



Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

Provisional

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Wednesday, 17 April 2024, 10 a.m.

New York

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| <i>President:</i> | Mr. Borg | (Malta) |
| <i>Members:</i> | Algeria | Mr. Attaf |
| | China | Mr. Fu Cong |
| | Ecuador | Mr. De La Gasca |
| | France | Mrs. Broadhurst Estival |
| | Guyana | Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett |
| | Japan | Mr. Yamazaki |
| | Mozambique | Mr. Fernandes |
| | Republic of Korea | Mr. Sangjin Kim |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Nebenzia |
| | Sierra Leone | Mr. Kanu |
| | Slovenia | Ms. Cvelbar Bek |
| | Switzerland | Mrs. Baeriswyl |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . | Dame Barbara Woodward |
| | United States of America | Ms. Sullivan |

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

The role of young persons in addressing security challenges in the Mediterranean

Letter dated 2 April 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2024/288)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda.

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of international peace and security

The role of young persons in addressing security challenges in the Mediterranean

Letter dated 2 April 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2024/288)

The President: I would like to warmly welcome the Ministers and other high-level representatives present in the Security Council Chamber. Their presence today underscores the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Albania, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, Spain, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Türkiye to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; Mr. Nasser Kamel, Secretary-General of the Union for the Mediterranean; and Ms. Sarra Messaoudi, Regional Lead of the MENA Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite His Excellency Mr. Stavros Lambrinidis, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of item the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2024/288, which contains the text of a letter dated 2 April 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept note on the item under consideration.

I now give the floor to Ms. DiCarlo.

Ms. DiCarlo: I would like to thank Malta for convening this debate today.

In 2015, the Security Council adopted resolution 2250 (2015), which acknowledged the importance of youth in prevention and peacebuilding. The resolution urged Member States to increase youth representation in decision-making processes at all levels. As we approach the tenth anniversary of that groundbreaking text, today's debate is a timely reminder that advancing meaningful youth participation must remain a priority for all of us.

The potential and opportunity for renewal that young people represent, as well as the vulnerabilities that can often affect them disproportionately, means that they must be part of the broader discussions shaping our societies. Yet much more needs to be done to meet the aspirations of the region's youth, including by empowering them to participate in the decisions that can affect both their present and their future.

Today's discussion is focused on the Mediterranean region, and with good reason. In the southern and eastern Mediterranean, young people constitute 55 per cent of the population. We recall the wave of demonstrations that swept across the region in 2011. Youth were at the forefront of those movements, protesting disenfranchisement and the lack of economic opportunity and employment. We also witnessed how violent and extremist networks exploited such grievances to lure young people into their ranks. Young people also make up most of those embarking on the perilous crossing of the Mediterranean, fleeing conflict and poverty in search of a better life.

It is estimated that one out of four young people around the world is affected by violence or armed conflict. The young, especially women, are more vulnerable to neglect, abuse and exploitation. Young people are more likely to be recruited by armed groups when they have no other livelihood opportunities. In addition, estimates also suggests that more than 90 per cent of all direct conflict deaths occur among young adult males. Exposure to conflict at a young age creates well-documented mental health and psychosocial impacts that persist into adulthood.

Those grim facts and figures are borne out in the unfolding calamity in one part of the Mediterranean. The 7 October attack on Israel by Hamas and the war in Gaza have destroyed many young lives. Seventy per cent of the population in Gaza is under 30. Almost all of them have been exposed to unprecedented levels of trauma, violence, disease and food insecurity. All

schools across the Gaza Strip are closed, impacting more than 625,000 students.

The impact of war and violence on youth is well known. What is still not sufficiently recognized is the many ways young people — with their energy, innovative ideas and creativity — can make the search for peace more sustainable and effective. We have witnessed that spirit of innovation in our special political missions, where we have increasingly deployed new technologies to organize digital consultations with youth. From Libya to Lebanon, those dialogues have helped us better understand their views and aspirations and to reflect them in our work.

Creating political space for youth to meaningfully engage in peace and security initiatives is key. For example, last September, our mission in Libya launched the Training Future Leaders of Libya initiative. Thirty young Libyan women will develop their skills in human rights, as well as legislation and policies, to promote women's participation and to counter hate speech. In February, the programme brought those young women to the European Parliament, where they discussed the impact of conflict on youth.

Young people are inheriting a planet on fire. One statistic encapsulates our dire situation: last month was the hottest March ever recorded. The previous nine months also set records. The Mediterranean is particularly vulnerable to climate change, warming at a rate 20 per cent faster than the global average. Massive floods, devastating storms and long droughts threaten livelihoods, health, water and food security across the region. The World Bank predicts that without concrete climate action, by 2050 as many as 19 million people could become internal climate migrants in North Africa alone. In addition to facing those risks, young people are also thought to be particularly vulnerable to climate-change-related health hazards owing to prolonged exposure during their lifetimes. Youth continue to take on a leading role in influencing, advocating and demanding greater political will and concrete action on climate change. That has been clear in their strong messages at the various meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP). Young women are often at the forefront of those movements, advocating for a gender lens at all stages of policy- and decision-making related to climate risks. In Cyprus, for example, our good-offices mission helped young people across the divide to unite around shared

concerns about environmental sustainability and to prepare joint positions for COP 28 in December.

As documented in the Secretary-General's report on youth and peace and security (S/2024/207), negative stereotypes of young people as agents of unrest and violence continue to contribute to their marginalization and stigmatization. To strengthen their role as positive agents of change, regional and multilateral actions are essential. In his policy brief on A New Agenda for Peace, the Secretary-General strongly advocates for active youth participation in decision-making processes. The United Nations is intensifying its efforts in that regard. The United Nations Development Programme's flagship report on human mobility reminds us that by accessing training, education and economic opportunities in other societies, young people, especially women, can be agents of change by bringing new experiences, skills and wealth back to their home countries.

Furthermore, my Department's Youth, Peace and Security Strategy builds on the Youth Promotion Initiative of the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund, which remains the only international financing mechanism dedicated to the implementation of this agenda and has invested \$128 million in 97 projects in support of youth inclusion across more than 30 countries since 2016. But we will need more adequate, predictable and sustained funding if we are to translate youth inclusion from a political commitment into tangible practice. Regional organizations have a key role to play. In that regard, we welcome the League of Arab States' recent endorsement of its first youth, peace and security strategy. I also commend the Union for the Mediterranean for its Youth 2030 strategy and its efforts to support work opportunities for young people in the southern Mediterranean.

Investing in youth is investing in peace. The work of the Council is critical in that regard. In his third report on the implementation of resolution 2250 (2015), the Secretary-General noted that the number of young briefers to the Security Council has fallen in the past two years. Meaningful youth engagement can start in this Chamber. I urge the Council to create more opportunities for young briefers and to continue to champion the youth, peace and security agenda, which is critical for the Mediterranean region and beyond.

The President: I thank Ms. DiCarlo for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Kamel.

Mr. Kamel: It is a privilege for the Union for the Mediterranean to be invited as a main briefer to the Security Council on such a crucial topic. At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and the Republic of Malta for facilitating this opportunity. Malta has always been an active and consistent proponent of peace, security and stability in the Mediterranean region.

At the crossroads of three continents, the Mediterranean Sea has a distinct influence at the global level. Although it makes up less than 1 per cent of the world's oceans, it accounts for a fourth of all international seaborne trade, harbours around 11 per cent of all marine species and generates an economic value of \$450 billion a year, representing 20 per cent of the annual global gross domestic product. However, at the same time, it is also a hotspot for many challenges that pose multilayered risks to our peace, security and stability, not least for our younger generations. As the sole intergovernmental organization gathering all countries of the region, the Union for the Mediterranean foresaw the value of working on the root causes of those challenges, in order to turn the region from a hotspot into a hope spot for our young people.

The primary challenge we are addressing is climate change, possibly the most existential threat facing the future of the Mediterranean basin, as Ms. DiCarlo mentioned. Its pace, magnitude and impact on the region have the potential to pose a serious risk to stability if it is not urgently tackled. The first-ever Mediterranean assessment report on the impact of climate and environmental change, prepared by an independent network of around 190 scientists and experts from more than 25 countries who are working closely with the Union for the Mediterranean and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, was published a few years ago with some sobering findings.

Again as Ms. DiCarlo mentioned, the Mediterranean basin is warming 20 per cent faster than the rest of the world. If we continue with current policies and without adaptation and mitigation measures, temperatures in the region will increase by 2.2°C by 2040 and a staggering 6.8°C by 2100. Today the temperatures are already 1.5°C higher than preindustrial levels. Just as melting ice caps have become symbolic of climate change in the Arctic, water scarcity has become the image most commonly associated with this same emergency in much of the Mediterranean, and if we add to that flash floods, as we saw in the United Arab Emirates yesterday, we can grasp the gravity of the situation. Together with a rapidly growing population and more than 180 million

people affected by water poverty, that constitutes a direct threat to our regional security and stability.

Added to the existing environmental risks, those threats intensify poverty, reduce fundamental human rights and lead to migration, posing profound State and human security challenges for Governments and peoples, particularly on the southern shores of the Mediterranean. Climate adaptation is therefore unavoidably intertwined with justice, equity, poverty alleviation and social inclusion. The situation is compounding the well-known high levels of fragility and vulnerability in the region, with a galloping demographic growth in the southern and eastern Mediterranean and a population that is on average 14 years younger than in the north. Some 50 per cent of that population is under the age of 24. At the same time, those young people are experiencing some of the highest unemployment rates in the world — up to three times the national unemployment level in some countries, with especially high proportions when considering women, girls and young people who are not in education, employment or training. Those are stark realities that can lead to insecurity and instability.

However, in facing those imminent challenges, we should neither panic nor despair. It is time to draw attention to the Mediterranean, not only as a hotspot for global challenges but as a laboratory for solutions, one that can be beneficial for the rest of the world. For that reason, we at the Union for the Mediterranean are not only working for young people but with them, so that they can build a more inclusive and sustainable future.

In 2021, we launched the UfM Strategy on Youth 2030, with a call for action co-built with youth from the region. It rests on three main pillars — first, the environment and climate action; secondly, education and employment; and thirdly, social inclusion and participation — all with a cross-cutting gender lens. We are tapping into innovative sectors, such as the green, blue and circular economies, which can contribute to the creation of those much-needed jobs. We work with Governments and industry to prioritize and invest in capacity-building for youth, women and marginalized groups to overcome the knowledge gap and social disparities. For those reasons, we also need to better include young people in decision-making processes, not only in the initial stages but also in the follow-up and monitoring phases. We in UfM are working firmly in that direction.

The adoption of resolution 2250 (2015), on youth, peace and security, and subsequent related resolutions, stands out as a landmark in moving forward this fresh conception of the youth as agents for peace. Their enthusiasm and potential for shaping decisions is a resource we can no longer afford to disregard.

Allow me to conclude by citing the report of the Secretary-General on youth, peace and security issued last month:

“young people bear a disproportionate burden of the adverse effects of climate change ... At the same time, young people are also the driving force in mobilizing and engaging in climate action worldwide.” (S/2024/207, *para. 13*)

That is true for almost all the challenges we face. We need to use this driving force, provide it with the right environment and space to thrive and empower it to lead us towards a more secure and sustainable future. We hope that the global community is ready to walk that talk with us, to make the Mediterranean become a true hub for best practices and solutions.

The President: I thank Mr. Kamel for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Messaoudi.

Ms. Messaoudi: We thank the Permanent Mission of Malta for the invitation and for including our voices in the conversation. To the members of the Council and to all allies in the struggle for a more just and peaceful world: *salam alaykum*.

Martin Luther King once said, “True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice.” My name is Sarra Messaoudi, and I am in front of members today not just as a young peacebuilder but as a proud Tunisian, Mediterranean and Arab woman who belongs to a bold youth community called the MENA Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security, hosted by Justice Call. As a Coalition, we unite young peacebuilders in the region who promote just peace and try to challenge the dominant narratives of youth in our region. Coming here today was not easy, but it really matters because one of the core principles of our work is identity and representation. As youth from the Mediterranean region, we know where we come from — a region that has transformed, and is still transforming, present history; and a region with over 60 million young people aged between 15 to 29 years of age, a youth population that deserves a future free from injustices, violence and instability.

As I sit here delivering these words, more than 40,000 Palestinian youth, children, men and women have either been killed or are under the rubble. Those people had lives, stories and dreams. They were not just numbers.

(spoke in Arabic)

May God have mercy on their souls.

(spoke in English)

As young people, we are exhausted. Enough is enough. We meet together to face these struggles and to address the generational wars, conflicts and insecurity. In the persistent challenges in the Mediterranean region, we see space for creativity — and therefore resilience and sustaining peace. In that regard, we have outlined five key challenges.

First, our civic space is under attack, and protection needs are increasingly demanding. That is why young people are coming together as coalitions, movements and networks so that they can share resources, co-create, collaborate and, most important, provide a safe space for solidarity and support. Members of the Security Council can take action by encouraging and collaborating with such structures and ensuring that their diverse expertise is on the front line in a more secure and safer manner.

Secondly, we face systematic barriers in terms of meaningful engagement and participation in peace, politics and security processes. However, young people are challenging the status quo and are rejecting engagements that do not adhere to the principles of the youth, peace and security agenda, which are based on meaningful and equal partnership. At the same time, young people are not adopting an “us versus them” mindset. They are calling for an intergenerational and multi-stakeholder partnership. In that regard, I would like to refer to the Guidance Note on Inclusive Intergenerational Dialogue, developed by the Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa and the Folke Bernadotte Academy, with input from our Coalition, which can be seen a resource for the Council. Our recommendations are that the Council must openly debate the Secretary-General’s report on youth, peace and security every two years; that members of the Council should integrate that agenda into all areas of its work; and that, similarly, members of the Council could consider establishing an informal Security Council expert group on youth, peace and security, which could

support these efforts and help connect young people with the work of the Council.

Thirdly, the mobility challenge in the Mediterranean region prevents youth from reaching their full potential. That challenge is two-fold. On the one hand, young people face severe travel requirements to obtain visas and permits, which prevents them from engaging at the global and regional levels. In response, young people are using the power of technology and social media to advance peace. They are creating digital communities that are borderless, fearless, collaborative and breakthrough. On the other hand, migration policies and agreements are continuing to harm migrants' rights. People who cross one of the deadliest migration routes in the world do not have access to social support systems. We want the Mediterranean Sea to be a sea of hope and opportunities where young people connect with their peers across its shores. We want the Mediterranean Sea to be a sea of peace, not one of death.

Fourthly, as young people, we recognize the urgent need to address climate-sensitive security risks, especially with the rising temperatures and floods that we witnessed in 2023. Addressing climate security risks can take a uniquely complex turn when it comes to the Arab Mediterranean region. In Palestine, for example, the struggle lies in saving what is left of agricultural land. That is why young people in Palestine are working to reconnect Palestinian farmers with their land by organizing "alternative tours" and employing non-violent resistance techniques. The Council should provide normative guidance on climate-sensitive security risks, including with attention to the specifics of the Arab Mediterranean region.

The fifth pressing issue is financing for prevention and peacebuilding. Preference is given to humanitarian efforts, with little investment in peacebuilding and prevention efforts. Prevention is one of the five pillars of the youth, peace and security agenda. Young people encounter a limited budget for work on the causes that matter to them. And of course, they struggle with a complex funding ecosystem that entails many complexities, including reporting, checklists and donor-driven agendas. At the same time, young people are exploring innovative ways to finance their efforts, for example through private sector investment and community philanthropy. Here I would like to highlight the work on Investing and Partnering with Youth for Peace, led by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Justice Call and UNICEF, which make the case for

why the private sector should invest in youth, peace and security.

We recommend Member States organize a high-level meeting to renew political and financial commitments to the youth, peace and security agenda and to launch the process for the second progress study on youth, peace and security with concrete and time-bounded proposals and actions.

What young people in the Mediterranean are facing today is a heavy burden on our shoulders. The present injustices will leave a lasting mark on our collective consciousness. We are questioning the international system, international law and the veto power. We are questioning the imposition of peace agreements that we did not participate in shaping and that do not meet our expectations. Just weeks ago, the Council adopted resolution 2728 (2024) for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, a promise of safety for millions, yet it seems as if it did not happen. A key message from young people in the region is that we need to walk the talk and move from resolutions to accountability and real implementation. In this battle, we need joint efforts, not siloed approaches.

We all have different roles to play, whether as diplomats not to only wear the diplomat hat, or for us as civil society not only to wear the hats of implementers. We need weavers, mobilizers, conveners, storytellers. All of these roles are important in the work on youth, peace and security, and all of them are complementary.

Finally, one last message I would like to end with: today young people are building peace by joining the decolonization movement, asking for aid and peacebuilding approaches to be decolonized, and for the power to be shifted to locally led efforts. Young peacebuilders can no longer be labelled as "too activist" or "too radical" to say what they want, because for us, liberation, freedom, dignity and human rights are the peacebuilding language that speaks to us. Just as 13 years ago, during the Arab Spring, when there was a huge human rights movement, we are ready to create a just peace movement because, for us, the revolution did not end but is continuing in many forms.

All participants in this Chamber were once young people. They had dreams, worked hard and wanted to make a difference and leave a mark. Let us all not lose this spark, because something we all have in common is that we are all believers in a better tomorrow. In these hard times, we should maintain solidarity and joint action, because none of us is free until all of us are free.

The President: I thank Ms. Messaoudi for her briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta.

I begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her insightful remarks, Mr. Kamel for his important briefing, and Ms. Messaoudi for sharing her experience as a young peacebuilder.

The Mediterranean region has undergone significant transformation in recent years, yet it continues to face complex and interconnected security challenges. These include geopolitical tensions and conflict, terrorism, violent extremism, maritime security problems, human rights violations, socioeconomic inequalities, climate change and cybersecurity. The complexity of these challenges underlines the fact that a holistic approach is needed to address them and their root causes in an effective manner. Close cooperation among countries of the region, including through regional and subregional organizations, is of paramount importance to foster dialogue and provide the ideal conditions for deeper cooperation and the strengthening of joint initiatives. Civil society also has a key role to play in contributing to positive change and promoting peace.

Furthermore, such responses must touch upon multiple dimensions and include conflict resolution and prevention, humanitarian aid, development cooperation and sustainable solutions. They must also aim at combatting disinformation and misinformation, which can have serious repercussions in terms of eroding trust, spreading divisive narratives and undermining institutions and democratic processes.

We must also consider that the Mediterranean is one of the regions that is most sensitive to climate change. Climate change is, already now, affecting the Mediterranean region so severely that the structures we have in place may no longer be effective when it strikes. Sudden onset extreme weather events have, until recently, caused death and destruction among our neighbours, overwhelming Governments and destroying decades of development. Higher temperatures, prolonged heatwaves, droughts and wildfires are destabilizing our societies by threatening our food security, our water resources and our health. On the other hand, slow-onset events such as sea-level rise have a direct bearing on our coastal economies and critical infrastructure. Climate change is disrupting

traditional livelihoods and triggering population displacement at a time of rapid population growth.

The Mediterranean region also has one of the youngest populations in the world, with one in every three people under 25 years of age. Regrettably, young persons have often been sidelined and excluded from decision-making processes. This has rendered them unable to access the needed support to sustain their conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives. They also continue to be victims of stereotypes and discrimination, sometimes seen only as troublemakers or conducive to violent extremism or radicalization.

Many young persons still struggle to access basic rights to quality education, health care and decent work. Many face life-threatening risks on a daily basis, especially in situations of conflict. Across the region, these challenges are most severe for girls and young women.

Decisive steps are needed to reverse these trends. As we have just heard, young persons are leading positive change in peace and security in the Mediterranean. They are at the forefront of efforts to sustain peace and address climate change. They have made innovative contributions to conflict prevention, reconciliation processes, peacebuilding, countering radicalization and violent extremism, and promoting human rights and the rule of law.

Young persons such as Ms. Messaoudi must be applauded for their efforts in community building. We must ensure their full, effective, inclusive, diverse and meaningful participation in decision-making processes. It is our collective responsibility to guarantee a safe and empowering environment for young human rights defenders and peacebuilders. This includes young women and LGBTIQ+ persons, who continue to face significant challenges in advocating for human rights and peace. We also need to integrate their voices at the United Nations, including the Security Council, in a systematic manner.

The third report of the Secretary-General on youth, peace and security (S/2024/207) shows that we have made progress across several pillars supporting the meaningful participation of young persons in peace and security issues. However, despite the adoption of three resolutions on youth, peace and security, actual implementation remains slow.

The Security Council can do more to offer the space for young persons to come forward as a positive force

for building peaceful and resilient societies. The youth, peace and security agenda should be discussed more frequently around this table, and young briefers invited more frequently. We must also seek to integrate and strengthen youth, peace and security elements as part of mandate renewals for United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions, as well as for United Nations country teams and Resident Coordinators.

In these efforts, the Security Council should collaborate closely with the newly established United Nations Youth Office and the new Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs, to ensure responsiveness to youth-related issues across the peace and security architecture.

In conclusion, I emphasize once again my firm belief that cooperation remains the key to navigating these complex contemporary challenges. Mediterranean countries must redouble efforts to tap into their human potential, build inclusive and resilient societies and pave the way towards a peaceful and prosperous future. Our diverse and rich heritage should serve as a guiding light towards achieving those goals.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and National Community Abroad of Algeria.

Mr. Attaf (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation recognizes that the friendly country of Malta was right to select today's topic. It is an important topic, considering the pivotal role of young people in confronting the current challenges in the Mediterranean region. Our region has not been spared that which has afflicted others in terms of crises, conflicts and tensions that continue to hold hostage their peoples' quests for peace, security, development, calm and peaceful coexistence.

We would recall the Libyan crisis, which has been ongoing and will be prolonged because of various obstacles to national reconciliation, because of institutional division and because of the difficulty the country is facing in holding an inclusive and unified election. Furthermore, those obstacles include foreign interference, which can be considered the most significant impediment to resolving the Libyan crisis.

We would also recall our people in the occupied Palestinian territories, who have been subjected to unjust and brutal aggression for more than half a year. That is simply a new chapter in Israel's continued and

repeated attempts to crush one of the oldest struggles in our region and our Organization. The youth of Palestine today do not have the right to dream of a safe and dignified life. They no longer have the right to aspire to education, to build their future and develop their country, which was stolen from them. Thousands of those youth no longer have the right to grow into young men and women, because the Israeli occupation has persisted in taking their lives when they were infants or children.

The Mediterranean basin, which is the crossroads of the greatest civilizations in human history, is now subject to many cross-border problems. Those problems are manifested in terrorist threats, violent extremism and organized crime, not to mention the increasing damage caused by climate change, which has become a part of daily life that can no longer be hidden or denied. In addition to all those challenges is that of illegal migration in the Mediterranean, for which we still await coordinated responses, from the countries of the region, that meet the scale and seriousness of the problem, including a way to deal equitably with the burdens placed on countries of origin, transit and destination.

Those accelerated developments place the young people of the Mediterranean at the heart of the current problem. On one hand, they are the greatest victims of the security challenges, but on the other hand, they are also an important key to resolving them fully and appropriately. In that regard, we note the urgent need to develop and adopt a collective approach that will meet the level of our young people's expectations and ambitions. Algeria calls for that approach in accordance with a renewed vision that responds to the following set of urgent priorities and requirements.

First, the region requires a development-centred approach, because sustainable development is the only way to dissuade young people from engaging in dangerous illegal migration, terrorism, radicalism and organized crime in its different forms.

Secondly, the region needs a preventive approach that works to spread a culture of peace, tolerance and coexistence, one that promotes dialogue and positive interaction among civilizations instead of sowing the seeds of division and causing clashes that lead nowhere.

Thirdly, the region requires a collaborative approach that includes the need to prioritize the values of solidarity, cooperation and partnership in a balanced way between the countries on both sides of the

Mediterranean, so that they can overcome the current challenges, which cannot be overcome separately or through conflicting methods and policies.

Fourthly, the region needs an approach based on international law and the resolutions of international legitimacy, one that puts an end to the forcible occupation of the lands of others, especially in Palestine and the Western Sahara, and one that would end foreign interference, by which the countries of the southern coast of the Mediterranean are mostly affected.

Fifthly and finally, the region needs an approach whereby all are committed to the principles of good neighbourliness while prioritizing mutual and shared interests. Those principles and ideals are not witnessed in the behaviour by some countries in our area, which seek to drown the societies in our region in various types of drugs that they produce and use as a lethal weapon against the young people of neighbouring countries in the Mediterranean.

Those are the basic foundations of an approach that my country continues to call for as we pursue it through the periodic resolution that we submit to the General Assembly on “Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region”. Algeria has never spared any diplomatic efforts in prioritizing the peaceful resolution of conflict and advancing development, especially with our African brethren, through the national agency for cooperation and solidarity for the development of Africa.

Moreover, Algeria is honoured to participate in the development of young African human resources, as we annually offer our African brothers no less than 2,500 academic scholarships in the various fields of higher education and professional training. In that context, Algeria hosts and supports the Pan-African University Institute of Water and Energy Sciences, including climate change, in cooperation with our German partner. That Institute is a successful example of North-South cooperation in the education and training of African youth.

We remain firmly convinced that the most important investment that is worthy of our efforts today is the power of the youth, who are the most precious treasure of our region. They are the treasure of treasures, a treasure that is superior to any other treasure. Without them, there is no way to build the future that we seek as countries and peoples — a future that brings people together and does not exclude anyone, one that unifies and does not divide, one where all can enjoy

peace, security, development and prosperity without exception, discrimination or favouritism.

Ms. Cvelbar Bek (Slovenia): I want to thank Malta for organizing this important debate on the role of young persons in shaping a more peaceful world of tomorrow. I also wish to thank Ms. DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; Mr. Kamel, Secretary-General of the Union for the Mediterranean; and Ms. Messaoudi, Regional Lead of the MENA Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security, for their introductory remarks and their insights on good practices of participation of young persons in the Mediterranean.

We welcome the focus of today’s discussion on the region of the Mediterranean — home to a large, diverse and dynamic youth population affected by climate-related risks. They represent the biggest wealth of the region and, thus, its greatest potential to address the root causes of the challenges we are tackling. Youth are our hope and commitment at the same time.

Allow me to touch on three points in that regard.

First, when addressing security challenges that impact the lives of future generations, the voices of youth are indispensable. Young persons must be part of the peace and security deliberations and decision-making processes on all levels. Intergenerational dialogue is essential. For many young persons, participation in local and national development policy processes and programmes serves a dual purpose — it fosters opportunities for young people and leverages their potential to drive innovation and economic growth, while simultaneously cultivating space for their political and civic engagement. Young persons can act as drivers for structural reforms and policy innovation.

We must aim to strengthen young persons’ participation in economic, cultural and political life, including in decision-making and electoral processes. Young persons need access to social protection and opportunities for their integration into labour markets. We must create an environment in which young persons can develop their potential and realize their aspirations. This will strengthen the Mediterranean’s resilience and peaceful prosperity.

As an example of empowering young persons, let me highlight Slovenia-based Euro-Mediterranean University, known as EMUNI, established within the Union for the Mediterranean. EMUNI’s growing potential as a higher education, research and innovation

hub, with its Mediterranean youth empowerment foundation, should be fully used for the benefit of the region's youth. EMUNI centres of knowledge and research in the southern Mediterranean will further foster collaboration, partnerships and engagement initiatives across the region.

Secondly, youth-led, inclusive capacity-building initiatives are excellent examples of how to promote the inclusion and meaningful participation of young persons in peace and security. We welcome the African-led initiatives aimed at giving young persons a say in democratic processes. We commend the role of the African Union in supporting and advocating young persons' leadership in conflict management and electoral processes.

Thirdly, the principles of the youth, peace and security agenda should also guide us in our endeavours to integrate youth into the climate, peace and security agenda. There is no inclusive and truly progressive climate action without the full, effective and meaningful participation of young persons. The youth movements play an increasingly important role in climate action. Their knowledge, creativity and competencies bring new perspectives to environmental peacebuilding initiatives in the region.

Slovenia is a Mediterranean country and shares the climate vulnerability of the region and its climate-related security risks. Young persons are strongly affected by both climate and conflict, but they are also extremely innovative in finding solutions for climate, water and food security — all vital for regional stability and peace. The twenty-third meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean, also known as the Barcelona Convention, showed the importance of youth leadership for a sustainable and peaceful region. Throughout our presidency of the Barcelona Convention, Slovenia pledges to support young persons as agents of regional marine protection, stability, sustainable development and peace.

The future belongs to the youth, and they must have a voice in shaping it. To give our youth a future free from war and fear, we must act now. Let us start building a more peaceful, sustainable and prosperous future now, in the Mediterranean and elsewhere.

Mr. Sangjin Kim (Republic of Korea): Let me first express my special appreciation to His Excellency, Mr. Ian Borg, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs

and Trade of Malta, for presiding over this meeting on the important role of youth in achieving peace and security. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and His Excellency Mr. Nasser Kamel. I am particularly appreciative of Ms. Messaoudi's presence and power briefing here today.

Today we confront a myriad of interconnected peace and security challenges, spanning from armed conflicts and violent extremism to food insecurity and the adverse impacts of climate change. These briefings showed how the Mediterranean, bridging three continents — Europe, Africa and Asia — serves as a microcosm of those global issues.

Despite those challenges, the youth remain as powerful agents for change and resilience. In that regard, Korea welcomes the third report of the Secretary-General on youth, peace and security (S/2024/207), which highlights youth engagement in strengthening peace and security. The comprehensive role of youth in shaping our collective future encompasses various key agenda and extends far beyond regional boundaries.

Today I would like to highlight the two prominent issues in which the participation of youth is particularly noteworthy.

The first issue is disarmament and non-proliferation. Engaging young people in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation is significant, as they have great potential to contribute to making the world a safer place by suggesting future-oriented solutions, providing innovative perspectives and increasing diversity in discussions. The participation of young people has become much more relevant with the rapid advancement of emerging technologies that could transform the world in the future. In the light of that, Korea introduced the biennial resolution entitled "Youth, disarmament and non-proliferation" in the First Committee (General Assembly resolution 78/31). The resolution was adopted with unanimous support in 2019 and 2021, and again, for the third time, in 2023. Those resolutions call upon the international community to engage, empower and educate youth in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. Korea hosted diverse events and programmes in implementation of the resolutions. More recently, Korea appointed 31 university students as Korean envoys for disarmament and non-proliferation in order to promote youth awareness and participation. Korea will continue to lead the effort to engage, educate and empower youth in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Secondly, with regard to climate, peace and security, young people are the driving force mobilizing and engaging in the global response to climate change and its transboundary impacts. While the youth of the Mediterranean region are engaged in tackling the complex nexus involving sea-level rise, migration and water shortages, the youth of the North-East Asia region are striving to promote regional cooperation on climate action and policies. For instance, the Futuring Peace in Northeast Asia initiative of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs is currently led by youth peacebuilders from the Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Japan and China who are actively pursuing broader youth representation in high-level policy forums. Their policy recipes for the region span the areas of the digital domain, education and the environment and include a plan to establish a youth climate council in the near future.

Before concluding, I wish to echo the sentiment encapsulated in the quotation from the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations: “Youth is the missing piece for peace and development”. Resolution 2250 (2015), adopted, in 2015, was the landmark resolution that led to the establishment of the youth, peace and security agenda. As we approach the milestone of its tenth anniversary next year, Korea would like to reaffirm its commitment to incorporating and enhancing elements of the youth, peace and security agenda, not only within the framework of the United Nations, but also across our national policies. Korea remains steadfast in its dedication to harnessing and recognizing the invaluable and positive contributions of youth to sustaining peace and security.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Welcome you back to the Chamber, Mr. President.

Allow me to begin with the inspiring story of two young women agents of change.

Ibtihal is Libyan, originally from Tripoli. In the midst of conflict, she organized a training programme to help women and young people gain access to opportunities to earn livelihoods. Sena, born in Damascus, took the refugee route to Türkiye in 2016. In her doctoral thesis, she analyses the literary works of Syrian refugees who, and I quote Sena, “try to present refugees in a different light: that of bravery, of resilience”.

Ibtihal and Sena are not alone. Many young women and men in the Mediterranean are committed to tackling the interconnected challenges weighing on

their future: conflict, climate change, marginalization, lack of employment and the apparent paralysis of State institutions when long-term action is needed. I would therefore like to thank Malta for bringing us together on this topic today, and I also thank the briefers for their inspiring contributions.

The willingness of youth to engage is undeniable, as we have just seen. What is needed is the willingness of political leaders to do their part. First, we need to empower young people economically and socially so that they have the resources, capabilities and confidence to be agents of change. That means implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but it is just as important to better prevent the violence and armed conflict that are often the root cause of young people’s lack of prospects.

Today too many young people in the Mediterranean bear the triple burden of conflict, marginalization and economic insecurity. That burden leads them to lose confidence in State institutions and to take dangerous migratory routes, as we have seen in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Syria and Libya. And that burden is likely to increase as the effects of climate change intensify, in turn exacerbating inequality and poverty. It is therefore in the interest of the whole region and of those beyond it to support the young people of the Mediterranean in developing their economic and social skills, as Switzerland is doing with its Youth for Change programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Empowerment is necessary, but insufficient. It is also necessary to value young people as agents of change; to regard their dynamism as an opportunity for peace and sustainable development, rather than as a danger; to remove obstacles to young people’s participation and to encourage their engagement instead of causing their ideas to shrivel up before they have a chance to germinate.

Valuing also means moving from words to deeds. The youth, peace and security and the women and peace and security agendas point to ways to genuinely strengthen participation, provided the political will exists. The Secretary-General’s latest report on youth, peace and security (S/2024/207) provides concrete examples of youth leadership, such as the intergenerational dialogue on youth and climate security at the twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the integration of young people in environmental peacebuilding initiatives within peace

missions in Cyprus and elsewhere. All Member States will soon have an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to young people, by including in the Pact for the Future the development of a global benchmark for genuine youth participation, under the auspices of the United Nations Youth Office. The Security Council could further strengthen its action, for example, by establishing a youth, peace and security action plan along the lines of the Peacebuilding Commission.

That brings me to my final point, which is protection. Even if some courageous young people speak out despite threats, fear silences many others. The way forward is obvious: create civic spaces, offline and online, where young people of all genders, communities and backgrounds can express themselves freely and without fear of reprisal, intercultural and intergenerational dialogue flourishes and hate speech withers.

The countries bordering the Mediterranean are far from uniform. That iconic sea often appears as a link between very different worlds. But throughout the Mediterranean — and indeed worldwide — young people are a crucial driving force in building peaceful, sustainable and prosperous societies. We therefore have a vested interest in empowering, valuing and protecting them, and in creating an environment conducive to their participation. As an Arab proverb says, “the fate of every nation depends on its youth”.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this high-level meeting. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing, and I thank Mr. Nasser Kamel, Secretary-General of the Union for the Mediterranean, and Ms. Sarra Messaoudi for the valuable information provided. I thank Ms. Messaoudi for her commitment to her work, and certainly for her call to action.

The briefings reveal how profoundly young people are being affected by conflict, insecurity, fragility and climate change. They also point to the boundless possibilities for harnessing the creativity and drive of the youth population to address the cross-border challenges they face in the Mediterranean region.

Through resolution 2250 (2015), almost 10 years ago, in 2015, the Council recognized the critical role of young people in promoting peace, resolving conflict and preventing violence. In that resolution, Member States were urged to ensure that young people participate meaningfully in peace processes and dispute resolution. We welcome this nearly decade-old imperative to put

in place mechanisms and to place young people at the centre of processes and policies for peace, security, stability and sustainable development.

Sierra Leone experienced a tragic civil conflict, which ended two decades ago. In our transitional justice process, the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission identified the fact that youth were not considered as relevant actors for governance as one of the key root causes of the conflict.

Young people were also disproportionately affected by low levels of employment and limited access to finance and business opportunities. In our post-conflict rebuilding efforts, young people were engaged as catalysts for peace and key actors in conflict and violence prevention. We have recognized that to be a continuous process, given the persistent challenges. In developing strategies for peace and sustainable development, therefore, we must continue to consider the unique needs of young people.

Looking outwards, we note that across the world, in particular in developing States, in Africa, the Mediterranean, and in Latin America and the Caribbean, insecurity pervades all dimensions of young people's lives — economic, political, social and physical. International and localized conflicts continue to have an adverse impact on socioeconomic options for young people, in most cases leaving them vulnerable to indoctrination and/or recruitment by armed groups or extremist or terrorist organizations. Young women and those from marginalized groups find themselves especially vulnerable to sexual-based violence.

Therefore, ensuring meaningful participation by young people in decision-making at all levels is fundamental. That is especially the case in conflict situations. However, despite being deeply affected by conflict, there are still many factors inhibiting the participation of youth in peace and security efforts, such as displacement, political exclusion and the lack of educational and employment opportunities. We should thus support youth involvement in peacebuilding efforts, including through capacity-building, investment and ensuring the provision of adequate resources for such initiatives.

In turning to the Mediterranean, the focus of our meeting, which is strategically located at the intersection of three different continents and various cultures, we note that it faces a unique set of issues with regards to its bulging youth population, which is approximately more than 30 per cent of the total

population of the region. The region is experiencing several complex and overlapping challenges, including conflict and the movement of refugees and migrants, in particular from the West African and Sahel region. The refugees and migrants continue to remain vulnerable to human traffickers, systematic violations of human rights and violence against women and girls.

There are, as well, reports of illegal trade in weapons, petroleum products and narcotic drugs. Terrorism, violence, extremism and the adverse effects of climate change, including droughts and flooding, add to the layer of complex challenges. The risks posed by those myriad factors extend beyond the Mediterranean itself, with a direct impact on Europe, Africa, West Asia and the broader international community.

The challenges facing young people are not insurmountable, particularly if they are addressed in collaboration with young people themselves. The root causes of the aforementioned complex and overlapping challenges must be addressed in a consensual, empathetic, equitable and fair way. Conflicts, particularly in the West African and Sahel region, must be addressed without geopolitical hegemonic and other external adverse interference that do not support the peaceful resolution of disputes and peace processes.

The socioeconomic factors must be addressed, and all must make good on their commitments to address global inequity and to end poverty, leaving no one behind. Climate change, recognized as an existential threat, must be addressed not through rhetoric but through action. In the West African Sahel, where we have concrete evidence of the nexus between climate change and insecurity, the Security Council must be in a position to recognize the adverse effects of climate change, ecological changes and natural disasters, including through floods, drought, desertification and land degradation, as well as their impacts on food security, among other humanitarian, social and economic factors, and on the security and stability of region.

That recognition must be backed by support for efforts to develop region-specific approaches and initiatives towards conflict-sensitive climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience in West Africa and the Sahel. The international community must also be committed to scaling up action and support, through the development, voluntary transfer and deployment of technology on mutually agreed terms, and capacity-building, in line with existing commitments to enhance

the adaptive capacity of countries from the region and to reduce their vulnerability to climate change.

Young people must play a meaningful role in all of that. Sierra Leone believes that young people are positive contributors to conflict prevention, peace, security and national development. We continue to bear witness to the need to promote their meaningful engagement and active participation, at all levels, in the formulation of policies to address drivers of conflict and to maintain peace and security.

We reiterate our support for an inclusive development framework that empowers youth, including across the Mediterranean and other regions affected, providing them with a structured platform to share their perspectives and engage in discussions and actions on conflict, security and socioeconomic development. We emphasize an approach that embraces the varied insights of youth on developing sustainable and innovative solutions and connections across generations, sectors and geographies.

The ability of young people to put dominant societal norms to the test and drive new social, political and cultural processes can hardly be overestimated. Youth are the most active demographic group in challenging authoritarianism, both before and after 2010, as well as dynamic advocates for raising awareness and the alarm on climate change and food insecurity.

Strategies being developed and to be implemented, in particular by United Nations agencies, should therefore make use of the knowledge and expertise of young people. Peacebuilding, socioeconomic and humanitarian interventions should have a youth component. Mainstreaming youth policies across various sectors would improve target rates and allow for useful lessons to be learned from implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation.

Funding and other non-monetary and logistical support should be increased for capacity-development programmes, targeting young people in the regions affected, including the Mediterranean, West Africa and the Sahel. Regrettably, even as education remains one of the hardest-hit sectors during instability and conflict, it is without a doubt the most significant factor in improving the lives and livelihoods of young people.

Let me conclude by reasserting the imperative that the Security Council must urge the implementation of strategies that address the five pillars of the youth, peace and security agenda, including participation,

prevention, protection, partnerships, disengagement and reintegration for broader inclusive and sustainable peace in the Mediterranean and other regions.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate Malta for organizing this high-level debate. I recognize the presence in the Chamber of high-level officials, and I thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing. In particular I would welcome the youth and address the youth today.

The role of young people is key to achieving peace and security, overcoming socioeconomic inequalities, preventing transnational threats and contributing to sustainable development in the Mediterranean region and around the world. Ecuador therefore welcomes this debate and thanks the briefers for their presentations.

The inequality gap between developed and developing countries is wide, which is precisely why there are security challenges. A large proportion of youth in the Mediterranean, who constitute a third of the population, face current and potential risks owing to the lack of employment and increasing job insecurity, the fragility of economic systems, the consequences of climate change and the impact of armed conflicts, including in terms of migration, forced displacement and refugee flows. According to United Nations data, approximately 15 per cent of international migrants are young people, and 70 per cent of them are women, who are more vulnerable to the risks of migration and related dynamics.

The root causes of conflicts must be addressed and gaps must be closed by improving social, economic and political conditions and by combating hunger and marginalization. The use of new information and communications technologies to recruit young people and incite them to violence cannot be ignored. In developed countries, young people are driving change in consumption and production patterns to ensure that global warming is not irreversible. How can we address an issue as crucial as climate change when young people in developing countries are not living but surviving, are in need and are living in poverty? Those realities should guide the agendas of subregional, regional and international organizations, in particular financial institutions' development cooperation programmes. To that end, developed countries must fulfil their commitments to provide official development assistance, in support of meeting peoples' basic needs in terms of infrastructure, health, education and sanitation and of combating poverty, which sows the

seeds of instability and conflict. Climate financing must also be urgently mobilized to enable developing countries to strengthen their national adaptation plans.

Ecuador is a young and diverse country, and it has a Government with an unprecedented level of representation by women and young people, in which youth employment is prioritized. My delegation agrees with the Secretary-General's view that young people should not be excluded from these or other discussions that affect them. We therefore call for their full, substantive and gender-focused participation in all spheres, including peacebuilding processes, in which their perspectives can help to build a culture of peace and tolerance, to strengthen institutions that ensure accountability and justice, and to establish an approach to prevention and the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 2250 (2015).

It is crucial to work with young people on strategies to ensure their access to decent livelihoods, give them opportunities to develop entrepreneurship in the areas of technological innovation and sustainable development, implement measures to bridge digital divides and motivate their empowerment and active participation as agents of change in peace, conflict and post-conflict situations, within and outside their region.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming the relevance of implementing the five pillars of resolution 2250 (2015) on youth, peace and security to address the challenges facing young people in the Mediterranean. Mainstreaming the principles of participation, protection, prevention, association, disengagement and reintegration for young people will help to promote the rule of law, accountability, economic growth and the construction of inclusive, prosperous, stable, safe and peaceful societies.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): I express our gratitude to you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting. I also thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo, Mr. Kamel and Ms. Messaoudi for their insightful briefings.

In the year 1862, 162 years ago, after Japan ended its two-centuries-long isolation, the first Japanese delegation was dispatched to Europe to open relations with the international community. They navigated through the Mediterranean Sea and visited Malta. Throughout history, the Mediterranean — with Malta situated at its centre — has been the nodal point connecting two oceans and three continents,

namely, the Atlantic and Indo-Pacific Oceans and Africa, Asia and Europe, respectively. Because of that connectivity, the stability and prosperity of the region is of great importance for maintaining international peace and security. That is also true for the countries in the Indo-Pacific, including Japan. However, the region is witnessing turbulence. Vessels transporting refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers on dangerous journeys from Africa to Europe are often overcrowded and unseaworthy, which results in tragedies due to shipwrecks and abandonment. We hear multiple reports of transcontinental migrant smuggling networks that not only exploit those migrants for illicit profit but often subject them to abuses such as human trafficking, violence or exposure to hazardous conditions. In the wider context of maritime security, the Houthis have repeatedly attacked commercial vessels in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, which connect the Mediterranean to the Indo-Pacific.

The countries on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean have a younger demographic profile. That makes those societies vibrant, but if instability deepens, a high unemployment rate and lack of political and social inclusiveness could drive young people to lose their hope for a prosperous future and to become susceptible to violent extremism and crime. To prevent that from occurring, a comprehensive approach based on national ownership, the empowerment of all individuals, including youth, and the addressing of root causes is imperative, as stressed in the open debate on peacebuilding and conflict prevention held last month, under the Japanese presidency, in this Chamber (see S/PV.9574). In the Mediterranean, international partnerships are strengthened by multifaceted cooperation between the African Union, the European Union and the League of Arab States, while upholding regional ownership. United Nations bodies can further enhance such partnerships through sound multilateralism and the promotion of the rule of law. Those efforts will help countries in the region to ensure the full, safe and meaningful participation of young people in political and social spaces so that they will not despair.

Sea level rise, floods and droughts caused by climate change constitute serious and imminent threats to countries and people in vulnerable situations, thus affecting human security. For example, the floods that hit eastern Libya last year led to a great loss of life. To better prepare for natural disasters, it is imperative to build trustworthy and capable institutions that reflect

the voices and needs of women and youth, who are among those most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

More than a century after the Japanese delegation's visit to Europe, Japan and Malta established diplomatic relations in 1965. Malta opened its Embassy in Tokyo in 2020, and this year, 2024, commemorates the opening of the Japanese Embassy in Malta. Building on that history, Japan will cooperate for peace in the region with Malta — a fellow maritime nation — and other countries on the Mediterranean Sea.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Maltese presidency for organizing today's important debate. I thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo, Secretary-General of the Union for the Mediterranean Nasser Kamel, and Ms. Sarra Messaoudi for their statements.

The Mediterranean concentrates multiple security, humanitarian, climate and development challenges, which are representative of the challenges facing the maintenance of international peace and security. Those challenges require concerted action by the international community that combines security, solidarity and development. In particular, they call for increased solidarity with countries neighbouring conflict zones, which are on the front lines of population displacement. France offers those countries significant support through official development assistance, as the fourth largest donor in the world in 2023, and through multifaceted exchanges with all its Mediterranean partners. France is deeply concerned about the precarious situation of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the Mediterranean. It is contributing to efforts to dismantle smugglers and train coastguards to prevent further tragedies at sea.

In the Mediterranean and the Middle East, young people have an essential role to play in finding lasting solutions to the crises shaking the region. They must be fully involved and represented in political processes. We welcome the efforts of the United Nations to that end.

In the Middle East, we must work collectively to avoid a regional conflagration and to ensure respect for international law. France reiterates its condemnation of the 7 October terrorist attacks and its call for the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages kidnapped by Hamas, including young people and children. It also calls for an immediate ceasefire and full and unhindered humanitarian access to Gaza,

where more than 33,200 Palestinian civilians have been killed, including many young people and children.

Children and young people, who today represent almost 60 per cent of the population of the Mediterranean basin, are our future. Their full, equal and meaningful participation in conflict prevention and the maintenance of peace and security is therefore essential to long-term international stability.

Despite growing awareness of the role of young people, they remain largely excluded from decision-making processes, political institutions and the job market. The international community therefore needs to strengthen its commitment to young people. Young people were one of France's priorities at the Generation Equality Forum, held in Paris in 2021, with France and Mexico as co-Presidents, and we also call for greater youth participation in United Nations climate change negotiations in order to boost the role of young people in discussions on the climate and peace and security nexus.

That commitment also means the effective implementation of the recommendations of *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982), as well as those of the youth, peace and security agenda. Through resolution 2535 (2020), the co-penholders — France and the Dominican Republic — called on the Secretary-General to publish a biannual report on the youth, peace and security agenda so as to ensure that it remains a priority for States and for the Organization. We are pleased that youth challenges were fully taken into account in the preparations for the Summit of the Future.

The President: I would like to welcome Ambassador Fu Cong, the new Permanent Representative of China to the Security Council. We look forward to working closely together.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for your words of welcome and friendship. I look forward to working closely with one and all.

I would like to thank Malta for its initiative to convene this open debate and Foreign Minister Ian Borg for coming to New York to preside over this meeting. I also thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo, Secretary-General Kamel and Ms. Messaoudi for their briefings.

The world today is far from being peaceful, and the Mediterranean region also faces complex security challenges. Some countries of the region are suffering

from severe domestic tensions, persistent social unrest and multiple non-traditional security challenges, all of which are threatening regional stability and people's livelihoods. Malta's initiative for the Council to discuss security threats in the Mediterranean, with special emphasis on the role of the youth, is therefore a positive step.

In that regard, China believes we should focus on the four areas.

First, we must end regional conflict as soon as possible. In the Mediterranean region, the Gaza conflict is the most pressing challenge. More than six months of conflict have claimed the lives of more than 34,000 people, and countless young people have been buried under the rubble or are mourning the loss of their loved ones. These young people could have become teachers, doctors or engineers, the backbone of society, but the relentless fighting has ruined their lives, destroyed their homes and dashed their hopes for the future.

"To save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" is the purpose of the United Nations, and it is the responsibility of the Security Council to restore peace to the youth in Gaza. It is imperative to fully implement resolution 2728 (2024) and achieve an immediate ceasefire. It is also imperative to lift the blockade on Gaza in order to expand humanitarian access and provide the population a basic means of survival. There will be hope for regional peace and development only when every young person enjoys security and dignity.

Secondly, we must address the issue of refugees and migrants. Their situation in the Mediterranean is grim, with more than 3,000 people, including many young people, having died or gone missing while attempting to cross the Mediterranean last year. China supports efforts to tackle illegal migration and human trafficking, in accordance with the Council's mandate, while complying with the norms of international law and protecting the human and fundamental rights of the refugees and migrants, thereby preventing the recurrence of tragedies at sea.

No one would choose to be uprooted if there were viable alternatives. Accelerating growth for underdeveloped regions so that people can live and work happily can eliminate the root causes that produce refugees and migrants. We call on developed countries to increase their support and assistance to developing countries so as to help them improve their economy and people's livelihoods.

Thirdly, we must eradicate the scourge of terrorism. Terrorist organizations such as Da'esh are mobilizing young people in North Africa, the Sahel and Syria to engage in violent activities. Those young people are roaming across borders, posing a threat to the stability of the Mediterranean region as a whole. The international community should support countries of the region in their counter-terrorism efforts, strengthen border control and law enforcement cooperation and mitigate the adverse effects of drug trafficking and illegal arms sales on young people. The United Nations should provide more support for the disarmament and demobilization of ex-combatants in the countries concerned and for the reintegration of young people affected by conflicts. As Secretary-General Guterres has repeatedly emphasized, terrorism cannot be eradicated by security means alone. We must therefore focus on sustainable economic and social development and break the vicious cycle of poverty breeding terrorism. We must prioritize youth education and employment in order to curb the infiltration of extremist ideologies, a culture of violence and hate speech among young people.

Fourthly, we must promote exchanges and dialogue among civilizations. The Mediterranean Sea connects the three continents of Asia, Africa and Europe and has nurtured diverse civilizations. In the face of complex security challenges in the region, exchanges, mutual respect, mutual learning and harmonious coexistence among different civilizations, ethnic groups and religions can help promote understanding and resolve differences and conflicts. President Xi Jinping proposed the Global Civilization Initiative, which advocates respect for the diversity of world civilizations and the strengthening of people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. We support Mediterranean countries in advancing dialogue among civilizations, enhancing connectivity among their peoples and working together to tackle common challenges. We encourage the youth from Mediterranean countries to be at the forefront of that endeavour and to play an important role in it. We also hope that cooperation and exploration in this area will inject more insight and inspiration to the promotion of dialogue among civilizations on a global scale, to the resolution of sensitive global issues and to the advancement of the peaceful development of humankind.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank today's briefers.

The Russian Federation has consistently attached high priority to regional security issues. We understand the objective interests of Malta, as well as of other States of the region, in discussing issues related to security in the Mediterranean. However, to be honest, it is not entirely clear to us how the role of youth can be singled out from this broad and undoubtedly important topic, given that there is a consistent understanding at the international level that the security of populations is the responsibility of national Governments. It is their official representatives who bear full responsibility for the decisions they take, both before their people and at the international level. In that connection, professional knowledge, experience and skills are crucial, and physical and mental maturity are a basic prerequisite.

Entry into political life should be an informed and organic decision taken by young people once they reach the age of 18, as stated in resolution 2250 (2015). Children should not be dragged into politics, depriving them of their childhood. Otherwise, there is a risk that young people will simply be manipulated and that the interests of certain political groups will be presented as the "vision of the young generation". Those risks should also be borne in mind when discussing increased participation by young people and youth organizations in intergovernmental processes at the United Nations. We believe that it would be counterproductive and that it would undermine the intergovernmental nature of the United Nations to attempt to equate the rights of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), even youth NGOs, with those of State representatives.

In any discussion of the role of youth, it is extremely important to focus not on the formal side of things, pushing for quotas for young people in various processes, but on the genuine problems that that population group faces. Youth are the hardest hit by poverty, unemployment and social exclusion, and that is felt most strongly by young people in developing countries.

Today we heard quite a lot about the devastating effects of climate change as almost the main cause of all problems and conflicts. We believe that that is drawing the focus away from the real issue. The Mediterranean area encompasses a fairly compact group of countries that are equally vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change. Droughts, floods, heat waves and wildfires happen everywhere. But do such disasters affect Mediterranean countries in the same way? It is clear that, on the African coast, the impact is more devastating and requires a longer recovery

period because those countries lack the resources for adaptation and mitigation. It is therefore important not to shift the focus to the climate agenda, but instead to focus on the general eradication of poverty and on improving the well-being of populations, including youth, in all countries of the region.

Let us call a spade a spade. Young people in the global North and the global South have very different opportunities to realize their potential. The Mediterranean is a clear illustration of that. There is an existential rift running along that body of water. Entrenched on one side of that rift is a prosperous Europe — a garden, in the words of Mr. Josep Borrell Fontelles — and on the other side there is a region that, largely owing to gross intervention by the West, is racked by conflict and internal instability, amid which the population must attempt to survive. Libya has not yet recovered from the devastating effects of Western intervention on its statehood. Syria and Iraq are forced to face them on their own, struggling with a multitude of socioeconomic and humanitarian problems. Gaza is ablaze.

Staggering numbers of young people on the southern shores of the Mediterranean rift that I referred to have been deprived of their right to a prosperous future, a right that is generally guaranteed to those born on the northern shore. They seek to overcome it by crossing the Mediterranean Sea at great risk to their lives, fleeing want, despair, unemployment and a host of other problems left behind as the legacy of Western colonizers.

The death rate among migrants trying to reach European shores by sea remains shockingly high. But those who do reach European shores are by no means welcomed. Suffice it to recall images of overcrowded refugee camps or hundreds of coffins on the Italian island of Lampedusa. We have repeatedly drawn attention to that catastrophic situation, but European Union (EU) member States are unwilling to assume responsibility and take appropriate measures to ensure safe conditions for the arrival of migrants and refugees. The EU continues to use force to prevent migrants from entering European countries. In that regard, it is worth recalling how desperately Poland fought off migrants in 2021, often literally opening fire on people. Simply put, Europe has fenced itself off in its “blossoming garden” and categorically does not want to see any strangers in it, particularly those arriving from the Middle East and North Africa, which it destroyed during its military ventures or years of neocolonial exploitation.

The best illustration of that are the double standards applied by EU member States to refugees from Ukraine and from the global South. The former are unconditionally provided with enhanced social protection packages, while the latter are required to fulfil a number of criteria for integration into the local community, having to prove their language skills, among other things. At the same time, many Ukrainian refugees — and this is something that has created a wave of outrage on social media — have fled to Europe to avoid military conscription and rent out their property in their homeland, being in no rush to integrate into the local community while regularly receiving social assistance from their host countries.

Of course, it is up to European citizens to decide how their tax money is spent. But when talking about the role of young people and their potential, it is important to avoid hypocrisy and double standards, because the plight of young people in a number of Mediterranean countries is the result of centuries of Western colonialism and its recurrences. We see how young people in various countries, with their keen sense of justice, are no longer willing to accept the unjustly imposed unipolar world and, as the most active, passionate segment of the population, are determined to participate in building a new, just world order based on the principles of cooperation, equality and mutual respect.

Of key importance in that regard is the promotion of dialogue among cultures, religions and civilizations. That has been recognized repeatedly by the General Assembly, and that conclusion was also reached by the Security Council in its resolution 2686 (2023), which was adopted unanimously last year. It is for that reason that a large part of the Russian Federation's efforts in the area of youth policy is focused on developing interpersonal contacts, strengthening trust and fostering a sense of brotherhood among representatives of different countries. That was, for instance, the objective of the World Youth Festival held in Sochi in March of this year, which brought together some 20,000 delegates from more than 180 States. Responding to numerous requests, our country's leadership has decided to hold the Youth Festival on a regular basis.

Russia participates in an exchange of experience on youth issues with many developing countries, including African countries. The focus of our efforts is on creating educational opportunities. Russian educational institutions annually welcome approximately 1 million students from a range of countries, including those of

the Mediterranean region, and the renowned Patrice Lumumba Peoples' Friendship University of Russia remains a leading institution in that regard. With regard to the United Nations, we are open to cooperation with the Youth Office, and we look forward to the increase in its activities within its established mandate.

In 10 to 15 years, those who are just entering political and diplomatic life will be sitting in our chairs. The future of our planet will depend on the opportunities we give them. Thus far, we are coming up short, getting carried away by secondary, albeit catchy, narratives and losing sight of systemic problems. Young people must be given an equal start, regardless of where they come from or where they are born. The concepts of "garden" and "jungle" are not conducive to that. We can radically change this deplorable situation only by overcoming the snobbery of the "golden billion", and that is something that we wholeheartedly support. The choice belongs to Member States.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): I thank Malta for convening today's debate. I also thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing and Mr. Kamel and Ms. Messaoudi for their valuable perspectives on the subject.

As our world experiences unprecedented conflicts, with conflicting parties seemingly unmoved by the misery and suffering of innocent civilian populations, the Security Council must continue to engage on effective ways of reversing this downward spiral. Prevention must be the priority. That requires a holistic approach that addresses risk factors and makes maximum use of resources, including human resources.

We have the world's largest youth population in history. While youth are among those most affected by armed conflict, they also have the enormous, mostly untapped, potential to contribute to sustainable peace. The adoption of resolution 2250 (2015) on youth, peace and security was an important shift in the perspective of the role of young people from victim or perpetrator of violence to positive agents of change, who can contribute to preventing and resolving conflicts and building peaceful, resilient and prosperous societies.

The Council can lead by example and demonstrate confidence in the world's youth. That includes increasing opportunities for young persons from different regions to brief the Council, so that it can hear their perspectives and understand their challenges and needs. Today we have benefited from one such briefing.

The Council must also continue to strengthen the youth, peace and security agenda and integrate it into the mandate renewals of peacekeeping operations and special political missions. Young people must be at negotiating tables and integrally involved in implementing peace agreements. Adequate resourcing for youth empowerment and participation should be built into mandates.

We also recognize the important role of the new United Nations Youth Office, which has a specific mandate on peace and security, and the Peacebuilding Commission, in supporting youth participation in matters related to peace and security.

The existential issue of our times is that of climate change, and our young people are at the forefront in advocating for action. The Mediterranean is one of the world's regions most vulnerable to climate risks and represents a microcosm of what many regions, including the Caribbean, are experiencing. As we prepare for the Summit of the Future and consider the Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace, we must put climate change at the centre as a risk multiplier, contributing to food insecurity and water scarcity and driving forced displacement. Those have the potential to fuel and exacerbate tensions and conflict, particularly when resources become scarce and overwhelmed governance systems are unable to meet the needs of besieged communities.

The Council has seen numerous examples of how, in the face of drought, internal displacement and chronic food insecurity, extremist groups have capitalized on the grievances and vulnerability of young people to bolster recruitment and radicalization. Poverty, unemployment, lack of economic opportunities and desperation have driven millions of children and young people into the arms of extremist groups.

Targeted action must be taken to provide opportunities and build the resilience of the young and most vulnerable in our world to withstand those challenges. Access to education, science and technology can strengthen their resilience and build their capacity to be part of solutions. Their meaningful participation in peace processes and decision-making can build trust and break cycles of violence, yielding positive and sustainable outcomes.

As we discuss the role of young people in the Mediterranean and the world in addressing security challenges, including those exacerbated by climate change, Guyana reiterates that the international

community must act on the numerous climate commitments, including climate finance, and create an environment for inclusive development. Peace and security and development are interdependent. If developing countries continue to lack the financing necessary to adapt to climate change and meet the development needs of their people, including their youth, peace and security will be a casualty in many other places. We must work to ensure that that is not the case.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate. I also thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo, Mr. Kamel and Ms. Messaoudi for their briefings this morning.

To achieve lasting peace, the whole of society is required to participate in building it. Without the diverse perspectives that youth and marginalized groups represent, we will struggle to build peaceful, prosperous and sustainable societies.

I wish to make three points.

First, the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund is a key instrument promoting the positive role of young people as agents of peace. Since 2020, the United Kingdom has provided more than \$35 million to the Peacebuilding Fund, which has implemented youth-related projects, including in Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Libya. We welcome the implementation of the Peacebuilding Commission's Strategic Action Plan on Youth and Peacebuilding, including the annual meeting on youth, peace and security, as well as efforts to integrate analysis that is sensitive to the agenda into the Commission's key deliverables.

Secondly, there is clear evidence that young people, especially young women and girls, are disproportionately affected by climate change and biodiversity loss, and those impacts are often exacerbated by existing inequalities. However, they are also agents of change in the response. In the Mediterranean region, heat waves, floods, sandstorms and water stress contribute to the loss of food security and livelihoods, directly affecting the drivers of migration. We need to manage carefully the emerging challenges and opportunities of migration, including by recognizing the role of young people in delivering adaptation solutions that provide people with options for sustainable livelihoods that do not compel them to migrate.

Thirdly, young people live with the effects of conflicts they did not start. Young people, especially young women and girls, should be meaningfully included in discussions that affect their futures, including in the Council. Therefore, we should translate our commitments into action by strengthening their full, equal, safe and meaningful inclusion in decision-making and peace, development and mediation processes.

We will continue to work with the international community to amplify youth voices and harness their lived experience across peace processes and the work of government.

Mr. Fernandes (Mozambique): We commend Malta's presidency for organizing this important and timely high-level debate on the role of young persons in addressing security challenges in the Mediterranean. We extend our appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing. We also thank Mr. Nasser Kamel, Secretary-General of the Union for the Mediterranean, and Ms. Sarra Messaoudi, the youth civil society representative, for their insightful briefings.

The multifaceted and complex security challenges in the Mediterranean underscore the need for the international community to continue its efforts towards sustainable peace and security. Youth engagement in decision-making processes is crucial owing to the immense challenges. We must recognize young people as active agents of change, not just passive victims or perpetrators of violence. Their participation is key to addressing peace, security and climate action.

The Union for the Mediterranean's strategy, focusing on trust, youth empowerment and sustainable development, offers a pathway towards peace and security. It envisions a Mediterranean in which young people actively shape their future and contribute to a prosperous and inclusive society. By nurturing the potential of young leaders, we can drive positive transformations across political, economic and social landscapes.

The youth, peace and security agenda is a critical framework for promoting the active engagement of young people in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery. However, its implementation can be hindered by financial constraints. Adequate funding has a pivotal role in realizing the youth, peace and security objectives. We must continue to advocate for robust financial support to empower our youth and promote peace and security worldwide.

As the United Nations organ responsible for maintaining international peace and security, the Security Council's influence is crucial in steering the Mediterranean region towards a path of peace and stability, alongside national efforts and international cooperation. To enhance the implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda and ensure meaningful participation in the Mediterranean region, the Security Council can, for instance, prioritize initiatives related to the agenda based on the region's needs, considering the diverse experiences and perspectives of young people. The Security Council can also establish partnerships with bodies in the region, such as the Union for the Mediterranean, to align efforts and share best practices and adapt them to the Mediterranean context. By integrating youth perspectives and fostering collaboration, the Security Council can advance peace and security in the Mediterranean and beyond. Moreover, the Security Council should formally acknowledge climate change as a significant security risk, elevate climate-related issues on its agenda and encourage coordinated action.

The African Union has taken significant steps to address youth involvement in peace and security. One notable initiative is the establishment of the Continental Framework for Youth, Peace and Security in recognition of young people's crucial role in armed conflict and insecurity on the continent. From an African Union regional perspective, we consider the ongoing fruitful relationship between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council a model of inspiration. We believe that the model could be replicated, where possible, with the Union for the Mediterranean in order to empower youth participation in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and post-conflict and transitional justice in the region. Mindful that there is no one-size-fits-all approach, we believe that valuable lessons can be drawn from experiences in other regions, which offer many examples in advancing the youth, peace, and security agenda. As duly reflected in the Secretary General's latest report on youth, peace and security (S/2024/207), the African Union and the United Nations Development Programme's 2022 continental dialogue launched a community of practice connecting young peacebuilders, Governments and regional mechanisms involved in developing or initiating national action plans on youth and peace and security.

In conclusion, we strongly encourage all efforts towards further empowering young persons in the

Mediterranean. That will drive positive transformations across political, economic and social landscapes. Mozambique, drawing on its own experience, emphasizes the importance of empowering youth in conflict prevention, management and resolution towards fostering sustainable and lasting peace and security.

Ms. Sullivan (United States of America): I would like to thank Malta for organizing this meeting, and I am grateful to our briefers for their enlightening presentations. I would also like to welcome the Ambassador of China to his first Security Council meeting — it is my first as well.

During the Summit for Democracy last month, President Biden shared his view that, through the full and equal participation of all our citizens, we can unleash human potential and put ourselves in the best position to take on our shared challenges. Those overlapping challenges, which include conflict, food insecurity, displacement, shrinking civic space and climate-related issues, are not just problems young persons will inherit tomorrow, but also struggles they — and we — encounter today. Young persons, in all their diversity, are grappling with those issues now, which is why we are taking an intersectional, interdisciplinary and intergenerational approach to the conversation and doing so at the Security Council, because it is clear that young persons are both profoundly affected by those shared challenges and play a vital role in solving them.

We have made great progress in implementing the youth, peace and security agenda. We have collectively advocated for the addition of language within the mandates of peacekeeping missions and special political missions calling for the meaningful and diverse participation of youth in peace and security processes. We will continue to support the operationalization of youth, peace and security within those challenging contexts. We know that women and girls are disproportionately affected by climate-related instability, conflict-related sexual violence and many other layers of vulnerability, and we have worked diligently to ensure that that is reflected in our strategies to respond to conflict, through the full implementation of both the women and peace and security and the youth, peace and security agendas.

When conflict erupts, young people lose months or years of education and face unspeakable violence, while experiencing a rapid narrowing of opportunities that are vital to a livelihood: reliable access to food, health services, education and employment. We know

that young persons in the Mediterranean are currently experiencing and witnessing great trauma, the effects of which will be felt for some time. Their healing and their full and meaningful participation in peace dialogues will be essential components of a durable, sustainable peace. Young people must be part of the conversation on building the future they will inhabit, and their contributions are invaluable. Young people in Israel and Gaza are being profoundly affected by conflict, and their meaningful participation in dialogues is an essential part of the path towards a durable, sustainable peace. In Libya, United States support for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes is focused on building the capacity of Libyan civilian institutions to pilot community-level programmes that can be scaled up as opportunities arise. Those programmes support opportunities for young persons, and we commit to advocating for the inclusion of youth perspectives in their design and implementation. To cite a Congolese saying: “When the youth play the drums, the elders can also dance”.

Across the globe, in some of the most challenging contexts, we support peacekeeping missions’ increased attention to incorporating young people in community dialogue and applying a youth lens to mission programming. Through their mandates to protect civilians, promote respect for human rights and support inclusive peace processes, United Nations peacekeeping missions are especially well placed to work towards ensuring that young persons living in some of the most challenging environments in the world are able to meaningfully participate in security and peace processes in their societies. In the Mediterranean, peacekeeping missions have also implemented projects aimed at addressing multiple facets of insecurity. The Youth Champions for Environment and Peace of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus was a great example of that type of programme, as it brought together Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots to address environmental challenges and jointly create climate adaptation and mitigation strategies.

Of course, we still have a long way to go. We must continue working together to provide peacekeeping missions and special political missions with mandates that sufficiently empower them to fully integrate the youth, peace and security agenda into all areas of mission operations. We must promote intergenerational dialogue within negotiations processes, so that outcomes reflect and respond to all those who are affected by the conflict.

In conclusion, we need to empower youth to address the challenges that most seriously affect them — and for young people in the Mediterranean, that includes a range of concerns from climate to economic opportunity to conflict. I look forward to continuing to work with Council members to promote the role of youth as positive contributors to their societies, and to peace and security writ large.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Lambrinidis.

Mr. Lambrinidis: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, the Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

This is a very hopeful meeting, and I commend you for convening it. We applaud and encourage the large number of young people and youth organizations eager to engage with democratic processes at all levels, and we want to ensure that their voices are taken into account. We depend on those voices, and we here in this Chamber should be discussing together how to empower them as well as we can. Ms. Messaoudi’s powerful statement is evidence of the immensely positive role they are keen to play.

However, while many young human rights defenders and peacebuilders are seeking to participate in relevant work, they all too often end up being excluded from decision-making processes. Those young people are not asking Governments for festivals and glitzy events. They are asking us to include them meaningfully in decision-making. Their specific insights and needs are insufficiently reflected in policymaking today. That tendency is particularly concerning in areas with large youth populations, which include many areas affected by conflict. Young people are frequently among those worst affected in conflict situations globally. At the same time, the impact of climate change is a threat to humankind itself and is jeopardizing the aspirations for intergenerational equity that we all aspire to. We need to recognize the links between the youth, peace and security agenda and climate security and ensure the meaningful participation of young persons in the development and implementation of climate policies. It is important to ensure that the voices of youth are systematically integrated, as their views and perspectives can bring fresh solutions and new impetus for work in the areas of both climate and peace. We see

that every day. We welcome the advances that Member States and regional organizations have made in institutionalizing the youth, peace and security agenda, but we are concerned that its actual implementation remains slow.

The European Union continues to be committed to the full implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda, and we are striving to strengthen that dimension in all of our conflict-prevention, mediation, peacebuilding, stabilization and crisis-management efforts. In 2022 we launched our Youth Action Plan, which contributes to the implementation of resolution 2250 (2015) by promoting youth leadership and participation, including in conflict situations around the world. In addition to relevant aspects of our development cooperation with partner countries, we currently support more than 30 youth-oriented conflict-prevention and crisis-response initiatives on four continents. In the southern Mediterranean region in particular, flagship initiatives of the EU and the Union for the Mediterranean include the Young Mediterranean Voices network, the Positive Agenda for Youth in the Mediterranean and the EU-Tunisia Partnership for Youth. Those projects are conducted in partnership with international and local civil society organizations, including youth-led associations. We have built cross-regional networks of young peacebuilders to create channels for young people to influence decision-making and contribute to the democratic life of their countries.

The EU encourages United Nations Member States generally to similarly contribute to the full implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda. In that regard, we welcome the recently published third report of the Secretary-General on Youth and Peace and Security (S/2024/207) and strongly encourage the Security Council to make the Secretary-General's report the subject of an open debate. The upcoming Summit of the Future provides another occasion for making new commitments to ensuring young people's full, effective and meaningful engagement in decision-making processes at all levels. Let us grab that opportunity. We call on everyone to fully seize it, to listen to the voices of young persons and to empower them. We look forward to cooperating with our international partners and working together for a world where the views and needs of young people are truly taken into account.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Türkiye.

Mr. Yıldız (Türkiye): I too would like to thank Malta for organizing this timely event and the briefers for their insightful remarks.

Considered the cradle of many civilizations, the Mediterranean region stands at a crossroads of history, cultures and challenges. As we discuss the wide topic of the role of youth in addressing security challenges, we must also acknowledge the unique perspective and potential that young people bring to this discourse. Their energy, creativity and determination are essential assets in our quest for peace and security.

The challenges in the Mediterranean are complex and multifaceted, ranging from political instability, conflict and terrorism to climate change, irregular migration and socioeconomic disparities. Young people bear the brunt of conflicts, poverty and lack of opportunity, but they are also powerful agents of change. They have the ability to mobilize communities, challenge the status quo and drive meaningful progress. Their voices must be heard in our quest for sustainable peace and security. Empowering young people through education, skill development and meaningful participation in decision-making processes is a strategic imperative.

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our times, especially for the Mediterranean. We are proud to see young people at the forefront of climate action. The Mediterranean region is warming 20 per cent faster than the global average. That will put additional pressure on the region's already strained ecosystems and its vulnerable economies and societies. The adverse effects of climate change on security should continue to be addressed within the context of the sustainable development agenda. Funding and resources for climate adaptation and resilience-building measures, particularly in coastal areas, should be enhanced. Research and data collection efforts should be supported in order to develop a holistic approach to addressing the complex interlinkages between the various challenges that the Mediterranean is facing.

We must also strengthen existing regional mechanisms, including the Union for the Mediterranean and the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean, in order to facilitate coordination and cooperation on climate-related initiatives among Member States. During Türkiye's presidency of the twenty-second Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,

Mediterranean countries made significant progress in developing the region's response to climate change. The establishment of the Climate Change Regional Activity Centre in Istanbul, in accordance with the Barcelona Convention, will further contribute to strengthening cooperation and building resilience in the region.

The Mediterranean is more than ever at the heart of the political agenda. Young people are often the most affected by insecurity and instability. The Mediterranean is one of the world's deadliest migration routes, as we have experienced. Thousands of people, including young persons fleeing poverty, conflict and unthinkable atrocities, have died or disappeared crossing the central and eastern Mediterranean. Today Libya continues to grapple with instability, the situation in Syria calls for our continued attention and 2.2 million people in Gaza continue to live in a state of crisis under relentless and indiscriminate bombardment. Thousands of lives have been cut short. The lives of children and young people are being besieged by unspeakable horrors as they are being deprived of water, food and shelter. Yet in the sixth month of the conflict the Security Council has still been unable to stop this unacceptable, human-made catastrophe.

Türkiye has an immense stake in the security, stability and prosperity of the Mediterranean. There are conflicts in Türkiye's wider neighbourhood that are affecting more than a quarter of the world's population, which is why mediation and the peaceful resolution of conflicts are among our foreign policy priorities. It was in that understanding that in 2010 Türkiye, together with Finland, launched the Mediation for Peace initiative here at the United Nations. That effort led to the establishment of the Group of Friends of Mediation, which has grown rapidly and now has 61 members, including key international and regional organizations. Young people are natural bridge-builders. Harnessing their potential as ambassadors for peace and reconciliation can help build trust and foster mutual respect among communities in the Mediterranean.

Türkiye stands ready to give its full support to ensuring a just, equitable and peaceful solution to all the continuing issues in the region, including the equitable delimitation of areas of maritime jurisdiction and the fair sharing of hydrocarbon resources, in accordance with international law. In that respect, President Erdoğan's proposal to convene an eastern Mediterranean conference could be an important step towards a lasting solution. That proposal is still on the table. Likewise, a settlement in Cyprus will contribute

to the security and prosperity of the entire eastern Mediterranean region. We think that the time has come to focus on bottom-up approaches that correspond to the current realities on the island, based on the inherent sovereign equality and equal international status of both sides. Türkiye will remain actively engaged in all regional and international efforts to achieve peace, stability and prosperity and to combat climate change in the Mediterranean region.

I would also like to inform you, Mr. President, that starting next week I will be assuming the position of Türkiye's Permanent Representative at the United Nations.

The President: I wish His Excellency Mr. Yıldız the very best in his new position.

I now give the floor to the representative of Cyprus.

Ms. Michail (Cyprus): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the group of nine European Union Mediterranean countries — Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and my own country, Cyprus.

I would first like to express our gratitude to Malta for organizing this important Security Council debate and to extend our appreciation to all the briefers for their insightful presentations.

The Mediterranean region is home to a diverse yet dynamic youth population that is facing multiple challenges. Young people constitute a significant proportion of the region's population and one that is disproportionately affected by the many pressing and multifaceted challenges that the Mediterranean is facing, including climate change, armed conflicts, irregular migration and organized crime. Those challenges lead to vulnerability and socioeconomic inequalities that are also affecting the well-being and mental health of the young. Young people are agents of positive change for peace and security in the Mediterranean. They are at the forefront of identifying innovative solutions to regional and global challenges. We must ensure the full, meaningful and effective participation of young people, including girls and young women, at all levels of decision-making, including here at the United Nations. It is imperative to provide a safe, enabling and empowering environment for young persons in order for challenges to be addressed in a coordinated, human-rights-based and gender-responsive manner at every level.

Almost nine years after the Council's unanimous adoption of its ground-breaking resolution 2250 (2015), positive steps have been taken to enable young people to build peaceful, inclusive and just societies. We welcome the third report of the Secretary-General on youth, peace and security (S/2024/207) and urge the Council to discuss it in open debate. We welcome the advances made by the United Nations, Member States and regional organizations towards institutionalizing the youth, peace and security agenda. We also fully support the mandate of the new United Nations Youth Office, which has an indispensable role to play in advancing that agenda, and we stand behind its efforts to lead engagement and advocacy for the advancement of youth issues across the United Nations. When it comes to addressing regional challenges and empowering Mediterranean youth, the Union for the Mediterranean and the Anna Lindh Foundation both play a key role for our region. We therefore commend and support the efforts and initiatives they have undertaken, which represent important steps forward in promoting dialogue and empowering young voices. Young persons are both resilient and innovative during turbulent times, and we can see that in the Mediterranean. We are committed to recognizing and supporting the positive role that they can play in building more peaceful, just and inclusive societies, including in our region. In that regard, we would like to make the following suggestions.

First, we need to ensure the full, meaningful and effective participation of youth in making policy and decisions in the areas of peace and security, including on conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and reconciliation processes in the Mediterranean region and beyond. In that regard, we need to recognize that peacebuilding is inherently intergenerational.

Secondly, regional and subregional organizations and institutions have an indispensable role to play in the implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda. Regional organizations and institutions that play a key role in these areas and of which our countries are members include the European Union, the Union for the Mediterranean — including the Euro-Mediterranean University, with its potential for strengthening educational, research and innovation opportunities — the Anna Lindh Foundation, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Our countries will continue to advance this issue in those multilateral forums. The role of young persons, and especially young women,

should not be omitted in these regional efforts to implement the youth, peace and security agenda.

Thirdly, climate change is unquestionably the greatest existential threat to the Mediterranean region. We have seen the youth of the region making valuable contributions to climate action and working at the forefront of efforts to combat climate change and its impact. That cannot be done in isolation, and recognizing the linkage between the youth, peace and security agenda and climate and security is vital to those efforts.

Finally, we need to allocate substantial funding to the youth, peace and security agenda. Instruments such as the Peacebuilding Fund can serve as a means to finance actions in support of youth and peacebuilding. Funding mechanisms should take into consideration the need to support both young persons and youth-led and youth-focused organizations working on peace and security, and at the same time they should adopt a youth lens.

Young persons across the Mediterranean are building bridges, creating synergies, becoming champions for human rights and initiators for climate action, advancing peacebuilding efforts and creating more just and resilient societies. Their contribution should inspire us to commit to putting youth issues at the centre of the lead-up to the Summit of the Future. We have an obligation to the current and future generations of the Mediterranean region and beyond.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): We thank you, Mr. President, and Malta for organizing this meeting on the challenges facing youth in the Mediterranean and the ways to redouble efforts to address those challenges, empower young people and strengthen their participation in development. I also want to thank all the briefers — Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Mr. Nasser Kamel, Secretary-General of the Union for the Mediterranean, and Ms. Sarra Messaoudi, Regional Lead of the MENA Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security — for their valuable briefings.

The delegation of Egypt welcomes the holding of today's debate, especially considering that people under the age of 30 make up 60 per cent of our country's population. In the past few years the Egyptian

Government has been working tirelessly to empower young people and improve their situation.

Our meeting comes at a time of mounting international challenges that have arisen in the wake of worsening crises that require all of us to address them with genuine cooperation and solidarity. Successive crises have worsened those challenges, particularly in developing countries that are facing increasing burdens, especially in terms of debt and budgetary deficits. That requires strengthening efforts to expand development in order to drive economic recovery and growth and support developing States in their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. That will create more jobs and economic opportunities, particularly for young people. In that context, I would like to share Egypt's vision for the best ways to advance international cooperation to benefit young people in their communities and to maximize the gains created by youth involvement in the development process.

First, in order to ensure stability on both the northern and southern sides of the Mediterranean, we must ramp up our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and enhance economic growth among the countries of the region. That requires support for developing countries from international financial institutions aimed at increasing economic growth, facilitating access to financing and creating job opportunities.

Secondly, the issue of migration in the Mediterranean must be addressed in a comprehensive manner that takes into account the root causes of illegal migration, including growing instability and declining development and economic opportunities, as well as the scientific and technological gaps that push young people to leave their homelands and seek other opportunities and a better life in other regions. That approach should also take advantage of the potential of youth in our region by increasing the routes available for regular and safe migration and by taking demographic facts as well as labour-market needs into consideration, while investing in capacity-building for migrants and mutual recognition of qualifications and academic degrees in order to enhance their employment opportunities in destination countries.

Thirdly, we need to promote political solutions to the various crises in the region, especially where there is instability. That must be backed up by efforts to preserve State institutions and give international support to peacebuilding in and around the region.

Fourthly, it is important to increase investment in educational programmes, research, development and scientific and academic exchanges between young people in the region. More scholarships are needed, particularly in the areas of science and technology, as well as vocational training, along with greater cooperation in training scientific workers. Education is essential as part of our efforts to empower young people politically, economically and socially and ensure that they can become an effective force in their communities, as well as to protect them from recruitment by terrorists, extremists and groups of organized crime.

Fifthly, Egypt reiterates that stability in the Mediterranean and the Middle East generally remains tied to the achievement of a comprehensive and just settlement of the Palestinian question, aimed at responding to the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to establish an independent State within the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with resolutions of international legitimacy. Israel must also end its occupation of all the Arab territories that it has occupied since 1967. The young people of the region must become drivers of stability, moderation and a better future rather than themselves being driven towards extremism.

Sixthly, we need to strengthen regional cooperation and consultation mechanisms and expand regional platforms for political, social and cultural dialogue among the countries of the region, especially as we approach the thirtieth anniversary of the Barcelona process, launched in 1995. I would like to commend the efforts of the Union for the Mediterranean and its role in promoting links among the States of the region, whether at the official or the popular level, through various valuable initiatives and programmes in the fields of education, employment and sustainable development. For its part, Egypt will remain committed to expanding dialogue among young people and the exchange of views and expertise. We are proud to host the World Youth Forum every year in the Peace City of Sharm El Sheikh, which provides thousands of young people with a space to debate and exchange views on issues of development, peace, security and innovation.

In conclusion, the youth of the Mediterranean, which is a historic region and cradle of civilizations going back thousands of years, need sincere efforts to help them achieve a safe and prosperous world. We must therefore strengthen cooperation between our countries and increase investment in direct communication mechanisms among young people, with a view to strengthening

common understanding and human dialogue based on respect for all civilizations and national particularities while promoting a culture of peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

Mr. Hachem (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin my statement by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your country's presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also want to thank the delegation of Japan for its efforts in the presidency last month. Lebanon is grateful to Malta for holding this debate on the role of young persons in addressing security challenges in the Mediterranean.

What we share with Malta is first and foremost the Mediterranean Sea, but we also share the fact that our two countries are small in terms of area but large in terms of role and message. Countries such as Malta have shown that small nations have an important role to play in supporting the right issues and achieving greater justice in our august Organization.

Lebanon's geographic location on the Mediterranean Sea is very important. Historically, it has been at a crossroads of civilizations and cultures. From there the Phoenicians set off as traders to roam the Mediterranean and as scholars who shared their alphabet with all of humankind. Princess Elissa sailed from the shores of Tyre to establish Carthage, and the legend of the Phoenician princess Europa was also born there.

The Mediterranean region is a microcosm of the opportunities and challenges facing our world today. Young people are the beating heart of the region. They must be provided with a nurturing environment in their own countries so that they can flourish and develop. Unfortunately, we see that the environment in our region is not always conducive to such opportunities. On the one hand our young people are facing foundational challenges such as wars, military conflicts and instability, and on the other they are dealing with economic crises, unemployment, corruption, climate change and gender inequality. Those challenges have driven many young people in the region to despair and to migration, some of it illegal. We must work together to put an end to those wars, resolve conflicts and ensure economic and human development, as well as bolster the capacity of women and girls, if we want to keep those young people in their homelands.

Today there are 1.7 million young people living in Lebanon, making up nearly 40 per cent of the country's

population. Lebanese youth have suffered from all the challenges I just mentioned and more. However, their potential remains enormous, and they have proved their skills through a number of initiatives that they have launched in various fields. Lebanon's first local youth conference was held last year in cooperation with UNICEF, with discussions of topics such as politics, education, water, climate change, waste management and food and agriculture. It also issued the first Lebanese youth climate manifesto, highlighting young people's calls for work and ideas addressing climate change. The message was that young people are asking to be included in the decision-making process and supported in implementing their initiatives. Lebanon listened to that appeal and has made efforts to involve youth in the decision-making process. Our young people made up 34 per cent of the official Lebanese delegation to the most recent conference of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, including technical negotiators. Thanks to the participation of young people, the voices and priorities of our Lebanese youth were heard on the international climate stage.

In the Mediterranean we also face challenges related to asylum-seekers, migration and displacement. Those challenges constitute an existential crisis for Lebanon and an imminent danger to other neighbouring countries. Our region is interconnected and intertwined, and the danger that exists in Lebanon today will inevitably reach all Mediterranean countries if a serious solution is not found to this crisis, whose peril and expansion to other countries we have warned about for many years.

Those who think that Lebanon should face this crisis alone are wrong. No one can bear this burden alone. The international community must therefore work seriously to resolve the crisis by facilitating the return of refugees and displaced persons to safe areas in Syria. If we continue with the same approach, we will see the problem of illegal migration boats crossing the Mediterranean persist, bringing with it either death for the desperate migrants or burdens and challenges for the host countries. We cannot stop that problem, despite our joint efforts to reduce it. In the light of the many crises around us, ensuring people's safe and dignified return is the only way to reduce migration and prevent it from worsening.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. De Martin Topranin (Italy): I thank Malta for convening this meeting and the briefers for their

insightful remarks. Italy aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the European Union and by the representative of Cyprus on behalf of the group of nine European Union Mediterranean countries.

Youth populations all over the Mediterranean are asking for peace, prosperity and a more just and sustainable future. We should listen to their call. It is our common responsibility to create environments that can enable youth to express their full potential and contribute to building more peaceful, prosperous and inclusive societies. The first step in that direction should be the effective and meaningful participation of young people, including girls and young women, in decision-making. The full involvement of youth in democratic processes and in the definition and implementation of social policies should not be limited to the national arena but should be guaranteed at the regional and global levels as well.

Italy would therefore like to reaffirm its commitment to advancing the implementation of the United Nations youth, peace and security agenda. We have been working closely with the recently established United Nations Youth Office and will continue to support the work of Assistant Secretary-General Paullier in advancing youth issues across the United Nations system. We also continue to believe that regional organizations, starting with the European Union and the Union for the Mediterranean, play an essential role in promoting youth leadership and participation. At the same time, we are working to draft our first-ever national action plan on youth, peace and security. The document will be the result of a collective endeavour, based on a participatory and multi-stakeholder approach in which youth-led organizations have a prominent role.

At this moment, when conflicts are proliferating and multilateralism seems in jeopardy, we should amplify the voice of our youth and enable young people to become agents for positive change. Mediterranean youth have already demonstrated their willingness and capacity to bring about innovative contributions to peacebuilding and to fighting violent extremism. We believe that more can and should be done to facilitate youth involvement in mediation efforts and in the management of all phases of the conflict cycle, from prevention to post-conflict stabilization.

Young people in our region have also been at the forefront of climate action. Younger generations are particularly aware of the growing interconnections between climate change and security, in the

Mediterranean and beyond. Italy wants to encourage youth to play an active role in shaping transformative solutions to address climate change, particularly in the most vulnerable countries and communities. With that in mind, together with the United Nations Development Programme, Italy is leading the global initiative Youth4Climate, which aims to provide young people with the means and resources to implement projects to combat the climate crisis. The best practices developed through Youth4Climate are also going to be shared during the ongoing Economic and Social Council Youth Forum.

Let us gather the ideas and proposals shared during today's debate with a view to fully integrating the objectives of the youth, peace and security agenda into the preparation process for the Summit of the Future.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on organizing this very important ministerial debate under your presidency. We are grateful to you for devoting this debate to the Mediterranean, *Mare nostrum*, which is very dear to Morocco's heart. It is a region that is vital to peace, security and development, not only for the countries on the shores of the Mediterranean but for the world as a whole, as has been regularly reiterated in United Nations resolutions for decades.

The Mediterranean is the cradle of many civilizations and of the three revealed religions. Unfortunately, it has now become an epicentre of crisis, war and tension. Peace and security in our region continue to be threatened by a lack of respect for international law, the spread of terrorism, interference in the internal affairs of neighbouring countries, the encouragement of separatism and the use of separatist armed groups linked to terrorism to threaten the territorial integrity of the States of the region, as was unfortunately the case with the Kingdom of Morocco, which finally and permanently regained its Saharan territory in 1975. The region gives us the impetus to add our voice to those of previous speakers in insisting on the key principle of respect for good-neighbourliness and the peaceful settlement of disputes, principles that cannot be allowed to become hollow or repeated only at meetings like this one. They must be respected and upheld on a daily basis by all the countries of the Mediterranean, so that *Mare nostrum* can once again become our common mother, a mother of peace and a mother of hope for its young people.

Young people are the driving force and intangible capital of their country, acting as primary peacebuilders and agents for stabilizing and consolidating peace. Among other things, their participation contributes to building resilient and inclusive societies, addressing the root causes of conflict and safeguarding equality and social justice. My country would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Union for the Mediterranean for putting in place a comprehensive programme for Mediterranean youth, focusing on two main strategic objectives — strengthening the economic, social and civil participation of young people in building a more just, inclusive and sustainable society and empowering the youth and women of the Euro-Mediterranean region to be agents for positive change and partners in regional development, cooperation and dialogue.

Morocco, as an active and respected player in the Mediterranean region, has made numerous commitments to young people, notably by including in its Constitution specific provisions pertaining to their empowerment and participation in all aspects of the country's socioeconomic, cultural and political development. Those actions clearly indicate the place of honour that young people occupy in our society. His Majesty King Mohammed VI considers that young people represent the country's true wealth and the heart of the new development model.

For several decades, my country has also had an immigration policy that aims to be humane, pragmatic and supportive, welcoming refugees and young migrants and offering them a life of dignity and equal access to education, housing, health, vocational training and employment. Unfortunately, that is not the case in neighbouring countries, which continue to subject migrants to the worst kinds of human rights violations

on their territories, including abandoning them in the middle of the desert. Those same countries also continue to subject the people living in refugee camps to terrible violations of their basic rights, as is the case in the Tindouf camps.

The Kingdom of Morocco also plays a leading role in the work of maintaining peace and security in the Mediterranean region and beyond. We have adopted multidimensional strategies, with regional and international cooperation at their core, to combat the scourges of terrorism, violent extremism and transnational organized crime.

King Mohammed is the Chair of the Al-Quds Committee, and we reaffirm our country's unchanging position in support of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, particularly the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

In conclusion, I would like to affirm that under King Mohammed's enlightened leadership, Morocco continues to be a haven of peace in its own region and a contributor to the collective efforts to make the two shores of the Mediterranean a crossroads for peace, stability, development and mutual respect, interactive and civilizational dialogue and a hand of friendship extended to all our neighbours for the welfare of all countries in the region.

The President: There are still a number of speakers on my list for this meeting. Given the lateness of the hour, with the consent of the members of the Council, I intend to suspend the meeting until next week.

The meeting was suspended at 1 p.m.