



# General Assembly

Seventy-first session

**58<sup>th</sup>** plenary meeting

Friday, 9 December 2016, 10 a.m.  
New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Thomson . . . . . (Fiji)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

## Agenda item 31

### Prevention of armed conflict

#### Draft resolution (A/71/L.39)

**The President:** Members will recall that I convened an informal meeting of the plenary on 20 October to hear a briefing by the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy for Syria on the humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. I should also like to recall my letter dated 8 December, which was circulated to all Permanent Representatives and Permanent Observers, in which I forwarded a request addressed to me by a group of Member States to convene a formal plenary meeting under agenda item 31 with reference to the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. I would like to further acknowledge a letter that was conveyed to me by the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic dated 22 November, which I understand has been sent to a wide group of Member States.

I now give the floor to the representative of Canada to introduce draft resolution A/71/L.39.

**Mr. Blanchard** (Canada): Before I begin my introduction of draft resolution A/71/L.39, I would like to make three technical revisions to the text. The revisions are to the fifth and fifteenth preambular paragraphs. There is one revision in the fifth preambular paragraph and two in the fifteenth preambular paragraph. In the fifth preambular paragraph, the words “Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant” should be replaced with the

word “ISIL”. In the fifteenth preambular paragraph, the words “Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh)” should be replaced with “ISIL (also known as Da’esh)”. Those changes correct a technical error that occurred during the editing process. They bring the text back into line with what was agreed to by Member States. Let me turn now to my introduction.

The situation in besieged parts of Syria, as we all know, is horrific. With regard to Aleppo, United Nations officials have reported that, if nothing is done, it may soon become one giant graveyard. Food supplies have been exhausted. Families are eating grass and the little garbage left to survive. The sick and injured have no hospital to go to and cannot get basic medical treatment. As we prepare to vote today, regardless of our political views on the conflict, I invite those present to put themselves in the shoes of the people of Syria. What are the remaining 250,000 people in eastern Aleppo expecting from the world? What is the world expecting today from the United Nations? Indifference, cynicism, silence, politicization, deadlock and inaction are not part of the expectations.

This is a crisis that has become the shame of our time; yet it is one that is entirely in our hands to stop. To do that, we must show a genuine concern for people’s lives. We must respect not just rights, but basic human dignity. We must, at a bare minimum, provide basic humanitarian and medical relief so that people can simply stay alive. We must stand up together with one powerful voice and say “Enough. Enough”. Civilians are not targets. Hospitals are not military objectives. The people of Aleppo have the right to life, and

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).

16-42614 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



humanitarian relief delivered now is what will keep them alive.

As Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura has said, military logic has taken over humanitarian concerns. He is right and that must stop. The draft resolution, and members' collective support for it, is not a solution to the conflict. But it is a step, an important statement. It is a reminder that, above all else, the lives of the Syrian people should be our priority. They are our priority. And the world will not stay silent while they suffer without assistance. And it is a reminder that for us, the States Members of the United Nations, we must be prepared to stand up collectively to call for an end to the violence, the human tragedy, that has become Syria. The draft resolution that is before the Assembly today is one way for us together to do just that.

*(spoke in French)*

Canada and the sponsors of the draft resolution invite all of the Member States to express loud and clear the following appeal: "The people of Aleppo, and of other besieged cities of Syria, have the right to life. They have a right to humanitarian aid."

We have had enough excuses and we must take action. The draft resolution is not about individual words on a page. It is about the world coming together to speak clearly and with a common voice to say that human life matters. The lives of Syrians matter.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Syria on a point of order.

**Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) *(spoke in Arabic)*: Before we proceed any further, I wish it to be known that, despite my delegation's rejection of draft resolution A/71/L.39 on a procedural and substantive basis, the Canadian delegation went ahead and introduced it. I request you, Mr. President, to seek the opinion of the Legal Counsel regarding the content of the seventeenth preambular paragraph, where my country, the Syrian Arab Republic, is referred to as "the Syrian regime". That, as everyone knows, is a blatant legal violation of Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations that constitutes a serious violation threatening the credibility and impartiality of this international Organization. I trust that the Legal Counsel's opinion will be included verbatim in the record of the meeting.

Despite all their experience, the sponsors of the draft resolution have committed a blunder that reveals

how ill-intentioned they are towards my country. While the draft resolution is entitled "The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic", they then insert, as stealthily as thieves at night, the words "the Syrian regime" in the seventeenth preambular paragraph. They should at least have respected the intelligence of the members of the Assembly and decided which of those two terms to use. Such mixing is inappropriate in the context of the deliberations of the General Assembly.

**The President:** In the light of the statement we have just heard, I understand that the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic has requested a legal opinion from the Legal Counsel on the use of the term "Syrian regime" in draft resolution A/71/L.39.

I have consulted with the Office of Legal Affairs, which points out that questions arising in the General Assembly concerning the terminology to be used in General Assembly resolutions are not questions that formally fall within the competence of the Office of Legal Affairs unless there is a formal request for a legal opinion on the matter from the Assembly.

May I remind delegations that the legal opinion of the Legal Counsel may be requested only by the Assembly itself. The Legal Counsel will not provide an opinion at the request of a delegation or a group of delegations. A request for a legal opinion may be proposed by a delegation, in accordance with rule 78 of the rules of procedure, in the form of a draft resolution or resolution that contains a clearly formulated question addressed to the Legal Counsel.

I should like to remind delegations that, pursuant to rule 78 of the rules of procedure, proposals shall normally be submitted in writing and shall not be discussed or acted upon unless circulated to all delegations on the day preceding the meeting. I would therefore request that the delegation requesting the legal opinion put the request in writing so that it can be circulated to delegations for their review.

That is the opinion I have received from the Office of Legal Affairs.

**Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) *(spoke in Arabic)*: Out of respect for status of the presidency, I will not challenge the opinion that the President has just read out. However, Member States are well aware that Syria is a founding Member of this international Organization. Attempts to tamper with its name will

not be successful. Those sorts of legal errors, which appear time and time again, go against the credibility of those who promote them.

At the outset, my attention was drawn to the fact that draft resolution A/71/L.39 states, in its second preambular paragraph, that it reaffirms its “strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic”. That is a sentence that appears in all resolutions on what is transpiring in Syria. However, the practices of the Canadian delegation and those that have acceded to its initiative have proved the wide gap between theory and practice when it comes to the application of that paragraph.

Those delegations violated the sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic when they called for this meeting and presented this draft resolution without consulting with the Syrian Arab Republic delegation, which is the delegation that is first and foremost concerned, within this international Organization, with efforts to deal with all aspects and consequences of the terrorist war imposed on my country.

In that connection, I would like to refer to the colossal breach perpetrated by the delegation of Canada and its partners, particularly when it comes to Article 12 of the Charter of the United Nations, which states:

“While the Security Council is exercising in respect of any dispute or situation the functions assigned to it in the present Charter, the General Assembly shall not make any recommendation with regard to that dispute or situation unless the Security Council so requests”.

It is well known that the Security Council is still exercising its responsibilities in respect of the Syrian situation. That makes the Canadian move contrary to the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

I am now forced to remind Member States that, a few days ago, the Canadian delegation, which claims to be interested in the welfare of the Syrian people, voted as usual against the resolution entitled “The Syrian Golan” (resolution 71/24), which considers Israel’s occupation of the Golan null and void. The Canadian delegation also voted against the resolution entitled “Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan” (resolution 71/97), which considers Israeli settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan to

be illegal and as constituting an obstacle to economic growth and peace.

How does one reconcile caring for the interests of the Syrian people with voting against resolutions that defend the right of the Syrian people to recover their occupied territory in the Syrian Golan and the interests of the Syrian people living under occupation in the occupied Syrian Golan? Is that not a sufficiently flagrant demonstration of the ill intentions of the sponsors, the Canadian delegation in particular?

In my statement I did not use the expression “Canadian regime”, because I respect the Charter and the rules of procedure that govern our work in this Organization, and therefore I have not used the expression “Canadian regime”, but rather the “Government of the Canadian delegation”.

I am also compelled here to remind Member States that the Government of the Canadian delegation, which claims to be interested in the welfare of the Syrian people, has participated from the beginning in the so-called global coalition against Da’esh in Syria. That coalition is inimical to international legitimacy and violates Syrian sovereignty on a daily basis. It systematically destroys Syrian infrastructure such as bridges, electric plants and croplands that were built over long decades with the time, energy and money of the Syrian people. Canadian, American, French, British and Danish jets razed them to the ground, instead of targeting the bases, supply lines and leadership of Da’esh in Syria and Iraq.

That was still not enough for them: they deliberately targeted safe hospitals and schools and killed thousands of civilians. The United States of America in particular bombarded Syrian army sites that were standing in the way of Da’esh spreading into Deir ez-Zor. The aim of that bombing was to prevent the Iraqi and Syrian armies from tightening their grip on the terrorists and the border area between Syria and Iraq.

Those are the same people who are presenting a draft resolution on humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people in Aleppo. The practices of the coalition I mentioned prove that its real name should not be the global coalition against Da’esh but rather the global coalition against the Syrian people. From experience — and there are many examples — any international coalition established by the United States will most definitely lead to destruction and sabotage, creating terrorist entities such as Da’esh. That was

recently acknowledged by President Obama. It seems that the American Administration has not learned from its mistakes and insists on supplying armed terrorist groups with weapons of all kinds, including anti-aircraft missiles. Yet it talks about the safety of civilian flights while itself providing terrorists with missiles of all kinds. We do not yet know the identity of the new terrorist entity for whose creation the incoming American Administration will ascribe responsibility to its predecessor.

I am also forced to remind Member States that the Government of the Canadian delegation, which claims to be interested in the welfare of the Syrian people, along with many of the draft resolution's sponsors, has imposed unilateral coercive economic measures that primarily affect Syrians and impede the ability of the Syrian Government to respond to the daily needs of its citizens, particularly those who have been disadvantaged as a result of the terrorist war imposed on my country, Syria.

The statement that I have just made highlights a few examples that refute the allegations made by the Canadian delegation and call into question the sponsors' interest in the welfare of the Syrian people. Our people did not appoint them as spokespersons with the authority to talk about our humanitarian suffering. They have in fact contributed to aggravating such tragedies day in and day out.

It would have been better, before the meeting, for the Canadian delegation and its partners to listen to the tragic stories told by tens of thousands of our people who have been saved by the Syrian army. Those stories, and the practices of Jabhat Al-Nusra and other terrorist groups over the past four years, are proof of what we have been saying for the past five years — that armed terrorist groups kill, detain and torture civilians and subject them to horrifying living conditions that are a throwback to Wahhabi dark ages. They plunder humanitarian assistance and sell it to the needy for sky-high prices; they force children and young people to carry arms and join their ranks. They kidnap women and force them to marry foreign terrorist mercenaries brought into Syria by regional, Arab and international intelligence services from more than 100 countries, including Canada itself. The Canadian delegation would do better to recognize the achievements of the Syrian army, which saved 100,000 Syrians in Aleppo from the merciless treatment of Jabhat Al-Nusra and other terrorist groups and provided them with shelter,

food and medicine, giving them a feeling of security and stability after more than four years of suffering. The Canadian delegation would do better to look at the corpses of the innocent civilians who attempted to enter areas under our army's control. Those genetically modified terrorists, the so-called moderate opposition, killed them. Most of those terrorists are citizens of those very States presenting the draft resolution today.

The approach used by some Member States to address the consequences of the crisis in my country, Syria, in particular its humanitarian aspect, poses a genuine threat to the status of the United Nations, its impartiality and credibility, as well as to its effectiveness in addressing international crises. The Canadian draft resolution is a reflection of the alternating roles played by some delegations inside the various bodies and organs of the United Nations through endless recurring meetings in order to adopt draft resolutions under various agenda items, with the intention of protecting terrorist groups and providing them with moral, political and information support, and of putting pressure on the Syrian Government and its allies in order to distort their considerable achievements in the war against terrorism that they have undertaken on behalf of the entire world.

As a matter of fact, I do not dispute the impartiality of the Canadian delegation, nor the integrity of the delegations of Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar, which support the terrorists with money, logistics and extremist religious speeches. Nor do I want to make much mention of the brazenness of Israel — which is occupying the Syrian Golan and supporting terrorist groups in the Area of Separation — or of the arrogance of the United States, Britain and France, which continue to provide political and military news coverage about such groups. I address my statement to the delegations of those States that continue to abide by the provisions, goals and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations. They believe in the independence, effectiveness and impartiality of the United Nations and in meeting the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people, eliminating terrorism and reaching a political solution.

From this rostrum, I would like to state that the Syrian Arab Republic declares its readiness to resume the Syrian-Syrian dialogue with no external interference, preconditions or participation by any terrorist sponsored by the States I have just mentioned. A vote against the Canadian draft resolution will reflect countries' rejection of the use and exploitation of the



Organization by some Member States and the haggling over the blood and suffering of the Syrian people. It will also reflect their support for a political solution to the crisis in Syria, and for the right of the Syrian Government, and its constitutional and legal duty, to fight terrorism and save Syrians from the scourge and practices of terrorist groups, in accordance with the principles of international law and with Security Council resolutions on combating terrorism. Like any other State that upholds its independence and sovereignty within the Organization, I request that the Canadian draft resolution be put to the vote.

**Mr. Vale de Almeida** (European Union): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its 28 member States.

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania, as well as Ukraine and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union welcomes today's meeting on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. The General Assembly cannot remain silent in the face of the dramatic situation in that country. We demand an immediate and complete end to all attacks on civilians and civilian objects in Aleppo and elsewhere in Syria, as well as an immediate end to all sieges in Syria.

The escalating violence in Aleppo is causing untold and unacceptable suffering for thousands of its inhabitants. Since the beginning of the offensive by the regime and its allies, notably Russia, the intensity and scale of the aerial bombardment of eastern Aleppo is clearly disproportionate. The deliberate targeting of hospitals, medical personnel, schools and essential civilian infrastructure, as well as the use of barrel bombs, cluster bombs and chemical weapons, constitutes a catastrophic escalation of the conflict and has caused further widespread civilian casualties, including among women and children, and may amount to war crimes. The Syrian regime has the primary responsibility for the protection of the Syrian population. The European Union therefore strongly condemns attacks by the regime and its allies, whether deliberate or indiscriminate, on civilian populations, humanitarian and health-care personnel and civilian and humanitarian infrastructure, as well as all disproportionate attacks, and urges them to cease indiscriminate and disproportionate aerial bombardments.

The European Union condemns the continued systematic, widespread and gross violations and abuses of human rights and all violations of international humanitarian law by all parties. We look forward to the findings of the United Nations internal inquiry on the targeting of a United Nations humanitarian convoy on 19 September — a clear violation of international law that requires full investigation. Those responsible for such violations and abuses must be held accountable through fair and independent investigations and prosecutions at the domestic and international levels, including a referral to the International Criminal Court. The European Union renews its call to the Security Council to take action in that regard.

An immediate cessation of hostilities in Aleppo and in all other parts of Syria, monitored by a strong and transparent mechanism, an immediate end to all sieges and full, unhindered, sustainable, countrywide humanitarian access granted by all parties are essential steps that must be taken to save civilians and lay the ground for a resumption of credible intra-Syrian talks aimed at providing security for the country's entire population. In that context, regional actors, particularly neighbouring countries, bear special responsibility.

The European Union will continue conducting intensive humanitarian diplomacy and seek ways to improve access and protection, as well as to promote humanitarian principles and local consensus on guidelines for the delivery of aid. We call on all parties, especially the Syrian regime, to provide full, unhindered, countrywide access to all those in need and to end all obstructions to the delivery of humanitarian aid. We urge the Syrian regime, without delay, to authorize cross-line humanitarian convoys to be delivered, including to eastern Aleppo. Such acts as besieging populated areas — for which the regime bears the greatest responsibility — in order to use the starvation of civilians as a tactic of war, and making forced population transfers for purposes other than international humanitarian law allows, are clear breaches of such law and must stop. Providing immediate relief for the suffering is imperative. The European Union stresses the importance of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) and its humanitarian task force for achieving concrete results and alleviating the suffering of the Syrian people.

The European Union firmly believes that there can be no military solution to the conflict. We reiterate our commitment to the unity, sovereignty, territorial

integrity and independence of the Syrian State. The European Union is an active participant in the ISSG and its task forces, and fully supports Special Envoy De Mistura in his efforts to create conditions that can enable a resumption of intra-Syrian talks. We take note of his proposal for eastern Aleppo. We recognize the efforts that have been made to re-establish a full cessation of hostilities, regret that they have not yet succeeded and encourage further attempts to achieve that. We deplore the fact that, in the space of only two months, two Security Council draft resolutions aimed at establishing a ceasefire in Aleppo, restoring the cessation of hostilities and enabling humanitarian access throughout Syria, particularly Aleppo, were vetoed.

A renewed cessation that would promote efforts to find a political solution, in line with the provisions of Security Council resolutions 2254 (2015) and 2268 (2016) and the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 (S/2012/522, annex), cannot wait any longer if we are to enable all the parties to re-engage in negotiations on a genuine political transition, which must include a broad, transitional governing body with full executive powers, formed by mutual consent. The European Union will continue to support the efforts of the Syrian opposition, in particular the High Negotiations Committee as the opposition representative, in the Geneva talks brokered by the United Nations. There cannot be a lasting peace in Syria under the current regime or until the legitimate grievances and aspirations of Syrian society are addressed.

The European Union condemns in the strongest terms the confirmed use of chemical weapons — as detailed in the reports of the Joint Investigative Mechanism of the Joint Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations — and the widespread attacks on civilians and human rights violations and abuses by the Syrian regime and Da'esh. The findings of the Mechanism reports will require strong action on the part of the OPCW and the Security Council. Impunity for such crimes is unacceptable, and the European Union will therefore continue to support efforts to gather evidence with a view to future legal action. In that context, we will act swiftly, according to established procedures, as long as repression continues, with the aim of imposing further restrictive measures on Syria that target Syrian individuals and entities who support the regime.

The European Union condemns the atrocities committed by Da'esh and other groups designated as

terrorists by the United Nations, and we reaffirm our strong commitment to combating them. We continue to support the efforts of the global coalition to counter Da'esh in Syria and Iraq. Da'esh and other organizations designated as terrorists by the United Nations constitute a threat to the future of Syria as well as to the interests and values of the European Union. We call for a well-coordinated and comprehensive international approach aimed at preventing material and financial support from reaching individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with such terrorist groups and dissuading any parties from collaborating with them. The European Union calls for the expeditious separation of all combatants not designated as terrorists from such terrorist groups. We reiterate that the fight against terrorism can never be used as an excuse for violating international humanitarian and human rights law.

A political solution is the only one that will enable us to decisively defeat Da'esh and other terrorist organizations in Syria. We thank the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy for their persistent efforts. Only when an inclusive political transition is in place will the European Union be able to assist in the country's reconstruction, both directly and through international organizations, a European Union objective that will enable the millions of Syrians who have been forced to flee their homes to return to them and live in peace and security in their own land.

Lastly, we would like to reiterate our full support for draft resolution A/71/L.39, put forward by Canada, and urge its immediate implementation.

**Mr. Petersen (Denmark):** I speak on behalf of the Nordic countries — Norway, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and my own country, Denmark.

Today the General Assembly will adopt a draft resolution (A/71/L.39) that clearly expresses the horror we all share as we witness the ongoing bloodshed in Syria. We thank Canada for its leadership and constructive process. The broad support for the draft resolution shows that we are united in our call for an end to that human and humanitarian disaster.

At the time of our meeting here today, the situation in Aleppo is of catastrophic dimensions in terms of human suffering. The Secretary-General and his Special Envoy have repeatedly warned the world about the possible destruction of Aleppo and the alarming conditions that prevail in other parts of Syria. Let me

take this occasion to reiterate some key messages from the Nordic countries.

The heavy and indiscriminate attacks inflicting devastation and harm on civilians, hospitals, medical personnel, humanitarian workers and schools must stop. Priority must be given by all sides to protecting civilians and facilitating humanitarian relief. All violations of international humanitarian law and human rights must be brought to an end, and those responsible must be held accountable. That includes attacks using chemical weapons, as confirmed by the Joint Investigative Mechanism of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations.

Syria is obliged under international humanitarian law to give immediate, full, unhindered and sustained humanitarian access to all parts of Syria. There can be no lasting solution for Syria without a political solution. We uphold our call for an inclusive and credible political process, in line with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), which includes making sure that women and civil society remain represented around the table.

Unfortunately, the Security Council has been unable to adequately address the crisis in Syria. The Security Council resolutions adopted have not been complied with. The Nordic countries repeat their calls on the Council to live up to its responsibility to maintain international peace and security, which includes addressing with the necessary resolve the humanitarian disaster unfolding before our eyes, particularly in Aleppo. We deeply regret that the Security Council was unable to adopt a draft resolution earlier this week.

We remain hopeful that the broad international resolve shown by the draft resolution before us today will bring real results for the people of Syria. We will certainly do our part to that end.

**The President:** Although I obviously want to allow speakers as much time as they require to express their views, given that 12 more delegations wish to speak and that time is short, I would ask that delegations be as concise as possible in the remainder of the debate.

**Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein):** The situation in Syria is the defining crisis of our time, both with respect to human suffering and the inability of the Security Council to address the unfolding humanitarian tragedy. Nothing illustrates the paralysis in the Council more starkly than the repeated use of the veto in connection

with draft resolutions that have pursued the primary goal of alleviating the suffering of the civilian population.

In addition, in the cases where the Council has been able to forge agreement, the results have been rather depressing; just about a year ago, Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) was adopted unanimously and gave hope that a political solution might be within reach. However, the reality today shows that there is no political process to speak of and that some of the parties to the conflict openly pursue a military solution. While the civilian population has been affected in much of the country, the situation in Aleppo has become the tragic symbol of our common failure to live up to our obligation to prevent more of the mass atrocities that are unfolding before our eyes, even though the majority of Council members have committed themselves to the code of conduct with regard to situations involving mass atrocity crimes.

In the current situation, the involvement of the General Assembly is an urgent necessity. We thank our colleagues from Canada for having taken the lead in that respect. We fully support the draft resolution (A/71/L.39) before us and hope that it will have the immediate impact on the ground that is intended. At the same time, we also believe that more action is needed by the Assembly in an area referred to in the text, that of accountability.

The conflict in Syria has long been characterized by an utter disregard for the most basic standards of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The violations committed have been documented and reported on extensively, in particular by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry. Many of those violations amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes. The use of chemical weapons, the indiscriminate shelling of civilian targets and the use of starvation as a method of warfare are among the war crimes that are being committed. Torture, enforced disappearances, sexual violence and murder are among the many gross human rights violations that have been committed as a matter of policy and as part of a systematic attack against the civilian population.

Since the referral of the situation to the International Criminal Court was vetoed in the Council more than two years ago, there has been no serious effort in the Council to ensure accountability and end impunity. It is therefore imperative that the General Assembly step in and enable the international community to at least take

one decisive step forward in that respect — to prepare files that can serve as the basis for criminal proceedings in a court or tribunal that may in the future be able to exercise jurisdiction over those crimes, irrespective of the perpetrators.

My delegation has been working closely with others in order to produce a text that will propose the creation of such a mechanism. We will consult more widely with the membership in the coming days and hope that a text to that end can be adopted expeditiously.

**Mr. Churkin** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Russia is deeply troubled by the conflict in Syria, which is now in its sixth year because of the reckless foreign policy of some international regional players. They once conceived the idea of ousting the Government in Damascus and redrawing the political, ethnic, religious and economic map of the region. We view that as an aggressive modern form of colonialism. We are expending tremendous effort to help halt the war and to prompt Syrians to engage in direct United Nations-led talks concerning the future political landscape of the country. Our immediate aim is to alleviate the plight of civilians in the conflict.

At the same time, the Russian Federation, at the request of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, is providing military support to combat the terrorists who, acting on instructions, have poured into the country from all sides in order to help crush the legitimate Government. And yet the armed extremists have suppressed protests. The merging of those phenomena has occurred thanks to generous support in the form of materials, finance and propaganda coming from abroad. The phantom notion of a moderate Syrian opposition has effectively collapsed.

On the political track, Russia, together with other interested international partners, has undertaken significant efforts to bring about a prompt end to the conflict. We have set up the International Syria Support Group, which is co-chaired by Russia and the United States. The Group, along with the Security Council, has prepared a series of core documents with a view to a settlement, and these help guide Special Envoy De Mistura.

As the Syrian question concerns peace and security, it needs to be considered by the Security Council, in a way that is consistent with its prerogatives under the Charter of the United Nations. To say that Council efforts to uphold peace in Syria are being blocked is

to distort reality. If at times consensus eludes us on a given document — which last occurred on 5 December (see S/PV.7825) — that means that the document is unbalanced, insufficiently well prepared or serves purposes that have little to do with a settlement. Vociferous presentations in front of television cameras certainly do not help.

The situation in Aleppo is tragic. The eastern part became a veritable stronghold of terrorists, led by Jabhat Al-Nusra. They mercilessly terrorized the civilians and ground them under their heel, and they tormented the civilians in the Government-controlled western neighbourhoods. We could not tolerate a continuation of that situation. We are working tirelessly with the Americans and with key regional partners to arrive at the most effective solution for Aleppo. That was the aim of the meetings between Mr. Lavrov and Mr. Kerry on 2 and 7 December. Finalizing an agreement is the aim of the meeting to be held tomorrow, 10 December, between Russia and America. Yesterday, the Syrian army suspended hostilities around eastern Aleppo, so as to allow the civilians that wished to leave the city to do so. Some 10,500 people, among them 4,015 children, were granted passage.

The draft resolution (A/71/L.39) under consideration has major shortcomings: faulty references to the reasons for the outbreak of conflict in Syria, intensified accusations against the Government, overly simplistic references to the elements related to the terrorist threat and the role of foreign sponsors in maintaining and bolstering them. Terrorists in the region have learned to manufacture and use toxic substances as weapons. The scale of that threat has yet to be assessed and the appropriate response to be found. There is no clear reference in the draft resolution to the fact that a cessation of hostilities cannot apply to terrorists. There is no reference to the key issue of differentiating between them and the so-called moderate opposition. The recent developments around Aleppo are not taken into account.

On the humanitarian track, we are helping with specific initiatives in a host of areas. Significant humanitarian assistance is being delivered to Syria, a task that we carry out together with our foreign friends. We hope that others will follow suit, above all those who categorically refuse to cooperate with the Syrian Government and who squander their energy on threats and accusations. They are not educating the Syrian Government through unilateral restrictions, but rather



asphyxiating the people they ardently claim to care about. Our doctors have been working selflessly in Aleppo. Recently, owing to the shelling of a Russian field hospital. Two female medical professionals were killed. The response to that tragedy — both from States and from international and non-governmental organizations — was muted, at best.

We are hardly surprised any longer by such double standards. We urge a swift resumption of the intra-Syrian talks, pursuant to the relevant Security Council resolutions. The six-month interruption — caused by the unwillingness of the disparate elements of the opposition to engage in a substantive discussion — is something we cannot afford. We expect that United Nations mediation will do whatever is necessary. We note that it is more important than ever to set up a truly international counter-terrorism coalition, based on international law. Today's tragedy can strike anywhere no matter how well defended the place may be. That warrants the broadest possible discussion among Member States, especially in the General Assembly.

For those reasons, the Russian delegation will vote against the draft resolution submitted by Canada.

**Mr. Gómez Camacho** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting, which was requested by over 70 Member States, including my own. After over five years of conflict in Syria, the lack of a political solution has resulted in the worst humanitarian crisis of the twenty-first century. This meeting is an opportunity to pool efforts and political will to urgently address the situation.

The staggering number of civilian victims, including women and children, who have been attacked indiscriminately with banned weapons is truly tragic. That is why we welcome the draft resolution (A/71/L.39) currently before the General Assembly, which we are co-sponsoring. It seeks to respond to the tragic humanitarian situation of millions of people and to put an end to the unacceptable suffering of the Syrian people.

That task is particularly important given the Security Council's inability to assume its responsibilities in the crisis. Mexico regrets that, on both 8 October (see S/PV.7785) and 5 December (see S/PV.7825), differences in the Security Council once again prevented it from exercising its authority by adopting measures aimed at responding to the tragic humanitarian crisis in Syria,

particularly in Aleppo. We reiterate that the use of the veto is not a privilege, but rather a great responsibility. That is why its use in situations like this one — where more than 300,000 people have died, 6.5 million have been displaced and more than 4 million live as refugees in countries in the region — is unacceptable.

The United Nations cannot and must not continue to be a passive bystander in the face of such a tragedy. We are duty-bound to take action in response to the conflict, which has also had serious regional and global consequences. Our primary challenge is to address the repeated violations of international humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict and to eliminate the restrictions on access to humanitarian assistance for those who need it the most, especially in besieged or hard-to-reach areas.

Humanitarian action is no substitute for political action. The only solution to this humanitarian crisis is a political agreement that puts an end to armed violence. Mexico reiterates its support for the efforts led by the Special Envoy, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, to promote a political dialogue that will enable peace talks to begin between the Syrian Government and opposition representatives. We hope that these talks will take place and soon lead to tangible benefits for the Syrian people.

We also trust that the Secretary-General-elect, Mr. António Guterres, will continue the efforts to work with the actors involved in order to strengthen peace in this country and in the region as a whole.

**Mr. Mendoza-García** (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation welcomes the convening of this plenary meeting. The situation in Syria could not be more urgent. In the vast majority of conflict zones, humanitarian aid has not been delivered for more than six months. We cannot be immune to the gravity and scale of this tragedy.

The Charter of the United Nations assigned the mandate for the maintenance of international peace and security to the Security Council. However, we have witnessed how the Security Council has been unable to arrive at a decision whereby the extremely serious humanitarian situation being experienced in Syria can be addressed effectively. It is not acceptable that States should continue to overlook the resolutions on Syria that both the Security Council and the General Assembly have adopted.

Costa Rica hopes that the members of the Council will manage to place the suffering of the Syrian people above their own political differences and assume their responsibility once and for all to use the measures provided by the Charter to end this tragedy. We reiterate our concern over the repeated use of the veto in cases such as this, where the necessary action by the Council is prevented, and especially in cases where mass atrocities may be involved.

Given the lack of effective action by the members of the Security Council, other States cannot remain indifferent. Costa Rica strongly urges all the parties to the conflict to implement the recommendations contained in the report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic issued on 11 August, which, in paragraph 139, calls on all parties once again to restore and revitalize the cessation of hostilities, minimize civilian casualties, end indiscriminate attacks and allow safe, sustained, unhindered and unconditional access to humanitarian aid. We also call for the implementation of the United Nations four-part plan for the delivery of food, medicine and other essential goods, medical evacuations and the rotation of medical personnel to attend to the sick and wounded.

Costa Rica welcomes as a step in the right direction the various negotiating efforts that are under way in order to change the situation on the ground. We are also pleased to see unilateral actions being undertaken for humanitarian reasons, such as those announced by Russia for the evacuation of civilians in Aleppo. We hope that such initiatives will allow the citizens of Aleppo to move to safer areas and that they will be maintained and extended to other zones that are also in need of humanitarian assistance.

My delegation cannot help but mention its enormous concern regarding the presence of terrorist groups in Syria. These groups are exponentially worsening the crisis and have committed abominable violations of the human rights of the civilian population. The fight against them must be our common objective.

Costa Rica is convinced that all the parties to the conflict must focus their efforts on finding a political solution to the conflict through renewal of dialogue, with, as their primary objective, the prevention by all means possible of any greater suffering on the part of the civilian population. The first step must be a ceasefire, followed by unrestricted access to humanitarian aid. We

need to remember that the process must be guided by the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. For this reason, we support the draft resolution submitted by Canada (A/71/L.39), whose delegation we thank for its efforts. We shall vote in favour, and we respectfully urge other delegations to do the same.

Every day, every hour and every minute are precious for those who have lost everything but who cling to the hope that the world has not forgotten them. As Secretary-General-designate António Guterres said,

“What is at stake is nothing more and nothing less than the survival and well-being of an entire generation of innocent people”.

We cannot continue to sit idly by.

**Mr. Delattre** (France) (*spoke in French*): I should like to begin with a word of thanks to you, Sir, and to the Permanent Representative of Canada for your presentations. I should also like to warmly thank the Canadian delegation for the significant efforts it has undertaken over recent months — efforts which today afford the General Assembly an opportunity to deliver a strong message at a critical juncture of the Syrian conflict.

During these terrible times endured by the people of Aleppo, we certainly have no right to abandon the struggle. It is never too late to save lives; it is never too late to provide assistance to a suffering population; it is never too late to lay down the foundation for a political solution, which is the only way to bring the Syrian tragedy to an end. That is why the Syrian situation requires a united voice from all the members of the international community, as we are all aware.

Eastern Aleppo today is on the brink of an abyss. The Syrian regime, backed by its supporters, has been obsessively bent on destroying all who have opposed it over the past five years and has had no regard whatever for the lives of civilians. It has had no hesitation about indiscriminately striking civilians using incendiary bombs, chemical weapons and barrel bombs. For years it has flouted international humanitarian law and the basic rules of humanity and morality, and each day the violations continue.

Today tens of thousands of people are still in eastern Aleppo. The solemn message that the General Assembly must deliver today is a message of humanitarian emergency. The civilians of Aleppo have been living in a state of siege since July: they have not

been able to receive aid or evacuate their medical cases or leave for cities of their choice in safety. We must say collectively to all the parties that, regardless of our differences, the international community is united in demanding the protection of civilians and wanting to prevent one final battle in which the massacre of civilians will be on a scale not previously experienced in the Syrian conflict — a massacre for which all the responsibility will, in the eyes of the world, rest with the supporters of the Al-Assad regime.

France has noted the opening of the humanitarian corridor out of Aleppo as announced by Russia. However, actions speak louder than words. It is critical for those seeking to leave Aleppo to be able to do so safely, and to be able also to select their destination.

Beyond this urgent message, the General Assembly must draw attention to the conviction that prompted the establishment of the United Nations: that a negotiated solution must prevail over military thinking. After months of fierce fighting, we must collectively call for the renewal of a credible political process, based on the *acquis* of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), to provide a future of peace and stability for the Syrian people.

We cannot emphasize enough that there is no military solution to the Syrian conflict. Taking back Aleppo is the obsession of the Al-Assad regime. However, taking back Aleppo will not settle the Syrian conflict. A military solution will never open up space for the reconciliation of the Syrian people or the rebuilding of their tormented country. Until a political solution is reached, Syria will remain what it is today: a landscape of war and desolation in which radicalization and terrorism continue to thrive. It is therefore the duty of the General Assembly, which is convening at this moment of truth, to open the way for new possibilities for the Syrian people. That is why France will vote in favour of the draft resolution (A/71/L.39) submitted by Canada and hopes that the General Assembly will be able today to deliver a strong and unanimous message.

**Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China is deeply concerned about the continuous escalation of conflict in Syria and the worsening humanitarian situation in the affected areas. The conflict in Syria has caused untold suffering for the Syrian people. We feel for Syria's war-torn civilians.

The current situation in the country can be attributed to a plethora of overlapping factors. The

situation in Aleppo and the humanitarian situation in Syria are not isolated. The international community should focus on the overall situation and adopt an integrated approach with the United Nations playing a central coordinating role so that efforts can be made to find a comprehensive, fair and proper solution to the question of Syria.

Against such a complex and sensitive background, the international community should above all maintain the overarching goal of seeking a political solution to the Syrian question. All efforts made should aim at facilitating the work on four tracks—a resumption of the ceasefire, political negotiations, the joint fight against terrorism, and humanitarian assistance. All parties in Syria should be encouraged to find a universally acceptable solution through peaceful negotiations, in accordance with the principle of having a solution that is Syrian-led and Syrian-owned. Parties to the Syrian conflict should focus on the fundamental interests of the country, the safety and security of its people, a return to dialogue and negotiations, and commit to the political settlement of the Syrian issue.

Recently, the Security Council has been seized of the situation in Syria. Countries such as Russia and the United States are actively engaged in diplomatic efforts to ease tensions on the ground. Against that backdrop, any measure taken by any party to the conflict must respect the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria, contribute to those efforts and seek to resolve problems rather than to complicate issues. Such measures must enable the parties to play a constructive role in the search of a political settlement at an early date. Any unilateral attempt to exert pressure or politicize humanitarian issues will only bring about further turbulence in the situation rather than turning it around.

The fight against terrorism is an important, integral part of the search for a solution to the Syrian question. The conflict in Syria has caused the development and spread of terrorism. The international community should focus on fighting terrorist forces inside Syria. On the question of counter-terrorism, the international community should adopt uniform standards, strengthen coordination and resolutely combat all terrorist groups designated by the Security Council.

On the question of Syria, China maintains the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. It upholds the basic norms governing

international relations and has played a constructive role in seeking a political settlement to the conflict. Recently, the Special Envoy of the Chinese Government visited Syria to work with the parties concerned in order to find a political settlement. China is ready to join hands with the international community in the common search for a political settlement at an early date.

**Mr. Vieira (Brazil):** I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting. Like others, we acknowledge the important role played by Canada in leading this initiative. Brazil supported the call for today's formal plenary meeting to express our strong concern with the humanitarian consequences of the escalation of violence and terrorism in Syria.

After nearly six years of extreme violence, the conflict in the country has further destabilized the Middle East, magnified sectarian tensions, fostered terrorism on a global scale and nurtured the worst humanitarian crisis of our times. Ongoing sieges and indiscriminate attacks in Deir ez-Zor, Aleppo, Idlib and the so-called four towns of Fo'ah, Kefraya, Madayya and Zabadani, among other locations, continue to cause unacceptable levels of civilian suffering. We are also alarmed by the persistent denial of access to humanitarian relief operations, including those of United Nations agencies. Reports of incidents involving the use of chemical weapons are deeply worrisome and should be comprehensively scrutinized.

My country also condemns in the strongest possible terms the attacks and violations of international humanitarian law perpetrated by terrorist organizations currently active in Syria, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and the Al-Nusra Front, among others designated by the Security Council. We reaffirm that all acts of terrorism are unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation. We also reiterate our concern with the negative impact of unilateral economic sanctions, which are detrimental to civilians in Syria and hinder humanitarian assistance and reconstruction activities. We recall that according to the Charter of the United Nations, the only international body with the legal authority to impose coercive economic measures is the Security Council.

Today's meeting should be guided by the need to find positive and constructive solutions to the conflict, as well as to the humanitarian crisis. Brazil regrets the continued inability of the Security Council to reach a decision on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, as

demonstrated by the rejection of three draft resolutions in just the past two months. Such an impasse underlines the urgent need to reform the Council in order to render it more democratic, effective and transparent, and therefore more adapted to the complex realities of our multipolar world. As evidenced by the letter supported by 74 Member States that called for today's meeting, the General Assembly has an essential role to play as a forum for discussion and collective action on Syria.

The draft resolution on which we are voting today (A/71/L.39) is a concrete manifestation of this responsibility. However, we should be careful in our debates to avoid reproducing the self-defeating logic of polarization that currently paralyses the Security Council in its deliberations on Syria. Instead, the Assembly should contribute to building confidence among the parties. In that regard, we also highlight the need to abstain from a selective or politicized approach to the developments in Syria. As pointed out by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, serious violations of international humanitarian law have been attributed to all actors. The plight of Syria's civilians will not be relieved by rhetorical exercises, finger-pointing or blame games.

As Brazil has long stated, the only sustainable solution for Syria is a political solution. We stress the need for a Syrian-led political process aimed at creating credible, inclusive and non-sectarian governance and the drafting of a new Constitution, as established by resolution 2254 (2015). In order to achieve this goal, all actors and their external supporters should restore the cessation of hostilities endorsed by resolution 2268 (2016), allow unhindered humanitarian access, ensure the separation between terrorist groups and the opposition, coordinate efforts to tackle terrorism, and resume the intra-Syrian dialogue as soon as possible under the auspices of the United Nations.

Those steps can and should be immediate and simultaneous, without any preconditions. As repeatedly stated by Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura, whose efforts we fully support, the political, humanitarian and security aspects of the Syrian crisis are interdependent.

We also urge the members of the International Syria Support Group, in particular its co-Chairs, Russia and the United States, to rise above their differences and resume full dialogue and cooperation on Syria. A political solution to the crisis in Syria



should not neglect the need to ensure accountability for the crimes committed by all parties to the conflict. Serious violations of international humanitarian law, as well as violations and abuses of international human rights law, must be investigated in an impartial and non-selective manner.

I conclude by calling upon the Security Council to discharge its duties as the organ with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Under Article 24 of the Charter of the United Nations, the Council has a political, legal and moral duty, acting on behalf of all Member States, to decide on the concrete actions required to bring peace, justice and stability to Syria, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

**Ms. Kabua** (Marshall Islands): In September 2013, Pacific Islands Forum leaders gathered in the Marshall Islands and expressed concern over the situation in Syria and

“call[ed] on all members of the United Nations Security Council, individually and collectively, to provide leadership”.

That call for leadership was made more than three years ago. The Marshall Islands is gravely concerned at the subsequent and ongoing diplomatic failure both to address the basic and worsening humanitarian crisis in Syria and to confront growing security threats. I need not recount the facts on the ground, which have already been clearly laid out by the Secretary-General and many others.

The Marshall Islands is a small island nation, very distant from the Middle East. But as a former United Nations trust territory, through our own history, we have realized the consequences of distant decisions made from New York. Indeed, as much as the United Nations has realized success in multilateral diplomacy, there have also been far too many inexcusable shortcomings over the years — grave humanitarian and security crises, even genocide — where the United Nations failed to act in time and where leadership was blinded by politics. It already appears that the situation in Syria will be added to this list, but it is not too late to take at least some measures of action to ensure that going forward every Syrian civilian receives the basic humanitarian assistance he or she so desperately needs.

The violence must end. Accountability for potential violations of international law is imperative. Credible

and effective steps to end this conflict must be undertaken. It is due time to look outside our walls here at United Nations Headquarters and be a truly United Nations, upholding the basic tenets of the Charter of the United Nations, not just in words, but in practice. We strongly support draft resolution A/71/L.39, and we hope our fellow member States in the General Assembly will join us. I also affirm our support for Canada and its leadership in facilitating this initiative.

Ultimately, this crisis will be our responsibility to shoulder, and the whole world is watching, looking to all of us for action. Today, as the General Assembly takes action on the draft resolution, our vote is our voice. Accordingly, the Republic of the Marshall Islands will vote in support of the draft resolution.

**Mr. Rycroft** (United Kingdom): I would like to begin with the words of a Syrian teacher left trapped in Aleppo:

“People here are dying of pain, dying of hunger, dying of bombing, dying of cold. This is the situation now in eastern Aleppo”.

Those are the words of just one of the tens of thousands of men, women and children currently enduring hell in Aleppo. They are words that should haunt us all.

We welcome the message sent by the membership in holding this meeting today, but in truth, just three Members of the Organization can bring an immediate end to the suffering and collective punishment: the Al-Assad regime and their Russian and Iranian backers. They claim that they cannot because they need to defeat terrorism. Really? Do they need to reduce Aleppo to rubble to defeat terrorism? Do they need to destroy hospital after hospital to defeat terrorism? Do they need to block humanitarian aid time after time to defeat terrorism? Their actions will not defeat terrorism and extremism; they will only fuel it.

Russia claims they are being misrepresented. They proudly point to the suspension of combat operations yesterday and the evacuation of 8,000 people as evidence of their humanitarian intent. But until Russia, Iran and the Syrian regime have implemented every word of the draft resolution we are about to adopt (A/71/L.39), and the countless others adopted by the Security Council, it will simply be too little too late. It will be too little too late for that teacher and for his pupils, too little and too late for the thousands who have died, the thousands who are suffering.

Yet despite all of this, it could get still worse. Hundreds of men and boys are disappearing as they flee eastern Aleppo, taken by the regime, their fates unknown. Let us therefore call on all parties to the conflict to protect civilians, not abduct or attack them as they leave. Let us call on them to allow the United Nations to put in place the necessary measures that will ensure the protection of those fleeing and to allow the United Nations to play a role in planning evacuations.

In truth, whether those steps are taken or not, the fighting in Aleppo will eventually end. When it falls silent, over the rubble of that once great city, the war, the killing, the suffering will all continue elsewhere. The Al-Assad regime will just control one third of Syria, and despite trying, they cannot control the hearts of those fighting for peace and democracy. We cannot give up. We must not give up. We must use every tool at our disposal, including in this General Assembly draft resolution, to bring about an end to the suffering.

Ultimately, we must never forget. When I was British Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the guns had been silent there for a decade. In that time, Slobodan Milošević, the architect of that conflict and that genocide, was already behind bars, facing justice. Let us make no mistake: the war in Syria, like the war in Bosnia in Herzegovina, will eventually come to an overdue end. Our memories are long and whether it is in a year or in 10, there will be accountability for those responsible for all those deaths in Aleppo and across Syria.

**Ms. Power** (United States of America): A journalist in eastern Aleppo named Wa'ad Al-Khateib won an award recently for her reporting. She could not escape the fighting around her, so Wa'ad sent her thoughts to be read out at a ceremony. Her conclusion:

“There is a perished city called Aleppo, and all its people are asking you to remember your humanity.”

All Aleppo's people are asking you, us, to remember your, our, humanity.

In September, the Secretary-General described Aleppo to the Security Council, saying even a slaughterhouse is more humane (see S/PV.7779). Russia and the Al-Assad regime had just reimposed their siege of eastern Aleppo and renewed their military offensive. In October, United Nations Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura warned,

“The bottom line is, in a maximum of two months, two and a half months, the city of eastern Aleppo may be totally destroyed.”

The barrel bombs kept falling. In November, Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien said eastern Aleppo could become one giant graveyard, but Russia and the Al-Assad regime pressed on with their assault, and the city's graves filled up. In December — this month — Egypt, New Zealand and Spain put forward a draft resolution in the Security Council demanding something quite simple: a seven-day halt to the fighting. Russia and China vetoed, allowing the butchery to go on.

Russia, the Al-Assad regime and their allies heard all the warnings, the same warnings all of us have heard. They knew the humanitarian catastrophe that would come from seizing a city of 275,000 civilians by force. Let us consider the toll: estimates are that Russia and the Al-Assad regime have displaced at least 32,000 people in the past two weeks alone, and the real number, we know, is likely much higher. Food stocks ran out almost a month ago in eastern Aleppo. Russia and the regime's campaign of air strikes have struck every single hospital in eastern Aleppo, every single one.

The people left in eastern Aleppo do not know where to go. Some get shot in the street as they try to flee, others stay in their basements hoping Russia and Al-Assad's aircraft refrain from dropping a bomb over their heads this time. Still others make it across the front line, only to have Al-Assad's intelligence agencies forcibly disappear them.

The United Nations has reported in the last couple days that many men who have crossed the lines have gone missing. These men who are missing may well have been, or be, murdered. Those who support the Syrian regime will forever be associated with the fate of these men, some of whom are still boys.

We must remember what Wa'ad wrote: “All of Aleppo's people are asking you to remember your humanity”. We, as members of the General Assembly, can remember our humanity by demanding right here that Russia and the Al-Assad regime comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, allow civilians, including the White Helmets and other first responders, to leave eastern Aleppo peacefully, not send them to be tortured in regime prisons, give fighters who wish to leave a safe exit, permit aid agencies, finally, to deliver medicine and food to those who choose to stay

in eastern Aleppo, and, above all, protect the civilians in eastern Aleppo who are in the firing line.

The way for all of us to make these demands is simple: we reach over and we push the green button to vote yes on today's draft resolution (A/71/L.39). I thank Canada for showing leadership in bringing this text forward to call for an end to this senseless violence.

Russia, the Al-Assad regime and all of their allies bombarding eastern Aleppo are watching this Hall carefully. So, somehow, are the people in eastern Aleppo. This is a vote to stand up and tell Russia and Al-Assad to stop the carnage. This is a vote to defend the bedrock principles of how States should act, even in war. This is a vote to urgently demand food, medicine and safety for a population in eastern Aleppo who have none.

This draft resolution is far from perfect. No resolution negotiated among States Members of the United Nations on a compressed timeline in response to an urgent catastrophe could be perfect. If ever there were a time not to let the perfect be the enemy of the good and the decent, this is the time. The people of eastern Aleppo need help. The General Assembly must stand with them. I urge representatives to vote in favour of this draft resolution.

**Mr. Lauber** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): In the face of the unprecedented scale of violence and the inhuman suffering that is plaguing Syria, Switzerland insists upon the three following priorities.

First, the Swiss Government renews its call on all parties to the conflict to fully and unconditionally uphold the rules of international humanitarian law, in particular the principles of the conduct of hostilities. All parties have an obligation to allow and facilitate rapid and unfettered humanitarian access. Furthermore, Switzerland recalls that the use of chemical weapons, the use of starvation as a means of warfare and the systematic forced displacement of civilians are war crimes.

Upholding the law also implies the punishment of perpetrators. Since 2013, some 80 States have called upon the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. Today Switzerland reiterates that appeal, as it has done regularly for three years. My delegation regrets the fact that it was not possible to include a reference in draft resolution A/71/L.39 to the sole existing mechanism that would

enable the delivery of justice to the victims. Until justice is possible at the national or international level, Switzerland supports all efforts that contribute to the collection and preparation of evidence with a view to judicial proceedings.

Secondly, Switzerland calls upon all parties to the conflict to immediately cease hostilities, ensure the protection of civilians in areas under their control and enable swift unfettered provision of humanitarian assistance. We also call upon those who have influence to bear upon the parties to the conflict to draw upon all necessary means to prompt the parties to fully uphold international humanitarian law, as well as to uphold all the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Thirdly, Switzerland unreservedly aligns itself with calls for parties to rapidly and in good faith resume discussions with a view to a political solution, which is the only way to end this conflict. To that end, the Swiss Government shall continue to offer its good offices to facilitate on its territory the holding of such discussions within an appropriate framework.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Canadian delegation, which facilitated negotiations on the draft resolution that we shall adopt later and which Switzerland fully supports.

**Mr. Rattray** (Jamaica): Jamaica joins other delegations in welcoming this opportunity for the General Assembly to discuss the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, which is undoubtedly one of the worst humanitarian crises of our time.

We are shocked and deeply disturbed by the images of destruction and the intense suffering of civilians — innocent men, women and children who have fallen victim to a war that has raged for over five years. We are also dismayed that the perpetrators of these horrors are able to do so with impunity and urge that robust accountability mechanisms be established to investigate and bring to justice those found to be in violation of international human rights and humanitarian laws.

The stark and deeply disturbing facts speak for themselves: more than 450,000 casualties and 13.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, with approximately 6.1 million people internally displaced. It is a stain on our conscience that the international community has failed to bring relief to those trapped in besieged, inaccessible areas. We view

the situation as both unacceptable and intolerable. We should not hesitate to take action in the face of the inertia that has paralysed other parts of the international system. It falls to us — the General Assembly — to stand up and declare with one clear and unequivocal voice that enough is enough.

We therefore urge the Assembly to demand an immediate cessation of hostilities. We do not have the luxury of time, particularly as we move rapidly into the increasingly harsh winter conditions that will add yet another layer to the cloak of suffering and despair that blankets the citizens of besieged places such as Aleppo.

We all have an obligation under international law to ensure that the violations and abuses taking place in the Syrian Arab Republic are immediately curtailed. My delegation therefore urges the Security Council to assume its responsibility to take prompt and effective action to enable the delivery of the complete spectrum of humanitarian assistance that is required for the civilian population in Syria.

Our plea for Syria is a plea for human life, for dignity and, ultimately, for justice.

**Mr. Ramírez Carreño** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela would like to reiterate its deep concern over the deadly armed conflict that has ravaged Syria for the past five years and over its impact on the entire civilian population. In that regard, we condemn the attacks against civilian targets and humanitarian actors, regardless of their origin, because such actions violate international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Today, the draft resolution proposed by Canada (A/71/L.39) aims to condemn Syria, a brotherly Arab country, which has been a victim of terrorist barbarism and is fighting to defend its sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity and to guarantee respect for the human rights of its people. As Venezuela has stated in the Security Council during the past two years, we believe that, while we must urgently address the serious humanitarian effects of the conflict in Syria, we must also bear in mind the causes behind it that determine its evolution. Those include the geopolitical agendas of a few States Members of the United Nations that put their interests before finding a true political solution to the war in Syria and promote it directly or indirectly.

Similarly, we reject the politicization of the humanitarian issue, with the aim of overthrowing legitimate Governments and undermining the social fabric of a country that has historically been prosperous, open and productive, a country that suddenly became involved in the war agenda of the major Powers that are violating regional stability and are today exhibiting a cynical double standard, claiming to be the standard bearers of the humanitarian cause, when in fact they are the principal parties responsible for this tragedy.

The military interventions in Iraq, Libya and Syria have destabilized the Middle East and North Africa region, fostering the expansion of the scourge of terrorism, especially the emergence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, the Al-Nusra Front and other associated entities. Terrorism continues to be the most nefarious consequence of this foreign interventionism in the region and, at the same time, is the main agent of armed violence and the humanitarian crisis which has caused thousands of deaths and millions of refugees, affecting the Middle East and North Africa region.

The imposition of the war in Syria and the ensuing humanitarian tragedy is a contemptible act, to which we must add the lack of will to find a real political solution. Some of those who have promoted this draft resolution covertly encourage terrorist groups to deepen the tragedy of a civilian population trapped in an endless conflict. If a country really wants to help the Syrian people, it should stop supporting extremist groups with weapons and money. These extremist groups have become terrorist groups that murder, torture and destroy the social fabric and everything in its wake in Syria, spreading death and destruction.

We would like to have a debate in the General Assembly on the origins of the conflict in the Middle East — in Iraq, Libya, Syria and Palestine. We are sure that we will always find the same actors promoting war. We therefore consider legitimate the efforts actively undertaken by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, with the support of other countries, in an attempt to overcome the scourge of terrorism and make effective progress in finding a political solution, which is the only possible solution. The Syrian people have every right to defend their territorial integrity, sovereignty and right to self-determination, as set out in the Charter of the United Nations.

In that regard, we support the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura,



and the work of the International Syria Support Group in finding a definitive solution through dialogue and political negotiation. Only if the relevant actors demonstrate a true political will to move forward along this path can we embark on a true path to alleviate the suffering caused by that terrible humanitarian crisis.

Politicized resolutions on this issue in any of the bodies of the United Nations, absent real efforts aimed at considering the political parties in this conflict and a clear resolve to fight terrorism, will only undermine any well-intentioned initiative to the detriment of peace and add to the suffering of the people. Today it is Syria that is the victim of this military aggression and political manipulation. Tomorrow any other brotherly country could fall victim. Draft resolution A/71/L.39 is a poor precedent.

Finally, we continue to call for a negotiated political solution to this terrible conflict, ending the foreign intervention in Syria and respecting the right of its people to choose its own path towards a future peace.

**Ms. Bahous** (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to express our thanks and appreciation for the holding of today's important meeting. I also wish to express our gratitude to Canada for its initiative and for the considerable and worthy efforts it has made towards the adoption of draft resolution A/71/L.39, which will hopefully reflect the international community's determination to maintain the political impetus needed to find a permanent solution to the Syrian crisis. Over the past few years, we have contributed positively to the negotiations on this issue, and we will support the draft resolution on the situation on Syria on which we will vote today because we believe that these efforts complement other efforts undertaken, whether they be in the Security Council or the International Syria Support Group or at the regional or international levels.

Our support is based on the pressing need to stop the bloodshed, the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and the violation of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. We will contribute to any initiative aimed at a political situation to ensure the security, stability and territorial integrity of Syria, fulfil the aspirations of its people and eradicate radicalism and extremism. We agree to all those goals and wish to achieve them in Syria through the implementation of the draft resolution to be put to the vote and all other relevant United Nations resolutions to concretely establish peace on the ground.

In numerous international forums, we have stated our clear and balanced vision for ways to end the strife and suffering. For us, three priorities must be respected at this delicate stage.

First, we call for the cessation of hostilities so that humanitarian assistance, medical supplies and food can be delivered to hard-to-reach areas under siege, particularly in Aleppo. We emphasize that the main priority is the protection of civilians. Secondly, we emphasize that, in order to reach a political solution, which is the only way to achieve peace in Syria, negotiations among Syrian parties must be resumed with a view to reaching a consensus on a transitional political process under Syrian leadership, in line with the guidelines of the International Syria Support Group, the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and the relevant United Nations resolutions. Thirdly, we call for redoubled and united efforts to combat and eliminate the terrorist organizations, including Da'esh and Jabhat Al-Nusra, that have exploited political divisions in Syria.

In conclusion, I wish to state that we appreciate all the work of the Security Council, particularly the recent efforts of Egypt, New Zealand and Spain. We reiterate our call to the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities and take all possible measures to curtail the violence and facilitate the delivery of assistance inside Syria. We urge all the concerned parties to fulfil their obligations, in accordance with international humanitarian law and respect for human rights.

**Mr. Garcia Moritán** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina has followed with alarm and grave concern the developments in the Syrian Arab Republic since the beginning of the conflict in 2011 and is deeply concerned about the worsening humanitarian situation over the past several weeks. Accordingly, along with 73 other Member States, we signed on to the request for the convening of this meeting of the General Assembly because we believe that the most democratic and representative body of the Organization cannot continue to be silent. We thank Canada for its valuable and important initiative, which we support on the understanding that its goals are primarily humanitarian.

It is of particular concern that the Security Council remains unable to agree on measures to achieve a ceasefire to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to the Syrian civilian population. For Argentina, now is not the time for political speculation

or pointing fingers, but for taking firm action in accordance with the responsibility that devolves on the Council and, in particular, on its five permanent members. The General Assembly must send a clear and strong message to the parties to the conflict on the need to strictly abide by international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including the necessary distinction between combatants and civilians. At the same time, the Assembly must demand assurances that immediate and unimpeded access will be granted for humanitarian assistance to reach all areas of conflict, including besieged and difficult-to-reach areas, such as Aleppo, which during the past several weeks has been the scene of intense fighting and bombardment.

Although we welcome any initiative — even if it is for a few hours only — to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population, which is the most affected by the conflict, we are convinced of the need for an unconditional ceasefire rather than temporary truces, thereby affording the time to accelerate the effort to arrive at a permanent political settlement.

Argentina condemns the acts of violence, the terrorism and the indiscriminate attacks committed against the civilian population, including against hospitals, schools and humanitarian aid convoys, as well as the use of chemical weapons, as reported by the Joint Investigative Mechanism of the Joint Mission of the Organization of the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations, which have led to a thoroughly unsustainable situation throughout Syria. In that regard, we note the primary responsibility of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to protect its people in accordance with international law, as well as the necessity for all parties to the conflict to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Argentina emphatically condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and rejects in the strongest terms the terrorist activity of the self-proclaimed Islamic State and of the Al-Nusra Front and other terrorist groups recognized as such by the Security Council. In that vein, our country reaffirms its conviction that the fight against terrorism must take place within the framework of international law, respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. Similarly, I would also like to reiterate yet again that providing arms, related materials and financing to the parties to the conflict simply serves to exacerbate the tragedy that the Syrian people is experiencing.

We wish to emphasize the need for the serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed by the parties during the conflict to be duly investigated and the perpetrators tried, either by the national authorities or by the applicable international mechanisms.

Argentina is convinced that there can be no military solution to the prolonged conflict that Syria has been experiencing since 2011. We therefore reiterate our strong support for the efforts undertaken by the Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, and the international community, including the discussions under way between the co-Chairs of the International Syria Support Group, the United States and the Russian Federation, in the quest to arrive at an immediate solution to the serious humanitarian crisis, the implementation of the ceasefire and a political agreement between the Syrian Government and the opposition to end the Syrian conflict through a credible, inclusive and non-sectarian political process led by Syria that follows the guidelines established by the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) of 30 June 2012.

**The President:** We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/71/L.39, entitled “The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic”, as orally corrected.

Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote before the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Four delegations have requested to speak in explanation of vote before the voting: the Islamic Republic of Iran, Saudi Arabia, Trinidad and Tobago and the Russian Federation. In the interests of time, I will assume that it is the Assembly’s wish to finalize the list.

*It was so decided.*

**Mr. Dehghani** (Islamic Republic of Iran): Draft resolution A/71/L.39, on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, is one-sided and divorced from the reality on the ground in Syria. We agree that the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic has been alarming for several years now and that the humanitarian situation has been deteriorating. We also fully agree that the international community, represented by the United Nations, should do everything in its power to address the humanitarian crisis in Syria.

From the outset of the crisis, Iran, through its Red Crescent Society, has been actively engaged in humanitarian operations in Syria. Bearing in mind its moral and international commitments, Iran will continue to assist Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance.

However, it is evident that the crisis is only the effect and that the draft resolution is totally silent about the root cause. It is an established fact that terrorism and violent extremism are the root causes of the disaster. That is the issue that should be first and foremost addressed by the international community. Militants and terrorists who are let into Syria, mostly through lax border control, and who are supported by some foreign countries, are responsible for the very difficult situation and the ongoing humanitarian disaster.

It is again an established fact that a number of armed terrorist groups, such as Da'esh, Jabhat Al-Nusra and Jaysh Al-Fatah, have been active in Syria and in control of territory. Their occupation of some densely populated regions of that fellow State Member of the Organization has exacerbated the situation. Actions by those groups have been the main source of the civilians' suffering and have been and continue to be a tremendous challenge to humanitarian operations. They have spread terror and intimidation among the population, some of whose members they have forcibly used as human shields. The control of territory by feckless and reckless groups, wherever it occurs, creates major threats and can ignite a humanitarian crisis. That is the core of the problem that we are facing in Syria.

Given that established fact, I have a question for the main sponsors of the draft resolution. The question can also be directed to the representative of the United Kingdom and the members of his delegation, who have blamed others for their fight against terrorism. What would they do if part of their own territory had been occupied by similar terrorist groups? Would they not take military action to dislodge them?

To resolve the crisis in Syria, we need to put an end to terrorist activities and at the same time continue our efforts to reach a comprehensive and exclusively Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political settlement based on dialogue among Syrians, without preconditions, aimed at ending hostilities and establishing peace and tranquillity. Those two actions should go hand in hand. The draft resolution is totally silent on those two major imperatives. Therefore, we will vote against the draft resolution.

**Mr. Al-Mouallimi** (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting to discuss the grave humanitarian situation in Syria and the actions taking place there, including mass killings, displacement, blockade and other crimes. Those actions by the Syrian regime and its allies are an affront to the conscience of humankind and constitute crimes against humanity. That must be addressed and curbed.

We appreciate the efforts of the sponsors, particularly Canada, in preparing draft resolution A/71/L.39. We also appreciate the good offices that accompanied the negotiations on the draft resolution. Regretfully, we find that the sum total of the draft resolution does not rise to the level of the suffering of the Syrian people. Nor does it distinguish adequately between the attackers and the attacked. Nor does it fully address the responsibility of the Syrian authorities and their allies, given the aerial bombardment of residential areas, with their defenceless civilians, the use of chemical weapons and the displacement of millions of people.

Hence the draft resolution cannot serve as an act of loyalty to the resilient Syrian people. It addresses the situation in Syria. But the grave situation in Aleppo and the inability of the Security Council to address that situation by adopting effective resolutions, given the double Russian-Chinese veto, make it necessary for the General Assembly to hold an emergency special session and to take over the responsibility of maintaining peace and security, which is being endangered by the military operations of the Syrian authorities and their allies.

Consequently, and despite our reservations regarding the draft resolution, my delegation will vote in favour of it. Together with other friendly countries, we will seek ways to circumvent its shortcomings.

**Ms. Beckles** (Trinidad and Tobago): Trinidad and Tobago wishes to provide the following explanation of vote prior to the voting on draft resolution A/71/L.39, entitled "The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic".

Trinidad and Tobago has maintained a principled stand on country-specific draft resolutions brought before the General Assembly. Although we have deviated from that position on occasion, we have a carefully constructed track record of abstention on country-specific resolutions in the General Assembly.

In that context, Trinidad and Tobago wishes to express its reservations with respect to the references to the Syrian authorities in the draft resolution before us. Quite apart from the problematic references to the Syrian authorities, as well as my country's principled position on country-specific resolutions, our preference would be to have a more balanced resolution that refers to all the parties involved in the conflict.

Trinidad and Tobago's position on the draft resolution is also informed by its shared responsibility, as part of the international community, to take action in the face of crises such as the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Syria. That responsibility includes the responsibility to protect populations from war crimes and crimes against humanity. In that regard, we are of the view that the gravity of the situation at hand warrants a departure from this country's principled position on country-specific draft resolutions brought before the General Assembly. Trinidad and Tobago will therefore vote in favour of draft resolution A/71/L.39.

**Mr. Churkin** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I must briefly comment on the statement delivered by the representative of the United States. The United States delegation prefers to engage in aggressive rhetoric, betting on further escalation around Aleppo, without any regard for the fate of its civilians. It was the United States delegation that disavowed a proposal that the United States Secretary of State submitted to our Foreign Minister on 2 December. It was the United States delegation that sabotaged a meeting of experts that was agreed by our ministers, preferring to engage in a loud and useful propaganda show at the Security Council.

Rather than replicate propagandistic clichés about Aleppo, the United States delegation should rather explain what is occurring under United States leadership around Mosul, what has occurred under United States leadership in Fallujah. The United States delegation could have rather drawn conclusions from its disastrous policy in Iraq, Libya and Syria, a policy for which the people in those countries and far beyond have paid and will continue to pay far too high a price.

**The President:** We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/71/L.39, entitled "The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic", as orally corrected.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Ms. Pollard** (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/71/L.39: Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Botswana, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kiribati, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, the Marshall Islands, Mexico, Micronesia, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Palau, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

**The President:** A recorded vote has been requested.

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour:*

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kiribati, Kuwait, Latvia, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Norway, Oman, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands,



Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Yemen, Zambia

*Against:*

Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Burundi, China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Nicaragua, Russian Federation, South Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zimbabwe

*Abstaining:*

Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Fiji, Guinea-Bissau, India, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Mongolia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, South Africa, Sudan, Suriname, Tajikistan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam

*Draft resolution A/71/L.39, as orally corrected, was adopted by 122 votes to 13, with 36 abstentions (resolution 71/130).*

**The President:** Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Citations from literature may help us to understand the surreal landscape in Syria. The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche said that people do not always wish to hear the truth because they do not want their illusions to be shattered. According to the American novelist Mark Twain, it is "easier to fool people than to convince them that they have been fooled". And our renowned Islamic and Arab leader Imam Ali Abi Talib spoke words of wisdom to us all when he said, "Oh, right! You have not left me with any friend".

I would like to thank the delegations of the States that refused to be puppets and instead were independent in supporting international law. They took hold of a

hot-potato issue when they defended the right, chose to respect the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and voted against or abstained on the egregiously unfair resolution just adopted. My delegation regrets the fact that the General Assembly has adopted a politicized, non-consensual text that runs counter to the provisions of the Charter, as I said in my earlier statement today.

In that regard, I would like to stress that the statements of some countries have confirmed what I said earlier, namely, that some delegations are disregarding the humanitarian situation in Syria. In that regard, their real intention is to use various forums — including the United Nations — to extend political help to the terrorist group Jabhat Al-Nusra and the other such groups that they support, as a cover-up for Governments of those countries that continue to provide armed terrorist groups with information and logistics, as well as military, political and financial support, in order to kill the Syrian people and destroy what they have built over decades, thereby serving the interests of Israel, which are to destroy peace and legitimize occupation and settlement activities.

We are witnessing a despicable, satanic coalition among Israel, its sponsors and its old and new allies. All the desperate attempts to distort the facts — through fabricated reports and the exploitation of the United Nations for the purposes of destructive agendas — will not, however, deter our Government and its allies from continuing to fight terrorism and attempting to rid the Syrians of this evil scourge. The States I mentioned created, sponsored and supported those groups, which are now a threat to the entire world.

We promise the Syrian people that we will not betray them — even as those States try to frustrate their dreams and mar their future. Our Government, army and allies will restore security, stability, development and prosperity to all of Syria. No sponsor of terrorism will participate in our rebuilding. I want to inform the sponsors of terrorism in Aleppo that the Syrian army has now liberated 93 per cent of the terrorist-controlled areas in Aleppo and that their bloodthirsty game is all but over. The full liberation of Aleppo will take place very soon. My advice to the sponsors of terrorism and terrorists in Aleppo is to find a corner, like punished children, to cry over their failure, frustration and defeat. Their bloodthirsty terrorist game in Aleppo and Syria is over. It is high time for them to acknowledge their loss, a loss that will not be mitigated through today's

adoption of a trivial, unjust and politicized resolution. I would like to assert that those who wager on terrorism as a political weapon will eventually lose when the terrorists turn against them, with all of their evil might.

**Mrs. Chartsuwan** (Thailand): We would like to thank you, Sir, for promptly convening this formal plenary meeting to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis facing the people of Syria, an important issue in which the United Nations as a whole has an essential and responsible role to play. The armed conflict and escalation of violence that we are witnessing has taken an unprecedented toll on civilians in Aleppo and elsewhere in Syria. That is why Thailand has given careful consideration to resolution 71/130, sponsored by Canada.

Our support of the resolution reflects Thailand's grave concern over the dire humanitarian situation and expresses our solidarity with those who continue to face devastation from the ongoing crisis, particularly civilians in besieged and hard-to-reach areas and those requiring urgent medical attention and assistance.

Regardless of their political alignment, all parties concerned must abide by and respect international humanitarian law. We urge all parties to cease hostilities and violence and to protect and minimize harm to civilians by ending all sieges, prohibiting indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian objects and granting humanitarian access to those in need.

As the conflict continues in its sixth year, it is clear that there is no military solution. Therefore, the international community must exhaust all channels for dialogue, with the goal of achieving a peaceful and lasting political settlement of the crisis.

**Mr. Rosselli** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay's position with regard to the humanitarian crisis in Syria has been expressed on numerous occasions during open meetings of the Security Council, where we sit as a non-permanent member. We decided to support resolution 71/130, as we know that what is needed now is a clear and concise resolution to ensure an urgent cessation of hostilities, access to humanitarian assistance throughout Syria, the protection of civilians and the lifting of all sieges, with a view to subsequently advancing towards a political solution to the crisis.

In that connection, Uruguay supports the paragraphs of the resolution that aim to alleviate the desperate situation of the Syrian people. However, my country cannot support most of the preambular paragraphs, as

they do not promote the resolution's objectives, but rather politicize the results of the negotiation. In doing so, they present a picture that does not fully reflect the realities of the conflict. Therefore, we disagree with the contents of the fifth to the twentieth preambular paragraphs, inclusive, and express our reservations regarding them.

**Mr. García Moritán** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the delegations of Argentina and Brazil, I wish to explain our votes on resolution 71/130, which was just adopted by the Assembly.

Our delegations voted in favour of the resolution because we believe that, when faced with facts that are common knowledge, the General Assembly must send a strong and clear message regarding the tragic humanitarian situation resulting from the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. In keeping with its humanitarian objective, the resolution calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities and reiterates that the parties must strictly comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law. And, accordingly, they should facilitate access for humanitarian assistance to all the conflict-affected zones, including besieged and hard-to-reach areas.

We are also categorical about the need to ensure that those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity are brought to justice. We hope that this General Assembly initiative will help to overcome the current polarization that is paralysing the Security Council with regard to Syria, rather than prolonging it.

Our delegation has reiterated that the only sustainable solution to the conflict entails a political process, led by Syria, that is aimed at establishing a credible, inclusive and non-sectarian system of governance and the drafting of a new constitution, as Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) requires.

Although our delegation supports the text of the resolution as a whole, we believe that some paragraphs can be regarded as selective, in that they portray the Syrian Government as the only party responsible for the origin of the conflict and its continuation. Not only does the language fail to reflect the complexity of the humanitarian tragedy in Syria, especially if we consider the many foreign players involved, but it is not appropriate to the primarily humanitarian objective of the resolution.

**Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China has always taken a responsible approach to the Syrian issue. We are firmly committed to the purposes and principles

of the Charter of the United Nations and to a political solution to the Syrian issue. China maintains that, in view of the current situation, all the parties should focus their efforts on the four-track strategy: the resumption of the ceasefire, political negotiations, cooperation on counter-terrorism, and humanitarian assistance.

Unilaterally imposing pressure and politicizing humanitarian issues will only further escalate the situation. At the same time, China would advise a small number of countries to end the practice of criticizing the legitimate positions of other countries and to make genuine efforts to help arrive at a political solution to the Syrian issue.

**Mr. Barros Melet** (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile voted in favour of resolution 71/130, entitled “The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic”. It did so because the resolution has a humanitarian objective, as established in its operative part, which focuses on protecting the civilian population and allowing access, and which calls for compliance with international human rights law and international humanitarian law. However, we do not agree with the inclusion of elements of a selective nature in the preambular part concerning the origin of the conflict, or with the terms that are used to refer to some of the parties, because they do not contribute to promoting the necessary understanding to elicit a humanitarian response.

A political solution and political dialogue are the only way to tackle the humanitarian crisis. We cannot be oblivious to the fact that it is the civilian population, including millions of boys and girls, that has been the most affected during the years of conflict. Nor can we think about lasting peace without justice, accountability and reconciliation. We stress that any effort to tackle the humanitarian situation will be insufficient if, at the same time, we do not guarantee an inclusive political process that is led by the Syrians themselves. A political solution, however, will remain out of reach so long as the militarization of the conflict continues. Hence, we call categorically for an end to the provision of arms to all the parties, and we hope that the report of the Secretary-General requested by the General Assembly will offer viable recommendations on protecting the civilian population and the critical infrastructure, such as hospitals and schools.

**Mr. Isnomo** (Indonesia): My delegation voted in favour of resolution 71/130, adopted today, entitled “The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic”, and wishes to explain its position.

Since March 2011, Indonesia has remained consistent in its repeated encouragement and calls to all conflicting parties in the Syrian Arab Republic to resolve political issues peacefully through dialogue and negotiation, instead of resorting to force and violence, because we believe that there is no military solution to the conflict. In doing so, Indonesia has called for the international community to respect the sovereignty, independence, unity and the territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, while calling on the latter to respect international human rights law and humanitarian law and to fulfil its obligations under the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

It is unfortunate that the situation in Syria has yet to improve. It has, in fact, worsened. Indonesia remains deeply disturbed by the developments affecting civilians and the loss of human lives. We urge all parties to grant humanitarian access and desist from targeting civilians and essential civilian infrastructure, which is in clear contravention of the Geneva Convention. In that regard, the recent news of the brief suspension of military activities in Aleppo would be a first step in providing humanitarian and medical access to the civilian population in the besieged areas. We once again urge a cessation of hostilities by all sides and access for humanitarian relief.

Indonesia had hoped for a more concise and balanced text that would place immediate priority on the cessation of conflict and hostilities, the granting of access to humanitarian assistance and the immediate resumption of a Syrian-led inclusive political process aimed at the formation of a Government that would establish order and foster long-awaited peace for the Syrian people in the country. Nevertheless, in the spirit of constructive engagement and to reach a possible resolution to the current situation in Syria, and in particular to relieve the plight of the Syrian civilian population, especially women and children, Indonesia joined the international call for resolving the situation in Syria by voting in favour of the resolution.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to underscore that the protracted conflict, which has caused immeasurable loss, casualties and harm for the Syrian people, could have long been resolved had the Security Council demonstrated its leadership and fulfilled its obligations for the maintenance of international peace and security.

**The President:** It is approaching 1 p.m., and we still have another 12 speakers who wish to explain their votes. Therefore, we will continue this afternoon at 3 p.m.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*