



# General Assembly

Seventy-fifth session

**21**<sup>st</sup> plenary meeting  
Thursday, 5 November 2020, 10 a.m.  
New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Bozkir . . . . . (Turkey)

*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

## Agenda items 9 and 14

### Report of the Economic and Social Council

#### Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/75/3 Part I and Part II)

#### Note by the Secretary-General (A/75/575)

#### Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

**The President:** In connection with agenda item 9, I would like to recall that, pursuant to resolution 58/316, of 1 July 2004, the Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 18 September, to consider agenda item 9 in its entirety in plenary, on the understanding that the administrative, programme and budgetary aspects should be dealt with by the Fifth Committee.

At the same meeting, the Assembly took note of the clarification that, in implementing resolution 58/316 to consider item 9 in its entirety in plenary, the relevant parts of chapter I of the report (A/75/3) that are under agenda items already allocated to the Main Committees will be considered by the Committee concerned for final action by the General Assembly.

In connection with agenda item 14, members will recall that, pursuant to resolution 57/270 B, of 23 June 2003, the Assembly decided to consider, under the

item, the chapters of the annual report of the Economic and Social Council relevant to the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, including through the participation of the President of the Council in its discussions.

I now give the floor to the President of the Economic and Social Council for the 2020 session, Her Excellency Ms. Mona Juul, to introduce the report of the Council on its 2020 session.

**Ms. Juul** (Norway): It is my pleasure to introduce to the General Assembly the 2020 report of the Economic and Social Council (A/75/3 Parts I and II) on its 2020 session. As the report shows, in the midst of the pandemic, the Economic and Social Council was able to act swiftly to reorganize its work and that of its subsidiary bodies. We readjusted our focus to assess and respond to the economic, social and environmental impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Although we had to modify our plans, we were always moving ahead and getting the work done for the people and the planet.

I thank all Member States for their patience and support shown to the Bureau and myself during this time. I also wish to thank the Secretariat and staff all over the world for their hard work in an extremely challenging working environment. Together, we showed the world that the work of the United Nations, including the Economic and Social Council, does not stop even when it seems that everything else is being brought to a halt.

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Owing to the impact of COVID-19, many forums and events of the Economic and Social Council were scaled down or modified, but we managed to forge ahead with a large proportion of our work. That included the forum on financing for development in April. We quickly adapted our modalities and used innovative ways to conduct our negotiations and meetings virtually. The forum held two meetings to address the immediate needs and the longer-term impacts of the pandemic. That convened the United Nations system and other international bodies, which collectively provided more than \$1.2 trillion for the countries most in need. The meetings helped Member States to gain a better understanding of the concrete policy and financing options available to tackle the global crisis and build back better. The Forum on Financing for Development resulted in the first agreed policy guidance on financing the COVID-19 response and recovery.

Also, as part of the financing for development agenda, I was proud to work together with the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session to create the High-Level Panel on International Financial Accountability, Transparency and Integrity for Achieving the 2030 Agenda, whose report is due in February 2021. We look forward to it informing the continuing discussions on financing for development and helping to guide the United Nations and its Member States towards a future with more transparent and accountable financial and economic systems that truly serve our aims of sustainable development.

In May, the operational activities for development segment delivered on its mandate as the prime oversight and accountability platform of the United Nations development system's support to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The segment reviewed four years of progress in implementing the guidance provided by the General Assembly on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of the operational activities of the United Nations system (QCPR), along with progress on implementing the repositioning of the United Nations development system. The segment paved the way for negotiations on the new resolution on the QCPR (resolution 74/297), which will guide the system during the next four years. It also discussed the critical response to COVID-19 at the country level, the funding of operational activities for development, progress on transparency and accountability, the revamped Resident Coordinator system, the new generation of United Nations country teams and the

Secretary-General's recommendations on the regional and the multi-country office reviews.

Following the segment, the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 2020/23, on the implementation of the QCPR, which welcomes the progress achieved by the United Nations development system and notes the challenges remaining. It also provides a mandate to the Secretary-General to take forward the multi-country office review and the repositioning of the regional assets of the United Nations development system.

During the humanitarian affairs segment, the international community came together virtually to address pressing issues and innovations for strengthening humanitarian action, especially in the face of responding to COVID-19. The Chair of the segment launched a call to action in support of the humanitarian response in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, which was joined by 173 delegations, along with the African Union and the European Union. In a series of high-level panels, humanitarian partners highlighted key areas for further action, including the complexity of health challenges in humanitarian contexts and early, fair and equitable access to vaccines and therapeutics. The segment further focused on the role of new technology and innovation in improving humanitarian effectiveness, along with the challenge of protracted internal displacement, with a focus on mobilizing action on longer-term solutions for the more than 50 million internally displaced persons globally.

The segment also held a high-level event on combating and preventing sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian crises, which considered the heightened protection challenges posed by the pandemic, while emphasizing the essential role of women in the fight against COVID-19 and the importance of their inclusion in decision-making and in building responses.

The integration segment also convened virtually and discussed analysis and policy proposals from the Economic and Social Council's subsidiary bodies and the United Nations system on the Council's 2020 theme and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The discussions confirmed that silo thinking and approaches continue to hinder progress on not only the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but also the COVID-19 responses.

The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, convened in July in a virtual format and included a three-day ministerial segment. The Forum brought together Heads of State and Government and ministerial-level officials, together with senior representatives of the United Nations system and other international bodies and stakeholders. It was particularly welcome that 47 countries also proceeded with presenting their voluntary national reviews despite the challenges posed by COVID-19.

The deliberations of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development focused on delivering the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs during this decade of action and delivery in the new context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments engaged in discussions with renowned experts and stakeholders on how the international community can demonstrate solidarity and international cooperation in responding to the pandemic and how to adopt responses that can put us back on track to achieve the SDGs and accelerate progress during the decade of action. The meeting produced key messages and concrete guidance for policymakers and practitioners. Participants emphasized that the world was already not on track to deliver the Goals before the pandemic, and now years of progress are being reversed and the road ahead is steeper. However, they also delivered the firm message that the 2030 Agenda is our road map for recovering from COVID-19 and that the pandemic offers the opportunity to introduce the transformative changes that we need to realize the 2030 Agenda.

We also discussed the importance of solidarity and foresight on financing, and increasing investment in, public services, including social protection, health systems, education, water, sanitation and digital connectivity, as well as pursuing a recovery that builds a more inclusive, gender-responsive and environmentally sound economy.

During its high-level segment, the Economic and Social Council convened a discussion on multilateralism after COVID-19 as a contribution to the UN75 commemorations. It issued a firm commitment to multilateralism, with countries and stakeholders from all regions strongly reaffirming the need to invest in inclusive multilateralism with the United Nations, including a revitalized Economic and Social Council, at its core.

During the 2019-2020 cycle of the Economic and Social Council, I was also proud to continue to reinforce and build on the Council's cooperation with other United Nations bodies — a process instigated by my predecessor, Ambassador Rhonda King of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. I worked closely with the President of the General Assembly of the seventy-fourth session, particularly in ensuring a joined-up/coherent approach to the work of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council during the disruptions created by the pandemic. The Economic and Social Council also held joint meetings with the Second Committee and the Peacebuilding Commission, and I was proud to brief both the Security Council and the Human Rights Council on complementary areas of work of the Economic and Social Council. I look forward to that strong cooperation across the United Nations system continuing during this cycle of the Economic and Social Council and beyond.

The Economic and Social Council also continued to play a facilitating role for civil society, including by granting consultative status to 274 non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It is also noteworthy that 189 NGOs in consultative status presented written statements to the Council's high-level segment in July, which is a record number. That testifies to the determination of civil society to continue to contribute to the Council's work despite the obstacles to in-person participation presented by the pandemic. As the restrictions on participation persist, we must continue to find creative ways to include their much-needed voices in our work.

I also would like to acknowledge the contributions of the science and technology communities on the SDGs and COVID-19 responses, in particular, the work of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism, the United Nations 10-Member Group to support the Mechanism and the United Nations inter-agency task team on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals.

With the support of the Council's Bureau and membership, the Economic and Social Council continued its important work despite all the challenges during its 2020 session, fulfilling our core mission to bring people and issues together to promote collective action for a sustainable world. In these challenging times, the Council has fully demonstrated its unique strength as an inclusive platform to engage and mobilize Governments, local authorities, the United Nations

system, international finance institutions, the scientific community, civil society and young people around the world, and I am proud of our achievements towards the priority areas that I set out one year ago (see A/74/PV.29), including on advancing financing for development, making the Economic and Social Council ecosystem as relevant and efficient as possible, ensuring that the Council plays its part in the implementation of United Nations reform and bringing a gender perspective to all aspects of our work.

Despite the added obstacles that lie ahead, it is clear that the Economic and Social Council is needed now more than ever in order to continue to promote inclusive multilateralism, with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as our guiding pathway to a sustainable future for all.

**Mr. Sandoval Mendiola** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico welcomes the presentation of the report of the Economic and Social Council (A/75/3) and, in particular, the leadership of Norway and Ambassador Mona Juul. The report comes at a decisive time in the implementation of the reform of the United Nations development system, in which we hope the Economic and Social Council will play a key role. The Economic and Social Council, like the Organization as a whole, had to significantly modify its working methods in order to be able to deliver on its mandates during 2020. Mexico believes that the Council has been successful in meeting its objectives in many areas.

My country actively participated in the Economic and Social Council's deliberations. As Vice-President, we had the privilege of presiding over the operational activities for development segment, to which Ambassador Juul referred. The operational activities segment represents the ideal space for accountability and the monitoring of activities on the ground in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We hope that the segment can be further strengthened and made more interactive to facilitate communication between the funds, agencies and programmes and Member States. The operational activities segment was the first segment of the Economic and Social Council to be held in a virtual format, and its importance and significance were particularly noteworthy this year. The success of the segment could be replicated in subsequent ones.

We welcome the success of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, in which Mexico,

through the joint mandate of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, participated by chairing the Group of Friends of the Voluntary National Reviews. We encouraged substantive interaction and the sharing of experiences and lessons learned. In that way, we ensured that all countries that presented their voluntary national reviews were able to interact effectively with other Member States. That demonstrates that the Economic and Social Council was able to successfully fulfil its mandates.

However, challenges remain to ensure that the pandemic is not an obstacle to strengthening multilateralism when we need it most. The resilience of the Organization has never been more important. One such challenge was of course the lack of a ministerial declaration of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. It could not be agreed unanimously, and therefore could not be adopted, since we, the Member States, were not able to agree on a virtual voting process. We will have to continue exploring possibilities to adapt the working methods ahead of the High-level Political Forum in 2021.

Mexico believes that another pending issue is progress on the aligning of United Nations intergovernmental forums with the 2030 Agenda. We cannot lose sight of the importance of that universal and indivisible agenda. Moreover, we are discussing a road map for recovery from the pandemic. Since 2016, co-facilitators have been appointed to advance that process. Mexico regrets the fact that, five years after the adoption of the most ambitious development framework, we are still trying to adapt our intergovernmental spaces to the 2030 Agenda, its goals and its indicators. We believe that there are solid foundations on which we must work and make progress, in accordance with the mapping exercises. We call for an assessment of duplications and gaps in order to achieve an agreement that goes beyond rhetoric. In that way, the agendas of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council will not only be updated to our current policy frameworks but also able to respond to the current needs of our populations. The consistency that we have requested the Secretariat to ensure in its must also apply to that of our principal organs.

We have entered the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals. We must act now so as not to allow events to overtake us. We are confident that the Economic and Social Council and the Organization will rise to the challenge.

In Mexico, the membership will find a constructive partner in all forums, always open to dialogue, and convinced of our collective capacity to provide global solutions to shared problems.

**Mr. Butt** (Pakistan): I would like to begin by thanking Ambassador Mona Juul for her leadership of the Economic and Social Council during these extraordinary times. I would also like to thank Ambassador Juul for presenting the Council's report for the 2020 session/cycle (A/75/3).

The work of the Economic and Social Council is indeed vital to promoting better standards of life and greater freedoms. Never before has the fulfilment of that mandate been more challenging or more imperative than it is today. The various forums and platforms of the Economic and Social Council provide useful opportunities to review our progress and renew our commitments. The Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development are such examples. I believe that under Ambassador Juul's leadership the Council was steered in the right direction to achieve its mandate. Despite the difficulties, the Economic and Social Council was able to adopt the first-ever outcome document on financing for development through virtual negotiations. I recall the establishment of the High-level Panel on International Financial Accountability, Transparency and Integrity for Achieving the 2030 Agenda as another important achievement of her presidency.

I would also like to mention that my own delegation, Pakistan, was part of the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council as the Vice-President responsible for the management segment. In that capacity, Ambassador Munir Akram convened three virtual meetings of the management segment to fulfil the mandated activities.

Allow me to congratulate Ambassador Juul on her successful stint as President of the Economic and Social Council.

**The President:** We have heard the last speaker inscribed for the joint debate. We have therefore concluded the debate on agenda items 9 and 14.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the report of the Economic and Social Council, contained in document A/75/3 parts 1 and 2?

*It was so decided.*

**The President:** The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 9 and 14.

#### **Agenda item 122** (*continued*)

#### **Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit**

**The President:** The General Assembly will now consider agenda item 122, entitled "Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit", to hold a specific meeting focused on development, in accordance with its resolution 60/265 of 30 June 2006.

I have been informed that no Member State has requested to take the floor.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 122.

#### **Agenda item 128**

#### **Strengthening of the United Nations system**

##### **Draft resolution (A/75/L.8)**

##### **Draft amendments (A/75/L.12 and A/75/L.13)**

**The President:** I would like to remind members that the debate on agenda item 128 and its sub-items is scheduled for Tuesday, 1 December 2020.

I am pleased to preside over the meeting today for the adoption of this much-anticipated draft resolution on the modalities for the thirty-first special session of the General Assembly convened in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic (draft resolution A/75/L.8). At the outset, I would like to thank the co-facilitators of the draft resolution, His Excellency Mr. Yashar T. Aliyev, Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan, and Her Excellency Ms. Louise Blais, Deputy Permanent Representative of Canada, for their able leadership and extensive engagement with Member States.

The draft resolution is the result of multiple rounds of consultations, which concluded last month, having spanned the seventy-fourth session and continued into seventy-fifth session. I commend all Member States for their dedication to those deliberations and for their commitment to dialogue and a spirit of compromise.

The draft text is intended to find common ground and ensure the broadest possible support. The adoption of the draft resolution will send a clear signal to the world that the General Assembly is a catalyst for action

by Member States, including coordinated efforts in response to the pandemic.

The special session of General Assembly on the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic is a historic moment and a test for multilateralism. It will be defined by our collective action on one of the most critical issues of our time.

It is vital that the special session provide an inclusive platform that has the capacity to hear from, and address, the concerns of Member States and other stakeholders, including civil society, academia and private-sector experts pioneering the development of vaccines. To that end, the second day will feature interactive multi-stakeholder dialogue panels on different aspects of COVID-19. I am confident that we will all benefit from a deep and diverse exchange of information and views, which will enable us to take stock of efforts to date, identify policy and operational gaps and forge a path forward.

In order to ensure that all voices are heard, I am counting on the Assembly's support and cooperation in adhering to the time limits for video messages and set out in the draft resolution. While we have allotted the maximum time permissible for both days of the session, we each have a responsibility to respect the time of every speaker.

As I have repeatedly stated, the urgency of this pandemic requires us to hold this special session as soon as possible. The special session is not the culmination of our action on this global pandemic. If anything, it is a belated first step, and discussions will catalyse further actions on various aspects of the pandemic. We cannot afford to stand idly by, for the consequences of this pandemic are far-reaching and will impact generations to come.

Make no mistake, this time is a time for action — action in memory of the souls lost to COVID-19, action to protect the most vulnerable people who are depending on us and action to safeguard our futures. Let us not forget that none of us is safe until we are all safe. Therefore, I ask Member States to support this draft resolution and enable the General Assembly to hold its critical special session on 3 and 4 December.

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

**Mr. Nakano** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): Through you, Mr. President,

I wish to inform members that a correct version of draft resolution A/75/L.8 is being uploaded on ODS, based on what was circulated in the letter from the President of the General Assembly dated 29 October 2020. The correction relates to paragraphs 3 (c) and 4 (a).

In the correct version, paragraph 3 (c) will read, as was originally circulated by the President of the General Assembly, "The general debate shall take place on the first day of the special session and shall include statements by Member and Observer States, the European Union ...". Paragraph 4 (a) shall read, as was announced by the President of the General Assembly in his letter of 29 October, "each Member State, Observer State ..." And I was just informed that the correct version of the draft resolution (A/75/L.8) has been now uploaded to ODS, so this is what the General Assembly has before it.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative Armenia to introduce the draft amendment contained in document A/75/L.12.

**Mr. Knyazyan** (Armenia): I have taken the floor to introduce draft amendment A/75/L.12, submitted by the delegation of Armenia to paragraph 3 (b) of draft resolution A/75/L.8, on the special session of the General Assembly in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

Armenia proposes to amend the paragraph to include a statement by the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) in the opening of the special session. Throughout the consultations on the modalities of the special session, Armenia has approached the initiative of the special session from the perspective of ensuring its added value and practical contribution to the response and recovery efforts of the international community. Bearing in mind that the global crisis that the world is currently undergoing is first and foremost a health crisis, we believe that the opening segment of the special session should give priority to the intervention of the Head of the WHO.

As the directing and coordinating authority on international health work, the World Health Organization plays a key role in coordinating the efforts of the international community in fighting COVID-19. We would like to recall also the leadership role of the WHO within the broader United Nations system response.

We hope that the draft amendment, which places emphasis on the central role of the United Nations specialized agency in coordinating the global pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, will be acceptable to Member States.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Israel to introduce the draft amendment contained in document A/75/L.13.

**Mrs. Furman** (Israel): I would like to thank the permanent representative of Azerbaijan, Ambassador Aliyev, and the Deputy Permanent Representative of Canada, Ambassador Blais, for their leadership as the co-facilitators of the modality draft resolution on the special session of the General Assembly (A/75/L.13) in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

The co-facilitators exerted every effort to encourage compromise on difficult issues. We thank them for this and for overseeing the entire process. That said, from the very first informal meeting, we made our position clear regarding the participation formula for the special session. The first draft of the draft resolution used the agreed language of Member States and observers of the General Assembly, which is the most inclusive language that allows for the widest participation. We supported this formulation and were disappointed when, owing to political pressure, the second draft departed from the agreed language, but we continued nonetheless to engage in the negotiation on the draft resolution in good faith.

We were willing to accept the carefully drafted balance compromise text for paragraphs 3 and 4, proposed by the co-facilitators on 13 October, regarding both the participation formula and civil society participation, and were disappointed to see no will to compromise from some other delegations.

The text circulated under a silence procedure on October 26 derogated from the compromise proposal, and we therefore broke silence. Regrettably, the final text of the draft resolution, as circulated for adoption on 29 October, did not take our concern into consideration and did not include the compromise text suggested by the co-facilitators earlier in the process. We therefore propose an amendment to the draft resolution with the purpose of reverting to the agreed language from the first draft.

Israel's amendment, which was circulated yesterday as document A/75/L.13, reads as follows:

“In operative paragraph 3 (c), replace the words ‘Member and Observer States, the European Union’, and, in operative paragraph 4 (a), replace the words ‘each Member State, Observer State, and the European Union’ with the words ‘Member States and observers of the General Assembly’”.

I would like to note that the oral update that was announced by the Secretariat this morning does not change our call for amending the text. We still ask that, in both paragraphs 3 (c) and 4 (a), the language be used from the first draft of this draft resolution, that is, “Member States and observers of the General Assembly”. We believe that this amendment more properly reflects the agreed language of previous resolutions.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the United States to introduce an oral amendment to draft resolution A/75/L.8.

**Ms. Nemroff** (United States of America): The delegation of the United States would like to propose an oral amendment to draft resolution A/75/L.8 as follows. In the fourth preambular paragraph, we propose to delete the language that reads “including the crucial role played by the World Health Organization”, so that the fourth preambular paragraph would then read,

“Reaffirming its commitment to international cooperation and multilateralism and noting the fundamental role of the United Nations system in the comprehensive global response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the crucial efforts of Member States therein”.

The United States offers this amendment to the fourth preambular paragraph in order to restore the crucial balance to the treatment of United Nations agencies in the text. Our response to the global pandemic must include a whole-of-United-Nations-system approach — one that acknowledges the important role numerous United Nations agencies have in addressing the multidimensional nature of the pandemic. Language that elevates the role of one United Nations agency above others is antithetical to a collective and concerted approach by the entire United Nations system.

The pandemic is not only a test of the multilateral system; it is a test of the United Nations system as a whole. We encourage all members to vote “yes” in support of this amendment.

**The President:** We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/75/L.8, the draft amendments contained in A/75/L.12 and A/75/L.13 and the proposed oral amendment. In that connection, I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Nakano** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): The present statement is made in the context of rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, which states that no draft resolution involving expenditure shall be recommended by a committee for approval by the General Assembly unless it is accompanied by an estimate of expenditures prepared by the Secretary-General. No draft resolution in respect of which expenditures are anticipated by the Secretary-General shall be voted by the General Assembly until the Administrative and Budgetary Committee (Fifth Committee) has had an opportunity to state the effect of the proposal upon the budget estimates of the United Nations.

Under the terms of paragraphs 1 and 10 of draft resolution A/75/L.8, which was technically corrected and uploaded on Official Document System, the General Assembly would decide that the special session of the General Assembly in response to the coronavirus disease pandemic at the level of Heads of State and Government will be held for two days, from 3 to 4 December 2020, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., at United Nations Headquarters in New York; and decide that the special session would be conducted within existing resources.

In order to implement paragraph 1 of draft resolution A/75/L.8, additional expenditures would need to be incurred by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, in the amount of \$77,800 in 2020, for interpretation services and verbatim record production in six languages and overtime. However, the additional requirements in the amount of \$77,800 would be met from within existing resources.

Accordingly, should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/75/L.8, no additional requirements would arise under the programme budget for the year 2020.

The statement that I just read out will be made available in *The Journal of the United Nations* under the e-statements link for this meeting.

**The President:** Before we take decisions on draft resolution A/75/L.8, the draft amendments contained in

documents A/75/L.12 and A/75/L.13 and the proposed oral amendment by the United States, the Assembly will hear from delegations wishing to make a statement in the explanation of vote before the voting on the draft resolution, the draft amendments and/or the proposed oral amendments, in one intervention.

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

**Mr. Aliyev** (Azerbaijan): As the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continues to accelerate globally, with over 48 million reported cases of infection and, as of today, 1,232,000 deaths, prompt and adequate response by the international community is required more than ever before. The General Assembly is uniquely positioned and bears the responsibility to address the multidimensional threat posed by the pandemic.

The initiative to convene the special session in response to the COVID-19 pandemic was put forward on 13 May on behalf of the member States of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. The initiative was supported by the majority of the States Members of the United Nations, as required by the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, and the session was convened on 10 July.

Under the current emergency and extraordinary situation, it is critical to strengthen solidarity, cooperation and multilateralism and highlight the central position of the United Nations system. The request to convene the special session of the General Assembly serves those objectives through providing an opportunity for open and transparent discussions among Member States, observer States, observers, relevant United Nations agencies and bodies and other stakeholders.

During the six rounds of informal consultations, draft resolution A/75/L.8 was negotiated in an open, transparent and meaningful manner. The purpose of the draft resolution is to decide on the modalities of the special session, including its scope, format, date and possible outcome.

The amendment made by the delegation of Armenia to paragraph 3 (b) of the draft resolution, contained in document A/75/L.12, consists of two components. The first one is the deletion of the original phrase “Chair

of the Movement of the Non-Aligned Countries” and the insertion of the new phrase “Head of the World Health Organization”. It is apparent that this amendment is not a demonstration of care about the World Health Organization (WHO).

It should be particularly noted that the crucial role of WHO is duly reflected in the draft resolution before us, and the Head of the organization will lead a special presentation and an interactive dialogue during the special session, as stipulated in paragraph 3 (a) (iii) of the draft resolution.

Moreover, the participation of the Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement in the opening segment is based on past practice. That was the case in 1974, when the holding of the sixth special session of the General Assembly, on raw materials and development, was initiated by the Non Aligned Movement.

It is evident that the sole objective of the amendment is to politicize the situation, totally exclude the representation of the Non-Aligned Movement at the opening segment of the special session, undermine the integrity of the draft resolution and challenge the delicate balance achieved as a result of comprehensive negotiations.

It should also be noted that, during all six rounds of negotiations on the draft resolution on modalities, not a single delegation, except Armenia, questioned the participation of the Chair of the Movement of the Non-Aligned Countries in the opening segment of the thirty-first special session. That demonstrated the common general understanding — and we take it as agreement — regarding the necessity for the Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement to address the General Assembly in the opening segment on behalf of the 120 members of the Non-Aligned Movement, the initiator of this very special session. Furthermore, it is abundantly clear that the Non-Aligned Movement and the World Health Organization are not alternatives to one another.

Given everything I mentioned, our delegation requests a recorded vote and calls on Members States to vote “no”, thereby rejecting the amendment contained in document A/75/L.12.

**Mr. Khan** (Pakistan): I requested the floor to express my delegation’s views on the amendment to draft resolution A/75/L.8, contained in document A/75/L.12.

The proposal for convening the special session of the General Assembly in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic was put forward on behalf of the member States of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and has been supported by a majority of States Members of the United Nations. In the wake of the unprecedented health and economic crises unleashed by the pandemic, my delegation attaches immense importance to the convening of the special session as a practical demonstration of international solidarity, cooperation and multilateralism, as well as to enforce the call for global action to address multidimensional impacts of the pandemic.

Draft resolution A/75/L.8, entitled “Special session of the General Assembly in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic”, was negotiated during multiple rounds of consultations in an open transparent and constructive manner. Inter alia, it notes the fundamental role of the United Nations, including the important role played by World Health Organization. In that regard, we appreciate the role played by the co-facilitators, Ambassador Aliyev of Azerbaijan and Ambassador Blais of Canada, in elaborating the text through consultations and engagement with the Member States in a thorough and transparent manner.

The text before us represents the broadest agreement among Member States on the modalities of the special session, including its scope, format, date and outcome, and manages to achieve a balance following several rounds of negotiations. The amendment contained in document A/75/L.12 does not encapsulate the essential elements that had been a source of discord among several Member States during the course of six consultations on the draft resolution, in particular the recognition of the role of the Non-Aligned Movement in initiating this proposal. We are therefore not in a position to support the draft amendment.

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

Before we proceed to take a decision on draft resolution A/75/L.8, in accordance with rule 90 of the rules of procedure, the Assembly shall first take a decision on the draft amendments contained in documents A/75/L.12 and A/75/L.13 and on the oral amendment proposed by the representative of the United States, one by one.

We turn first to the draft amendment contained in document A/75/L.12. A recorded vote has been requested.

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour:*

Armenia, Cyprus

*Against:*

Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Canada, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Togo, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United States of America, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

*Abstaining:*

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Chile, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay

*Draft amendment A/75/L.12 was rejected by 2 votes to 74, with 62 abstentions.*

[Subsequently, the delegations of Nepal and Turkmenistan informed the Secretariat that they

had intended to vote against; the delegations of Austria and Estonia had intended to abstain.]

**The President:** The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft amendment contained in document A/75/L.13.

A recorded vote has been requested.

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour:*

Australia, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, United States of America

*Against:*

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Argentina, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Germany, Greece, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

*Abstaining:*

Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Togo

*The draft amendment was rejected by 118 votes to 7, with 11 abstentions.*

[Subsequently, the delegations of Nepal and Togo informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote against.]

**The President:** The Assembly will now take a decision on the oral amendment proposed by the representative of the United States of America.

I give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation, who wishes to make a statement.

**Mr. Varganov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We believe that the World Health Organization has played a major role in addressing the consequences of the pandemic, and that the way in which this is reflected in the text that you, Mr. President, disseminated accurately reflects reality. Therefore, we do not agree with the proposal made by the United States of America to amend the text of draft resolution A/75/L.8, which was agreed in very difficult circumstances and which preserves a very fragile balance.

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

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour:*

Côte d'Ivoire, United States of America

*Against:*

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Pakistan, Panama,

Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Tuvalu, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

*Abstaining:*

Botswana, Brazil, Ghana, Guatemala, Papua New Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone

*The oral amendment was rejected by 125 votes to 2, with 7 abstentions.*

[Subsequently, the delegation of Nepal informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote against.]

**The President:** Since the draft amendments contained in document A/75/L.12 and A/75/L.13 and the oral amendment proposed by the United States of America have not been adopted, we shall proceed to take a decision on draft resolution A/75/L.8, entitled "Special session of the General Assembly in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic".

A recorded vote has been requested.

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour:*

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania,

Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

*Abstaining:*

Armenia, Israel, United States of America

*Draft resolution A/75/L.8 was adopted by 150 votes to none, with 3 abstentions (resolution 75/4).*

[Subsequently, the delegations of Botswana and Nepal informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote against.]

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

**Ms. Goebel** (Germany): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

The candidate countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania, the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the European Free Trade Association country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this explanation of vote.

We welcome today's adoption of resolution 75/4, on the modalities for the special session of the General Assembly in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. We would like to thank the President of the General Assembly and

the co-facilitators, Azerbaijan and Canada, for all their efforts.

Agreeing on the General Assembly special session modalities today was necessary so that we can proceed to hold the session on 3 and 4 December. In view of the universal impact of COVID-19, which affects all our citizens, we need a united, inclusive response on the part of the General Assembly stressing the central role of the United Nations system not only in responding to the pandemic and its immediate consequences, but also in recovering and rebuilding better, including international cooperation in the face of such global threats. We want the special session to contribute to this undertaking.

For that reason, we strongly welcome the focus of the interactive dialogue on the inter-agency coordination efforts of United Nations entities to address the COVID-19 pandemic. As we did throughout the negotiations, we insist on bringing human rights and the humanitarian dimension into this discussion, hence the importance of the participation of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the interactive dialogue. For us this is a must.

Let me turn to the importance of civil-society participation in this special session, another high priority for the European Union. Throughout these negotiations, we have insisted that without the full contribution of civil society, our objectives in the response to COVID-19 cannot be attained. The involvement of civil society is crucial. For that reason, we call for the full participation of the relevant stakeholders, including civil society, in the General Assembly special session, both during the general debate and in the interactive dialogue.

Moreover, any objections to organizations being included on the list must be made in a transparent manner and be well explained. We regret that despite our flexibility and attempts at providing different language proposals, we continue to have an opaque text that lacks transparency and accountability.

The EU and its member States, together with other delegations, have raised concerns with the way in which previous non-objection clauses have been abused. Let me be clear: we do not deny the right to object per se, but we feel that it cannot be exercised in an arbitrary manner. Concrete reasons must be provided for objecting to the participation of civil-society organizations in our discussions. We therefore

continue to insist on a better approach. For us, the final decision on the list of civil-society organizations must be taken by the General Assembly itself, not by a single Member State. However, let me also add, Mr. President, that we have full trust in the fact that you will do your best to ensure that Member States will use their right to object in good faith and in full transparency.

Finally, we want to insist on the importance of equal involvement by all participants throughout the General Assembly special session. We would have preferred to limit statements in the opening segment of the session to those by United Nations institutions, with priority given to the most pertinent actors within the United Nations system on this occasion.

In addition to the aforementioned, the European Union and its member States stress that we continue to consider that it was necessary to include in the draft before us a reference to Security Council resolution 2532 (2020), adopted unanimously on 1 July 2020.

**Mr. Roscoe** (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom thanks you, Mr. President, and the co-facilitators, Azerbaijan and Canada, for the work done on this modalities resolution over the past two months.

The United Kingdom voted in favour of resolution 75/4, and we believe that we must now turn our attention to what the General Assembly special session can deliver. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) continues to impact us all, and it is important that Member States, United Nations entities, civil society and other relevant stakeholders come together to discuss coordination efforts to address the impact of this pandemic.

However, the United Kingdom was disappointed that despite engaging closely in the negotiation process, our concerns regarding language on civil-society participation were not addressed in the text. As set out in our letter to you, Mr. President, dated 28 October 2020, this language does not include the transparency that we asked for in return for accepting a reference to the non-objection clause. On the contrary, this language paves the way for the abuse of the non-objection clause, as Member States do not have to provide a concrete basis for their objections.

We have witnessed this on a number of occasions, with arbitrary barriers placed on the participation of non-governmental organizations at United Nations events.

Mr. President, you have said that you would involve civil society in a meaningful way, so that a diverse range of voices are heard in the General Assembly Hall. The United Kingdom fully supports you in that endeavour. But meaningful participation requires expansive language on civil-society participation in modalities resolutions, and that rhetoric must be translated into action.

We therefore ask you, Mr. President, to fully reaffirm that civil society and other relevant stakeholders will be able to participate in both sessions of this special session on COVID-19. We also ask for your assurances that the right to object is not abused by Member States. We must remember that civil society has played and continues to play a crucial role in the fight against COVID-19. We must ensure that their voices are included in important discussions on the United Nations response to the pandemic and that the efforts of those who wish to silence them are prevented.

**Mr. Varganov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Russia supported the initiative of the Chair of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries to convene a special session of the General Assembly on the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. We are convinced that the time has come for a focused discussion in the interests of strengthening the joint efforts of the international community to combat the negative impacts of the outbreak of this dangerous disease. Guided by this, our delegation voted in favour of adopting resolution 75/4.

Nevertheless, we cannot but express our disappointment at the fact that the negotiating process on the draft document at the final stage was not sufficiently transparent or balanced. We note that despite the support of an absolute majority of Member States, the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) will not be able to speak at the opening of the general debate of the special session for reasons that are of a political nature. Changing previously agreed wording about the role of WHO in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic is also regrettable. In general, we oppose the politicization of the special session, which is supposed to help intensify international cooperation to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences.

We are convinced that changing the provisions for the participation in the special session of observers from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that do not have consultative status with the Economic and Social

Council is not justified. We underscore that here we are not talking about ignoring the useful and important contribution of representatives of civil society in the work of the United Nations; no one has any doubt about that. Nor is it about the lack of transparency in selecting the NGOs that participate, although the principles for drawing up those lists are opaque. Rather, this is about a number of delegations using the subject of the COVID-19 pandemic to impose upon the General Assembly changes to working methods that have been crafted over many years and which were adopted unanimously five months ago. This is being done as part of a broader policy to undermine the role of national delegations in the work of intergovernmental organizations. We are therefore forced to dissociate from the current wording of footnote 2 of the resolution. We underscore that we do not see it as a precedent for the subsequent work of the General Assembly or other United Nations organs. We trust that the fruitful discussions during the special session, in which we intend to constructively participate, will help the world get a handle on the COVID-19 pandemic as soon as possible.

**Mrs. Furman** (Israel): The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is affecting people and countries all over the world and is having a devastating effect on us all. It is therefore appropriate for the United Nations to hold a special session of the General Assembly in response to the coronavirus disease.

Israel regrets having had to abstain on the modalities resolution today (resolution 75/4). We would have preferred to vote in favour but could not do so due to the political pressure that prevented the resolution from using the agreed participation formula. We therefore dissociate from operative paragraphs 3(c) and 4(a).

**Mr. Sandoval Mendiola** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico voted against the amendment submitted by the representative of Israel amending the phrase contained in operative paragraphs 3(c) and 4(a) pertaining to observer States. The modalities resolutions for the most recent special session of the General Assembly, that is, the one held in 2016 on the world drug problem, included observer States. Their exclusion would be a step backwards. A special session of the General Assembly must involve all delegations under the principle of legal equality, which governs regular sessions. Consequently, Mexico believes that this practice should remain in place.

However, Mexico wishes to make it clear that it is important that in future we also include observers of the General Assembly that do not have the legal character of being a State in order to be more inclusive in terms of the participation of relevant stakeholders.

The fact that Mexico abstained in the voting on the draft amendment contained in document A/75/L.13, submitted by Armenia, should not be in any way interpreted as opposition to the participation of the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO). On the contrary, Mexico has repeatedly stated during the consultation that it is in favour of his being involved. We believe that his participation is important at the opening of the session, because it would be illogical for the specialized agency of the United Nations on effective responses to global health challenges to be absent from a special session such as this.

However, the draft amendment presented omits mention of participation by the Chair of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, rather than simply adding the Director-General of WHO. That goes against the spirit that prevailed in consultations. The participation of the session's conveners at its opening should also be in line with the practice established by the Assembly. We deplore the fact that it was not possible to include both.

**Ms. Nemroff** (United States of America): I wish to thank Azerbaijan and Canada for their able leadership in co-facilitating the intergovernmental negotiations on the modalities for the special session of the General Assembly in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

As we strive to defeat COVID-19 around the world, the United States remains committed to working collaboratively with the international community to take the necessary steps to prevent such a catastrophic pandemic from ever happening again. The United States constructively engaged throughout the negotiations and showed the utmost flexibility on several issues of concern. We were willing to accept the co-facilitators' compromise text, including with regard to civil-society participation in the special session, and the reference to the role of the World Health Organization in the modalities text.

We were disappointed to see that the reference to those and other issues in the final version of the text departed from the co-facilitators' carefully crafted compromise language. For that reason, we broke silence on the 26 October version of the text and

asked the President of the General Assembly to take our proposals into account in a revised version that would allow the special session to enjoy the greatest Member State support possible. We sent an additional letter to the President of the General Assembly that was also disregarded, and, unfortunately, those concerns were not met. This introduction of new language not reached through the normal processes and methods of transparent negotiation undermines the co-facilitators' role and, indeed, the integrity of the process of negotiation by Member States. As a result, we regret that the United States could not join consensus on resolution 75/4.

The United States dissociates from the fourth preambular paragraph due to the reference to the World Health Organization. Our response to the global pandemic must include a whole-of-United-Nations approach that acknowledges the important role that acknowledges the important role that numerous United Nations agencies have in addressing the multidimensional nature of the pandemic. Language that elevates the role of one United Nations agency above others is therefore unacceptable to the United States. For the same reason, we cannot accept the new language on WHO proposed by Armenia in operative paragraph 3(b) and voted against it.

However, throughout the negotiations on the resolution, the United States underscored the important role that non-governmental and civil-society organizations, including those that do not have Economic and Social Council consultative status, should play through their participation in the special session. The role that civil-society organizations play in our collective response to the global COVID-19 pandemic is fundamental and invaluable. The process of admission for those organizations to participate must be completely transparent.

We reiterate our strong concern at the use of the non-objection basis clause in operative paragraph 3 (e), which has, unfortunately, been used to prevent the participation of some civil-society organizations in United Nations meetings and conferences. It is important that we restore an approach that appropriately balances the leadership role of the President of the General Assembly with feedback from Member States and will help us move towards greater transparency, predictability and inclusivity.

The co-facilitators had proposed compromise language that simply commits Member States to letting the Office of the President of the General Assembly know the concrete basis for objections they may have to the participation of civil-society organizations in United Nations conferences and meetings. If there are objections to integrating civil-society voices into discussions throughout the planning for important United Nations processes, these objections should not be made a secret. That should be the minimum that we offer our important partners. We should continue our efforts to develop and refine clear and transparent procedures to facilitate the full participation of civil society in high level United Nations meetings and processes.

**Mrs. González López** (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am taking the floor to provide an explanation of vote regarding the draft amendment presented by Armenia (A/75/L.12) and particularly on resolution 75/4, on the special session of the General Assembly in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

At the outset, El Salvador wishes to record the fact that we acknowledge the laudable work of the World Health Organization, particularly in a context that is highly challenging for all countries, as is the fight against COVID-19. However, we abstained in the voting on the amendment submitted for operative paragraph 3(b), given that we believe that the participation of the Chair of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries should be guaranteed in the light of his leading role in convening this special session of the General Assembly.

Ideally, El Salvador would have preferred to include the participation of both the Chairman of the Movement and the Director-General of the World Health Organization, without having to decide on the participation of one as opposed to the other.

With regard to resolution 75/4, which we have just adopted, El Salvador recognizes the importance of holding a special session of the General Assembly to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly given the fact that this unprecedented phenomenon requires that more effective measures be taken by the international community and the strengthening of multilateralism to that end. With that in mind, my delegation believes that the resolution was highly pertinent, and it actively participated in the negotiation process leading thereto.

As we have set forth in our previous statements, the Republic of El Salvador hopes that the holding of the special session will generate a concrete result with an action-oriented approach, thereby demonstrating how the United Nations system, its Member States and other relevant actors are capable of carrying out measures that lead to a specific outcome that addresses the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the light of the foregoing, my delegation has expressed its ongoing concern with respect to paragraph 8 of the text. We strongly believe that if an effort on this scale is to be undertaken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, then it must be done with a view to achieving a concrete outcome that aligns multilateral efforts and related follow-ups that combat the pandemic and help us to recover from it. That is why, during the last session of negotiations, my delegation expressed its full support for the delegation of Mexico's alternative proposal, keeping in mind that a practical summary is more in line with the position that we have held since the beginning of this important process.

Finally, we reaffirm the importance of all relevant actors inclusively participating in this special session, including those in the scientific field, which will allow us to find a comprehensive solution to combat and overcome the adversities resulting from the pandemic.

**Mr. Fiallo Karolys** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation takes the floor to explain its vote on draft amendment A/75/L.12 and on resolution 75/4 as a whole.

During the informal consultations, Ecuador supported the inclusion of the Executive Director of the World Health Organization in the opening segment of the thirty-first special session of the United Nations General Assembly in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and we regret that resolution 75/4, which we just adopted, does not contain that provision. My delegation nevertheless wishes to record its support for that point in the record of this meeting.

Furthermore, as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Ecuador voted against the draft amendment contained in document A/75/L.12 because it excluded of the Chair of NAM from the opening segment. In this regard, it is worth recalling the principal role that NAM and its member countries, including Ecuador, played in convening of the thirty-first special session of the General Assembly on COVID-19. It is for

this reason also that Ecuador voted today in favour of resolution 75/4 in its entirety.

**The President:** We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting. We have also heard the last speaker on this agenda item.

The General Assembly has just adopted a decision to proceed with a special session on the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic four weeks from now (resolution 75/4). We have never before convened a special session of the General Assembly on a pandemic, but, since the Organization was founded 75 years ago, there has never been a pandemic as far reaching and devastating as COVID-19, touching every one of our countries and economies.

I recognize that there remain different views among the membership on certain issues and principles, several of which are long-standing, in this Hall. But we should not lose sight of the forest for the trees. I encourage Members — in fact, I implore them — to set aside these differences, pull together and contribute to the success of the special session. The people the delegations represent expect no less. Let us use this opportunity to deliver for them and in the process demonstrate through our words and our deeds that multilateralism is essential to confronting this virus and overcoming it.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to the representative of Azerbaijan, Mr. Yashar T. Aliyev, and the representative of Canada, Ms. Louise Blais, the facilitators of the informal consultations, who demonstrated great ability and patience in their conduct of the discussion and complex negotiations on resolution 75/4. I also thank Member States for their valuable contributions to reaching an agreement on the resolution. I also thank the Secretariat for its efforts at a time of financial constraint to support Member States in their desire to proceed with this important special session.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 128.

**Agenda item 137****Seventy-fifth anniversary of the end of the Second World War****Draft resolution (A/75/L.4)****Draft amendments (A/75/L.6 and A/75/L.10)**

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation to introduce draft resolution A/75/L.4.

**Mr. Kuzmin** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I have the honour to take the floor to introduce draft resolution A/75/L.4 on behalf of the following sponsoring States: Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Republic of Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, China, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burundi, Cambodia, the Central African Republic, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Namibia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Serbia, Singapore, South Africa, the Sudan, Syria, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Zambia, Zimbabwe and my country, the Russian Federation.

The previous and current sessions of the General Assembly are directly linked to two great anniversaries: the seventy-fifth anniversaries of the end of the Second World War and of the establishment of the United Nations. These are dates that unite us all.

The very term "the United Nations" emerged during the years of the Second World War. The establishment of the Organization and the adoption of the Charter of the United Nations legally enshrined in law the victory won over Nazism. This war, unprecedented in its scale and ferocity, was a colossal tragedy for the peoples of the entire world. The threat to the fundamental principles of civilization was averted at the cost of vast joint efforts and heavy losses.

We do not have the right to forget history. We have a duty to honour the memory of the victims of that war. The draft resolution presented by the sponsors and contained in document A/75/L.4 provides in particular for the holding of a special solemn meeting of the General Assembly on 1 December. In the past, the General Assembly has held such a meeting every five years on the eve of Victory Day, in May. This year the pandemic unfortunately altered our plans. We call for this draft resolution to be adopted and a solemn meeting

to be held to honour the greatness and memory of the millions of innocent victims, including the victims of various theories of racial or ethnic supremacy and of horrendous war crimes and crimes against humanity. We also wish to honour the memory of those who have fought for us.

Two amendments to the draft resolution have been submitted (A/75/L.6 and A/75/L.10). I will call for a vote on one of them (A/75/L.10) and request the floor a second time after the introduction of the draft amendment on the fifth preambular paragraph (A/75/L.6), which has been submitted by a group of countries.

As for the draft amendment to the second preambular paragraph (A/75/L.10), proposed by the United States, I have the honour to report that, on behalf of the initial sponsors of draft resolution A/75.L.4, the language of the draft amendment is acceptable for inclusion in the main draft resolution. It can therefore be reflected in the text of A/75/L.4 without a vote by way of an oral amendment. We are grateful to the delegation of the United States of America for its constructive proposal.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Germany to introduce the draft amendment contained in document A/75/L.6.

**Mrs. Heusgen** (Germany): On behalf of the sponsors, I would like to introduce the draft amendment contained in document A/75/L.6. We strongly support the aim of the draft resolution A/75/L.4, which is to commemorate the victims of the Second World War with a special solemn meeting at the General Assembly. However, we are gravely concerned that the draft resolution, which was adopted by consensus in the past, was politicized this year through the introduction of new, non-negotiated and controversial language in the fifth preambular paragraph. This language is highly sensitive for many Member States, as the Second World War brought about painful divisions in Europe and far beyond.

From the beginning of the negotiations of the draft resolution, we engaged constructively but our calls to address this issue were ignored and the penholders were unwilling to engage in transparent consultations or find a compromise. For these reasons, we have been forced to introduce the draft amendment contained in document A/75/L. 6, which, if adopted, would delete the fifth preambular paragraph and bring the text back to its agreed form of 2015, which was adopted

by consensus at the seventieth session of the General Assembly (resolution 69/267).

We will vote in favour of this draft amendment and kindly ask Member States to support us and vote in favour of A/75/L.6 in order to avoid major divisions in the General Assembly on an issue that is so important for the international community as a whole.

**Mr. Ngoyi** (United States of America): Given the oral amendment made by the Russian Federation, the United States of America withdraws its proposed draft amendment (A/75/L.10). We also want to thank the sponsor for accepting this change.

**The President:** I note that draft amendment A/75/L.10 has been withdrawn.

I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus.

**Mr. Tozik** (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Belarus is disappointed that a group of countries has introduced an amendment to draft resolution A/75/L.4, entitled “Seventy-fifth anniversary of the end of the Second World War”, contained in document A/75/L.6.

The year 2020 marks the anniversary of the end of the bloodiest and most destructive war in history, which took the lives of many millions of people and caused enormous suffering for all of humankind. This historic event set the stage for the founding of the United Nations, which was designed to save succeeding generations from the scourge of military conflict.

Preserving the memory of the war is our shared duty and a priority for all of us. It is therefore puzzling that a number of countries are trying to delete from the draft resolution the paragraph on the importance of preserving and not desecrating or destroying monuments erected to the memory of those who fought on the side of the United Nations in that war.

We regret that we are starting preparations for a special solemn meeting of the General Assembly in commemoration of all victims of the war, the holding of which is stipulated in draft resolution A/75/L.4, with this unnecessary vote. We call on all countries to vote against the draft amendment contained in document A/75/L.6.

**Ms. Blais** (Canada): I am honoured to speak at this plenary meeting on the agenda item entitled “Seventy-fifth anniversary of the end of the Second World War”.

With regard to action on the draft resolution A/75/L.4 and the proposed amendments, Canada supports the commemoration of this anniversary in a consensus manner, along the lines of agreed language from 2015, when the General Assembly last commemorated the end of the Second World War (resolution 69/267). We join Member States in submitting draft amendments to this end.

Over a million Canadians fought in the Second World War, 45,000 of whom gave their lives and 55,000 more of whom sustained injuries. We honour their sacrifice today, as we will for Veterans Day and Remembrance Day.

The Second World War began in 1939 to halt aggression and expansionism that threatened Europe and the wider world. But as the conflict widened and was prolonged, Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill signed the Atlantic Charter off the coast of Newfoundland, which is now part of Canada, and committed themselves to such principles as the rule of law and the right of self-determination. The Atlantic Charter was subsequently signed by many others, including Canada. Entire nations and peoples joined the fight against aggression and tyranny, but they were also fighting in pursuit of essential freedoms to establish the foundations upon which a new and better world would be built.

When the war ended, in 1945, many of these countries came together in San Francisco determined to build this better world. We enshrined our commitment to doing so in the Charter of the United Nations, and we made clear that shared values, faith in human rights, dignity, equality, justice and respect for obligations and social progress would light our path.

(*spoke in French*)

These values are as intangible as they are universal. They have guided us through remarkable processes of decolonization and economic and social transformation over the past 75 years. The Charter has therefore been a victory for more than just the countries that were involved in the conflict. The Charter has been a victory for all of us, for all countries, large and small — for we the peoples of the United Nations.

(*spoke in English*)

This is why we must respect and defend the Charter and all that it stands for and continue to build with its spirit in our hearts and in our minds. This is true now

more than ever. The coronavirus disease is one of the most challenging global crises since the Second World War, and the pandemic has struck as the global order and people around the world were already facing the challenges of poverty and growing inequality as well as threats to their hard-won civil and political rights. These troubling trends have tended to be revealed and even magnified by the pandemic.

Our challenge therefore is this: to meet the problems before us with the same commitment to realizing a better world as those who met that challenge in San Francisco had in 1945 — to choose solidarity over isolationism, human rights over oppression, equality and social justice over discrimination and narrow nationalism.

May we all remember the sacrifices that were made for us, to be better able to make the right choices. May we all rise to this challenge together.

**Mr. Roscoe** (United Kingdom): It is difficult to follow the powerful words from my friend from the Canadian delegation. I thank her for those.

We simply wish to join Germany in supporting its proposed deletion of the fifth preambular paragraph contained in A/75/L.6.

The United Kingdom also strongly supports the aim of the draft resolution contained in document A/75/L.4. The intent of the resolution is, as others have said, to commemorate the victims of the Second World War with a special solemn meeting. However, we echo the concerns raised by Germany over the addition of politicized and controversial language in the fifth preambular paragraph of draft resolution A/75/L.4.

We pay tribute to the historic role of the Allied forces and their sacrifices in the defeat of Nazism during the Second World War. Nevertheless, we should likewise recognize that it is for Member States to choose how to remember and celebrate their national histories, including through the creation, preservation and, if appropriate, disposal or moving of monuments. The United Kingdom believes that this is a matter for each Member State to decide, and therefore it is inconsistent with the fifth preambular paragraph as it stands.

Since the beginning of the negotiations on this text, in March, we and our likeminded colleagues, have engaged constructively on this draft resolution. There was ample time to address the concerns that we and others repeatedly raised. Unfortunately, our calls were ignored, as was compromise.

The egregious inclusion of the fifth preambular paragraph in A/75/L.4 is particularly galling, but it is emblematic of a wider problem: an attempt by the penholders to use this text to pursue historic revisionism. Indeed, our colleague from the Russian delegation told us just now that we do not have the right to forget history. Well, the United Kingdom maintains that we do not have the right to rewrite history either.

We will therefore vote in favour of the draft amendment, and we kindly ask Member States to support us and vote in favour of A/75/L.6.

**The President:** We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/75/L.4, as orally revised to incorporate draft amendment A/75/L.10, and to consider draft amendment A/75/L.6. Delegations wishing to make statements in explanation of vote before the voting on the draft resolution and/or the draft amendment are invited to do so now in one intervention.

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

**Mr. Kuzmin** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I listened closely to the representative of Germany, who spoke on behalf of a group of States.

Speaking on behalf of that group, Germany proposes deleting from draft resolution A/75/L.4 the following words:

(*spoke in English*)

“Emphasizing that the Victory in the Second World War is the common legacy of all Member States of the United Nations, and noting in this regard the importance of preservation and inadmissibility of desecration or destruction of monuments erected in remembrance of those who fought in that war on the side of the United Nations.”

(*spoke in Russian*)

Why is a group of countries co-sponsoring the draft amendment openly and unabashedly saying that this language is unacceptable? Allow me to explain. Today in some European countries a fully-fledged war has been declared on monuments to those who fought against Nazism. Heroes are now often held

up as criminals who fought on the side of the Hitler coalition or collaborated with the Nazis. Even 10 or 15 years ago, such a shameful phenomenon would have been unthinkable.

What we call rewriting the history of the Second World War is gaining disastrous momentum and taking absolutely ugly forms. It is surprising and distressing to see among the sponsors of the draft amendment States whose heroic peoples made such a sizeable contribution to the defeat of Nazism. But it is especially painful to see Georgia and Ukraine among those supporting the draft amendment. Hundreds of thousands of Georgians and Ukrainians gave their lives fighting selflessly as part of the Red Army against Nazism. Their memory is sacred. The idea behind the draft amendment is nothing other than a betrayal of their grandparents who died on the battlefields. I cannot describe it in any other way.

We are the last generation that will see those who participated in this war alive. There are very few of those participants left and more of them leave us with each passing year. The Soviet Union bore the greatest losses — 27 million lives — and made a most substantial contribution to the overall victory in the Second World War. Just imagine — there is not a single family in Russia that did not lose family members in the war.

Detractors say that Russia is supposedly trying to monopolize the victory, but the truth is quite the opposite. Let us take a look at the content of the fifth preambular paragraph, which draft amendment A/75/L.6 invites members to delete. It says that the victory is the common heritage of all States Members of the United Nations and that monuments to those who fought against Nazism are a worldwide memorial to humankind. We are proud of that history and we are ready to share that pride with everyone.

I therefore call on everyone to vote against draft amendment A/75/L.6.

**Mr. Utebaev** (Kyrgyzstan): This year we celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, the greatest tragedy of the twentieth century for the peoples of the world. The war took the lives of more than 70 million people, and almost half of them — 27 million people — were Soviet citizens. The peoples of the Soviet Union, including Kyrgyzstan, sacrificed their lives to safeguard the future of humankind and world civilization.

Our duty is to carefully preserve and pass on the legacy of truth about the most terrible war in human history. We strongly believe that the international community must remember the lessons of the Second World War and work to promote the preservation of the historical memory of peoples. It is our common duty to preserve and firmly defend historical truth and honour the lessons of the Second World War and the memory of its victims and of all who fought against Nazism and fascism.

It is especially important to honour the memory of people who died during the Second World War and maintain military graves and monuments in good condition. In this regard, along with the other sponsors of draft resolution A/75/L.4, the Kyrgyz Republic opposes the amendment to delete the fifth preambular paragraph of the draft resolution, and we appeal to all States to support our position during the voting.

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

Before we proceed to take a decision on draft resolution A/75/L.4, as orally revised, in accordance with rule 90 of the rules of procedure, the Assembly shall first take a decision on the draft amendment contained in document A/75/L.6.

We turn first to the draft amendment contained in document A/75/L.6.

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

**Mr. Nakano** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft amendment, and in addition to the delegations listed, New Zealand and Norway have also become sponsors of document A/75/L.6.

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

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour*

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand,

North Macedonia, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

*Against*

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Congo, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mongolia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Zambia, Zimbabwe

*Abstaining*

Algeria, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Maldives, Mexico, Nepal, Panama, Paraguay, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Yemen

*The draft amendment contained in document A/75/L.6 was adopted by 54 votes to 40, with 45 abstentions.*

**The President:** The Assembly will now proceed to take a decision on draft resolution A/75/L.4, as orally revised and amended.

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

**Mr. Nakano** (Department 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, the following countries have also become sponsors of A/75/L.4, as orally revised and as amended: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, the Central African Republic, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Fiji,

Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Namibia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Serbia, Singapore, South Africa, the Sudan, Suriname, the Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

**The President:** May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/75/L.4, as orally revised and amended?

*Draft resolution A/75/L.4, as orally revised and amended, was adopted (resolution 75/5).*

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

**Mr. Roscoe** (United Kingdom): We simply wish to say at this point that resolutions commemorating important anniversaries to mark the end of the Second World War have been negotiated by the Assembly for a long time. In this instance, we engaged constructively from the beginning of the process, repeatedly raising our concerns as I have done previously, about the addition of what we considered to be politicized language. However, our requests of the penholder were unanswered.

We are pleased that, ultimately, resolution 75/5 has been amended to enable consensus and preserve international unity. We look forward to the commemorative event on 1 December.

**Ms. Goebel** (Germany): I have the honour to speak on behalf of all 27 member States of the European Union (EU), as well as the following countries: Albania, Australia, Canada, Georgia, Iceland, the Republic of North Macedonia, New Zealand, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

Resolution 75/5, commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, was negotiated for a long time. The EU has engaged constructively from the beginning. However, our calls went unheard for the longest time and the penholder was unwilling to engage on certain elements.

We appreciate the fact that, in the end, the resolution was amended in a way that enabled its consensus-based adoption, thereby preserving the usual unity of the international community on the subject. In that regard,

we look forward to the commemorative event to be held on 1 December.

**Mr. Situmorang** (Indonesia): Indonesia wishes to take the floor to explain its abstention in the voting on the amendment to the fifth preambular paragraph to the former draft resolution A/75/L.4 (resolution 75/5), as contained in document A/75/L.6.

Indonesia continues to lend its full support to the resolution, as a whole, as a sponsor of the text presented by the Russian Federation, as we have done in previous years. We share the importance of the historic occasion of the end of the Second World War, with its impetus for the founding of the United Nations and therefore has hope for a consensus on the resolution.

Resolution 75/5 plays an important role for the States Members of the United Nations as they reminisce on the history and are mindful of its lessons, while recognizing the mistakes of the past and learning to approach situations differently. We have to move forward. We must work together in a much better way and help create an enduring environment that is conducive to and promotes international peace and security, development and human rights. In short, we must deliver to we, the peoples.

At the same time, Indonesia notes the complexity of the history related to the end of the Second World War and its various interpretations and perceptions. In that regard, countries may have different perspectives on the events and preservation of the valuable history and lessons learned. Together we learned from that important chapter of our history that we have to advance peaceful solutions to our differences.

Indonesia therefore underscores the importance of dialogue in bridging the differences in our future deliberations of the resolution, with a view to finding a compromise for the text to be adopted by consensus. Rest assured of our delegation's readiness to engage constructively with all Member States on this indispensable part of world history.

**Mr. Kyslytsya** (Ukraine): I would like to explain my delegation's position on resolution 75/5, which was just adopted.

During the Second World War, Ukrainians made sacrifices and an enormous contribution to the victory over Nazism by demonstrating exemplary heroism in the struggle for the liberation of their native soil and the countries of Europe. It is also obvious that the efforts

and sacrifice of the United Nations to end the Second World War laid the groundwork for our Organization 75 years ago. My country is proud to be one of its founders.

Unfortunately, the penholder's real attitude to the Charter of the United Nation is well-known. The drafting process of resolution 75/5, on such an important occasion for all of us, was far from ideal. The initial language used in the draft, as presented by the main sponsor, blatantly sought to manipulate history, endeavoured to monopolize the victory over Nazism and shrank the essence of the last resolution adopted by consensus — resolution 69/267. Therefore, we welcome the fact that the essential language from the previous resolution on refraining in international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State was finally restored in the draft.

We also very much appreciated and supported the adoption of the amendment presented by the European Union, which made the text clear from a historical point of view. Although we believe that history should be left to historians, I would like to note that on 23 August 1939, the secret Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed. It delineated the spheres of interests between the Nazi regime and the Soviet Union under communist rule and led to further division in Europe for decades. The Pact led to aggression and occupation, unprecedented human suffering and crimes against humanity.

In 1939, the Nazi regime invaded Poland. Two weeks later, Stalin also invaded Poland and followed up with the occupation of parts of Finland and the annexation of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and parts of Romania. The question of why and who started the bloodiest war in the history of mankind is by and large a rhetorical one. Both regimes had a lot in common. There was neither democracy nor respect for human rights, which gave rise to authoritarianism and served as a trigger for aggression against sovereign States. The crackdown on democracy in contemporary Russia and its ongoing aggression against Ukraine only prove that that interlink remains valid .

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that Ukraine condemns all cynical attempts of the Russian Federation to present itself as a champion of combating Nazism, while glorifying Stalinism and following his methods by committing similar war crimes and crimes against humanity in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

**Mr. Ngoyi** (United States of America): The United States disassociates itself from the consensus on the fourth preambular paragraph. Resolution 75/5 includes references to decolonization, which are not related to the topic at hand. While the United Nations has played a role in a decolonization process, the United States believes that decolonization is an effort better determined by a territory and its administering Power than by a United Nations body.

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

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its concentration of agenda item 137.

### Agenda item 67

#### Report of the Human Rights Council (A/75/53 and A/75/53/Add.1)

**The President:** I would like to recall that the General Assembly, at its second plenary meeting on 18 September, decided to consider agenda item 67 in plenary meeting and in the Third Committee, pursuant to resolution 65/281 of 17 June 2011.

In accordance with decision 75/506 of 13 October 2020, I now introduce the pre-recorded statement of Her Excellency Ms. Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger, President of the Human Rights Council.

*A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (see A/75/825).*

**The President:** It is my pleasure to welcome Her Excellency Ms. Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger. Due to restrictions resulting from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the President could not be here in person. However, the link between the United Nations campuses in Geneva and New York remains indestructible. We are therefore one United Nations and the annual presentation of the report (A/75/53 and A/75/53/Add.1) of the Human Rights Council to the General Assembly is important evidence of this bond. We are all working in the image of the founders of the Organization, who 75 years ago declared in the first paragraph of the Preamble of the Charter of the United Nations,

“We the peoples of the United Nations determined to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the

equal rights of men and women, and of nations large and small...”

These words were drafted to safeguard humankind against future challenges.

As we tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, they remain profoundly relevant. For the COVID-19 pandemic is not just a health crisis. It is a human rights crisis. In an era of inequalities, the challenge is even more acute for the most vulnerable people around the world. The coronavirus pandemic is revealing structural inequalities and obstacles to the full enjoyment of human rights.

I therefore commend the President of the Human Rights Council for her leadership in swiftly reconvening the Human Rights Council. Indeed, the Council was the first intergovernmental body to resume its work in-person and exercised flexibility in procedure by adopting a new hybrid model of in-person meetings with remote participation. That enabled the Council to hold three sessions and meetings, enabling the membership to deal with a large volume of thematic and country issues, which are of critical importance.

In order to uphold our collective dignity, it is essential that our responses to the COVID-19 pandemic promote protection and do not exceed necessary limitations. Indeed, human rights can assist States in responding to the pandemic and limiting adverse ramifications. Public services must always be delivered with human rights at the forefront. Our response to the crisis must be shaped by, and uphold respect for, human rights. Responses must be universal, open, transparent, accountable and inclusive.

Civil society, the private sector and all stakeholders must be able to participate and provide feedback. This is essential not only for protecting our population today, but also for identifying who is suffering the most; why that has transpired; how we can protect these communities at the moment; and when we will face the next global challenge. That is because another crisis of this magnitude will come, and we will have to meet it when it does.

None of us is safe from COVID-19 until we are all safe. None of us is free until we can all fully enjoy the freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We cannot neglect our duties to the people whom we serve at this time of crisis, when it is even more important. We must work towards lasting

peace, sustainable development and the protection of human rights if we are to create the future we want. Parties to conflict must facilitate rapid, safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian assistance, including for the most vulnerable groups. The decade of action and delivery to implement sustainable development must become the decade of recovery.

The gains we have made on gender equality cannot become derailed by the pandemic. Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, more girls were in school than ever before. We must ensure that those girls return to education and are equipped to live a life of their choosing, free from fear and violence. Twenty-five years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, it is simply unconscionable that there has been a rise in gender-based violence during this period.

It is up to all of us, as the membership of the General Assembly, in particular those who are the members of the Human Rights Council, and all individuals to ensure that gender equality is at the fore of our work and lives. Gender equality is a key priority of mine for the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session, and I trust that the President of the Human Rights Council, as only the second-ever female President of the Council, will continue to champion gender equality for the remainder of her term in Geneva.

We simply cannot allow discrimination or intolerance to prevail in any form. Looking ahead to the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action in 2021, I welcome the work of the Human Rights Council towards the elimination of racial discrimination and xenophobia.

This meeting offers us an opportunity to listen to the President of the Council and learn from our sisters and brothers across the Atlantic, who like us are working tirelessly to create a better world for the people whom we serve.

I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

**Ms. Castan** (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU).

The European Union would like to warmly thank the President of the Human Rights Council (HRC), Ambassador Tichy-Fisslberger, for presenting the Council's annual report (A/75/53 and A/75/53/Add.1) to

the General Assembly and her able stewardship of the work of the Council in 2020.

The EU is convinced that the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, as well as the Third Committee, have a crucial role to play in ensuring respect for human rights. Unless we fulfil our international obligations to respect, protect and fulfil all human rights and gender equality, there can be no lasting peace, reconciliation, security, stability or enduring development and prosperity. Ensuring the full realization of those mandates requires sufficient financial resources. The EU calls on all United Nations Member States to fulfil their obligations. Cuts to the United Nations general budget should not disproportionately affect the functioning of the United Nations human rights bodies and mechanisms.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has exposed how persisting inequalities and the failure to fulfil human rights negatively impact on our ability to respond to global challenges. When addressing the Third Committee three weeks ago, High Commissioner Bachelet underlined that any recovery that fails to address the root causes of inequality, political and economic instability and displacement condemns us to future crises.

The work of the Human Rights Council and its special procedures during these times has proven to be key in developing and suggesting comprehensive approaches to address the crisis in a way that effectively delivers for everyone. Despite this year's challenging circumstances, the Human Rights Council has continued to address pressing issues across all regions, including through urgent debates on racism and the human rights situation in Belarus.

The EU strongly supports the full and effective implementation of the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights with adequate resources and stands ready to contribute to its implementation through its initiatives in Geneva, New York and elsewhere. In that respect, the EU will continue to call for justice, condemning human rights violations and abuses, wherever they are committed, and standing for accountability and the fight against impunity, as we have done in Geneva this year, including in the cases of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Myanmar, Syria, Burundi and Belarus.

Resolutions, debates, the Universal Periodic Review and presidential statements supplement one

another. All of them should be used to improve the human rights situation in Member States. Following the recent election of the new members of the Human Rights Council, we reiterate that all United Nations Members should take effective actions to implement, uphold and promote the highest human rights standards and that they have a special responsibility in that regard when they are elected to the Human Rights Council. The EU supports increased transparency of HRC elections and accountability of the latter's members. An important step in the election process would be organizing an open debate convened by the President of the General Assembly.

No State has a perfect human rights record, but we particularly expect from the newly elected members that they engage in the work of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms in a spirit of self-reflection with a view to improving their own human rights situation and addressing all human rights concerns that come before the Council on their merits. We also strongly encourage all States and other stakeholders to cooperate with the special procedures as a means to enhance the protection and promotion of human rights. We take this opportunity to call on all States that have not done so to extend a standing invitation to all special procedures.

Civil society and human rights defenders are the eyes and ears of the Human Rights Council. They play an essential role in strengthening the connection among the real issues affecting people every day and the work of the United Nations, thereby ensuring that the Council effectively delivers. The EU urges all States, including the members of the HRC, to respect and protect civil society and human rights defenders cooperating with the United Nations system. We call for accountability for and condemn all forms of intimidation, harassment and reprisals both offline and online in this regard.

This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. Yet we have seen that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated gender inequalities and globally increased sexual and gender-based violence, including domestic violence.

Moreover, access to education and employment is challenged and the gender poverty gap is expected to widen. Those rights are not a given, and we need to fight for them every day and everywhere. We welcome the work done by the Human Rights Council to strengthen

the existing framework with the adoption of several strong resolutions aiming to promote women and girls' full enjoyment of human rights and gender equality.

Last but not least, 2020 also marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations. On this occasion, in the margins of the forty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council, the EU advocated for the adoption of a resolution in order to reaffirm the importance of the United Nations, multilateralism and respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms in addressing global challenges.

*Mr. Arriola Ramírez (Paraguay), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

**Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar)** (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure to thank Ms. Tichy-Fisslberger, President of the Human Rights Council, for introducing its annual report (A/75/53 and A/75/53/Add.1) and for her efforts in leading the Council's work.

The State of Qatar believes in the important role played by the Human Rights Council, based on its faith in the importance of international cooperation and universal respect for the values and principles of human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination, and in addressing flagrant violations effectively. The State of Qatar was one of the first States to support the United Nations initiatives in our region. Since 2009, we have hosted in Doha the United Nations Training and Documentation Centre on Human Rights for South-West Asia and the Arab Region. The Centre plays an important role in building human rights capacities.

The State of Qatar is proud to conclude our term as a member of the Human Rights Council this year. We have fulfilled our national and international obligations and look forward to continuing our constructive contributions by announcing our candidacy for a seat in the Human Rights Council for 2022-2024.

We are also pleased to announce from this rostrum that the State of Qatar has taken an important role in the context of our national initiatives to promote national legislative institutions, keep working towards modernization and strengthen the rule of law. His Highness the Emir of the State of Qatar announced at the forty-ninth session of the Shura Council on 3 November the holding of elections to the Council in October 2021. This is an important step towards promoting the Shura

tradition and enabling the citizens to participate more broadly in drafting legislation.

The report of the Human Rights Council before us refers to several important issues that are priorities for the State of Qatar.

First, with a view to strengthening and protecting the right to education, the State of Qatar submitted draft resolution A/74/L.66, which was adopted by the General Assembly on 28 May as resolution 74/275, proclaiming 9 September the International Day to Protect Education from Attack. We are confident that celebrating this international day every year will help to ensure respect for educational institutions and students' education worldwide.

Secondly, with regard to promoting human rights through sports to all societal categories without discrimination, the State of Qatar attaches great importance to the Generation Amazing programme, which is one of the main initiatives of the Supreme Organizing Committee for the World Cup in 2022. Its aim is to harness football for the sake of promoting social skills, empowering young people and integrating them in societies around the world.

Thirdly, the State of Qatar was one of the countries which submitted a resolution to the Human Rights Council on the fifteenth anniversary of the principle of the Responsibility to Protect. That was in line with the policy of the State of Qatar to protect civilians and prevent collective atrocities and with our partnership in the presidency of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect in New York, along with Denmark and Costa Rica. We are proud that the principle of the Responsibility to Protect has made great progress over the past 15 years through a significant number of United Nations Member States joining it in support of this important humanitarian principle.

The report of the Human Rights Council also refers to the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures with regard to human rights. For more than three years, the State of Qatar has endured an unjust blockade and illegal unilateral measures, resulting in flagrant violations of human rights. The National Human Rights Committee of the State of Qatar has recorded more than 4,275 human rights violations by the blockade countries, including the rights to freedom of movement, residency, property, education, health, employment and justice. Those measures have also affected family reunification, freedom of expression and opinion,

and led to arbitrary arrests, forced disappearances, incitement to hatred and violence, and violations of the right to freedom of religion.

Judgments and decisions have been adopted by international bodies for the benefit of the State of Qatar, at the forefront of which is the International Court of Justice and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This has proved that the blockade is contrary to international law and legal commitments pertaining to human rights. There is therefore a need to end it and subject its violations to accountability. We stress that the negative consequences of the unjust blockade have not discouraged the State of Qatar from implementing its national and international obligations to protect and promote human rights. I would like also to mention the efforts made by the State of Qatar to address COVID-19 at the national, regional and international levels within an approach that focuses on respecting human rights.

In conclusion, the State of Qatar reiterates its commitment to continuing its active contributions to the Human Rights Council so that it will be able to carry out its mandate in order to promote and protect human rights.

**Ms. Oehri** (Liechtenstein): The Human Rights Council has shown its responsiveness throughout these difficult times to the significant fall-out of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the promotion and protection of human rights. We thank its President, Ambassador Tichy-Fisslberger, for her determination and leadership in guiding the Human Rights Council at this time.

The holding of two urgent debates in 2020 on systemic racism and police brutality and on the human rights situation in Belarus demonstrated that the Human Rights Council continues to be in a position to address human rights situations of concern in a timely and effective manner. Liechtenstein strongly supports the work of the Council, its evolving body of special procedures and its strong civil society dimension, as well as the Universal Periodic Review, the integrity and universality of which are important achievements that must be preserved.

Those mechanisms are all the more relevant in times when human rights are under attack. The COVID-19 pandemic, the wider inequality gap and the resulting economic impact have further increased vulnerability to human trafficking and modern slavery.

With the transition to an increased amount of online activities as a response to the pandemic, traffickers are increasingly using online technology to recruit and exploit victims, which makes the crime and combating it even more complex.

Liechtenstein has contributed to the fight with a public-private partnership initiative — Finance against slavery and trafficking — and its blueprint for financial actors to help eradicate slavery, such as through the promotion of sustainable and innovative financing and responsible lending and investment, as well as compliance and regulation. In addition to the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, the Human Rights Council can play an important role in disseminating the blueprint. We are grateful for the support of the Special Rapporteurs on contemporary forms of slavery and on trafficking in persons in this regard.

While this debate is an important annual opportunity for the General Assembly to engage with the Human Rights Council on its substantive work, it also provides a good platform to evaluate the Council's institutional role within the framework of the United Nations. The latest review of the Human Rights Council has brought useful clarification to the Council's relationship with the General Assembly, including the Third and Fifth Committees.

We are concerned about the severe and ongoing liquidity crisis of the United Nations, which also negatively affects the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Human Rights Council and has led to a situation in which not all mandated activities for the year could be carried out. While we welcome the pragmatic solution that the Human Rights Council has found by postponing the activities concerned until next year, that should be an exceptional case. In that regard, we call on all States to fully comply in a timely manner with their financial obligations towards the United Nations and call for more resources to be allocated to the human rights pillar.

The work of the Human Rights Council is essential in cases of human rights emergencies and grave violations, and the Council is indeed often the only United Nations body to address such situations. In this regard, we welcome the adoption of follow-up resolution 45/31, on the role of the Human Rights

Council in the prevention of human rights violations at its forty-fifth session. The measures decided upon provide a valuable opportunity to further strengthen the Council's role with regard to the prevention of human rights violations. In particular, we welcome efforts to apply the responsibility to protect principle in the framework of the Council's work.

We continue to be concerned about grave human rights violations, including in Myanmar and the Syrian Arab Republic, as documented in the Council's special procedures and accountability mechanisms. Liechtenstein welcomes the Council's support for accountability efforts, including the important steps taken by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the context of forced deportation and the International Court of Justice under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, in its resolution 43/26. At the same time, we regret that the Security Council continues to ignore calls from States, the United Nations system and the victims themselves for a referral to the ICC.

There is no doubt that there is room for improvement regarding the mandate of the Human Rights Council to promote the effective coordination and the mainstreaming of human rights within the United Nations system. This calls for stronger and more consistent links between Geneva and New York, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and a more robust cooperation between the Human Rights Council and the other relevant main bodies of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council.

The work of the Human Rights Council and many of its special procedure mandate holders is, in many instances, relevant to discussions in the Security Council, yet consistently disregarded by the latter. We call on the Security Council to take up the offer of the Human Rights Council to engage more on substantive matters, use the best available factual basis for decision-making and not limit its work to an extensively narrow concept of security.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item at this meeting. We shall hear the remaining speakers this afternoon at 3 p.m. in this Hall.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*