



General Assembly

Seventy-fifth session

25th plenary meeting
Thursday, 12 November 2020, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Bozkir (Turkey)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda items 125 and 126

Implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

Draft decision (A/75/L.7/Rev.1)

Draft amendment (A/75/L.15)

The President: At the general debate this year, world leaders pledged their strong support for multilateralism and the United Nations as the most effective system to address global challenges, including the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and climate change. This year, as we commemorate 75 years of the United Nations, we have been reflecting on the United Nations we need to deliver the future we want. We need a system that is fit for purpose and can deliver for the people we are serving.

The General Assembly, as the most representative body of the United Nations, has a convening power like no other. This is where all Member States can discuss issues and solutions that cross national boundaries. Strengthening the General Assembly is vital; to improve the effectiveness of the United Nations is also important. The revitalization process has strengthened the General Assembly by increasing the transparency of important processes and improving the overall functionality of our Organization.

During this session, I encourage members to work to identify and implement practices to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of this body. An organization that stands still will never stay relevant.

In that regard, I would like to thank Her Excellency Ms. Egriselda Aracely González López, Permanent Representative of El Salvador, and His Excellency Mr. Michal Mlynár, Permanent Representative of Slovakia, for taking on the role of co-chairing the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly this session.

I look forward to the report of the Secretary-General on the impact of COVID-19 on the work of the General Assembly, which was requested by the most recent resolution on the revitalization of the General Assembly (resolution 74/303). This will be an opportunity to reflect on the steps that members have taken to adapt to the unexpected challenges arising from the pandemic.

Working methods must be robust enough to continue our important work, and the General Assembly cannot be seen to sit idle while the world around us attempts to address one of the greatest challenges in a generation.

The intergovernmental consultations on the alignment of the agendas of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies is a critical opportunity to examine the agendas that guide our work. A comprehensive and holistic view of the agendas across the main bodies is necessary to ensure that these bodies are more relevant and fit for purpose.

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I therefore made sure to appoint experienced co-facilitators for the alignment. I thank Her Excellency Ms. Darja Bavdaž Kuret, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia, and Her Excellency Ms. Rabab Fatima, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, for having taken on this important responsibility.

Previous discussions have demonstrated Member States' broad support for improved coherence of the agendas of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary bodies within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

I intend to meet regularly with the co-facilitators and the President of the Economic and Social Council, the Chairs of the Main Committees and the General Committee in order to prepare the programme of meetings for the consultations on alignment to be held in 2021. It is our common responsibility to make much-needed progress on the alignment process, which must remain inclusive and Member-State-driven in order to be effective.

I encourage all members to remain engaged in these two complementary processes aimed at revitalizing the General Assembly. My team and I stand ready to support them in this crucial work.

This afternoon, the General Assembly will consider a draft decision (A/75/L.7/Rev.1) and a draft amendment (A/75/L.15) on a procedure for decision-making in the General Assembly when an in-person meeting is not possible. As I mentioned in my letters and earlier today, I have continued work across the aisles on this topic. I am fully aware of the sensitivities as well as of the complexity of the issues at hand. Since I took office, I have met and discussed this question with Permanent Representatives in various contexts and settings, seeking to bring delegations together in a cooperative spirit to find creative solutions on the crucial issue of business continuity.

We have an obligation towards our constituency to find ways to enable the General Assembly to function effectively and remain relevant in the framework of the Charter and the rules of procedure. The format, scope and characteristics of those solutions is, of course, to be decided by the membership of the Assembly through the tools at its disposal. I reiterate my call on all members to continue to work together to strengthen the role and functioning of the General Assembly.

I now give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein to introduce draft decision A/75/L.7/Rev.1.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): I have the honour and the pleasure to introduce draft decision A/75/L.7/Rev.1, submitted on behalf of the core group, consisting of Austria, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Ghana, Iceland, Jamaica, Malta, New Zealand, Qatar, Sweden, Switzerland and my own country, Liechtenstein, and, in addition, on behalf of all the co-sponsors listed in the document: Barbados, Colombia, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Honduras, Ireland, Latvia, Norway, the Republic of Korea and San Marino. Since the document was published, the following delegations have also added their names as co-sponsors: Andorra, Belgium, Canada, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Monaco, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Panama, Peru, Ukraine and Sierra Leone.

At the outset, we wish to thank you for your leadership, Mr. President, and to express our gratitude at the fact that we are able to gather in this Hall in person, albeit in imperfect and difficult circumstances. We hope that we will be able to continue our work following the *modus operandi* we have been working under since early September in the coming weeks and that we will be able to bring the work of the Main Committees and of the plenary in this manner to a successful conclusion before the holidays, which would be an accomplishment of which we should all be proud.

At the same time, and as we look confidently to the challenges ahead of us, it is also the moment to prepare for less propitious circumstances, such as the ones we encountered earlier in the year during the lockdown period. We were caught, as you have stated repeatedly, Mr. President, unprepared at the time. That was the case not just for the Assembly and the Organization but for most of our national systems and indeed the world as a whole. Our lack of preparedness resulted, for the Assembly, in difficult months that were less productive than they should have been, given the expectations the world has vis-à-vis the United Nations in times of a global health crisis and a pandemic.

Our inability to apply our rules of procedure or to resort to decision-making in the manner foreseen for the Assembly led to paralysis and deadlock, the starkest illustration of which is the fact that our very omnibus resolution on the pandemic itself (resolution 74/307) was adopted only after we could meet in

person again. Being caught unprepared one time is unfortunate — doing so a second time would be unforgivable. That is why we have taken the initiative to build on the work done under the able leadership of Ambassador Rattray of Jamaica during the lockdown and are now able to present a voting procedure for the Assembly at times when in-person meetings are not possible. We want to do our business in person for as long as we can do so safely, and we want to make our decisions in this Hall whenever possible. We will work with you, Mr. President, the United Nations and the city of New York towards this best possible scenario, but we see it as our obligation to also prepare for the worst.

The Security Council has given itself a voting procedure for times when in-person meetings are not possible, as it should have. The one universal intergovernmental body of the United Nations system — the Assembly — must do likewise.

In addition to building on our extensive collective consultations during the early months of the year, we have engaged intensely on this text, in open consultations as well as in bilateral and other settings. We wish to thank all delegations that have asked questions, offered comments and voiced scepticism, as a result of which we can now present a text that is able to accommodate the concerns expressed to the extent possible and to garner the strongest possible support among the membership.

I wish to highlight briefly some of the aspects of the text that have been subject to in-depth discussions and also to further revisions and fine-tuning.

First, a number of States felt that safeguards were needed for the membership to have control in the decision that in-person meetings are not possible. The language in our text is based on past practice, including when you, Mr. President, last informed the membership that the building was closed due to a number of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) infections. In addition, the possibility of an electronic voting procedure precludes a situation in which a President of the General Assembly could act against the will of the majority of Member States.

Secondly, we wish to stress that the procedure we are suggesting for adoption has the narrowest scope of application possible. I would note first that it is limited to the most exceptional circumstances, which, let us remind ourselves, have so far occurred only once in the 75-year history of the Assembly. As a second

point, the procedure is applicable only if the Assembly is unable to meet for a prolonged period of time. The recent instance of the temporary closure of the United Nations premises would typically not qualify, and we would expect the presidency to make the necessary adjustments to the calendar, which you, Sir, were able to do, even during the busiest time of work for the Assembly. A third point is that if the proponents of a decision do not wish to see their text adopted under the e-voting procedure, postponement is the obvious option. At the same time, we consider it very important that the scope of application not be further restricted in the way suggested by the proponents of the draft amendment contained in document A/75/L.15.

The Assembly needs to be able to react to a crisis situation and to make decisions of political relevance. The proposed restrictions would not have allowed the Assembly to even adopt the omnibus resolution on COVID-19. It is also clearly our view that such a limitation of scope is not compatible with the rules of procedure of the Assembly. That being said, we fully share the concerns of those who do not want to see a proliferation of resolutions adopted under this procedure. We do not want that either, and we have introduced clear provisions to that effect in the text.

Thirdly, we are very sensitive to questions of the capacity of small States. I represent one of the smallest Members of the United Nations, and the group of co-sponsors is a combination of small States and States that have strong sympathy for small-State issues. We have therefore introduced language in the text that addresses capacity issues and gives the Secretariat a clear mandate to assist States in the challenges that they may be facing.

Fourthly and finally, some of our partners have also voiced security concerns — concerns that we take seriously and believe to be of the utmost importance for a solid voting system. We are thankful that the procedure provided for in the resolution can be carried out through a platform that has proved to be workable and trustworthy for a good number of years. In addition, the public nature of the voting process is, of course, relevant, and so is the possibility for every delegation to check that their vote is accurately reflected, just as we do in this Hall as a matter of course.

We have worked hard to bring a text in the format before us today. We are satisfied that we are able to present a product that finds overwhelming support

among our partners. The measure before us is of the essence, but at the same time it is pretty basic. The Assembly should have had this in place when we went into lockdown, and we now have the chance to ensure that the rules of procedure of the Assembly, of which voting is a crucial part, are followed as closely as possible when the Assembly is not able to meet in person. Our collective experience earlier this year teaches us that the sheer existence of a voting procedure is in fact a key ingredient of a genuine consensus-building effort. If every State has the possibility to block any decision at any time, there is simply no incentive to compromise in negotiations, which, ultimately, is what makes consensus possible in the first place.

In September, we gathered in an unusual format both to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of our Organization and high-level week. A strong commitment to multilateralism was the key takeaway from that week in September, with an overwhelming number of States making it clear that we need more United Nations, not less, and a better United Nations, not one that is further incapacitated. The Assembly is the bedrock of multilateralism — the central decision-making and standard-setting body of the United Nations system. It must at all times be capable of making decisions, and even more so in times of extreme crisis situations that will inevitably exist every time we are unable to meet in person. Supporting this draft decision today, and opposing attempts to defer or dilute it, is therefore simply an expression of the belief in the role and value of the Assembly and the importance of making its voice heard when it is most needed.

Finally, let me address an issue that is important to many delegations in this Hall today. We have heard in our discussions with colleagues that many wished that we could end up with a consensual decision and that we should give as much time as needed for that. I would like to convey to you, Mr. President, and to all those who have expressed that view that this has all along been the very premise on which we started this exercise. We have talked in good faith to each and every delegation that has shown openness to working on a consensual text. We have come to the unfortunate but obvious conclusion that there are States that we cannot bring on board on this initiative. The draft amendments before us make this very clear, as they are incompatible with the very purpose of the procedure. The proposals circulated at the last minute by others are unrelated to the procedure provided for in A/75/L.7/Rev.1 and

largely address business continuity while we are able to meet in person. We are happy to engage in that discussion, but it is a different discussion.

We are therefore convinced that we need to act decisively now to equip the General Assembly with the procedure that we propose, given the worsening conditions in the city. Mr. President, we hope that you can rally behind this cause and oppose any procedural efforts to delay, defer or adjourn it.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba to introduce the draft amendment contained in document A/75/L.15.

Mr. Pedroso Cuesta (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour of introducing the draft amendment contained in document A/75/L.15, on behalf of the following 10 countries: Burundi, Cameroon, China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Myanmar, Nicaragua, the Russian Federation, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and my own country, Cuba.

The draft amendment has two purposes; it is in no way an attempt to jeopardize the existence of the mechanism that the draft resolution contained in document A/75/L.7/Rev.1 proposes to establish.

First, the amendment would increase the participation of Member States, through the General Committee, in the decision to activate the use of the mechanism that the draft decision intends to create, should circumstances so require.

Secondly, the draft amendment would help to ensure that this mechanism of an exceptional character is used only for taking action on issues that are key to the vitality and functioning of the Assembly, such as budget issues, extensions of mandates adopted by the Assembly and the postponing or rescheduling of meetings or events mandated by the General Assembly. In our view, the draft amendment would contribute to ensuring balance in a draft decision that does not have a consensus, *inter alia*, because Member States would have little control over the activation of the new mechanism and because the current draft would allow for excessive use thereof, which does not fit with its exceptional character.

I wish also to state that the concerns relating to the draft amendment were addressed by our delegations in a transparent and timely manner throughout the negotiations. However, because little or no flexibility

was shown on both these issues by those submitting the draft decision, we had no alternative but to submit this draft amendment.

In that regard, we invite all delegations to vote in favour of the draft amendment contained in document A/75/L.15.

Mr. Bessedik (Algeria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM).

At the outset, allow me to congratulate Ms. Egriselda Aracely González López, Permanent Representative of El Salvador, and Mr. Michal Mlynár, Permanent Representative of Slovakia, on their appointment as co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly.

Let me also express NAM's appreciation to the outgoing co-Chair, Ms. Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, Permanent Representative of Ghana, and the reappointed co-Chair, Mr. Michal Mlynár, for their able leadership in steering the process of revitalization during the previous session of the General Assembly.

The commemoration this year of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations certainly marks a significant milestone in sustaining the momentum on the issue of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. It is an occasion to uphold the universal values and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to ensure that our Organization is fit for purpose. We reiterate in that context that the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly remains a critical component of the comprehensive reform of the United Nations. Indeed, a reinvigorated General Assembly would contribute significantly to strengthening the wider United Nations system, improving global governance and enhancing multilateralism.

This year has been particularly challenging. The unfortunate situation occasioned by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has indeed posed unprecedented challenges for the continuation of many important meetings of General Assembly-mandated processes during the previous session. We have, however, been successful in concluding the proceedings of the Ad Hoc Working Group, including its four thematic debates and the annual resolution on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

While the General Assembly has managed to adapt to this unparalleled situation, NAM would like, however,

to underscore the exceptional nature of current working methods in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the critical importance of strict compliance with and adherence to the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, which must continue to guide our work.

Furthermore, we consider it important to recognize that all resolutions of the General Assembly on the revitalization of its work contribute to the strengthening of the role, authority, efficiency and effectiveness of the General Assembly.

NAM reaffirms in that respect the relevance of resolution 73/341 and the previous resolutions adopted by consensus relating to the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, as outlined in resolution 74/303, of 4 September 2020. We note with appreciation the fact that the General Assembly agreed that resolution 73/341 as a whole would form the basis for the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly during the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly.

Besides the fact that that resolution contains substantive elements that reflect many of NAM's long-standing positions on a number of important issues in relation to the revitalization of the General Assembly, that approach will allow us to build on the progress made thus far and address some of the most intractable issues before us.

In that connection, NAM will continue to provide support towards achieving inclusiveness, transparency and efficiency in the United Nations and stands ready to cooperate with the co-Chairs as well as with the President of the General Assembly in order to strengthen the role of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative policy-making organ.

NAM would like to emphasize in that regard the importance of preserving the intergovernmental, inclusive and democratic nature of the United Nations as well as the need for strict respect for the Charter-based prerogatives of the principal organs of the United Nations, in particular the General Assembly.

NAM recognizes that working methods are only a step towards more substantive improvements aimed at restoring and enhancing the role and authority of the General Assembly. We continue to stress the need to rationalize the work of the Assembly. In that spirit, the number of high-level and side events organized in parallel with the general debate should be kept to a

critical minimum in order to preserve and enhance the sanctity of those debates.

NAM attaches great importance to the aim of enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Office of the President of the General Assembly. That objective is even more relevant now in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the Office's greater role in enabling the General Assembly to adapt its working methods and continue to perform its essential functions.

NAM would like to reiterate that the process of selecting and appointing the Secretary-General should be carried out in full compliance with the General Assembly's mandate, in accordance with Article 97 of the Charter and all relevant and consensus General Assembly resolutions, particularly resolutions 69/321 and 70/305.

We welcome further discussion in the Ad Hoc Working Group on all options regarding the duration and renewability of the term of office of the Secretary-General. The Movement further underscores that the achievements that marked the election of the incumbent Secretary-General, with regard to transparency, democracy and the inclusion of all Member States, should continue to be applied during the forthcoming Secretary-General selection and appointment process scheduled for 2021.

In conclusion, NAM reiterates its commitment to engaging constructively in the process of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, with the aim of strengthening the Assembly's role as the Organization's chief deliberative policymaking organ. We will continue to promote inclusiveness, transparency and efficiency in the United Nations.

Mr. Aidid (Malaysia): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), composed of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam and my own country, Malaysia.

At the outset, ASEAN would like to express its appreciation to Mrs. Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee of Ghana and Mr. Michal Mlynár of Slovakia for their able stewardship in facilitating the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly during the previous session, despite the many challenges related to the coronavirus disease

(COVID-19) pandemic. ASEAN also congratulates Ms. Egriselda Aracely González López, Permanent Representative of El Salvador, and Mr. Mlynár on their appointment and reappointment, respectively, as co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group for the current session.

ASEAN welcomes resolution 74/303, adopted by consensus on 4 September. We believe that the thematic discussions on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly during the previous session will advance our vision of making the General Assembly more effective and relevant for all.

The seventy-fifth anniversary of the Organization offers a golden opportunity to reinvigorate and revitalize the United Nations. A revitalized United Nations and a revitalized General Assembly, in particular, will undoubtedly make the Organization more accountable to the people we serve. Given the Assembly's representative character, primacy and credibility, it is therefore pivotal to ensure its effectiveness and efficiency in fulfilling its functions as set out in the Charter of the United Nations. In that context, ASEAN would like to highlight the following points on the four clusters under this important process.

First, on the role and authority of the General Assembly, ASEAN would like to reaffirm the Assembly's central role and credibility as the most representative organ of the United Nations. From tackling the root causes of conflict to establishing human rights treaties and adopting the Sustainable Development Goals, the General Assembly's deliberations will continue to improve and protect the lives of millions of people around the world. In that regard, we reiterate how important it is that all Member States continue working together to ensure that the General Assembly delivers and remains relevant, even when it faces great challenges. We also continue to call for greater synergy, coherence and coordination between the work of the Assembly and other United Nations organs. That relationship is crucial to ensuring better cooperation on issues that require coordinated action by the United Nations, in accordance with their respective mandates.

Secondly, with regard to the working methods of the General Assembly, we support rationalizing its agenda by addressing any gaps, overlaps and duplication where the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is concerned.

Thirdly, ASEAN continues to call for a transparent and open selection process in the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General and other executive heads of the United Nations system. In addition, we stress the importance in that regard of ensuring equitable geographical distribution and representation, as well as gender balance.

Lastly, ASEAN calls for greater accountability and transparency from the Office of the President of the General Assembly and for strengthening its institutional memory. We commend the efforts of the previous three Presidents in preparing and sharing their handover reports with all Member States. We also hope that the President of the General Assembly can continue to disclose relevant information on the Office's official engagements, especially with regard to meetings with the representatives of other United Nations organs. We commend the continuation of the morning dialogues with the Permanent Representatives, as well as the interactive dialogues with the candidates for the position of the President of the General Assembly.

Revitalizing the work of the Assembly under the four thematic clusters will contribute to the continued evolution of the United Nations as an essential organization that is fit for purpose post-COVID-19. Let me conclude by reiterating ASEAN's continued commitment to engaging constructively with all Member States in the deliberations of the Ad Hoc Working Group during this session.

Mr. Carazo (Costa Rica): I have the honour of taking the floor on behalf of the 25 members of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) group: Austria, Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Gabon, Ghana, Hungary, Ireland, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Maldives, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Portugal, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Uruguay and my own country, Costa Rica. The ACT group promotes a more transparent and efficient United Nations. We believe that the process of revitalizing the work of the General Assembly constitutes an important avenue towards that goal.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges for the General Assembly, including for its business continuity. As the most important intergovernmental forum, the General Assembly must be fully functional at all times, particularly in times of crisis. It is therefore imperative to

ensure that the Assembly takes the necessary measures to better prepare for future crisis situations, including when it might be impossible for its members to convene in person. The possibility of voting electronically is an indispensable element of such an effort and can help ensure that Member States can exercise their rights under the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of procedure at all times.

We also welcome the Assembly's unanimous adoption of resolution 74/303. While we would have initially preferred more substantive negotiations on the issues that would have enabled us to build on the progress made in previous resolutions, we were honoured to join the consensus on a more concise but substantive text. We want to congratulate Mrs. Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, Permanent Representative of Ghana, and Mr. Michal Mlynár, Permanent Representative of Slovakia, on their guidance of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly during the seventy-fourth session. We also congratulate Ms. Egriselda Aracely González López, Permanent Representative of El Salvador, and Mr. Mlynár on their appointment and reappointment, respectively, as co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group during the seventy-fifth session.

The ACT group looks forward to continuing the excellent collaboration between Member States and groups of States that we witnessed, under extraordinary circumstances, in the negotiations on resolution 74/303, on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. We are committed to strengthening the Ad Hoc Working Group as a unique platform and tool for promoting a more efficient, inclusive and coherent United Nations.

The ACT group attaches particular importance to ensuring transparency and inclusion in the processes for selecting and appointing the Secretary-General and other executive heads. As we all know, the current term of the Secretary-General runs through the end of 2021, which makes this, the seventy-fifth session, critical to ensuring that the process of selecting and appointing a Secretary-General for the next term is guided by the principles of transparency and inclusiveness, per resolution 73/341. Resolutions 69/321, of 2015, and 70/305, of 2016, which constituted the framework for the truly historic, inclusive and transparent selection and appointment process for the current Secretary-General, continue to serve as the basis for all our efforts.

Looking to the upcoming selection and appointment process, our group believes that we are facing two scenarios: one in which the incumbent is running for re-election, and another in which a full replication of the process conducted in 2015 and 2016 is applicable, with possible further improvements. Under the first scenario, we would like to recall paragraph 43 of resolution 73/341, which provides for the “possibility for the incumbent Secretary-General to present a vision statement for the next term and to brief the Member States on its content”.

Based on the above, our Group understands that provision as a minimum, and we look forward to engaging with all the relevant parties to propose further measures for strengthening the transparency and inclusiveness of the process. Such measures could include interactive discussions between the Secretary-General and Member States, consultations with regional groups and town-hall meetings with the membership and civil society, among others.

A second scenario would see the roll-out of the process carried out in 2015 and 2016 clearly defined by resolutions 69/321 and 70/305 and by the best practices and lessons learned from that process. Among those, our group would like to recall the ACT document on “Lessons learned on the selection and appointment of the ninth Secretary-General of the United Nations in 2015 and 2016” (A/72/514, annex), which was transmitted to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council and circulated to all Member States on 5 October 2017. We would particularly like to draw your attention and that of the membership, Mr. President, to the document’s indicative timeline for the appointment of future Secretaries-General. Pursuant to that, in October of the year preceding appointment, a joint letter encouraging the nomination of qualified candidates would be sent from the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council to all States Members of the United Nations; the deadline for the submission of candidatures would be on 1 April of the appointment year; the deadline for the completion of General Assembly hearings with all candidates would be at the end of June of the appointment year; and, by 1 October, the Security Council would issue a recommendation and the General Assembly adopt a resolution regarding the appointment of the Secretary-General.

While the timeline proposed by the ACT group is indicative, it is here to remind us that we will soon have

to take important steps in order to ensure a process that follows the mandate of the relevant General Assembly resolutions and the best practices of 2015 and 2016. Ensuring the greatest possible transparency and inclusiveness is also what is expected from all of us in view of this most crucial matter. The ACT group looks forward to engaging with all relevant actors to ensure that the upcoming process for the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General fully abides by the established principles of transparency and inclusiveness.

Finally, on the issue of transparency, the ACT group will continue to look ahead to the annual report of the Security Council for 2020, particularly because of the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic with regard both to the functioning of the Security Council and to almost all of the items on its agenda.

(spoke in Spanish)

In my national capacity, I would like to state that for Costa Rica, the revitalization of the General Assembly is a priority, not an option. It is also a matter of priority that we adopt an electronic voting procedure immediately. The question we should ask ourselves is not whether we should adopt such a procedure this afternoon, but rather why we have taken so long to do so. There are many arguments in favour and also some against. To those who oppose the procedure, Costa Rica responds that, for a small State like ours, it is unacceptable for the General Assembly to be able to take decisions only by silent procedure, without the option of voting, as occurred during the first months of lockdown due to COVID-19. It is vital that we have a contingency plan for such situations. Failure to take steps to deal with this cannot be justified.

The proposed procedure that was submitted for review this afternoon is suited to that purpose and is applicable only in extraordinary circumstances, when in-person meetings are not possible owing to specific and imminent risks to our health and safety. It is not applicable when the General Assembly can meet in person, even if restrictions such as the current ones are in place. Nor is it to be used in any way as a substitute for decision-making in person. This procedure is our insurance policy. It is an essential tool for ensuring the continuity of our activities. It is as close as possible to the decision-making process used during face-to-

face meetings. That is why I reiterate that an electronic voting procedure is not an option but a necessity.

Without the possibility of voting, every State has a de facto veto for blocking General Assembly decisions, even in the face of the overwhelming will of the membership. That is unacceptable. This procedure resolves that problem and honours the principle of one-country, one-vote, even in the most extraordinary and exceptional circumstances. We have a collective responsibility to better prepare for a possible future crisis. I invite one and all to join this initiative that guarantees a voice and vote for all.

Additional remarks with regard to asserting the authority of the General Assembly in presentations of reports of the Security Council can be found in our written statement and will be duly incorporated into the official record.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Gonzato (European Union): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

The candidate countries of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's first joint debate during the seventy-fifth session on the item "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly". We were very encouraged by your earlier statements that this important dossier would be among your key priorities during your mandate. You can count on the EU's continued strong support in the matter.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Ambassador Pobee, Permanent Representative of Ghana, and Ambassador Mlynár, Permanent Representative of Slovakia, for their excellent work and dedication in steering the process as co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly during the previous session, which was heavily impacted by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and therefore did not allow us to make the progress we had hoped for. I would also like to congratulate Ambassador González López, Permanent Representative of El Salvador, and Ambassador Mlynár

on their appointment and reappointment, respectively, as co-Chairs. Our group stands ready to work closely with both of them during this seventy-fifth session to promote tangible and concrete results in revitalizing the Assembly and aligning its work with that of the Economic and Social Council.

In that regard, Mr. President, we also commend your early appointment of the co-facilitators for the alignment process and extend our warm congratulations to Ambassadors Fatima and Bavdaž Kuret, Permanent Representatives of Bangladesh and Slovenia. We consider those two distinct processes to be closely intertwined and therefore strongly encourage their close consultation and coordination throughout the session. That will contribute to achieving the desired synergies for both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council by better aligning the work of both organs with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Some progress on alignment has been achieved in previous years, but regrettably the process stalled during the previous session. The EU remains engaged and is ready to explore ways to better synchronize the revitalization and alignment processes in order to make progress during this session. In that regard, we strongly welcome your commitment, Mr. President, to meeting before the end of the year with the co-facilitators, the President of the Economic and Social Council, the Chairs of the Main Committees and the General Committee to discuss a work plan. We also welcome your encouragement to explore an early start of the alignment process.

This seventy-fifth session is indeed a critical one for three reasons. First, the world is watching us to see how serious we are about shaping the United Nations in a way that enables it to make tangible progress on priorities that have a direct, positive impact on our citizens. We believe that collectively we can and should do a better job of streamlining our work.

The revitalization of the General Assembly is clearly interlinked with the overall reform of the United Nations. As the only intergovernmental organ with universal membership and a broad mandate, the General Assembly has a central role to play in responding to global challenges. Our group continues to support efforts aimed at strengthening the role and authority of the Assembly.

Secondly, we cannot ignore the severe impact that COVID-19 has had and continues to have on the work

of the General Assembly and its Committees, forcing many processes to be postponed, limited to technical rollovers or moved to the virtual space. When we lack interpretation services and physical voting cannot take place, the ability of delegations to make their voices sufficiently heard is severely limited. Clearly, COVID-19 took us by surprise, and we must ensure that we are better prepared for a crisis like this in the future. That means that we must adopt measures aimed not only at preserving the business continuity of this body, which includes full respect for multilingualism, but also at ensuring the inclusiveness of our processes through the strong engagement of civil society and other stakeholders. Against that background, we look forward to the briefing by the Secretary-General to the Ad Hoc Working Group on his analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the work of the General Assembly, as agreed in resolution 74/303.

Thirdly, it will be during this session that the process for the selection and appointment of the next Secretary-General will be launched. The EU remains fully committed to ensuring a transparent and inclusive process, in line with the provisions agreed in resolution 73/341, building on the landmark resolutions 69/321 and 70/305.

Let me conclude by emphasizing the unique opportunity the seventy-fifth session provides to make progress amid the challenges we are facing. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic proves that we need to improve and modernize the way we work. Before closing, I also want to express the support of the EU and its member States for the draft decision contained in document A/75/L.7/Rev.1.

Mr. Fifield (Australia): My statement is on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand (CANZ). On behalf of CANZ, I would like to congratulate the co-Chairs on their appointment to the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly. In the case of our good friend Ambassador Mlynár, I note that this is a reappointment, and as such, I welcome the experience and continuity that he brings to the role. To our good friend Ambassador González López, I have no doubt that the Working Group will benefit from her fresh insights. I also acknowledge and thank Ambassador Pobee for her significant contribution and hard work.

The Working Group's efforts to improve the General Assembly's efficiency and effectiveness, including by streamlining and rationalizing its agenda, are more

relevant than ever. As we have adapted to working within the constraints imposed by the coronavirus disease pandemic, we have all been forced to be pragmatic and to prioritize. I encourage all delegations to bring this approach to our discussions on the Ad Hoc Working Group so that we can make solid progress on issues within the mandate of the revitalization of the General Assembly during the seventy-fifth session.

CANZ looks forward to the Secretary-General briefing the Working Group during this session on his analysis of the impact of the pandemic on the work of the General Assembly. There will no doubt be many lessons that we can learn, as well as useful innovations that we can continue to apply. However, in the view of CANZ, it is already abundantly clear that the General Assembly must be able to continue to operate, particularly with respect to its essential functions, in times of crisis when it is physically impossible to meet for extended periods of time. We therefore support the draft decision for consideration today on electronic voting as an appropriate means for adapting the General Assembly's working methods in exceptional circumstances (A/75/L.7/Rev.1).

CANZ looks forward to working closely with all our colleagues to take forward our shared interests in the coming months.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I want to speak on draft decision A/75/L.7/Rev.1, entitled "Procedure for decision-making in the General Assembly when an in-person meeting is not possible". Russia, on behalf of a group of States — Burundi, the Republic of Cameroon, the People's Republic of China, Cuba, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Myanmar, Nicaragua, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela — would like to express its categorical disagreement with the imposition of this draft decision on us, and we urge all States to refrain from supporting it.

We support ensuring that the work of the General Assembly continues uninterrupted. We are in favour of business continuity. But this proposed draft decision could cause serious or even irreparable harm to the authority of the General Assembly and the legitimacy of its decisions. We are being asked to approve a procedure whereby one person, the President of the General Assembly, can terminate in-person meetings of the main organ of the United Nations, suspend its existing rules of procedure and proceed to take decisions

in a virtual format using electronic voting, which is not provided for in the existing rules of procedure, on any item on its agenda. And the criteria for undertaking such extraordinary measures remain quite vague.

In the Security Council we also discussed how we would function in a lockdown, and there were votes in favour of electronic voting. But at the time we reached a consensus decision to vote via a written procedure, with everyone agreeing that electronic voting was not feasible. Today, however, we are being asked to adopt a decision that does not enjoy unanimous support, in effect imposing it on countries that disagree. A decision is being proposed that divides the General Assembly rather than uniting it. I appeal to members to consider how such a decision would benefit the authority of the General Assembly and whether it would have the necessary legitimacy, even if this decision were eventually adopted.

The opponents of this initiative are accused of trying to prevent the General Assembly from continuing its work in all circumstances. That is not true. The only thing we are proposing is that we come up with modalities for the work of the Assembly in any circumstances that would be acceptable to everyone. There are other ways besides electronic voting, not limited merely to decision by consensus. We suggest considering what would happen if a virtual system and e-voting were subject to external interference, or if some States simply transferred the vote to other States or unauthorized persons without our even being aware of it.

We have all now had the opportunity to take part in virtual negotiations, and we know very well the unacceptable situations that can arise. States are unable to connect to the virtual platform or get disconnected at the worst possible moment and cannot reach tech support. However, during negotiations some of this can be fixed by reconnecting or sending some information later. But that is simply not the case with votes. If members have Internet problems and cannot get through to tech support, they simply cannot take part in the voting. We are being asked to sit in front of the computer all day, monitoring messages about the voting process and procedural motions and keeping track of the time. Is this even realistic, especially if the procedure is being used for a large number of resolutions at the same time? We also need to keep in mind that not all delegations have equal technical capacities.

Moreover, taking decisions in this format will make negotiations an unnecessary formality. Why seek difficult compromises when one can simply hold a couple of town-hall meetings, declare the negotiations process completed and proceed to voting? I would like to address this point in greater detail, because the way in which this draft decision was prepared is simply outrageous.

We were assured today that the process was transparent and inclusive, but in reality, the group of sponsors held one informal open meeting — a so-called town hall — which showed the widely divergent views that existed among the few delegations that took part, after which, without engaging in negotiations, they switched to negotiating through bilateral contacts. After that, the draft document was circulated as an official proposal, a date was requested for voting and only then was another informal meeting held, during which no one engaged in negotiations or considered the proposal paragraph by paragraph. The few Member States that participated were simply offered an opportunity to speak. Subsequently, the meetings were concluded, and the text put before us today underwent only cosmetic changes. We consider such a process disrespectful to delegations.

From the very beginning, Russia, along with a number of like-minded States, has stressed the need for transparent and inclusive dialogue in an appropriate format, such as the Sixth Committee or the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly, or that negotiations be held under the auspices of the President of the General Assembly. However, our proposals have been ignored. The date of the vote was declared as an ultimatum and not subject to review even at the request of the President of the General Assembly. One wonders what the objective reasons for such haste were.

In-person meetings of the General Assembly are taking place. All the Main Committees are carrying on their work. The city of New York is functioning almost normally. Restaurants and shopping centres are open. Nothing indicates that the United Nations will have to shut its doors in the near future. Yes, the situation is still tense, but we have taken preventive measures and we are managing.

The sponsors claim that the purpose of their initiative is to ensure the business continuity of the United Nations in any time of crisis. If we are seeking

a long-term solution, our approach to it must also be serious. The proposed decision is not the national project of a group of States but an issue that affects the legitimate interests of all States Members of the United Nations. All States must have the opportunity to contribute. The sponsors of the draft have continued to insist on holding a vote on it, and if we get that far, it will take place without taking account of the views of a large group of States. Behind the scenes, the sponsors insist that they are confident of victory. In other words, they see this draft decision as a battlefield rather than an arena for arriving at mutually acceptable solutions. But even if they win this vote, it will be a Pyrrhic victory, and the legitimacy of the decision will be doubtful. They are promoting division in the General Assembly, while we are in favour of consensus. "Feel the difference", as people say. Essentially, they propose taking a decision blind. After all, many Member States are not even familiar with the essence and nuances of the proposals, which, as we have said, involve a whole range of technical, logistical, procedural and political issues.

Together with China, Russia has circulated a draft decision according to which the most essential issue is working to ensure an in-person decision-making format for the General Assembly. In the event of a crisis, a vote could be held using a written procedure or another method. According to our proposed draft decision, all of these measures would be taken in response to a request by Member States. These proposals are just one option for resolving the issue. We are sure that other States can also express their views and make proposals. Today we are witnessing an attempt to deprive them of that opportunity.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that Russia is a firm supporter of the business continuity of the General Assembly and other United Nations organs in any circumstances. When the epidemic forced us to leave the United Nations campus, we supported the silent procedure prepared by the Office of the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session, under which 31 decisions were successfully adopted. We adopted not only budgetary decisions and mandate extensions using this procedure, but also substantive resolutions, including on the topic of the pandemic. The General Assembly kept doing its work, demonstrating its unity to the world in a difficult situation. We believe that without undue haste, and with the appropriate

platform for negotiation, we can come to a decision that is acceptable to all.

I urge States to refrain from supporting the proposed draft decision and allow the time and opportunity necessary to find consensus on this important issue.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, Mr. President, I would like to express our appreciation for your presidency and your efforts to manage the work of the General Assembly during this exceptional time. I would also like to express my appreciation to the co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly during the previous session, Ambassadors Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee and Michal Mlynár. I congratulate Ambassador Egriselda Aracely González López on her appointment and Ambassador Mlynár on his reappointment as co-Chairs of the Working Group during the current session. We are confident that they will succeed in their endeavours.

As the United Nations celebrates the anniversary of its seventy-fifth year, the General Assembly's consideration of agenda items 125 and 126 takes on particular importance. Based on strengthening multilateralism and the central role of the United Nations as stipulated in the Declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations (resolution 75/1), we must work to improve the role, competence and performance of the Assembly as the main multilateral body of the United Nations. In order to revitalize the General Assembly, it is important to assure the implementation of its decisions and follow up on that while examining the obstacles to that revitalization.

As with any organization, improving the Assembly's performance requires committing to transparency, rationalizing activities, promoting consistency and reducing duplication. We believe that it is important to support the essential role played by the President of the General Assembly and his Office, which is why the State of Qatar always makes voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund of the Office of the President with a view to supporting and facilitating his important work.

This year the coronavirus disease pandemic has been an essential element that we had to address within the framework of revitalizing the work of the General Assembly. As set forth in resolution 74/303, the impact of the pandemic on the work of the General Assembly required special attention. The pandemic and the

precautionary measures taken to tackle it were obstacles to in-person meetings in the United Nations during the spring and summer. However, with the support of the General Assembly, we Member States were able to overcome some of those unprecedented challenges.

Despite that, however, we have not resolved an essential issue in the work of the General Assembly, which is taking decisions that require a vote. Notwithstanding the priority of working for consensus in every case, voting is an integral part of the conduct of the work of the General Assembly, the most democratic body of our international Organization. While the United Nations premises were closed, we were unable to take decisions as stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of procedure. Our inability to vote gave every Member State a de facto right to a veto. That was an obstacle to democratic decision-making and affected the sovereign right of every Member State to participate fully in the work of this important multilateral body.

While we dealt with these exceptional circumstances, now that the United Nations premises have reopened we cannot risk any repetition in the future of exceptional situations where in-person meetings are not permitted, either because of a second wave of the current pandemic or as a result of some other emergency. In our view, the revitalization of the General Assembly requires that the Assembly be effective in all circumstances.

Today the General Assembly will consider adopting a draft decision (A/75/L.7/Rev.1) in order to ensure that it is better prepared to address exceptional circumstances that may prevent in-person meetings, and the group of States that have worked on this initiative, including Qatar, have introduced a concept aimed at achieving that. This year we learned a great deal from the global health crisis. Perhaps the most important lesson was that we should not stand idly by waiting for the unknown. We must be prepared for every eventuality. As for the General Assembly, its work is indispensable, and we should not leave it up to circumstances to resolve.

Mr. Mabhongo (South Africa): We would like to take the floor to explain South Africa's position on draft decision A/75/L.7/Rev.1, entitled "Procedure for decision-making in the General Assembly when an in-person meeting is not possible".

The coronavirus disease pandemic has brought unprecedented disruption, not least to our deliberations and to the meetings of the General Assembly. We

are all therefore acutely aware of the challenges that the pandemic has posed, and we can all agree on the need to develop a system or means for continuing the work of the Assembly in all areas and in functions that are essential in varying degrees to a diverse array of delegations. It is for that reason that during circumstances as extraordinary as those we are all currently dealing with, South Africa supports in principle the need for electronic voting on a broad range of important topics. That will ensure that our work is not interrupted and that we are allowed to carry out the mandate that we have been entrusted with as Member States of this Organization.

Despite this crucial need, we still have concerns about the process in which the engagement on draft decision A/75/L.7/Rev.1 has unfolded. We believe that a decision on such matters requires that the States Members of the United Nations concur based on the broadest possible consensus. This is a decision about voting in the General Assembly. The credibility of the voting system is also a function of the confidence that Member States have in it. A number of countries consider that they do not yet understand the full implications of some of the draft decision's provisions and would therefore require time to discuss it. We believe that such further consultations need not take too long but would lead to a broader buy-in on the part of Member States.

Some members have also expressed understandable concerns about possible information and communications technology challenges and security and other constraints that variously affect some delegations and that we have seen play out in some of the efforts to conduct our work through various e-diplomacy platforms. South Africa also believes that voting in the General Assembly and its committees entails more than just signalling "yes", "no" or "abstention", and that we need adequate measures to substitute for the physical presence and voices of delegations during the various phases of action on draft decisions and resolutions.

In conclusion, I want to stress that South Africa supports the full business continuity of the General Assembly. We emphasize that procedures for decision-making in the Assembly should enjoy the consensus of Member States in order to ensure the credibility of this important chief deliberative principal organ of the United Nations. As it stands now, draft decision A/75/L.7/Rev.1 does not enjoy such a consensus. South Africa will therefore be unable

to join the consensus when action is taken on this draft decision.

Mr. Chaudhary (Pakistan): At the outset, my delegation would like to state that we align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and we would like to make a few points in Pakistan's national capacity as well.

My delegation would like to congratulate Ambassadors Egriselda Aracely González López, Permanent Representative of El Salvador, and Michal Mlynár, Permanent Representative of Slovakia, on their appointment and reappointment, respectively, as co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly. On behalf of my delegation, I would also like to assure them of Pakistan's full support in their work and our collective endeavour to make the General Assembly more robust and fit for purpose. We would also like to take this opportunity to commend the co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group at the seventy-fourth session, Ambassador Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, Permanent Representative of Ghana, and Ambassador Mlynár, for diligently steering the process, despite the challenging circumstances they faced amid the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

The work of the General Assembly represents the will of the world's peoples, making it incumbent on us to strengthen its effectiveness and vitality while preserving its intergovernmental and democratic character. Under the Charter of the United Nations, the Assembly's role is broad and far-reaching. It is the principal deliberative policymaking organ of the United Nations, and the most representative.

The Assembly's revitalization is essentially a political rather than a procedural matter. As such, progress on the revitalization process requires both constructive engagement and a strong political will. We hope that the celebrations marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations will garner the political commitment needed to deliver on the promise of revitalization. The revitalization process was constrained during the previous session owing to unavoidable restrictions on in-person meetings, which led eventually to a technical rollover of the previous year's resolution (resolution 74/303). This year we hope the situation will continue to enable us to conduct in-person deliberations, of course with the necessary

precautions in place, and with a view to building consensus and achieving meaningful progress. During the ongoing session, we hope to build on the progress made through all previous resolutions related to revitalization, including resolutions 74/303 and 73/341.

Pakistan remains committed to striving for an outcome this year that truly reflects the future we want and the United Nations we need. A reinvigorated General Assembly will make the United Nations more inclusive, enhance its effectiveness and outreach in the face of growing challenges and accelerate progress towards the targets enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That is particularly crucial in this decade of action and delivery. In that context, my delegation would like to emphasize a few key points. First, the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is a critical component of the overall reform of the United Nations. To that end, we must focus on improving the implementation mechanism of General Assembly resolutions, thereby translating ambition into action. We therefore suggest that for every resolution the Secretariat be required to submit a report on the status of implementation within a specific time frame.

Second, we call for greater coordination, information-sharing and synergies among the principal organs of the United Nations, which would help to forge coherent multilateral responses to such global challenges as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Third, we must preserve the Assembly's political role, manifested in the ability of any Member State to raise any issue of concern to it in the Assembly under an existing or additional agenda item. That is the special value of the United Nations for the majority of its membership, and this ability should not be arbitrarily restricted or proscribed in the name of rationalization.

Fourth, it is particularly vital to restore the Assembly's role in the maintenance of international peace and security, in accordance with Articles 10, 11, 12, 14 and 35 of the Charter. The Security Council's role in the maintenance of peace and security, as envisaged in the Charter, is mainly reactive, not proactive. We believe that thematic issues raised in the Security Council should revert to the General Assembly.

Fifth, the General Assembly's role in the financial and administrative management of the Organization needs to be strengthened. In particular, the Assembly should closely scrutinize the decisions of the Security Council that require the allocation of resources

for peacekeeping or other purposes. Similarly, the General Assembly's administrative role should be strengthened by among other things requiring the Secretary-General to consult the Assembly on all key high-level appointments, including the appointment of Special Representatives of the Secretary-General. The Assembly's approval should also be secured for the establishment of high-level panels on various issues and the selection of their members.

Sixth, the Assembly should examine the deliberations and decisions of the Security Council more closely. We support the submission of special reports by the Security Council, as this type of review is especially necessary whenever the Security Council authorizes action under Chapter VII.

Seventh, the Security Council has assumed a role in two areas, terrorism and non-proliferation, in response to extraordinary events. Now that the General Assembly has adopted a comprehensive strategy on terrorism, the main responsibility in that area should revert to the Assembly. The Security Council's committees should be replaced by a standing committee on counter-terrorism under the General Assembly. Likewise, the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, rather than the Security Council, should be the platform for consideration of humanitarian issues, including those arising from conflict situations.

Eighth, we echo the calls for strengthening the Office of the President of the General Assembly through greater influence in the allocation of human and financial resources, among other things. The Office of the President of the General Assembly represents the United Nations membership as a whole. In that regard, we underscore the need to increase the amount allocated to the Office in the United Nations regular budget. At the same time, ensuring that the Office has sufficient support staff is crucial, including through secondments from Member States.

Lastly, making the General Assembly more relevant in the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General is of paramount importance. Given the complex and multidimensional nature of global challenges, the role and significance of the Secretary-General of the United Nations have been considerably enhanced. The United Nations must respond to the changed circumstances in a more inclusive and democratic manner. How we decide to move on these suggestions

will contribute to shaping the future we want, and a consensus will continue to be vital to that.

In conclusion, I would like to once again assure you, Mr. President, of my delegation's commitment to engaging constructively in the deliberations aimed at achieving our common objective, that is, strengthening the work of the General Assembly.

Mr. Nasir (Maldives): My delegation would like to thank Ambassadors Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, Permanent Representative of Ghana, and Michal Mlynár, Permanent Representative of Slovakia, for their leadership as co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. We also want to congratulate Mrs. Egriselda Aracely González López, Permanent Representative of El Salvador, and Mr. Mlynár on their appointment and reappointment, respectively, as co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group for the seventy-fifth session. The Maldives seeks a transparent and efficient United Nations, and the process of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is integral to that.

The General Assembly stands alone as our Organization's most inclusive platform for discussion and cooperation on the most pressing global issues. The unprecedented challenges posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic have made it clear that wide multilateral action is our only hope in the face of the greatest threats to humankind and human existence. In order to overcome the greatest obstacles to the realization of our collective ideals, including the pandemic and climate change, we must have an Assembly that works on a basis of unity, not division, and that exercises its unique authority with transparency and efficiency. We, the Member States, have a duty to ensure that the Assembly meets its full potential as a means of achieving our shared goals of peace and prosperity.

The Maldives acknowledges the progress that has been made towards revitalizing the work of the General Assembly, especially since the Ad Hoc Working Group was established, in 2005. We note with appreciation the steps taken regarding the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General, elections and the strengthening of the office of the President of the General Assembly. Our delegation hopes that the advances made in the e-services offered to Member States as a result of the

pandemic continue to develop in order to lower costs and improve the availability of documents.

The Maldives also supports the continued efforts of the Assembly and its Main Committees to streamline their agendas through mechanisms, including by clustering and sunseting agenda items. As we have said in the past, questions must be asked about the usefulness of adopting the same resolutions repeatedly every year or every other year, or of adopting more than one draft resolution on the same subject. We must also give serious consideration to biennializing and triennializing items and resolutions.

Notwithstanding the progress made, much work remains to be done to revitalize the work of the General Assembly. In 2019, more than 75 per cent of all meetings in New York and Geneva were non-mandated. The proliferation of such events continues to strain delegations that lack the resources and personnel to meaningfully cover every event and makes it difficult for those delegations to focus their attention on the most serious challenges. Revitalization should therefore include discussion of whether the Assembly would be best served by a reduction in the number of mandated and side events. As the most important intergovernmental forum, the Assembly must always be fully functional, and more so in times of crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic threatened the business continuity of the General Assembly. We must learn from the experience and take all necessary measures to ensure that the Assembly is always equipped to function.

In his statement in the general debate (see A/75/PV.14), Mr. Abdulla Shahid, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Maldives, remarked that the United Nations gave the world a platform to share its problems and prepare solutions. The General Assembly is the heart of that platform, and only by actively maintaining its efficiency and legitimacy can we collectively meet the great challenges of our time.

Mr. Fiallo Karolys (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to read out a statement by the Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations, Ambassador Cristian Espinosa Cañizares.

“At the outset, Ecuador congratulates Ambassador Egriselda Aracely González López, Permanent Representative of El Salvador, on her appointment as co-Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly. I also congratulate Mr. Michal

Mlynár, Permanent Representative of Slovakia, on his reappointment as co-Chair of this crucial process, and wish them both every success. I underscore the contribution of Ambassador Mlynár and Ambassador Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, Permanent Representative of Ghana, and their teams during the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly.

“In particular, I would like to highlight the efforts of both co-Chairs in maintaining dialogue and discussion among delegations, including even during the most difficult times, as a result of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Curiously, before the March quarantine and subsequent our return to Headquarters, the last in-person meeting in which my delegation participated also had to do with the revitalization process, at which time Ecuador insisted on the importance of modernizing our working methods and the tools we have at our disposal in the Assembly.

“Since the founding of the United Nations, our countries and the world in general have experienced unprecedented challenges, and it is precisely at such moments that the Organization and the General Assembly must be more effective than ever. During the informal consultations held during the seventy-fourth session on COVID-19 and the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, as well as many other items, Ecuador insisted on the importance of updating procedures for decision-making in the General Assembly in the event that holding in-person meetings is not possible.

“We must learn from the experience we had in March, when social distancing measures forced us to leave this Hall for our homes and move to virtual platforms without any preparation for decision-making. Ecuador believes that this cannot be allowed to recur, and for that reason we have sponsored draft resolution A/75/L.7/Rev.1, which we will continue to fully support.

“Another issue is the need to ensure coordination between the work of the main and subsidiary bodies, thereby avoiding overlaps and duplication. Ecuador is concerned about the fact that delegations continue to increase and duplicate the agenda items within the main bodies rather than focusing on the

efforts needed to support the implementation of existing commitments. The COVID-19 pandemic requires us to prioritize quality over quantity. It is time for us to focus on substantive issues and what really matters to humankind.

“When we review working methods, we should not fail to deal with accessibility issues. Ecuador will continue to insist on that issue during the current session of the General Assembly, while at the same time supporting the Organization’s efforts to increase accessibility both at Headquarters and in Headquarters chambers, as well as in terms of material working conditions. Unfortunately, since 2007 we have given this issue a great deal of discussion but have made little progress. How is it possible for the United Nations to promote the rights of people with disabilities around the world and their full inclusion when Headquarters continues to fail to provide the minimum access necessary for people with disabilities? The best way that we can pay homage to the United Nations during its seventy-fifth anniversary, which we are celebrating, is to build a more efficient Organization and a stronger, as well as more accessible, Assembly. To that end, it is important to recognize that the General Assembly is the Organization’s central body for addressing and meeting global challenges. That is why this process must continue in order to strengthen the authority of its role.

“In conclusion, I would like to align my delegation with the statement made earlier by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.”

Mr. Kakanur (India): I thank you once again, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting.

India aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

We warmly congratulate the Permanent Representatives of El Salvador and Slovakia on their appointment as co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly for this session.

The seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations is a significant milestone that must see us step up our efforts to reinvigorate and revitalize the work of the General Assembly as a critical component of the

comprehensive reform of the United Nations. India has consistently held the view that the General Assembly can be revitalized only when its position as the chief deliberative policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations is respected in the letter and spirit.

This year has been particularly challenging. The sudden and unprecedented onslaught of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic posed immense challenges to the continuation of many important meetings and mandated processes of the General Assembly. We had to adapt to the unanticipated limitations placed on in-person meetings, and the working methods of the General Assembly had to be redefined to ensure business continuity. That posed several procedural, technical, logistical and legal challenges. How do we ensure universal participation, transparency and broad consultations? How do we make critical decisions, especially on budgets, without relying on voting, and set up virtual meeting platforms? And last but not least, how do we conduct crucial elections for the President of the General Assembly and members of the Security Council?

Working closely with the General Committee and the Secretariat, the then-President of the General Assembly and the General Assembly, with the support of the wider membership, put in place special procedures for making decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Notwithstanding some of the challenges of functioning via a silent procedure, the method enabled the Assembly to succeed in adopting more than 70 important resolutions and decisions. That brings us to draft decision A/75/L.7/Rev.1, which was introduced earlier. While we will share our views in detail later during the discussion on the proposal, we want to emphasize the following.

Continued deliberations and consultations on improving preparedness and business continuity are welcome, and to that extent we appreciate the efforts of the proponents of the proposal. However, we remain unconvinced that such a decision is even required at this stage. The provisional procedures adopted at the peak of the COVID-19 crisis worked very well. What is the rush to put this measure in place? New or rushed ideas do not necessarily represent progress. The draft proposal before us today requires much more time for detailed, inclusive and transparent deliberations, including seeking relevant legal advice. Much remains to be done in terms of guaranteeing the integrity and safety of the technological platform that will be used.

Finally, the sanctity of the floor of the Assembly and the in-person presence of representatives of Member States when making decisions cannot be undermined.

The success of multilateralism depends to a large degree on the success of the General Assembly. As we celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, let us use this important milestone to make genuine efforts to strengthen the role of the General Assembly in setting the global agenda instead of taking steps that could dilute its credibility and authority.

Mr. Ilnytskyi (Ukraine): Ukraine aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. I would like to highlight several points concerning the working methods of the General Assembly in my national capacity.

We are all working now in what for the United Nations are unprecedented circumstances with regard to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which has dramatically affected every aspect of our lives and further aggravated existing threats. At the same time, we should also treat the restrictions for countering the pandemic as an opportunity to enhance our cooperation in overcoming existing limitations and problems. It is high time for the Organization to review its working methods so that it can respond appropriately to current challenges. After this crisis is over, the United Nations must develop immunity to past issues. We commend the efforts of the Secretary-General to prevent the spread of the pandemic at Headquarters, as well as to provide appropriate international assistance to overcoming its consequences generally. Member States have also demonstrated the ability to temporarily adapt to working methods in the General Assembly suited to the pandemic's circumstances.

Our joint efforts made the continuation of the work of the General Assembly during the COVID-19 pandemic possible and enabled us to take forward its important agenda on overcoming the pandemic and its consequences. I am confident that considering the unpredictable situations caused by the pandemic, the General Assembly should take full advantage of this opportunity and do its part to revise the ways in which it conducts its business. In that context, the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies should ramp up their use of information technologies in order to mitigate the consequences of the potential spread of the disease. In that regard, we welcome the decision to allow the use of

pre-recorded statements during the general debate and other high-level meetings of the current session. The Committees also adapted their *modus operandi* to the pandemic, and I am sure that those decisions saved the lives of many living in New York and elsewhere.

Against all odds, in March the General Assembly was able to adopt an interim no-objection procedure for taking decisions, thereby allowing the adoption of a number of important documents at the early stages of our work in a rapidly deteriorating pandemic situation. In addition, as I said, the interim mechanism was not envisaged in the General Assembly's rules of procedure. It was clear that the circumstances at the time required an exceptional procedure for a limited period of time.

At the same time, our desire for consensus should not be a substitute for meaningful discussion on important issues. The paradigm of consensus and only consensus can be a disincentive to negotiations. The prolonged period during which the Assembly was deprived of the possibility of adopting decisions by vote clearly revealed the need to ensure that it was fully capable of working in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of procedure in any extraordinary circumstances.

As we recently commemorated the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Charter, I would like to recall that in San Francisco the founding nations, including Ukraine, agreed that the Assembly should be able to adopt its decisions by vote, thereby avoiding the procedural mistakes of the Organization's predecessor, the League of Nations. We are therefore reaching a point at which the Assembly can no longer be allowed to stand idle, given the circumstances the whole world is experiencing. The Assembly needs to be up to date with regard to technologies and able to provide the possibility for electronic voting on issues in extraordinary situations when a secret ballot is not required. We therefore support and have become a sponsor of draft decision A/75/L.7/Rev.1 on electronic voting, as introduced today.

I would also like to mention the issue of strengthening the authority of the General Assembly. We continue to witness attempts to hinder the Assembly's special authority to consider issues brought to its attention by Member States. I am referring to recorded votes on the inclusion of items on the agenda, including item 65, entitled "The situation in the temporary occupied territories of Ukraine". While the results of

the votes have been self-explanatory at every session, I would like to emphasize that the Assembly cannot be considered effective or up to today's challenges if there are constant attempts to avoid the consideration of pressing issues. We believe that as the main deliberative policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations, the Assembly is obliged by the Charter to discuss any questions, including those related to the maintenance of international peace and security. I am also confident that open, comprehensive and substantive discussions with the United Nations membership on the issue of the armed aggression against my country during the resumed part of the current session will facilitate the restoration of my country's sovereign territories and contribute to upholding the principles and values enshrined in the Charter, as well as serving the meaningful revitalization of the Assembly.

In conclusion, I would like to underline that while our joint work aimed at the revitalization of the General Assembly has already brought about tangible results, there is plenty of room for improvement in order to make this body and its decisions effective and thereby safeguard the legacy of the Organization.

Ms. Lahmiri (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, my delegation would like to thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting on the dual items of the implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations and the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. We would also like to take this opportunity to warmly congratulate Mrs. González López, Permanent Representative of El Salvador, and Mr. Mlynár, Permanent Representative of Slovakia, on their appointment and reappointment, respectively, as co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly. We also want to take this opportunity to commend the outstanding work done by the outgoing co-Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group, Mrs. Pobee, Permanent Representative of Ghana.

The process of the revitalization of the General Assembly has undoubtedly seen its share of difficulties during the current session, owing to the unprecedented situation resulting from the coronavirus disease pandemic. However, we were able to successfully conclude the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group. This session, which marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, is essential to ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of the Organization. For 75 years, the goals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations

have guided international relations. A revitalized General Assembly would contribute significantly to strengthening the entire United Nations system and multilateralism as well.

For Morocco, the process of revitalizing the work of the General Assembly is directly linked to the overall reform of the Organization. In that regard, we reiterate our support for the important reforms introduced by the Secretary-General, whose positive results are already enabling the United Nations to better confront the complex and multidimensional changes of our world. I would like to remind the Assembly that Mr. António Guterres put forward those reforms as part of his campaign for the post of Secretary-General, and I want to congratulate him on keeping his promises to Member States and assure him of our support for the continued implementation of those reforms and the undertaking of new ones. We welcome the tangible and constructive progress made in recent years in revitalizing the work of the General Assembly as a result of our shared efforts and the successful outcome of the Ad Hoc Working Group's initiative. We urge all Member States to continue in the same spirit so as to reinforce the gains made in previous sessions.

We note with satisfaction the measures taken by the Secretariat, particularly the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, to implement the decisions of the Assembly on its revitalization and ensure the smooth running of our meetings and other activities within the Organization. With regard to the financial liquidity crisis that the Organization is still dealing with, the Secretary-General has taken concrete measures, and we welcome their rapid roll-out and effectiveness. In our shared goal of revitalizing the General Assembly and ensuring the smooth functioning of the Organization, it is incumbent on all of us to ensure that the United Nations has the administrative and financial means necessary for its proper functioning. We also commend the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance for the outstanding work done to ensure the balanced budgets necessary for the proper functioning of the Organization.

It is important to continue working on increasing synergies and coherence with regard to agenda items and the various Committees and ensure the harmonization of the General Assembly's agenda with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

With regard to the working methods of the General Assembly, we support the efforts to increase gender parity within the United Nations and commend the Secretary-General's commitment and remarkable measures taken to ensure male-female parity, which has already been achieved at the level of senior officials, as well as for the entire staff of the United Nations. Morocco welcomes the efforts to make the selection process of appointing candidates to the post of Secretary-General and other United Nations senior-level positions inclusive, transparent and efficient. At the same time, the process should allow for continuity in the implementation of the Secretary-General's bold reforms.

Before concluding, I would like to emphasize that the process of revitalizing the work of the General Assembly requires the constant commitment of all Member States, as well as the genuine political will needed to implement that noble goal. Morocco reaffirms its commitment to continuing to contribute effectively and constructively to the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group.

Lastly, Morocco expresses its support for draft decision A/75/L.7/Rev.1, entitled "Procedure for decision-making in the General Assembly when an in-person meeting is not possible".

Mr. Mavroyiannis (Cyprus): My remarks complement the statements made earlier by the observer of the European Union and by the representative of Liechtenstein on behalf of the core group.

Cyprus has joined the main sponsors of draft decision A/75/L.7/Rev.1, as we strongly believe that all the principal organs of the United Nations should be able to deliver on their mandate fully and uninterrupted, without restricting the scope of their work or the rights of their members, irrespective of the circumstances we find ourselves in. In addition, my recent experience as Chair of the Fifth Committee is that the Organization can find itself in a very difficult position if it does not have a mechanism for making decisions at all times.

As a small country, Cyprus needs the General Assembly to have at its disposal the tools to perform its duties, rain or shine. Business continuity is a must, even in difficult circumstances. Given the *raison d'être* of the United Nations, it is inconceivable to us that we could ever say for any reason that the Organization is closed for business. While this year the world was waiting for the United Nations to provide timely solutions to

a multifaceted global crisis such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, rightly thinking that the United Nations is unique in combining expertise in all aspects of the crisis and an unsurpassed capacity for international cooperation, the Organization was in near-paralysis. The Organization is all of us, and we can do better. That is what we are here to do today.

We are here to remedy a specific lacuna, exposed by the COVID-19 crisis, in order to be able to address future crises of equal scope and seriousness. We hope we never have to use the procedure that we are proposing here today, but we should not shy away from addressing the appearance of a specific problem with a targeted solution. No crisis can be allowed to deprive any Member State of its most fundamental right at the United Nations, the right to vote.

The proposed procedure, with all its imperfections, is the closest we have come, after months of discussion, to a method of remote voting that respects the rights of Member States under the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of procedure. We trust that all Member States will apply the procedure responsibly and prioritize the work that highlights the central role of the General Assembly in the organized international community.

As a main sponsor, we have tried hard to address all the concerns brought to our attention, short of altering the fundamental tenets of the project. What is before us today is the result of compromise. We would have wished to see it adopted unanimously, but seeing that that was not feasible, we were left with no option but to vote or shelve the initiative. No country should see the draft decision as going against its interests. Although we may not fully share the fears expressed by other Member States, we are fully determined to work with them to avoid any misuse. It is our collective responsibility to work together to improve access to technology and enhance the security of the platform used. I am convinced that that is part of our duty today. We should judge the draft decision before us based on how it serves our collective interests by safeguarding the indispensability, credibility and integrity of the General Assembly.

Mr. Mlynár (Slovakia): My delegation fully associates itself with the statement made earlier today by the observer of the European Union, and I would like to make a few additional points in my national capacity.

Let me start by thanking you, Mr. President, for convening today's plenary debate, which goes to the

very core of the United Nations — empowering the General Assembly in order for it to fulfil its central role as reflected in the Charter of the United Nations, so that it is better able to confront and address the current global challenges. As we have just commemorated the seventy-fifth anniversary of the creation of the United Nations, the way we work and the aims we want to achieve are more relevant than ever. We should therefore strive to use this opportunity for further reflection and to agree on tangible outcomes.

It has been a great honour for me and my country to guide the negotiations on the issue of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly during the past two sessions, alongside my co-Chairs, Ambassadors Sima Sami Bahous of Jordan and Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee of Ghana. With the trust and support of all delegations, I am pleased and honoured to continue serving as one of the co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly during the General Assembly's seventy-fifth session and under your able leadership and political guidance, Mr. President. I look forward to working with the Permanent Representative of El Salvador, Ambassador Egriselda Aracely González López, in that regard. We are both honoured to take up our important responsibility during this session and are fully committed to doing our best in steering the efforts of member States in the Ad Hoc Working Group. I would like to extend our sincerest invitation to all Member States to engage and actively participate and work with us, because it is a joint effort. It is only together that can we achieve the expected and desired outcomes.

In previous sessions we have seen the General Assembly make significant achievements in the area of revitalization, ranging from specific issues, such as enhancing the appointment process of the Secretary-General, to the streamlining of its working methods in general. I firmly believe that resolution 73/341, adopted during the seventy-third session and reconfirmed through a technical rollover in the previous session, has not only been streamlined and made concise but also provides a solid foundation for continued meaningful discussions and the identification of further action-oriented solutions. Many colleagues and delegations have referred to previous results in areas where further concerted efforts are needed, and I can assure all delegations that we have been listening attentively. All of their points will be very carefully reflected and addressed.

I would like to highlight just a few issues that we believe remain very relevant to the process, without going into too many technical details. First, previous resolutions of the General Assembly, not only on the issue of revitalization, but on any other matter relevant to this undoubtedly broad topic, should be duly implemented. Let us be frank and honest about the fact that we lag behind in implementing many resolutions and measures that have already been agreed on. Rather than focusing on efforts aimed at improving implementation, we often resort to adopting new resolutions or solutions. By making sure that resolutions are adhered to, several issues of concern can be addressed in a fairly simple way, without the need to repeat negotiations or reinvent the wheel on the same matters at each or every other session. In that regard, we should also make better use of the lessons learned in the Main Committees on the revitalization of their own work, including the biennialization and triennialization of agenda items, in addition to an increased and enhanced role for the General Committee, which proved that important role recently during the pandemic. In that context, Mr. President, we certainly welcome your indication that you intend to work very closely with the General Committee and the respective Chairs of the Main Committees.

Secondly, while there is general agreement on the overburdening of our agenda, so far we have fallen quite short of moving to take tangible measures to address some of the very real challenges on that issue.

Thirdly and lastly, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continues to test our preparedness and resilience. I wish we could all say that we have already reached a point where we can start speaking about COVID-19 in the past tense. Unfortunately, that is still not possible. But we are not starting from scratch. We need to reflect in a serious and holistic way on the impact of pandemic on the work of the General Assembly and address the various lessons learned in order to make our working methods more effective and more efficient in good times and, potentially, in bad times. In that context, we very much look forward to receiving the analysis that the Secretary-General has been tasked with preparing and to welcoming him and his representatives in the Ad Hoc Working Group in order to address those pertinent and important issues. As I have heard today, there is considerable interest among all Member States on precisely those issues. Securing business continuity in the General Assembly,

as the most representative organ of the United Nations, during potential further waves of the pandemic, or similar future threats, should be imperative for all of us.

In conclusion, we should continue making further strides in pursuit of our common goal of revitalizing the Assembly in order to make it a truly deliberative and functional body that represents all of us. My delegation and I look forward to engaging with you and Member States, Mr. President, in a results-oriented process during the Assembly's seventy-fifth session in order to further improve the Organization's ability to make a relevant contribution to peace, prosperity, sustainable development and human rights. That is our overarching goal and an important principle. I again thank you, Mr. President, for your trust and leadership. We are fully committed to working with you throughout the session.

Ms. Fatima (Bangladesh): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate, for sharing your insights on the need for a revitalization of the General Assembly and for upholding the values and principles of multilateralism.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made earlier today by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

I would like to congratulate my good friends Ambassadors Egriselda González López and Michal Mlynár on their appointment as co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly. I also want to express my deep appreciation to Ambassador Martha Pobee and Ambassador Mlynár for their able leadership in steering the proceedings of the Working Group during the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session.

In response to the unprecedented situation posed by the coronavirus disease pandemic, Member States have to adapt to a new reality in managing General Assembly processes. We thank you and all delegations, Mr. President, for your flexibility and spirit of accommodation in overcoming the challenges to conducting our work and ensuring business continuity. Since the extraordinary circumstances are not over yet, we need to be nimble in adjusting to any future eventualities, while complying with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

The strength of the General Assembly is its unique convening power and ability to bring all countries

together. The Assembly is a symbol and practical manifestation of multilateralism. The seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations provides a unique opportunity to build on the achievements made to strengthen the United Nations and multilateralism as a whole. To ensure that the Assembly will conduct its role in a comprehensive and collaborative manner, we all have to do our part to preserve its intergovernmental, inclusive, consultative and democratic nature. Bangladesh believes that the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly remains an integral part of the wider efforts of reforming the United Nations as a whole. In that context, Bangladesh appreciates the agreement that resolution 73/341 will form the basis of the whole process of the Ad Hoc Working Group. Bangladesh also welcomes the adoption by consensus of resolution 74/303 and all relevant previous resolutions, and we look forward to similar constructive engagements among delegations during the current session.

Rationalizing the agendas of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, eliminating duplication and overlap and promoting complementarity in the consideration and negotiation of related issues are priorities for many Member States. Aligning the Assembly's agenda with the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is also vital, and we believe there is still room for improvement. In that connection, I want to thank you, Mr. President, for entrusting me and my country and my good friend Ambassador Darja Bavdaž Kuret with the co-facilitation of the agenda alignment process. We look forward to having the support of all Member States in accomplishing that important task in an inclusive, consultative and productive manner.

The Office of the President of the General Assembly plays a critical role in the fulfilment of the mandate of the United Nations. There is no alternative to strengthening the Office of the President and equipping it with adequate resources, including additional human resources, on a permanent basis from the Secretariat, with a specific view to improving record-keeping and assisting with continuity from session to session. In that regard, we take positive note of the incremental progress achieved so far. The practice being followed in recent years for the election of the President of the General Assembly is a welcome development. We need to build further on it and replicate the practice in other appointments where possible.

We subscribe to the initiative aimed at the proper implementation of the Charter of the United Nations with respect to the functional relationship between its main organs, in particular the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. We commend the regular dialogue held by the President of the General Assembly with the Presidents of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. To that end, the Ad Hoc Working Group should suggest how synergy, coherence and complementarity among the agendas of the Assembly and its Committees, the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies, as well as interaction with the Security Council, can be improved.

Bangladesh continues to take a serious interest in the reform of the working methods of the General Assembly and its Main Committees and welcomes the progress made by the Committees in improving their working methods. We understand that a working method is only a step towards more substantive improvements aimed at restoring and enhancing the role and authority of the Assembly. In that context, we see merit in mainstreaming some of those efficiency measures across all the Committees. We also underscore the need for our collective understanding and determination in ensuring due prominence for the general debate segment of the annual General Assembly session. In that regard, we echo the views of many Member States regarding the growing number of side events and activities taking place in parallel to the General Assembly debate.

Let me conclude by emphasizing once again the important role of the Ad Hoc Working Group and assuring the Assembly that Bangladesh will continue to engage in a constructive manner in the proceedings of those forums so that we can make meaningful progress this year.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): Malta aligns itself with the statements delivered earlier today by the observer of the European Union and by the representative of Liechtenstein on behalf of the core group.

In my national capacity, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate. I also want to take this opportunity to thank the co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly during the previous sessions for steering the process under difficult circumstances and to congratulate the recently appointed co-Chairs, to whom we promise our full support.

In the interests of time, as a member of the core group, I will focus on draft decision A/75/L.7/Rev.1, which is before us today. The relevance of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly has been emphasized by the way our work has been affected by the coronavirus disease pandemic. We have come to accept that refraining from attending in-person meetings can be part of the way to fight the spread of this virus. Moreover, other circumstances could lead us to cancel in-person meetings.

We applaud the United Nations for its resilience when confronted with this unprecedented situation, as it did the best it could with the tools available to it at the time. However, it would be irresponsible of us not to learn from the past few months and adapt to the times by adding to our toolbox to ensure that the United Nations remains relevant and functioning, especially when the world around us is facing dire challenges and looks to us for leadership, guidance and solutions. It is therefore critically important to consider possible avenues that could help us carry forward the important work of the General Assembly even when we cannot meet. When the adoption of decisions by consensus is not possible, a mechanism enabling the use of electronic voting is one way that would allow us to continue to reach our goals, beyond the technical rollovers we have seen. In that regard, I want to express our support for the procedure for decision-making in the General Assembly when an in-person meeting is not possible.

Mr. Šimonović (Croatia): Croatia aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier today by the observer of the European Union. I also want to deliver some remarks in my national capacity, as well as in our capacity as a member of the core group. Let me thank previous co-Chairs and congratulate those newly appointed and continue the discussion on draft decision A/75/L.7/Rev.1, on electronic voting.

The draft decision on which we are about to vote is not just another decision. It is a document that is crucial to ensuring the global leadership of the United Nations and the central role of the General Assembly within the United Nations, in all circumstances. In a letter addressed to all of us, you made it clear, Mr. President, that the General Assembly must be able to perform its duties in any given circumstances. I fully agree. As the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has shown us, in times of crisis, we need the United Nations even more than we usually do. And in order to take timely

and decisive action in the General Assembly, we must be able to vote.

Two months ago, immediately after the United Nations lockdown ended, the General Assembly adopted the omnibus resolution 74/306, on a comprehensive and coordinated response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although only two Member States voted against it, with two more abstaining, we would not have been able to adopt that document, crucial to our response to the crisis, if we had not been able to meet in person. Allowing 193 States to have veto power in situations where the General Assembly's response may be desperately needed undermines the leading role of the United Nations and the central role of the General Assembly, the key guarantor of the sovereign equality of all Member States within the United Nations.

In the same letter, Mr. President, you also emphasized that the consensus on the importance of the ability of the General Assembly to perform its duties in any given circumstances is growing. A large cross-regional group of sponsors of today's draft decision testifies to that. Unfortunately, however, a consensus has not been reached. We may all agree that electronic voting is not ideal. It is therefore not meant to complement or replace in-person decision-making. This draft decision limits electronic voting to rare and extraordinary circumstances when the inability to meet in person and vote seriously impedes the Assembly's ability to perform its duties for a prolonged period of time.

If those circumstances are so rare and extraordinary, will we ever need this decision again? Let us hope that we do not. However, let us make sure that we have it in case we do need it — in the next few weeks as well the years to come. If in time we can reach a consensus on a better way to vote when in-person voting is not possible, today's draft decision will still have served the purpose of having a viable solution in the meantime.

Mrs. González López (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): El Salvador thanks you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

I would like to thank the preceding co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly, Ambassadors Michal Mlynár, Permanent Representative of Slovakia, and Martha Pobee, Permanent Representative of

Ghana, for their leadership, which paved the way for a satisfactory outcome.

Today's debate is being held in unprecedented circumstances, marked by a crisis that has laid bare the importance of reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism as a response to twenty-first-century challenges. El Salvador believes that the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is more relevant than ever, given the myriad of challenges to the Organization and, more broadly, to global governance. In that regard, we would like to mention a number of factors that we believe to be relevant to the process.

As we mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the foundation of the Organization and nearly three decades since the General Assembly began to formally debate the revitalization of its work, El Salvador believes that the process is a key component of United Nations reform and the strengthening of multilateralism. My country therefore believes it is crucial to continue implementing the current resolutions on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, while also attempting to meet our most pressing challenges.

El Salvador is of the view that strengthening the General Assembly must go hand in hand with strengthening synergy, coherence and coordination between its work and that of the other principal organs of the United Nations. It is also important for my country not to lose sight of the fact that revitalization entails ensuring that the General Assembly is more effective, efficient and responsible in meeting the needs of the citizens of the world. As the only intergovernmental body with universal membership, and given its far-reaching mandate and broad range of responsibilities, the Assembly has a key role in establishing the global agenda and re-establishing the central role of the United Nations in developing multilateral solutions to ongoing and emerging global issues. It is therefore essential that the main representative organ of the United Nations reflect the willingness of its members to adapt their work to people's concerns and aspirations, while maintaining their commitment to current and future generations.

El Salvador believes therefore that much remains to be done to make the general public aware of the importance of the work, priorities and role of the General Assembly, and we welcomed the efforts made in previous sessions to promote greater participation. We must continue encouraging active participation and increasing the representation of all regions in debates.

Whenever possible, we must listen to other relevant protagonists with ideas to share that could enrich our discussions.

My country believes that it is crucial to ensure that the work of the General Assembly is in line with and contributes to the implementation of the three pillars of the United Nations. As we start the Decade of Action to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as other instruments and multilateral agreements essential to our work, El Salvador believes that it is crucial that documents issued by the Organization be as action-oriented as possible and in line with its priorities. We believe it is necessary to continue promoting equity and diversity within the United Nations, while always bearing in mind the universality of its membership and the principle of the sovereign equality of all Members. It is also important to continue building on the results achieved so far in the area of gender equality in the Organization.

During this session, we will undoubtedly consider key issues that will lay the foundations for the work of the United Nations after the coronavirus disease pandemic. Over the past few months, owing to the limitations imposed by the crisis, we have had to move forward and promote greater access to new technologies at an unprecedented speed. We believe it essential to continue seeking innovative and creative working methods that will enable us to fulfil the mandates of the General Assembly even during crises. To that end, we need effective and sustainable funding to increase the efficiency of our Organization. El Salvador is of the view that resources are best used when they solve major problems afflicting our countries and are dedicated to caring for and protecting the most vulnerable in society. Accountability therefore continues to be a high priority.

Lastly, it is a great honour for my country and for me to lead the negotiations on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly during the seventy-fifth session, alongside Ambassador Mlynár of Slovakia. I thank you, Mr. President, for the trust you have shown in us by appointing us as co-Chairs. I am sure that with the support of all delegations, we will achieve results that strengthen the General Assembly and enable it to address and overcome the current global challenges.

Mr. Roscoe (United Kingdom): I will be very brief. In our Organization's seventy-fifth year, the revitalization of its work has never been more important. The initial

results of the global consultation launched to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations send us a clear message. There is widespread support for the United Nations, but reform is needed to equip us for future challenges. Despite positive perceptions of the United Nations and its role in global affairs, more than half of respondents indicated that they see our work as remote from their lives. The revitalization of our agenda is therefore critical if we are to enhance our focus and relevance, which we should do by streamlining and reducing overlaps and duplications in our work.

The ongoing coronavirus disease crisis has amplified the need for revitalization and given us a sense of where we can make progress. Across the Committees this year, we have seen examples of finalizations and technical rollovers of resolutions in order to enable us to set priorities in our work and focus on what is really important. Now our task will be to translate that momentum into lasting and targeted change, and we should approach this year's revitalization process by getting on and doing that.

Mr. Yao Shaojun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would first like to thank you, Sir, for convening today's meeting.

China supports the statement made earlier by the representative of the Russian Federation.

Since its founding 75 years ago, the United Nations has made outstanding contributions to the maintenance of international peace and stability and the promotion of progress for human society. The purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations have become the basic norms governing international relations and the concept and practice of multilateralism have brought tangible benefits to the peoples of the world. Yet at the same time the world is facing new challenges, exemplified by intertwined traditional and non-traditional security issues, a grim international security situation, attacks on international rules and challenges to multilateral mechanisms. The world needs multilateralism and a strong United Nations more than ever.

The General Assembly is both the principal Charter body and the principal policy review body of the United Nations par excellence. Its revitalization affects the vital interests of all Member States and has important and far-reaching effects in terms of enhancing the authority and credibility of the United Nations. The general membership, and not least its developing countries,

expects the General Assembly to continue to improve its work and fully meet the responsibilities entrusted to it by the Charter.

In the light of the evolving international situation and prominent challenges facing the United Nations in various areas, the General Assembly should focus on reviewing and addressing the major issues of general interest to Member States, especially those concerning the fundamental interests of developing countries. It should pay greater attention and contribute more to development issues and play a bigger role in promoting international development and cooperation. The Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and other organs should strengthen their division of labour and coordination while leveraging their respective strengths. On issues concerning the maintenance of international peace and security, the Assembly should strengthen its coordination and cooperation with the Security Council in accordance with the Charter.

Today's agenda items are entitled "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly" and "Implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations". Regrettably, these items, which are supposedly dedicated to strengthening the authority of the General Assembly and maintaining the unity of Member States, have been used to introduce a controversial electronic voting procedure, resulting in division among the general membership.

China is committed to ensuring the business continuity and effective performance of the General Assembly in exceptional circumstances when in-person meetings are all but impossible, and we support ensuring the right of Member States to ask for votes and participate in them. However, the electronic voting procedure is fraught with loopholes that range from political to legal and procedural to technical in nature. As such, it is not the best solution, much less the only way out. In view of that, China and Russia have jointly proposed other possible options to ensure the continuity of the work of the General Assembly, which have been circulated to all Member States. Member States have the right to be informed of more viable options so that after careful and thorough discussions, the best possible course of action can be selected and developed.

Regrettably, the sponsors of draft decision A/75/L.7/Rev.1 rushed to establish an electronic voting procedure, refused to discuss and incorporate the

proposal by China, Russia and other countries and artificially pared down the feasible options. As a result, Member States did not have enough time or opportunity to study and compare the pros and cons of the various options. During the consultations, many countries expressed concerns and presented better and more reasonable proposals on the scope of the application and the triggers of the voting mechanism, only to be ignored, or worse, rejected, by the sponsoring countries.

Despite the lack of transparency and inclusiveness in the subsequent amendments, the draft decision is still being rushed to a vote without full consultation with the general membership, which is deplorably unfair. Instead of seeking consensus, the sponsors are imposing premature solutions. And instead of seeking solutions, they are undermining the solidarity of Member States and the authority of the General Assembly. Exploring a decision-making procedure under exceptional circumstances, including electronic voting, bears on the full and complete application of the General Assembly's rules of procedure, the immediate interests of each Member State and the effective operation of the Assembly in the long term.

Under rule 163 and footnote 84 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, any formulation or amendment of the rules of procedure should be referred to the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly. China supports in-depth discussions in the framework of the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly on electronic voting, the Chinese-Russian proposal and any other potential options that may be put forward by Member States in an effort to find the best possible solution.

Mr. Rattray (Jamaica): I am taking the floor to speak on draft decision A/75/L.7/Rev.1. As a member of the core group, I can attest that the main sponsors conducted extensive outreach with a view to securing the broadest possible agreement among Member States. In doing so, however, we recognize that the final draft might not command every member's full support. That is not unusual, as unanimity, while ideal, is not a realistic objective for every proposal that is introduced in the General Assembly. As we are all well aware, getting 193 Member States to agree on the text of a draft decision or resolution is extremely challenging.

We would like to remind the Assembly that under the Covenant of the League of Nations, decisions could be made only by unanimous vote. That rule applied not only to the League's Council, which had the

responsibility for maintaining international peace, but also to the League's Assembly, the equivalent of today's General Assembly. Its practical effect was to equip each State member of the League, with a few limited exceptions, with veto power. In essence, a single "no" vote cast by any member State was sufficient to kill any draft resolution. It was through the lesson learned from that mistake that the founders of the United Nations decided that decisions should be made by majority vote. The notable exception, of course, applies to the five permanent members of the Security Council when they act in their capacity as veto Powers.

The point is that the attainment of unanimity is too high a hurdle to ensure effective multilateral decision-making. If we accept that, which the evidence of the League of Nations bears out, then we must acknowledge that the silence procedure mechanism, which we became so reliant on during the early months of the pandemic, is a blunt and ill-suited decision-making tool, because it effectively provides each Member State with a veto. The unsuitability of the application of that method of decision-making to all circumstances is precisely why we are engaged in this process. The silence procedure may be appropriate in some circumstances, but it is not suited to issues that are even slightly controversial. As such, it does not lend itself to consensus-building, since those who do not support certain parts of a draft text are not incentivized to engage actively in consultations. Silence can simply be broken without the prospect of a vote thereafter. That runs counter to what we all strive to achieve, which is decisions that are made without the need for a vote. That requires consensus-building, which for us as diplomats is our stock-in-trade.

That is why the draft stresses the importance of orderly, transparent and inclusive consultations, particularly in the absence of in-person meetings. We have traditionally been willing to undertake the painstaking and often laborious process of narrowing our differences and broadening our areas of commonality because, at the end of the day, the prospect of a vote looms. As such, we view the public application of the principle of consensus as operating in tandem with a voting process. But in extraordinary situations where in-person meetings are not possible, there is no opportunity for us to vote in the event that consensus cannot be achieved.

I am mindful that General Assembly decisions are frequently adopted by consensus and believe that

we must return to a place where we can adopt draft resolutions without objection, even when we do not support them wholeheartedly. But I want to reiterate that the impetus to achieve consensus is our ability to call for a vote. It is a fundamental feature of multilateral decision-making that we must safeguard, particularly during extraordinary circumstances such as we have been experiencing.

Let me conclude by addressing concerns that have been expressed by some Member States regarding the possibility that malicious cyberactivity could be detected during or after the electronic voting process. I would simply note, in that regard, that the electronically recorded votes module operates on the e-deleGATE platform, which also houses the e-sponsorship and e-speaker modules. Those systems, with which we are all familiar, operate in a similar fashion to the mechanism that we propose. Moreover, since June, the e-recorded votes module has been further enhanced with multiple layers of security, such as secondary authentication requirements. That is not to suggest that the electronic voting system will be foolproof, but I can say that in the event of an obviously malicious act, the voting process could be suspended.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin my brief statement by expressing our full support for whatever needs to be done to enable the General Assembly to carry out its work without interruption, no matter the circumstances. That is why our delegation recognizes the importance of draft decision A/75/L.7/Rev.1 on decision-making procedures in the General Assembly in the event that in-person meetings cannot be held. It is precisely because of the importance, scope and relevance of this draft decision that we believe it should be adopted by consensus, not by a vote, as is currently intended.

What is the extreme urgency in adopting this decision by vote, which prevents us from having a reasonable amount of time to enable further consultations that could lead to a consensus among all members of the General Assembly? What is the time-limiting factor that requires this draft decision to be submitted with such haste and adopted this afternoon? What is behind that reasoning? Given those questions, which are difficult to answer justifiably, Equatorial Guinea calls for time to be allowed for consultations in order to resolve the various pending questions on the matter. My colleague the Ambassador of Jamaica has just provided some additional details during his statement.

Those clarifications would have been well received during the consultations, discussions and negotiations. Many countries were not involved in that process, and we are now faced with the *fait accompli* of having to participate in a vote on a draft decision that has very significant implications for all States Members of the United Nations.

For that reason, our delegation will not be able to join the consensus on voting in favour of the draft decision. We believe that such decisions must be made by consensus, as in the Security Council. We see no reason why more time cannot be given. Is some sort of cataclysmic event expected in the short term? Has a tsunami been predicted that will force us into a situation where we cannot meet as we do now? Between now and the end of the month, or by January, is it truly impossible to have time for further consultations to bring everyone together to reach a consensus on this important decision?

Mr. Bessedik (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): I would like to make a few remarks in my national capacity. If I may, I would like to begin by underscoring several points in the light of this debate.

First of all, this is a joint debate on two agenda items, namely 125 and 126, which explicitly mention the implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations and the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. Under that heading, we have a draft decision (A/75/L.7/Rev.1).

That brings me to the questions and concerns of my delegation. As far as I know, the revitalization process was launched on the basis of a fundamental rule, which is that of consensus. If the draft decision presented under that heading contradicts that rule, does that mean we are prepared to ignore that rule in the future and allow delegations to call for a vote as they deem necessary, when all previous resolutions on revitalization have been adopted by consensus? This issue is all the more pertinent given that it is an integral part of the United Nations reform process, along with that of the Security Council, which is also based on consensus.

Are we therefore willing to overlook that fundamental rule in the future because a group of delegations refuses to extend the deadlines or continue negotiations until we can arrive at a consensus? In any case, we are deeply concerned about the future of the revitalization process. Are members prepared to ignore the fundamental rule of consensus in order to

open a new track, namely consensus by vote? That is something that has never arisen before. As far as I am aware, and perhaps the Secretariat can confirm this, it is the first time that any draft decision or resolution under this agenda item has been put to a vote. As coordinator of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, we have never had to call for a vote on a revitalization-related matter. Are we prepared to overlook the consensus rule for the time being?

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation on a point of order.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of a group of States — Algeria, Burundi, the Republic of Cameroon, the People's Republic of China, Cuba, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Myanmar, Nicaragua, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela — Russia proposes a procedural solution on the transfer of draft decision A/75/L.7/Rev.1 to the Sixth Committee, in accordance with rule 163 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

The draft decision submitted amends the rules of procedure of the General Assembly or applies them in a distorted or incomplete manner, which is essentially the same thing. As provided for in rule 67 of the rules of procedure, the General Assembly can take decisions at its meetings only if a quorum is present. According to the draft decision under consideration, decisions would be adopted without holding a meeting and a quorum would be established virtually. Moreover, rule 87, on voting methods, indicates the possibility of using mechanical equipment for counting votes, but does not provide for virtual voting. There are also issues with the implementation of rule 88, regarding certain procedural motions during the voting process.

In accordance with rule 163 and paragraph 1 (c) of annex II of the rules of procedure, amendments to the rules of procedure may be introduced following a report of the Sixth Committee. While we know that the sponsors of the draft decision do not agree with the fact that their draft decision constitutes such an amendment, they cannot deny that their proposal involves a decision-making procedure of the General Assembly and that such decisions must be subject to proper legal analysis and prepared in a transparent and inclusive framework under a neutral Chair.

In that connection, we call on all States to support our proposed procedural solution, which would help to prevent division in the General Assembly and reach a decision acceptable to all. Russia, together with China, has proposed a way to ensure business continuity for the General Assembly during a crisis. We have heard the proposals of other States. Let us transmit them to the Sixth Committee in order to find an approach that is acceptable to all.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform my Jamaican colleague that the two issues in question should be separated. No one is casting doubt on the right of any Member State to put draft decisions and resolutions to a vote, and neither are we opposed to putting draft resolutions to a vote in extraordinary circumstances. The question is about the procedure that should be applied in that case. But a separate issue is raised if the proposed draft, on a crucial matter, should be adopted by a vote, which could have been avoided and indeed still can be. If the matter should lead to division in the General Assembly with regard to the decision-making procedure, all subsequent decisions taken using that new procedure would be of dubious legitimacy.

We ask that the procedural decision be put to a vote and we urge all Member States to support our solution to the matter.

The President: My understanding is that the representative of the Russian Federation has proposed that draft decision A/75/L.7/Rev.1 be referred to the Sixth Committee for its consideration, after which the Sixth Committee is requested to report to the General Assembly in accordance with rule 163 of the rules of procedure.

I now give the floor to delegations wishing to make further statements.

Mr. Rattray (Jamaica): I am taking the floor on behalf of the main sponsors of draft decision A/75/L.7/Rev.1 to oppose the motion to defer action on it by referring it to the Sixth Committee for consideration.

The draft is the outcome of a process of extensive consultations on an issue that has been in the purview of the Assembly for seven months. Delegations have been provided with ample time to propose amendments and were consulted in an effort to find the broadest possible agreement on the text. For that reason, and taking into account the broad support expressed for the draft decision, as well as recent developments affecting

the United Nations, the main sponsors consider it important for the General Assembly to take action on the draft decision.

We therefore oppose the deferral of its consideration. The main sponsors have taken note of the proposals to improve the business continuity of the United Nations and consider them entirely complementary to the draft proposal. In fact, we stand ready and willing to engage in those discussions.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): The draft decision before us (A/75/L.7/Rev.1) was the subject of comprehensive discussions over the past seven months.

All delegations are aware of the importance of ensuring that the General Assembly is prepared for a crisis such as the one we have been dealing with in as timely a manner as possible — especially given the current circumstances, with scientific experts talking about a second wave of the pandemic — in order to be able to continue its work without interruption. Since the draft decision has no impact on the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and does not create a precedent in that regard, we do not see a need to refer it to the Sixth Committee. We affirm that the General Assembly should consider the draft decision at this meeting. We are not in favour of postponing it or referring it to the Sixth Committee, which would lead only to further delays and expose the General Assembly to a potential vacuum with serious consequences in the light of imminent developments in the health arena. We therefore call on Member States to vote against the request to defer action on the draft decision today.

The President: I will now put to the vote the motion that draft decision A/75/L.7/Rev.1 should be referred to the Sixth Committee for its consideration and the Sixth Committee requested to report to the Assembly on account of rule 163 of the rules of procedure.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Argentina, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Dominica, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia,

Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Zimbabwe

Against:

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Belgium, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kiribati, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey,

Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Vanuatu

Abstaining:

Antigua and Barbuda, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Botswana, Brazil, Chad, Chile, Djibouti, Egypt, Grenada, Guyana, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Madagascar, Mali, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Senegal, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Zambia

The request that draft decision A/75/L.7/Rev.1 be referred to the Sixth Committee was rejected by 33 votes to 85, with 35 abstentions.

The President: The Assembly will proceed to consider the draft decision and the draft amendment after explanations of vote before the voting. Due to the late hour, we shall continue the discussion tomorrow at 10.30 a.m. in this Hall.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.