

15 May 2013



General Assembly

GA/11372

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

Sixty-seventh General Assembly
Plenary
80th & 81st Meetings (AM & PM)

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADOPTS TEXT CONDEMNING VIOLENCE IN SYRIA,

DEMANDING THAT ALL SIDES END HOSTILITIES

High-Level Meeting on Global Plan Of Action Addressing Human Trafficking Concludes

As the General Assembly took action on a resolution addressing the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, delegations strongly condemned the ongoing violence and called for involved parties to immediately end the hostilities on all sides, and work together for an inclusive Syrian-led political transition to a democratic, pluralistic political system.

The Assembly then adopted the text by a recorded vote of 107 in favour to 12 against, with 59 abstentions.

Under terms of the resolution, the Assembly strongly condemned the Syrian authorities' continued and escalating use of heavy weapons, ballistic missiles and cluster munitions, including indiscriminate shelling from tanks and aircraft, against population centres. It also demanded that all violations of international humanitarian law ceased.

Syrian authorities were called to cooperate with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry and with the Secretary-General's investigation into the alleged use of chemical weapons. The text also demanded that both entities be granted full and unfettered entry and access to Syria. Further, authorities were to strictly observe their obligations under international law with respect to chemical and biological weapons.

The resolution, while also stating grave concern at the increasing number of refugees and internally displaced persons, deplored the deteriorating humanitarian situation and demanded that the authorities facilitate access for humanitarian organizations. It also urged the international community to provide financial support to enable host countries to respond to the growing humanitarian needs of Syrian refugees and affected communities.

Vuk Jeremić, President of the General Assembly, opened the session, stating that the Assembly had gathered to "express the conscience of the international community". Efforts were needed to focus on an immediate and unconditional end to the violence, and on engaging the involved parties in dialogue. It was necessary to build on the 2012 agreement that had been reached by the Action Group for Syria in Geneva, and just reinvigorated a few days ago in Moscow. Once the political process got moving, Syrians could reconcile and freely determine their own future.

The crisis was “a grave test” for the United Nations and the world, he said. He warned of the potential damage facing the Organization if it failed to stop what was fast becoming the most horrific humanitarian catastrophe of recent times. “If we are unable to do anything to stop this tragedy, then how can we sustain the moral credibility of the Organization?” he asked. “It is high time to say enough is enough.”

Introducing the draft resolution, the representative of Qatar stressed that the text was objective, balanced and fair, including those sections condemning violence. The Arab League’s leadership on finding a solution to the Syrian crisis conformed to Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter and, despite the urgency of the matter, the draft prioritized consultations and consensus.

However, Syria’s delegate opposed the resolution, stating that his Government had continued to react positively to peace initiatives and had remained committed to achieving a “Syrian-led comprehensive national dialogue” that would include the opposition. Opposition forces that rejected dialogue needed to adhere to the will of the “great majority of the Syrian people”, which favoured a political solution.

Nonetheless, the representative of Saudi Arabia disagreed, stating that the Assad regime had continuously rejected the international community’s concerns over the hostilities. He pointed out that Syria had tried to make the issue appear to be a conflict between itself and Qatar and Saudi Arabia. That was just an attempt to divert attention from the “abundant” fact that it was a conflict between the Syrian Government and its opposition.

While acknowledging the gravity and severity of the situation, some speakers expressed concerns over the text. The Russian Federation’s representative called the draft “harmful and destructive”, saying that the authors were not pursuing a political solution. The resolution pushed to replace the official Government of Syria by only recognizing the National Coalition of the Syrian Revolution as legitimate representatives of the Syrian people. That could encourage the opposition to continue fighting and undermine Syria’s sovereignty.

Several representatives echoed that stance, with Bolivia’s delegate also pointing out that the resolution had not been discussed broadly or transparently. Entire regions’ concerns had been unaccounted for. The resolution sought to “put out a fire by putting gasoline on it”, he said, and was biased and unbalanced, with no responsibility being given to the National Coalition for atrocities committed.

France’s delegate refuted such criticism by highlighting the resolution’s balanced nature. It not only condemned violence and violations of human rights committed by both sides, it did not recognize the National Coalition as the only opposition party. Instead, the National Coalition was an intermediary of political transition. Honest evaluation of the text was needed.

Also speaking during the debate on the draft were representatives of the United States, Turkey, China, South Africa, Iran, Venezuela, Malaysia, and the United Republic of Tanzania.

The representatives of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Uruguay, Nicaragua, Indonesia, Ecuador, Argentina, Cuba, Pakistan, Brazil, India, Chile, Singapore, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Thailand, Switzerland, Peru, Paraguay, Serbia, Jamaica, Mexico, Colombia, Liechtenstein, Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas all made statements in explanation of their votes.

A representative of the Delegation of the European Union also made a statement, as did the Permanent Observer for the Holy See.

Speaking in exercise of the right of reply was the representative of Syria.

The Assembly then concluded its high-level dialogue on trafficking in humans. Representatives of Czech Republic, Rwanda, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Philippines, Trinidad and Tobago

and Georgia delivered statements.

The Permanent Observer for the Holy See, along with officials from the International Organization of La Francophonie and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), also contributed to the debate.

The General Assembly will meet again at 10 a.m. Thursday, 16 May, to hold a thematic debate on “Sustainable development and climate change: Practical solutions in the energy-water nexus”.

Background

The General Assembly met this morning to take action on a draft resolution relating to the prevention of armed conflict. It was also expected to conclude its high-level meeting on the appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Before members was a text on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic (document [A/67/L.63](#)) in which the Assembly sets out its views and demands on the Government and other actors regarding international humanitarian law and human rights, the humanitarian situation in Syria, and the political transition.

By that text, the Assembly would strongly condemn the Syrian authorities' continued and escalating use of heavy weapons, ballistic missiles and cluster munitions, including indiscriminate shelling from tanks and aircraft, against population centres. It would condemn all forms of violence and call upon all parties to immediately end such acts, as well as demand that all violations of international humanitarian law cease.

The Assembly would demand that the Syrian authorities immediately release all persons arbitrarily detained; strongly condemn the shelling and shooting by the Syrian Armed Forces into neighbouring countries; and demand that the authorities cooperate fully with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry and individuals working on its behalf, granting them full and unfettered entry and access to all areas in Syria. It would also demand that they grant the same access to the Secretary-General for his investigation into the alleged use of chemical weapons. It would demand that the authorities strictly observe their obligations under international law with respect to chemical and biological weapons.

Further, the Assembly would deplore the deteriorating humanitarian situation and the failure to ensure safe, timely humanitarian aid to all affected areas; demand that the authorities facilitate access for humanitarian organizations to all people in need; strongly condemn all attacks and threats of violence against humanitarian personnel, and medical facilities and vehicles; condemn all attacks on, detentions of and threats of violence against United Nations personnel; and express grave concern at the increasing number of refugees and internally displaced persons as a result of the ongoing violence.

The Assembly would urge the international community to provide urgent financial support to enable host countries to respond to the growing humanitarian needs of Syrian refugees and affected communities; and urge all donors to expeditiously finance support to the United Nations, other humanitarian actors and host countries to implement the humanitarian response plan and the regional refugee response plan.

Moreover, the Assembly would reiterate its call for an inclusive Syrian-led political transition to a democratic, pluralistic political system. It would ask the Secretary-General to provide support and assistance for implementing the transition plan set forth in the final communiqué of the Action Group for Syria.

Opening Remarks

VUK JEREMIĆ (Serbia), President of the General Assembly, described Syria as one of the world's most important civilizations, saying that, since the beginning of hostilities, its vitality and grandeur were gone, with towns and villages razed to the ground and at least 80,000 people killed, most of them civilians.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had registered close to 1.5 million people in camps inside Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and beyond. More than 4 million Syrians had been internally displaced, according to some estimates. Furthermore, evidence of chemical weapons use was coming to light.

“What happens in Syria and the weeks and months ahead will profoundly bear upon the security and well-being of the entire region, and possibly beyond,” he underscored. “We must not allow the shadows to lengthen and mayhem to spread like a contagion.” The status quo was a prescription for a disastrous future of “growing estrangement, multiplying crises and uncontrollable revendication”, he said. As the Assembly gathered to “express the conscience of the international community”, efforts must focus on an immediate and unconditional end to the violence, and on engaging the involved parties in dialogue. However, those goals must not be confused with the hard work required to achieve sustainable, lasting peace in Syria, he cautioned.

The international community must build on the 2012 agreement reached by the Action Group for Syria in Geneva, and reinvigorated a few days ago in Moscow, he emphasized. That would then get the political process off the ground and enable the Syrians to reconcile and freely determine their own future. “It is incumbent on the international community to extend its full support to this course of action.” Calling the crisis “a grave test” for the United Nations and the world, he warned of the potential damage to the Organization if it failed to stop what was fast becoming the most horrific humanitarian catastrophe of recent times. “If we are unable to do anything to stop this tragedy, then how can we sustain the moral credibility of the Organization?” he asked. “It is high time to say enough is enough.”

MESHAL HAMAD M.J. AL-THANI ([Qatar](#)), introducing draft resolution A/67/L.63, emphasized that the text, rooted in international law and the United Nations Charter, did not impose on Member States. Rather, it was objective, balanced and fair, including those sections condemning violence. He also emphasized that Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter underlined the crucial importance of “regional arrangements in international security”, a stance included in the draft. Therefore, the United Nations should take a complementary role and welcome the Arab League to find a solution to the Syrian crisis.

Calling upon all political international and regional stakeholders to stop the bloodshed, he said the critical situation of refugees and internally displaced peoples must be addressed, especially by host countries. The draft called upon the Security Council to take action and supported the United Nations investigation into the use of chemical weapons. Despite the urgency of the matter, the draft gave priority to consultations and a consensus solution, he said. After all, the Syrian people deserved peace, in line with the United Nations principles of justice, stability, and equality.

Statements

BASHAR JA'AFARI ([Syria](#)) said that the content of the resolution contradicted the agenda item “Prevention of armed conflict”. Rather, the text sought to escalate violence by legitimizing the provision of weapons to terrorists in Syria and by recognizing one faction of the opposition as the Syrian people’s legitimate representative. Further, Al-Qaida-linked terrorists, due to the “involvement of intelligence agencies of well-known States”, were operating in Syria and committing “unprecedented savage crimes” and human rights violations. Yet, even though some of the resolution’s co-sponsors had acknowledged those crimes, the draft did not contain the word “terrorism”.

Describing the Arab League’s recognition of the National Coalition of the Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces as “illegal”, he said it undermined the Syrian State and its institutions. Such endorsements blocked a political solution as prescribed by Security Council resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012), as well the Geneva Communiqué, and flagrantly violated international law and the charters of the Arab League and the United Nations.

States claiming to work for democracy in Syria were the same ones preventing Syrians from choosing their own representatives and leadership, he continued. Instead, “a certain group created in Doha”

had been pushed as the Syrian people's "sole representative". The Arab League had played a "destructive role", manipulating the Arab Observer Mission to Syria and agreeing to provide arms to terrorist groups. Even the United Nations Special Representative, Lakhdar Brahimi, had warned of the risks that such a path posed to dialogue and negotiations.

He emphasized his country's positive reaction to peace initiatives and its continued commitment to achieving a "Syrian-led comprehensive national dialogue" that would include the opposition. He called on opposition forces that rejected dialogue to adhere to the will of the "great majority of the Syrian people", which favoured a political solution. However, some States wished to prolong the crisis in order to destroy Syria's infrastructure and social fabric. They were motivated by the same "political, military and economic interests" that had motivated interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, he said. Pointing out that United Nations officials had been in contact with the Ambassador of the Coalition in Qatar who had given instructions to the Brigade of Martyrs of Yarmouk to kidnap United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) peacekeepers, he urged Member States to vote against the resolution.

ABDALLAH YAHYA A. AL-MOUALLIMI (Saudi Arabia) said that the "ferocity" of the Syrian Government forces against the Syrian people was happening so frequently that "we cannot number them". Crimes against humanity, against civilians, rape, ethnic cleansing and human torture were happening every day. The refugee situation, as well, recalled the plight of the Palestinian people and presented a heavy burden on neighbouring countries, and the chance of peaceful solutions diminished because the Assad regime continuously rejected the international community's concerns.

In response to comments that the draft text was unbalanced, he asked those critics if they would say the same to the families of the victims, displaced and injured. "Justice says that the efforts should stem from the will of the Syrian people," he stated, pointing out that Syria had tried to make the issue appear to be a conflict between itself and Qatar and Saudi Arabia. That was just an attempt to divert attention from the "abundant" fact that it was a conflict between the Syrian Government and its opposition. In addition, the Syrian delegate had attempted to make the violence look like a conflict against terrorists. Were the 80,000 people killed all terrorists? he asked.

ROSEMARY A. DICARLO (United States), expressing concern over the potential use of chemical weapons, said that the consequences of the hostilities were growing more dire all the time and the hugely generous neighbouring countries that had taken people in were now facing a growing security threat and economic burden. She supported a Syrian-led peaceful transition, and highlighted the United States-Russian Federation efforts to advance a political solution under the framework agreed in Geneva. The current draft resolution, which she co-sponsored, was also consistent with that framework, and she urged all States to support the text.

Y. HALIT ÇEVİK (Turkey) said the situation in Syria was one of the biggest crises in the Middle East and beyond. Therefore, the draft resolution was timely, demonstrating that the international community sought to stop the violence and devise a plan towards stability. The dynamics of the Security Council had prevented the body, usually responsible for maintaining peace and security, from discharging its duties. It now fell to the General Assembly to express the common sense of the international community. Furthermore, he stressed that inaction should not be seen as supporting the regime's brutal policies.

ALEXANDER A. PANKIN (Russian Federation), calling the draft resolution "harmful and destructive", said that the authors were not thinking of a political way to resolve the conflict. In pushing to replace the official Government of Syria, the opposition had been reflected in the draft as the only representative of the Syrian people. That could be seen as encouragement to the opposition to continue its armed fight. Thus, the draft undermined the sovereignty of Syria and was clearly a one-sided text. In spite of obvious facts recognized by the international community, there was no mention of external armed support.

He went on to say that the co-authors had not sought to hold broad consultations despite that being a requirement of the General Assembly. The conflict in Syria was a serious internal conflict, with the

Government fighting terrorist groups, including Al-Qaida. The draft's aim was not to end the bloodshed immediately, but to align opposition groups in order to put pressure on Damascus. That was irresponsible and counterproductive, especially at a time when the United States and Russia had held a meeting based on the Geneva Accords. "We don't need destruction initiatives here at the United Nations," he said.

LI BAODONG ([China](#)) said that the principle of non-interference of internal affairs should be respected, adding that the future of Syria should only be decided by the Syrian people. The recent rounds of political solutions, launched by the international community were encouraging and he urged the Syrian Government and the opposition to cooperate and cease fire. Although he understood the concerns of Arab States and their need for a political settlement, he emphasized that it must be done peacefully and justly.

GÉRARD ARAUD ([France](#)) urged the Assembly to "work pragmatically and go beyond the caricatures that we have heard up to this time". The Security Council had vetoed three draft resolutions and had been unable to move forward. Thus, Qatar had presented a draft resolution in the General Assembly. With 80,000 dead, Syria was destroying itself. "This was an issue of despair," he said, stating that the draft text was not unbalanced, as it condemned violence and violations of human rights committed by both sides.

"If we talk about terrorism, we have to talk about State-terrorism," he said, adding that the Assad regime had used weapons, some forbidden, against its own people. The National Coalition was not the only recognized opposition party, as was suggested by some speakers. Rather, the draft text presented the Coalition as an intermediary of political transition. The text needed to be honestly evaluated because, in contrast of what had been said, the representative of Qatar had held negotiations with everyone in order to address all concerns on the matter.

JEREMIAH NYAMANE KINGSLEY MAMABOLO ([South Africa](#)) said that, with members prioritizing their national interests at the expense of the Syrian people, the Security Council had "abdicated on its responsibilities". He implored the Council to resolve the crisis before it plunged the entire region into economic and political chaos. As well, it was disappointing that the Syrians had not managed to begin an inclusive dialogue towards sustainable peace, adding that the only way to achieve it was through the widely endorsed Action Group Communiqué.

He went on to say that the general orientation of the resolution was unacceptable, pointing out that it could potentially exacerbate the crisis, not solve it. The resolution contained no call for cessation of military activities, while bending the rules to fit the narrow interests of a few. Further, the co-sponsors had not listened to the African Group's request to defer the vote until after negotiations. There was no transparency or inclusivity in negotiation of the text and no time for comments.

MOHAMMAD KHAZAEI ([Iran](#)) said the draft was a deviation from all current international efforts for a peaceful solution, as well as the principles enshrined in the Charter. The text had not noted Israel's recent attacks, including air strikes, on Syria. Rather, it demonstrated a confrontational approach to Syria, which did not help to bring the parties to a platform of dialogue. The draft also supported decisions made outside the United Nations, and included frameworks and mechanisms that did not correspond to peaceful initiatives that the organizations should pursue under agreed processes, including the Geneva Action Group for Syria. In addition, it failed to explicitly recognize the responsibilities of armed groups in their recourse to atrocious acts and violence.

SACHA SERGIO LLORENTY SOLÍZ ([Bolivia](#)) stated that his position was not informed by a desire to gain oil or mining concessions, or to find cheap labour. Rather, he was genuinely concerned by the current situation. He opposed the resolution, partly because it had not been discussed broadly or transparently. Entire regions' concerns had been unaccounted for. Further, it had been submitted at a "strange time", just as the United States and the Russian Federation were jointly proposing a peace conference that offered a negotiated solution as a real prospect.

He said that the resolution did not seek to de-escalate violence, but was an attempt to "put out a fire by putting gasoline on it". It also was biased and unbalanced, with no responsibility being given to the

Coalition for atrocities committed. Instead they had been afforded international legitimacy. Because the draft's aims were part of a geostrategic effort to achieve hegemony over the region, its adoption would mean the triumph of interference over sovereignty and of militarism over politics.

GUILLERMO ENRIQUE MORENO ZAPATA (Venezuela) said the text bet on war rather than wagering for peace. It violated Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, blamed the Syrian Government for the climate of violence and instability in the country, ignored the Syrian Government's calls for political dialogue, blocked the mediation efforts of the Joint Special Envoy for Syria, and ignored the terrorist actions by armed opposition groups.

Further, she stated, its proposal that the United Nations recognize the National Coalition for the Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces as the "legitimate representative of the Syrian people" would encourage the radicalization of the already extreme postures of the armed opposition groups, ignoring a legitimate Government and setting a dangerous precedent for international law. The legitimate representative of the Syrian people was the Government of President Bashar Al-Assad. Only the Syrian people, not the United Nations, could determine a possible transition of Government, without foreign intervention.

HUSSEIN HANIFF (Malaysia) said that there was no military answer to the violence, only a political answer. Expressing concern over the Assad regime's use of weapons, he said that the international community, in particular the United Nations, Arab States and other regional parties needed to find a lasting solution. While maintaining Malaysia's policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign nations, he said he supported the draft resolution. A multilateral system could ensure that concrete and viable steps contributed to the comprehensive transition of power. Lastly, he welcomed the efforts of the Russian Federation and the United States to convene an international conference on the matter.

TUVAKO NATHANIEL MANONGI (United Republic of Tanzania) called on Council members to take the necessary steps, put aside their differences and agree on a suitable course of action to end the conflict. The Syrians had shed enough blood, and they needed Council action, not words. As well, recent efforts under the Final Communiqué of the Action Group on Syria deserved a chance. It was in the best interest of the Syrian people and their friends to support a peaceful negotiated solution to resolve the deadly conflict. For that reason, he supported the African Group's call to defer action on the current draft. Although he wanted to see an end to the violence in Syria, he did not view the current draft as contributing to that end. Thus, he would abstain from the vote on it.

Action on Draft Resolution

The Assembly President then read out an oral statement on the financial implications arising from the draft resolution. It stated that the request in operative paragraphs 21 and 31 for documentation would constitute additions to the documentation workload of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management of two documents to be issued in all six languages and an extra \$113,000 for documentation services in 2013.

An additional \$36,000 would be required under section 24, Human rights for consultancy, at the P-3 level for three months to help prepare the report and research and analyse information from several sources on the situation of internally displaced persons in Syria. No provision had been included under the programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013 for the above activity, and as such more funds would be required.

Accordingly, should the Assembly adopt draft resolution A/67/L.63, an extra \$149,200 would be needed, including \$113,200 under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, and \$36,000 under Section 24, Human rights of the programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013. However, all possible efforts would be made to absorb the extra requirements of \$149,200 within the existing resources under sections 2 and 24, and report thereon in the context of the second performance report for the biennium 2012-2013.

Prior to the vote, several delegates spoke in explanation of position.

The representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea said he would vote against the text, emphasizing that the sovereignty of every State was fundamental to sound international relations. Syria was no exception. The Government had been elected democratically and was legitimate. The conflict was a totally internal issue and must be settled through political means, he declared, stressing that regime change was "not a solution".

Uruguay's representative, stating his abstention from the vote, said, although the General Assembly must take a clear position on the tragedy the world was witnessing, his abstention was an "expression of caution" with regard to certain sections of the resolution, which were not linked to humanitarian aspects. On the political transition, he said his country's suggestions were not taken into account.

The delegate of Nicaragua said she would vote against the draft because its fundamental goal was not to end violence or to promote inclusive, Syrian-led dialogue. Further, it disregarded the current initiative organized by the United States and the Russian Federation which sought to involve all parties and to lay the groundwork for a peaceful conclusion to the crisis.

The representative of Indonesia, saying he would abstain from the vote, underscored that it was imperative to pursue a resolution through a Syrian-led political process, and that the draft's implication of who constituted the legitimate representation of the Syrian people did not comply with his country's beliefs.

The representative of Ecuador said he would vote against the resolution, as it ran counter, not just to the previous resolutions on the subject and to the Geneva Communiqué, but to the principles on which the United Nations had been founded. It also disregarded the recent agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation. While he welcomed the efforts of Arab States to resolve the crisis, he believed the League of Arab States decisions could not be considered universal as it was a regional group.

Argentina's representative said she would abstain from the vote. The only possible solution was through an inclusive political dialogue without preconditions, and while Argentina considered that the consolidation of an opposition was important to begin the process of political dialogue, it should be up to the Syrian people.

The delegate of Cuba said he would vote against the resolution, as he believed deployment of foreign forces could be dangerous to the region and to the world as a whole. Concerned by the Western media's discussion of the conflict, which was politicized, he said the international community's role was to offer aid to protect peace and security, not to incite acts that led to deaths of citizens.

Pakistan's representative, stating that, in solidarity with the Syrian people and the League of Arab States, he would vote in favour of the text, called on the General Assembly and Security Council to help the Special Envoy revive a negotiation process that needed to be Syrian-led.

The Assembly then adopted the text by a recorded vote of 107 in favour to 12 against, with 59 abstentions (see Annex).

Following the vote, several delegations spoke in explanation of position.

The representative of Brazil, explaining her abstention, said the resolution could have included important findings and conclusions of the Independent International Inquiry on Syria. Only the Syrian people, not the Assembly could decide who should represent the Syrian opposition. She failed to see how the resolution aimed to improved conditions that would enable the parties to negotiate a positive outcome for a possible conference that moved beyond the Geneva Action Group initiative last year.

India' representative, stating his abstention, said that, although terrorist groups including Al-Qaida had entrenched themselves in Syria, posing serious national, regional, and international consequences, representation was for the Syrian people to decide, and not the General Assembly, which ran the risk of appearing as a facilitator of regime change.

Chile's delegate, voting in favour, said the General Assembly was obliged to recognize that the political crisis was becoming ever more a threat to regional peace and security. Nonetheless, it was not the role of the General Assembly to determine the legitimate representation of the Syrian people. However, taking note of the Syrian opposition was just one step of many in the process of political transition. Other actors such as the Arab League and regional organizations would also play a vital role.

The representative of Singapore said he abstained, despite having supported the previous two resolutions on the situation in Syria. Although he condemned the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force by the Syrian Government, he recognized that the situation was complex and that other parties were also using force. He did not feel it was legitimate to confer international recognition on any particular representative of the Syrian people.

The representative of Guatemala, noting that he had voted in favour of the resolution to join the call to end the violence, expressed serious reservations about some elements of the draft, including the absence of specific language he deemed important. As well, although he lauded creation of the National Coalition of the Syrian Revolution as an appropriate interlocutor between the opposition and the Government, he never recognized it as the "legitimate representative of the Syrian people", as could be surmised from the text.

The delegate of Costa Rica said he voted in favour of the resolution. It was essential that the international community send a clear message to the Syrian Government and other warring parties in Syria, including those countries militarily involved, that fighting needed to stop in order to open a route to peace and democracy.

Thailand's representative voted in favour of the resolution to show her deep concern over the worsening crisis. However, that support did not mean full endorsement of all the resolution's content, as she noted concerns, among others, on text addressing legitimate representation, which could only be determined by the Syrian people through free and fair elections.

Switzerland representative, voting in favour, welcomed the establishment of the National Coalition and its aim. When nations did not have the capacity to ensure justice and end impunity, responsibility transferred to the international community. A more explicit reference of that in the draft would have been welcomed. Indeed, the High Commissioner for Human Rights had called for the referral of the massive violations of human rights to the International Criminal Court.

The delegate of Peru, while voting in favour, emphasized that only the Syrian people should lead the political transition of their country. His vote did not in any way give representation to the National Coalition as the sole representative of Syrians. He recalled his reservation to that reference.

The representative of Paraguay, having voted on all previous resolutions, said he abstained because it contradicted the Charter, particularly on the issue of no intervention in matters of internal affairs. On the other hand, he supported any undertaking with regard to humanitarian initiatives alleviating the plight of the Syrian people.

Serbia's representative voted in favour of the resolution, but stressed the need for all international efforts to continue working towards a peaceful settlement. A comprehensive political dialogue was clearly needed in order to obtain a sustainable political solution. She welcomed the agreement between the United States and Russian Federation as a way to move forward on the basis of the Geneva Communiqué.

The delegate of Jamaica, although she abstained, stressed her deep concern over the impact of the conflict on the most vulnerable, especially women and children. She was also mindful of the impact on

neighbouring countries as well. She supported the joint United Nations League of Arab States Special Envoy's plan which offered a democratic approach and remained hopeful that the proposed international conference on Syria would contribute to a peaceful transition.

The representative of Mexico, who voted in favour, said that, although it was not possible to remain passive in the face of a crisis of such magnitude, the consultation process could have been held in a more open and transparent way to take into account concerns and suggestions of all sides. He would have preferred to include in the draft an appeal to the international community to cease the transfer of arms to any parties.

Colombia's representative, voting in favour, said that the resolution adopted set the actions necessary to put an end to violence in line with the Geneva Communiqué. However, only through a political dialogue led by Syrians would it be possible to move towards a political transition and the establishment of a democratic Syria.

The delegate of Liechtenstein, explaining his vote in favour, believed the resolution was appropriate, given the nature of the crisis and the failure of the Security Council to live up to its responsibilities. The international community did not want to stand idly by. However, he was uncomfortable with the process by which the resolution had been drafted and negotiated. It had been a missed opportunity to make an unequivocal statement about the need for accountability on atrocity crimes. He believed that would have substantially improved the text.

Trinidad and Tobago's representative abstained in the vote but wished to register his abhorrence at the continued gross violations of human rights and humanitarian law. He also supported the idea of a Syrian-led transition. However, Member States had not been provided with adequate opportunity to make comments on the draft. He also felt the resolution was ambiguous about the process of transition, stressing the need to be clear, precise, and not subject to multiple interpretations.

The Assembly then heard statements delivered by the representatives of two observer missions.

IOANNIS VRAILAS, Deputy Head, Delegation of the European Union, said he supported the text, emphasizing the urgent need to find a political solution to the crisis while respecting the integrity and sovereignty of Syria and neighbouring States. The European Union also supported the vision of a political settlement as outlined in the Geneva Communiqué, as well as the joint call by the Secretary of State of the United States and the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation to convene an international peace conference on Syria as a follow-up to the June 2012 Geneva conference. He welcomed the creation of the National Coalition of the Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, saying it was the only legitimate representative of the Syrian people. He urged the Coalition to seize the opportunity created by the initiative by the United States and the Russian Federation.

FRANCIS CHULLIKATT, Permanent Observer for the Holy See, said it was a priority for those with influence over the warring parties to call upon them to halt the bloodbath and continual violations of human rights that only opened the door to further retaliation and recrimination. Only through the involvement of all political parties and the various components of civil society, including representatives of the different religious groups, could solutions and hope be offered for the reconstruction of Syria's social fabric and rebuilding of the country. It was particularly urgent to appeal to the international community to support the major United Nations humanitarian agencies in Syria, including financially, he said. "What matters here are not acts of mere generosity, but acts that can generate and sustain peace, security and the common good of the entire international community," he said. It was necessary, furthermore, that the parties guarantee access by humanitarian aid workers to those most in need.

The Assembly then returned to explanations of position.

EUGENE GLENWOOD NEWRY (Bahamas) said the text contained "many constructive elements", including its emphasis on the plight of vulnerable groups, especially women, children, internally displaced

persons and refugees. While welcoming its reaffirmation of support for all diplomatic efforts for a peaceful solution, it was not as balanced as it could have been, although it provided, in the aggregate, important support for the people of Syria. Bahamas had voted in favour of the text, he said.

Right of Reply

The representative of Syria, speaking in exercise of the right of reply, rejected the Assembly's adoption of the text, saying that those who had voted in favour reflected the positions of their national capitals to perpetuate the conflict. However, he emphasized that he would not fall into the "trap of provocation and wrangling". The increase in the number of Member States opposing today's text, compared to previous resolutions indicated the growing international understanding of what was really transpiring in Syria. He expressed hope that the United Nations would continue to counter the "culture of radicalism and terrorism", and read the "road map of current events" quite accurately away from interests inside and outside the region. "The pains of the people are higher than the designs and plans of those who trade in the markets of blood and terrorism," he said.

Despite Qatar's having presented the resolution, it was well known that the text was not Qatari and that Qatar was "only a tool for representation". The regimes of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey persisted in funding jihadi and transnational terrorist organizations, he said, recalling that Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi had already referred to the presence of 40,000 terrorists who had shed blood in Syria, including members of Al-Qaida. How could Qatar have such influence as to secure the release of United Nations peacekeepers kidnapped by rebels in the Golan if not for its involvement with rebel groups? He advised his colleague from Saudi Arabia to reread Syria's statement from this morning since he had presented an erroneous account of what was really going on inside Syria. Furthermore, the representative of France had demonstrated "unprecedented hypocrisy", he said, adding that if it was legal to fight terrorism in France, then it was legal elsewhere. How could France claim that it had launched wars against terrorist groups in the Sahel region while backing the same terrorist groups in Syria?

The Assembly then resumed its High-level Meeting on the Appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking.

Statements

EDITA HRDÁ (Czech Republic) said her country's anti-trafficking strategies focused on helping all victims. In 2008, the Government had established a system for exchanging information on human trafficking, and in 2012, it had adopted a strategic document on tackling human trafficking for the period for 2012-2015. That document set forth measures to assess the situation in socially excluded areas and to systematically ratify important international instruments such as the Palermo Protocol. Since the main obstacle to ratification had recently been removed and criminal liability introduced, the Government was poised to ratify the Protocol, she said.

JEANNE BYAJE (Rwanda), associating herself with the African Group, said human trafficking was a new offence in her country's criminal justice system. Since 2009, a total of 130 cases had been recorded, including those of recovered or intercepted victims, while others remained in the hands of criminals. Girls aged 16 to 22, especially orphans and girls from poor families, were the most targeted. In March 2013, police had intercepted a foreign agent who had recruited 12 genocide orphans with the promise of work and study abroad. Sometimes traffickers used offers of marriage to attract victims. The Government had established and equipped a transnational organized crime division within the police force staffed by competent officers, she said. The INTERPOL office in Kigali had partnered with the Regional Bureau in Nairobi to conduct joint investigations into human trafficking. Last August, Operation Hope had been conducted in East Africa to uncover organized criminals recruiting young girls. Rwanda's laws on human trafficking had been reviewed and amended to suit current crime trends, and plans were under way to set up a national task force on human trafficking.

SANJA ZOGRAFSKA-KRSTESKA (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) cited the work of

her country's National Commission on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration, saying it had recently expanded its remit to cover people trafficked for labour exploitation, begging and forced marriages, as well as those trafficked for sexual exploitation. The Commission had elaborated three National Strategy and Action Plan documents which aligned with international instruments and were informed by previous policy experience. It emphasized prevention and the root causes of trafficking, stressed economic empowerment of vulnerable groups and promoted awareness campaigns. At the same time, more severe criminal sentences for perpetrators had been introduced, while the number of prosecutions was rising. Law enforcement agencies were undergoing strengthening and structures were being established at the local level to identify, assist and support potential victims and at-risk groups, she said.

EDUARDO JOSE ATIENZA DE VEGA (Philippines) said Government agencies in his country were monitoring trafficking more tightly, through the expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act and increased funding for the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking. Prevention efforts included better training for officials and the negotiation of bilateral agreements to better protect Filipinos working overseas. Regionally, the Philippines was deeply involved in the anti-trafficking efforts of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and had recently hosted an Experts Working Group aimed at developing a draft ASEAN convention and regional plan of action against human trafficking. The Philippines introduced a biennial draft resolution on trafficking in women and girls, and was one of only 12 countries to contribute to the Trust Fund for Victims of Human Trafficking, he said.

RODNEY CHARLES (Trinidad and Tobago) detailed his country's efforts to combat human trafficking, saying the Trafficking in Persons Act No. 14 had been passed unanimously by Parliament on 9 June 2011. It had gone into effect on 2 January 2013. The law imposed severe penalties on those involved in human trafficking and made various social benefits available to victims as restitution. A counter-trafficking unit had been established on 11 January 2013 to address all related matters. It investigated cases in addition to screening, identifying, protecting and assisting victims. It also raised awareness about human trafficking. The unit was working with non-governmental groups and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to provide holistic care for victims, including shelter, communications with families and consular representation, he said.

NELI SHIOLASHVILI (Georgia) said her country had ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children in 2006, supplementing the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. That same year, the Government had ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. Georgia's criminal code did not differentiate between trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation and sex exploitation, she said, adding that it covered both internal and transnational forms of human trafficking, and viewed the taking of a victim abroad as one of the most aggravated forms of the offence. The Law on the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons underlined the State policy to suppress the crime, and determined the organizational and legal grounds for preventing and combating human trafficking. Other related activities included the creation of a State Fund for Protection and Assistance to Victims, the establishment of shelters for victims and the formation of a unified database on traffickers, among others. Trainings had also been conducted for judges and prosecutors, high school teachers, representatives of the Office of the Public Defender and the media.

FRANCIS ASSISI CHULLIKATT, Permanent Observer for the Holy See, said there was an urgent need to challenge the commodification of women and girls, as well as the lifestyles and models of behaviour that had generated an industry of sexual exploitation. Trafficking in women for sexual exploitation accounted for 58 per cent of all cases reported globally, he noted. It was a grim reminder that prostitution and consumers of so-called "sexual services" contributed to the trafficking of women and girls. Unrelenting consumerist tendencies demanding more for less without regard for workers' rights also fuelled trafficking, while forced labour accounted for more than 25 per cent of trafficking victims. Efforts to address human trafficking were inherently linked to addressing the eradication of poverty and the lack of equal economic opportunity. Through its Catholic institutions and agencies worldwide, the Holy See was providing assistance, care and support to thousands of survivors, he said.

FILIPPE SAVADOGO, Permanent Observer for the International Organization of la Francophonie,

underscored the importance of establishing partnerships with civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the media. Given the immensity of combating human trafficking, Member States should ratify the Palermo Protocol and contribute as much as possible to the United Nations Victim's Fund. Each State must accept ownership of the problem "if we are to work on eradicating the problem", he said, describing human trafficking as one of most critical of the twenty-first century, especially for young people at a time when they already faced mounting challenges, such as unemployment.

MICHELE KLEIN SOLOMON, Permanent Observer of the International Organization for Migration, said that in the past 15 years, the agency and its partners had implemented more than 882 projects in over 94 countries. They had trained tens of thousands of public and private representatives, and protected and aided more than 30,000 trafficking victims. Since its creation in 2000, IOM's Global Assistance Fund had helped more than 1,500 victims. However, it was not known how many people were trafficked annually, nor was there reason to believe the crime was less prevalent today than it had been two decades ago, she said.

Prioritizing the needs and rights of irregular migrants, rather than levelling administrative or criminal sanctions, would identify and protect more victims, she continued. Traditional labour practices that exacerbated the vulnerability of migrants must be addressed, and it was necessary to discourage demand for goods and services produced by victims. In 2009, IOM had started the "Buy Responsibly" pilot initiative, which encouraged people to seek assurances from retailers that their goods were not produced by trafficked or exploited migrant labour. Thanks to public-private cooperation and partnerships, 2010 was the first year in which more victims of labour trafficking had been referred to IOM for assistance than victims of sex-related trafficking.

Closing Remarks

SEWA LAMSAL ADHIKARI (Nepal), Vice-President of the General Assembly, said there were still "miles to go before we can proclaim that all human beings are free and none are enslaved". It was not often that such a meeting lasted more than two days, which demonstrated the issue's importance. Testimonies and proposals shared over the last three days had been enlightening, reminding all of what could be done to tackle the problem. "Some of us are origin countries and some of us are destination countries," she said, pointing out, however, that too many had not ratified the Trafficking Protocol.

She said that passing national legislation to criminalize trafficking was progress but it meant nothing unless it was implemented by law enforcement. Underscoring the important role of non-governmental organizations, who worked with survivors on the ground, she said it also critical to develop partnerships with the private sector and the media, and to adopt a bottom-up approach, since the problem had its source in villages, towns and cities. She called for the strengthening of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). "We owe it to our young girls and boys to provide other outlets and opportunities so they are not swept up in an anonymous wave of suffering," she said.

ANNEX

Vote on Situation in Syrian Arab Republic

The draft resolution on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic (document A/67/L.63) was adopted by a recorded vote of 107 in favour to 12 against, with 59 abstentions, as follows:

In favour: Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Latvia, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco,

Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tonga, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Vanuatu, Yemen.

Against: Belarus, Bolivia, China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ecuador, Iran, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Syria, Venezuela, Zimbabwe.

Abstain: Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Brazil, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominica, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Paraguay, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, Ukraine, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Viet Nam, Zambia.

Absent: Cameroon, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Iraq, Kiribati, Mauritania, Philippines, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uzbekistan.

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