



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

8960th meeting
Monday, 31 January 2022, 10 a.m.
New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Ms. Juul	(Norway)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Hoxha
	Brazil	Mr. Costa Filho
	China	Mr. Zhang Jun
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Gabon	Mr. Biang
	Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
	India	Mr. Tirumurti
	Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Kenya	Mr. Kimani
	Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Nusseibeh
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

Threats to international peace and security

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation requests a procedural vote on the proposal to hold today's meeting on the initiative of the United States. In explaining its proposal to convene today's meeting, the delegation of the United States underscored that it considers the deployment of Russian troops on Russian territory to be a threat to international peace and security. That is tantamount not only to unacceptable interference in the domestic affairs of our State but also an attempt to mislead the international community on the actual situation in the region and on the reason for current global tensions.

We are essentially being asked to convene a Security Council meeting based on speculations and unfounded accusations that the Russian Federation has often and consistently refuted. Furthermore, the open format for discussion proposed by the United States on this extremely provocative topic makes this meeting a classic example of megaphone diplomacy aimed at the public. As we have all often said, diplomacy of that kind must be rejected. We do not think that it helps to unite the Council. On the contrary, we fully understand that our American colleagues wish to generate hysteria surrounding their own statements about the Russian acts of aggression allegedly being prepared, including in the Security Council. Colleagues are being put in an extremely difficult position.

Such hysteria is particularly damaging to Ukraine itself. As we witnessed just a few days ago, its President requested Western countries not to generate unfounded hysteria about the deployment of Russian troops near the border, as it harms the Ukrainian economy. President Zelenskyy said that such panic was not needed. It apparently serves only those who hype up this topic — the myth of Russian aggression. I have before me statements by Ukrainian officials that there is no threat from Russia. For instance, the Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Minister of Defence, Mr. Reznikov, and the President, Mr. Zelenskyy, have explicitly said that they do not see the activities we are being told about today in the Council. I am not going to quote the full

texts; we are prepared to circulate those statements to Council members later today.

We urge all colleagues to adopt a position of principle and prevent the use of the forum of the Security Council to promote the propagandist beliefs of our colleagues. We would also like to remind the members of the Security Council that, in December 2021, the Russian delegation announced plans to hold the annual discussion on the situation in Ukraine during our presidency of the Council, which begins tomorrow.

The seventh anniversary of the adoption of the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements will provide us with an excellent opportunity to constructively demonstrate the Security Council's commitment to resolution 2202 (2015) serving as the international legal foundation for the Ukrainian settlement. The event is scheduled for 17 February. If our American colleagues wish to add any information for the public concerning this, they will be able to do so at the planned February meeting. We urge all sensible members of the Council not to support this provocative proposal and to show a responsible attitude towards the Charter and the Security Council.

The President: The representative of the United States has asked for the floor.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): As our colleague said, we called for this meeting. And we called for this meeting because of what we have all witnessed over the course of the past few months in terms of the actions of the Russian Federation on the border with Ukraine. They indicate that it is within their own territory, but it is also very close to their neighbour's border.

It is a neighbour that has been invaded already before. It is a neighbour that has Russian troops occupying its territory. We have had numerous meetings — more than 100 meetings over the course of the past few weeks — both with Russian officials and in consultations with our European and Ukrainian colleagues. All of those meetings have been in private. We think that it is now time to have a meeting in public and have this discussion in a public forum.

We have worked with the Ukrainians at their request to provide assistance to them so that they can prepare for what they see as inevitable, including having provided \$200 million dollars in assistance in recent weeks and more than \$5 billion in assistance

since 2014, and that is so that they can be prepared. The Security Council heard from our Russian colleagues that we are calling for this meeting to make all members feel uncomfortable. Imagine how uncomfortable you would be if you had 100,000 troops sitting on your border in the way that those troops are sitting on the border with Ukraine.

For us, this is about peace and security. It is about honouring the Charter of the United Nations, which calls on us as members of the Security Council to protect peace and security. This is therefore not about antics. It is not about rhetoric. It is not about the United States and Russia. What this is about is the peace and security of one of our Member States.

The President: In view of the request and comments made by members of the Security Council, I intend to put the provisional agenda to the vote.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the provisional agenda for today's meeting. I shall put the provisional agenda to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Albania, Brazil, France, Ghana, Ireland, Mexico, Norway, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Against:

China, Russian Federation

Abstaining:

Gabon, India, Kenya

The President: The provisional agenda received 10 votes in favour, 2 votes against and 3 abstentions. The provisional agenda has been adopted.

Threats to international peace and security

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Belarus, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

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

Before we begin with our speakers list today — recalling the Security Council's latest note by the President (S/2017/507) on its working methods — I wish to encourage all speakers, both members and non-members of the Council, to deliver their statements in five minutes or less. Note 507 also encourages briefers to be succinct and focus on key issues. In that spirit, briefers are further encouraged to limit their initial remarks to seven to 10 minutes. Everyone is also encouraged to wear a mask at all times, including while delivering remarks.

I now give the floor to Ms. DiCarlo.

Ms. DiCarlo: The United Nations is closely following the ongoing diplomatic discussions on the future of the European peace and security architecture among representatives of the Russian Federation, the United States, members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We hope that the outcome of those talks will strengthen peace and security in Europe, including for Ukraine.

Although not an active participant in those exchanges, in all his contacts, the Secretary-General has unequivocally supported the ongoing diplomatic efforts at all levels. Still, we remain greatly concerned that, even as those efforts continue, tensions continue escalating in a dangerous military build-up in the heart of Europe. It is reported that more than 100,000 troops and heavy weaponry from the Russian Federation are positioned along the border with Ukraine. Unspecified numbers of Russian troops and weaponry were also reportedly being deployed to Belarus ahead of large-scale joint military exercises in February on the borders with Ukraine, Poland and the Baltic States.

NATO members are reportedly planning additional deployments in Eastern European member States, and NATO has advised that 8,500 troops are currently on high alert. Accusations and recriminations among the various actors involved in the ongoing discussions have created uncertainty and apprehension for many that a military confrontation is impending.

The Secretary-General has made clear that there can be no alternative to diplomacy and dialogue to deal with the complex long-standing security concerns and threat perceptions that have been raised. He has expressed his strong belief that there should not be any military intervention in this context and that diplomacy should prevail. He has been equally explicit that any

such intervention by one country in another would be against international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

His expectation is that we all contribute to avoiding confrontation and creating conditions for diplomatic solution to end the crisis. We therefore welcome the steps taken so far by all involved to maintain dialogue. We urge and expect all actors to build on those efforts and remain focused on pursuing diplomatic solutions by engaging in good faith. We further urge all actors to refrain from provocative rhetoric and actions, to maximize the chance for diplomacy to succeed. Achieving mutual understanding and lasting mutually acceptable arrangements is the best way to safeguard regional and international peace and security in the interests of all.

Let me repeat the full commitment of the United Nations to the sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, in accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions. It is important, especially at this time, for the international community to intensify its support for the efforts of the Normandy Four and of the Trilateral Contact Group, led by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), to ensure the implementation of the Minsk agreements endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 2202 (2015).

We welcome the recent meeting of the Normandy Four advisers in Paris and their agreement to reconvene shortly in Berlin as another sign that diplomacy can work. We commend these efforts and those of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine.

Likewise, United Nations agencies in Ukraine are committed to continue delivering on their mandates in accordance with the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, humanity and independence. Safe, unimpeded humanitarian access must be respected under any circumstances to provide support to the 2.9 million people in need of assistance, the majority of whom are in non-Government controlled areas. In this regard, I encourage Member States to contribute to the humanitarian response plan. Further, the Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine continues to document civilian casualties in the conflict area.

No one is watching the current diplomatic efforts more than the people of Ukraine. They have endured a conflict that has taken over 14,000 lives since 2014 and

that, tragically, is still far from resolution. It is painfully obvious that any new escalation in or around Ukraine would mean more needless killing and destruction.

Whatever one's position may be regarding the current situation or the status quo in eastern Ukraine, this should be inconceivable. The fact that it is not should give us pause. The principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act and multiple other commitments to safeguarding regional and international peace and security are crystal clear. Any escalation or new conflict would deal another serious blow to the architecture so painstakingly built up over the past 75 years to maintain international peace and security just when we need it most.

Once again, I would like to stress the Secretary-General's appeal to all concerned to take immediate steps to de-escalate tensions and continue on the diplomatic path. The United Nations stands ready to support all efforts to that end.

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

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing.

The situation we are facing in Europe is urgent and dangerous, and the stakes for Ukraine — and for every United Nations Member State — could not be higher. Russia's actions strike at the very heart of the Charter of the United Nations. This is as clear and consequential a threat to peace and security as anyone can imagine. In the wake of the Second World War, the Council was formed to address precisely the kind of threat that Ukraine now faces. As Article 39 says, "[t]he Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace". Therefore, our charge is not only to address conflicts after they occur, but also to prevent them from happening in the first place. That is why today's meeting is so crucial.

Russia's aggression today not only threatens Ukraine; it also threatens Europe. It threatens the international order this organ is charged with upholding — an order that, if it stands for anything, stands for the principle that one country cannot simply redraw another country's borders by force or make another country's people live under a Government they did not choose. We continue to hope Russia chooses

the path of diplomacy over the path of conflict in Ukraine, but we cannot just wait and see. It is crucial that the Security Council address the risk that Russia's aggressive and destabilizing behaviour poses across the globe.

First, let us be clear about the facts. Russia has assembled a massive military force of more than 100,000 troops along Ukraine's border. These are combat forces and special forces prepared to conduct offensive actions into Ukraine. This is the largest — hear me clearly — the largest mobilization of troops in Europe in decades. And as we speak, Russia is sending even more forces and arms to join them. Russia has already used more than 2,000 rail cars to move troops and weaponry from across Russia to the Ukrainian border. Russia has also moved nearly 5,000 troops into Belarus, with short-range ballistic missiles, special forces and anti-aircraft batteries. We have seen evidence that Russia intends to expand that presence to more than 30,000 troops near the Belarus-Ukraine border, less than two hours north of Kyiv, by early February. In addition to military activity, we have also seen a dramatic spike in cyberattacks on Ukraine in recent weeks. Russian military and intelligence services are spreading disinformation through State-owned media and proxy sites, and they are attempting, without any factual basis, to paint Ukraine and Western countries as the aggressors to fabricate a pretext for attack.

Russia's military build-up on the border has been paired with extensive new demands and aggressive rhetoric. This is an escalation in a pattern of aggression that we have seen from Russia again and again. In 2014, Russia illegally invaded and seized Crimea. In 2008, Russia invaded Georgia. Russian troops are currently refusing to depart Moldova, despite the wishes of the Moldovan people and their democratically elected Government. And in the Donbas region of Ukraine, Russian-backed separatists continue to foment and ignore violence towards the Ukrainian people. Recently, Russia has threatened to take military action should its demands not be met.

If Russia further invades Ukraine, none of us will be able to say we did not see it coming. And the consequences will be horrific, which is why this meeting is so important today. Already, Russia's war in eastern Ukraine has killed more than 14,000 Ukrainians. Nearly 3 million Ukrainians — half of whom are elderly people and children — need food, shelter and life-saving assistance. Devastating as this situation is,

it would pale in comparison to the humanitarian impact of the full-scale land invasion Russia is currently planning in Ukraine.

Over the years, Russian leaders have claimed that Ukraine is not a real country and questioned its right to self-determination. So, let us be clear — Ukraine is a United Nations Member State that recently celebrated three decades of independence. It has a proud people and a rich culture. Ukraine is a sovereign country and a sovereign people, entitled to determine their own future, without the threat of force. This is not just the conviction that Ukrainians hold — it is a right enshrined by the Charter of the United Nations, a right that Russia and every other Member of this institution has freely committed to upholding.

Our international order is not perfect. But it is grounded in respect for people and countries to govern themselves, to defend themselves and to associate with whom they choose. All countries have a stake in defending and preserving these principles, and nothing could be more fundamental. What would it mean for the world if former empires had license to start reclaiming territory by force? That would set us down a dangerous path.

Russia could, of course, choose a different path — the path of diplomacy. In recent weeks, the United States, along with our European allies and partners and other nations around the globe, concerned by Russia's threat to Ukraine, has continued to do everything we can to resolve the crisis peacefully. In all of those talks, our messages have been clear and consistent. We seek the path of peace; we seek the path of dialogue. We do not want confrontation, but we will be decisive, swift and united should Russia further invade Ukraine.

We continue to believe that there is a diplomatic path out of the crisis caused by Russia's unprovoked military build-up. We are working to pursue diplomacy in every possible venue, but we also know that diplomacy will not succeed in an atmosphere of threat and military escalation. That is why we have brought this situation before the Security Council today.

The United States has been clear — if this is truly about Russia's security concerns in Europe, we are offering it an opportunity to address those concerns at the negotiating table. The test of Russia's good faith in the coming days and weeks is whether it will come to that table and stay at that table until we reach an

understanding. If it refuses to do so, the world will know why and who is responsible.

We urge our fellow members of the Council and other Member States to assess not only Russia's statements but its actions, too, with clear eyes so as to evaluate the risk it presents not just to Ukraine's border and its people, but to all of us. We urge them to speak clearly and forcefully in favour of the path of diplomacy, rather than the path of conflict.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this open meeting. I also thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing.

The primary responsibility of the Security Council is to maintain peace and security with a view to preventing conflicts in the world. We have argued here several times that, in terms of prevention, the Council still has a long way to go. The Council has been seized many times to discuss the situation in Ukraine since the beginning of the aggression in 2014, and here we are again today.

We express our deep concern regarding Russia's military build-up near Ukraine in recent months. Dozens of battalions have already been relocated to the Ukrainian border. Military troops are being dispatched from the east to the west of Russia. Those include heavy combat forces, tanks, artillery, air defence systems and ballistic missiles. Several thousand Russian troops have also been sent to Belarus. That movement of troops and weaponry is very worrying. It has caused anxiety and fear among people in Ukraine and justifiably serious international concerns, particularly for us in Europe.

Let me reaffirm our unwavering support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

In 1994 — 27 years ago — Ukraine received security assurances through the Budapest Memorandum, whereby Russia, together with the United States and the United Kingdom, pledged “to respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine”, in exchange for Ukraine giving up its nuclear arsenal. The signatories also reaffirmed their commitment to seeking Security Council action to provide assistance to Ukraine should it become a victim of an act of aggression. We call on Russia and the Security Council to expressly confirm respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

It would be wrong to consider the threat of a military attack by Russia against Ukraine as another crisis between Russia and the West. It is a challenge to the European security order and to the whole international security architecture, which is based on the Charter of the United Nations. It is an affront to the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and its decalogue, upon which the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was founded and of which Russia is a part.

The latest developments on the Russian-Ukrainian border are a well-known playbook. We saw them in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine repeatedly since 2014, unfortunately at the cost of thousands of lives, both civilian and military. Russia has used military violence as a means of achieving its political and geopolitical goals.

Russia is a big country and has a role to play in European and world geopolitics. It can play an important part in making the world a better and safer place. Unfortunately, it is doing the contrary. The narratives of spheres of influence in Europe or dictating by threats the geostrategic orientation of other countries are tools of another century, of another time reminiscent of the Cold War. Countries are and should be free to join whichever organization they want, be it NATO, the European Union, the Collective Security Treaty Organization or the Commonwealth of Independent States. Sovereign countries take decisions by their free will, not under the threat of a gun.

What is there to gain in a potential conflict of which everyone anticipates disastrous consequences? What can justify the loss of thousands of lives, widespread destruction, the severance of relations and continued tensions, including, as has been made repeatedly clear, severe consequences for Russia itself? There is no other place where more is known about war and its disastrous consequences than in this Chamber. Therefore, we must be able to look beyond and seek other means to address issues, however complex they are or seem to be.

Albania believes that the crisis should be solved through talks and discussion. Finding solutions through negotiations was our primary focus as Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE in 2020. It remains the same now in the Council. There are several mechanisms to be used through diplomatic efforts. Concrete steps towards de-escalation are needed, paving the way towards talks in efforts to seek solutions. Such efforts should be

made in good faith and not conducted in a climate of escalation rhetoric. The resumption of the Normandy format meetings last week in Paris was the right step and we hope that the process will continue.

We should all bear in mind that the crisis in and around Ukraine has a direct impact on the whole of Europe. The instrumentalization of ethnic minorities, targeted cyberattacks, political interference here and there for political gain, a growing tendency of genocide denial and the glorification of war crimes and war criminals are all acts that seek destabilization, create tension and should be treated as a threat to peace and security — because they are. That is why we deem it of paramount importance to invest in prevention. I hope that this meeting will be part of such genuine efforts.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I am grateful to Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing.

Article I of the Charter of the United Nations defines our purpose here — to take collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace.

Today over 100,000 Russian troops are massed on Ukraine's borders. They are equipped with tanks, armoured vehicles, rocket artillery and short-range ballistic missiles. They are supported by Russian air and maritime long-range strike capabilities. That is not a routine deployment — it is the largest military build-up in Europe in decades. In the best-case scenario, the scale of the Russian forces assembled on three sides of Ukraine is deeply destabilizing. In the worst case, it is preparation for a military invasion of a sovereign country.

In 2008, Russia told the Council that it was sending peacekeepers into Georgia. In reality, it was invading an independent, democratic country. In 2014, Russia denied to the Council the presence of its forces in Crimea. In reality, its soldiers were annexing part of an independent, democratic Ukraine. Today Russia denies that its forces are posing a threat to Ukraine. But yet again we see disinformation, cyberattacks and destabilizing plots directed against an independent, democratic country.

The United Kingdom welcomes our discussion today as part of the intense diplomatic effort to ensure that Russia de-escalates the situation and avoids conflict. We are unwavering in our support for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. At the same time, we have sought dialogue

with Russia through the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the NATO-Russia Council and bilateral discussions with all levels of the Russian Government. We are ready to address mutual security concerns based on existing European security structures and international commitments. That includes our expectation that Russia should address our concerns. We are committed to a constructive dialogue if Russia is genuine about finding a diplomatic solution.

The Council has a vital interest in this diplomatic effort because — let us be clear — this is not a regional issue. Any Russian invasion or act of aggression against Ukraine would be a gross breach of international law and Russia's commitments under the Charter. Conflict would result in terrible bloodshed and destabilize the entire international community. There should be no doubt about how costly such a miscalculation would be for Russia or how devastating it would be for the people of Ukraine, whose only provocation is to want a democratic future for their country. There would be no winners, only victims — civilians caught in the crossfire or forced to flee and families grieving the loss of fallen soldiers on both sides.

We urge Russia to make clear in the Council that it will abide by its obligations under the Charter, that it has no plans to invade Ukraine, that it will abstain from the threat or use of force against its neighbour, that it will not further undermine Ukraine's sovereignty or territorial integrity by military or any other means and that it will stand down its troops.

Mr. De Rivièrè (France) (*spoke in French*): The situation at the borders of Ukraine is a matter of deep concern for France.

The accumulation of significant military capabilities on the border of a neighbouring sovereign State constitutes threatening behaviour. It raises legitimate questions about Russia's intentions, especially since that country has already undermined the territorial integrity of Ukraine in the past. France reaffirms its full and complete support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. It calls on Russia to engage in a de-escalation of the situation, respect international law and participate constructively in dialogue within the framework of established international mechanisms.

The priority is to work collectively for a rapid de-escalation. President Macron has worked for that

over the past few days, during his trip to Berlin and during his telephone conversation with President Putin. This Security Council meeting must also be part of that objective. France supports all dialogue efforts in the various existing frameworks and hopes that Europeans will play their full part in them. Within the framework of the Normandy format, which brings together Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine, those efforts made it possible, during the meeting in Paris on 26 January, to agree on a declaration of support for unconditional respect for the ceasefire and the implementation of the Minsk agreements. We will continue our efforts in that regard at the next meeting planned to be held in Berlin in the near future.

The dialogue, regardless of the forums in which it is conducted, must respect the fundamental principles on which European security is based, as set out in the Charter of United Nations and the founding documents of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, including the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. Those principles include, in particular, the sovereign equality and territorial integrity of States, the inviolability of borders, non-recourse to the threat or use of force and the freedom of States to choose or modify their own security arrangements. They are neither negotiable nor subject to revision or reinterpretation. The notion of a sphere of influence has no place in the twenty-first century.

If Russia does not choose the path of dialogue and respect for international law, the response will be strong and united. Any further attack on Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity will have massive consequences and a severe cost. The Europeans are working on coordinated restrictive measures and stand ready, together with their partners, to react. If the path of dialogue and cooperation is chosen, the European Union is ready to commit itself to developing its relations with Russia on the basis of a united, long-term and strategic approach, according to the five guiding principles of 2016.

In the context of current threats and tensions, France reaffirms its solidarity with the Ukrainian people and Government. With our European partners, we will continue to mobilize in support of Ukraine, in particular by supporting reforms.

Mr. Tirumurti (India): We have been closely following the evolving developments relating to Ukraine, including through ongoing high-level security

talks between Russia and the United States, as well as under the Normandy format in Paris.

India's interest is in finding a solution that can provide for the immediate de-escalation of tensions, taking into account the legitimate security interests of all countries and aimed at securing long-term peace and stability in the region and beyond. We have also been in touch with all the parties concerned.

It is our considered view that the issues can be resolved only through diplomatic dialogue. In that context, we welcome the efforts under way, including under the Minsk agreements and the Normandy format. Flowing from the recently concluded meeting in Paris under the Normandy format, we also welcome the unconditional observance of the July 2020 ceasefire and the reaffirmation of the Minsk agreements as the basis of work under the ongoing Normandy format, in particular the commitment of all sides to reducing disagreements on the way forward. We also welcome their agreement to meet in Berlin in two weeks. We urge all parties to continue to engage through all diplomatic channels and to keep working towards the full implementation of the Minsk package.

Quiet and constructive diplomacy is the need of the hour. Any steps that increase tension may best be avoided by all sides in the larger interest of securing international peace and security. More than 20,000 Indian students and nationals live and study in different parts of Ukraine, including in its border areas. The well-being of Indian nationals is of priority to us.

I reiterate our call for the peaceful resolution of the situation by sincere and sustained diplomatic efforts to ensure that the concerns of all sides are resolved through constructive dialogue.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): A few moments ago, the Security Council voted to adopt the agenda for this meeting to consider the situation in Ukraine. Our responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security makes it imperative to encourage the path of dialogue and preventive diplomacy. That is the only way to end the tensions, bridge the differences between the parties and forge a unified and pacific position on the situation in Ukraine.

Let me begin by thanking Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, for her briefing. I also welcome

the participation of the representatives of Ukraine, Belarus, Poland and Lithuania in this meeting.

Ghana has been following closely the situation in Ukraine. I have also listened carefully to the briefing that we just received from the Secretariat as well as the statements of those delegations that spoke before me. We have paid careful attention to the perspectives of the parties key to the situation and hope that by the end of this meeting, the views of members of the Council will be closer to each other than when we first began.

We note from the situation in Ukraine that while there has been a build-up of Russian troops at the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine, those troops are currently within the national territory of the Russian Federation. We also have taken note of the fact that while the military build-up of the troops of the Russian Federation is within its borders, that has caused Ukraine and other parties concern over the intentions behind the build-up and its prospective implications for international peace and security.

We therefore welcome the ongoing dialogue between the Russian Federation and the United States to address primary and secondary security concerns that have implications for the situation in Ukraine as well as the recent face-to-face dialogue between the representatives of the Russian Federation and Ukraine under the Normandy format in Paris after several months of no contact, to enhance trust and eliminate any possibility of an accidental incident.

We note with concern the implications that the situation has had for the economy of Ukraine and neighbouring markets and welcome in that regard the call by the President of Ukraine for an easing of the strong narratives on the situation. This must be a time for confidence-building so as to facilitate the restoration of normalcy for the people of Ukraine.

In conclusion, Ghana believes that in conformity with the provisions of the Charter of the Organization, differences between Member States should be resolved only through peaceful means. We remain encouraged by the ongoing diplomatic engagement between the parties and reiterate our support for those efforts, which should also take into account the delicate nature of the situation.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): I thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing.

Today's discussion is an important opportunity for the Council to address the developing situation at Ukraine's borders, which has become a matter of profound international concern.

Let me underline at the outset that Ireland, along with our European Union partners, is a strong and unwavering supporter of Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

At this moment of rising tension on Ukraine's frontiers, arising from Russia's military build-up, Ireland calls for calm, de-escalation and the pursuit of diplomacy. We call also for constructive and determined engagement on all dialogue tracks, including the Normandy format and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Ireland is fully committed to the core principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Those include the sovereign equality and territorial integrity of States. We recall today that those principles were agreed, collectively and freely, by all Members of the United Nations.

Moreover, European security is built on a series of essential commitments and obligations. It is the fundamental right of a sovereign and independent State to chart its own path in the world; to choose its own foreign policy; and to make arrangements for the security and defence of its territory. The Helsinki Final Act, one of the foundational documents of the OSCE, confirms the obligation of States to

“respect each other's sovereign equality ... and the right of every State to juridical equality, to territorial integrity and to freedom and political independence.”

Subsequent agreements, including the Charter of Paris and the Charter for European Security, agreed in Istanbul in 1999, reaffirm the core principles underpinning collective European security.

Earlier this month, Ireland marked 100 years of a hard-won independence. Just as we would not accept another State determining our foreign and security policy, Ukraine similarly has the sovereign right to choose its own policies.

We in the Council are too often faced with the terrible humanitarian consequences of violent conflict, usually where diplomacy and dialogue have failed.

Force is never the answer. It is not the answer now. What is needed now above all is a negotiated diplomatic solution that reinforces our collective security in Europe. We have the institutions and the mechanisms within which to pursue such a solution. Let us use them. Absent that, it will be innocent civilians who once again pay the awful price of conflict. That is not a prospect any of us wish to contemplate.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China opposes the Security Council's holding of this open meeting, as requested by the United States. The Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations, in her letter to the President of the Council dated 27 January, claimed that the reason why the United States is asking the Council to hold this open meeting was that Russia's deployment of troops along the Ukrainian border posed a threat to international peace and security.

China cannot align itself with that point of view. Recently, there have indeed been some tensions over the issue of Ukraine, and we are paying attention to what exactly is causing those tensions. Some countries, led by the United States, have claimed that there will soon be a war in Ukraine. Russia has repeatedly stated that it has no plans to launch any military action, and Ukraine has made it clear that it does not need a war. Under such circumstances, what is the basis for the countries concerned to insist that there may be a war?

We note that the United States, Ukraine and the relevant European countries, as well as NATO, are engaged in various forms of diplomatic contact with Russia. The parties concerned should persist in seeking to resolve their differences through dialogue and negotiations. What we urgently need now is quiet diplomacy, not microphone diplomacy. That is the viewpoint held by many members of the Council that have also made unrelenting efforts towards that end. Regrettably, the United States did not accept such a constructive proposal.

At a time when dialogue and negotiations are under way and concrete progress has yet to be made, the holding of such an open meeting by the Council is clearly not conducive to creating a favourable environment for dialogue and negotiations, nor is it conducive to defusing tensions.

China once again calls on all parties concerned to remain calm and not to do anything that might aggravate tensions or intensify the crisis but to properly resolve

their differences through consultations on an equal footing, fully taking into account each other's legitimate security concerns and on the basis of mutual respect.

China's position on Ukraine has been consistent. To resolve this issue, we must return to the original plan of the implementation of the new Minsk agreement. That agreement, endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 2202 (2015), represents a binding, foundational political document recognized by all parties and should be effectively implemented. China supports all efforts in line with the directional spirit of the agreement and hopes that all parties concerned will show their positive willingness to implement it, resolve their differences arising from its implementation through consultation, and promote the actual implementation of the new Minsk agreement.

The expansion of NATO is a problem difficult to circumvent in handling the current tension. NATO is a product of the Cold War, and NATO's expansion epitomizes group politics. We believe that the security of one country cannot be achieved at the expense of the security of other countries, still less can regional security be guaranteed by intensifying or even expanding military groups.

Today, in the twenty-first century, all parties should completely abandon the Cold War mentality and come up with a balanced, effective and sustainable European security mechanism through negotiations, and Russia's legitimate security concerns should be heeded and addressed.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Ms. DiCarlo for her briefing.

First and foremost, I would like to thank those countries that conducted themselves properly and deemed it possible to vote against or abstain in the voting on the proposal of the United States to raise this topic for discussion today. One might have the impression that Russia fears discussing the Ukrainian situation and therefore put forward a procedural vote to block it. Russia is not refusing to discuss the situation in Ukraine, but we just do not understand what we are discussing in this Chamber today. Indeed, why are we here today?

As I have stated previously, during our presidency of the Security Council in February, we are planning to hold a meeting — specifically on

17 February — to commemorate the seventh anniversary of the implementation of the Minsk agreements, at which point we could talk about the situation in relation to a Ukrainian settlement. But today's meeting is not about that at all.

Recently, we have been faced with a very unusual situation even by the standards of our turbulent times. The deployment of Russian troops within our own territory, which has repeatedly occurred in various degrees in the past, has never before raised any show of concern. Troops and military personnel remain in their own areas of deployment and in barracks where they have always been, whether or not they are actually on the border.

This deployment of Russian troops in our own territory is getting our Western and United States colleagues to say that a planned military action, even an act of aggression, is about to be launched. But the Permanent Representative of the United States spoke as if that act of aggression had already taken place. I listened to her statement very carefully. The Russian military action against Ukraine, all of them are assuring us, is going to take place in just a few weeks' time, if not a few days' time. However, no proof whatsoever has been put forward to uphold such a serious accusation. Nevertheless, that has not stopped people from whipping up hysteria to such an extent that an actual economic impact is already being felt by our Ukrainian neighbours.

Our Western colleagues are talking about the need for de-escalation. However, first and foremost, they themselves are whipping up tensions and rhetoric and provoking escalation. The discussion about the threat of war is provocative in and of itself. They are almost calling for it; they want it to happen. They are waiting for it to happen as if they want to make their words become a reality — and this despite the fact that we are constantly rejecting these allegations, and despite the fact that no threat of a planned invasion of Ukraine has come from the lips of any Russian politician or public figure over this entire period. No such threat has been made.

Rather, at all levels, we have been categorically rejecting such plans, and we are going to do that again right now. Everybody who claims the opposite is misleading those who might believe it.

If our Western colleagues, who provoked and supported the 2014 bloody anti-Constitutional coup

that brought nationalist radicals, Russophobes and pure Nazis to power in Kyiv, had not done that, then we would today be living in an atmosphere of good-neighbourly relations and mutual cooperation. However, some in the West simply and clearly do not like such a positive scenario.

What is happening today is yet another attempt to drive a wedge between Russia and Ukraine. Thanks to the geopolitical games promoted by the West, our Ukrainian brothers have been suffering for some seven years now. The Ukrainians are actively being brainwashed, and they are induced to embrace Russophobic and radical thinking, leading to the belief that for Ukraine to have a bright future, it must not establish relations with its neighbours, but rather strive at any cost to join the European Union and NATO. They are banning Russian, which is a native language for significant number, if not the majority, of people in Ukraine. They are causing a schism in the Orthodox Church. They are making heroes of persons who fought for Hitler — who killed Jews, Poles, Ukrainians and Russians.

The best interests of the Ukrainian people in this destructive game are something that our Western colleagues are not taking into consideration. Their aim is to prevent the natural brotherly coexistence of our two peoples and countries, which would destroy their plans to weaken Russia and create an arc of instability around it. There is nothing that we are seeing that is new in this regard. It is the same spirit of divide and conquer — or divide and rule. This is the spirit that characterized Western States in the past.

It is also noteworthy that our American colleagues have artificially injecting the sham tension that they themselves created on the Russian-Ukrainian border into the negotiation process launched at our insistence on providing legally binding security guarantees for us. They are deliberately creating the impression that Moscow is seeking to escalate tension in order to use it as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the United States and NATO. All one needs to do is look at the timetable for the negotiation process to see that such fabrications are fundamentally wrong.

The situation in fact is completely the opposite. Our Western colleagues are trying to ride the crest of this wave of hysteria to boil dialogue between us slowly down to a so-called settlement of the situation on the border with Ukraine.

Our security requirements are much broader: Ukraine must not join NATO and no foreign troops should be deployed on its territory. Both of these are elements of an overdue agreement that could radically improve the military-political situation in Europe and the world as a whole. This type of agreement is something that we have talked about in the Astana, Istanbul and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe summits where, apart from affirming the freedom to choose one's allies or alliances, it was also stipulated that the security guarantees of some States should not be carried out to the detriment of the security of other States.

Since our American colleagues convened today's meeting, let them show us at least some evidence apart from bogus narratives fabricated in their own heads that Russia intends to attack Ukraine. In the statement of my American colleague, there was a significant hodgepodge of accusations of aggressive actions by Russia, but not a single concrete fact.

Incidentally, I would like to put a question not only to our United States colleague, but also to those who said similar things: where did they get the figure of 100,000 troops deployed, as they state, on the Russian-Ukrainian border? We have never cited or confirmed that figure. We remember these tricks from the moment when United States Secretary of State Colin Powell waved around a vial with an unknown substance in this Chamber as so-called evidence of the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Such weapons were never found, but we all know very well what happened to that country.

It seems that our American colleagues are also prepared to sacrifice Ukraine for their own geopolitical interests. Otherwise, it is difficult to explain why, when calling us together today, the initiators of today's meeting did not even heed the opinion of the President of Ukraine, who asked the West not to whip up panic, which has already had a harmful impact on the economic situation in that country. Otherwise, it is also difficult to explain why our colleagues from the United States and a number of other countries are actively pumping Ukraine full of weapons and ammunition and even talk about it with great pride. Ukraine readily uses such weapons against civilians in the east of its own country. All this is being done in violation of the Minsk agreements, approved by the Security Council as the only basis for a peaceful settlement of the internal Ukrainian conflict. Incidentally, my American

colleague mentioned that 14,000 people have died in the conflict. I recommend that she read the reports of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and see how many of those 14,000 people have died on each side, as most were civilians in Donbas who died of shelling from the Ukrainian armed forces and the national battalions.

The manoeuvres of the United States regarding the convening of this meeting are particularly inadequate and hypocritical because it is the Americans themselves who have record levels of troops outside their territory. United States troops, advisers and weapons, including nuclear weapons, are frequently deployed thousands of miles from Washington, D.C., not to mention the fact that United States military adventures have killed hundreds of thousands of civilians in countries to which they were supposedly bringing peace and democracy. The United States has repeatedly, including in recent years, used force against other States without the authorization of the Security Council. In its arsenal are unilateral sanctions coercive measures and threats with which they are trying to force everyone to comply, like the rulings of some self-styled Supreme Court. According to American experts, 84 United Nations member States out of 193 have been subject to occupation or aggression or attacks by the United States. In 191 states, American troops were deployed in some way in the twentieth or twenty-first century. Data available online indicate that there are around 750 United States bases in more than 80 countries, with 175,000 troops deployed abroad, including more than 60,000 in Europe. The United States military budget in 2020 was \$778 billion. Russia's budget is \$61 billion, lower by a factor of 12. Those are examples of an evident and concrete threat to international peace and security.

As for the calls for a settlement of the crisis around Ukraine, we agree wholeheartedly, but the crisis has only one dimension — it is an internal Ukrainian crisis. I repeat that the situation can be improved only through Kyiv's implementation of the Minsk agreements, which stipulate above all direct dialogue with Donetsk and Luhansk. There is no other option. If our Western partners pushing Kyiv to sabotage the Minsk agreements, which Kyiv is eagerly using, then this situation could end in the worst way for Ukraine — not because someone will have destroyed it, but because it will have destroyed itself.

Russia has absolutely nothing to do with this. Not one should try to shift the blame. We will talk about all of this in detail on 17 February at the long-planned annual meeting of the Security Council on the implementation of resolution 2202 (2015).

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing.

My delegation is closely following the situation on the borders of Ukraine and Russia and has received reports of a large-scale mobilization of Russian troops on the borders of Ukraine, suggesting that military action is imminent. This alarming information is accompanied on the ground by real agitation, with the deployment of significant financial means and military equipment from countries friendly to Ukraine. The resulting verbal escalation and high tension are polarizing a great deal of diplomatic activity, which is reflected in various initiatives, including the Normandy format in the context of the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

In the face of this particularly concerning escalation of tensions, my country, aware of what is at stake and the strength of the forces involved, calls on all stakeholders to show restraint and turn to dialogue and negotiations in order to preserve stability and peace in the region. This is the moment for the international community and its members to activate the channels of preventive diplomacy, in accordance with Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations, devoted to the peaceful settlement of disputes.

It is obvious that the effectiveness of preventive diplomacy depends not only on the good faith of the protagonists, but above all on tact, composure and the framework of its implementation. The duality of rhetoric — alarmist, concerning the imminence of military action in Ukraine, on the one hand, and rejectionist juxtaposed to it, on the other — amplify the fragmentation of the Council at a time when the peoples of the world expect it to reach consensus and take resolute action to match the scale of devastation caused by the wars and crises that are ravaging several regions of the planet. The strength of the Council lies in its unity. It is unity, not fragmentation, that lifts the Council to the height of its mandate to serve the peoples of the world. We believe that diplomacy, in its most practical and efficient forms, is capable of bringing calm to the borders of Ukraine.

In conclusion, I would like to echo the appeal made on Friday by the President of Ukraine, urging us to keep a sense of proportion and not to stoke panic.

Mr. Costa Filho (Brazil): Let me also thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing before the Council this morning.

Geopolitical tensions and threats to international peace and security require the Security Council's prompt and timely engagement. Open references to military actions, unilateral economic sanctions and other measures are developments that should be avoided, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

The Security Council must fulfil its primary objective — to prevent war. There is a general and urgent need to resort to meaningful dialogue with and between the parties directly involved in the escalation of tensions. We urge all parties to exercise maximum restraint and to engage constructively in talks aimed at resolving their differences. There is room to restore confidence and find a lasting diplomatic solution to this crisis. For that, we need political will and genuine commitment from all sides.

Brazil encourages all parties to strictly observe international law. It is imperative that we be consistent in applying the principles enshrined in the Charter, in a non-selective manner. The prohibition on the use of force, the peaceful resolution of disputes and the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the protection of human rights are pillars of our collective security system.

Brazil also highlights the need for good faith in order to address the legitimate security concerns of all parties, including Russia and Ukraine. We encourage the parties to pursue genuine talks on the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Resolution 2202 (2015), which provides useful guidelines on addressing the situation in eastern Ukraine, is also a valuable tool in diplomatic efforts to overcome the situation. Brazil welcomes the resumption of talks in the Normandy format and the renewed commitment to the ceasefire in eastern Ukraine.

Despite the sensitive and difficult nature of the issue on our agenda today, I would like to conclude with a note of hope. Over the past few days, it has been encouraging to hear statements to the effect that there is no military solution to the situation. At this moment in particular, that should be the motto of the whole United

Nations membership and of the Security Council for a renewed commitment to diplomacy and prevention.

Mr. Kimani (Kenya): I thank you, Madam President, for the able way in which you have presided over the Security Council in the month of January. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing and welcome the participation of the representatives of Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania and Poland in today's meeting.

Kenya abstained in the procedural vote to hold this meeting. We did so to reflect our contention that the main issue in question is the impasse between NATO and the Russian Federation. We believe that it is imminently solvable and that the diplomatic steps under way already show promise. That, rather than escalation in search of a winner-take-all outcome, is what is required to support and protect international peace and security.

Kenya has always maintained that respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all countries is a cornerstone of global peace. Where there are disputes regarding territorial jurisdiction or security interests, we strongly support patient diplomacy as the first, second and third options. When the dispute is between major Powers and concerns the security of a third country, it is imperative that they embrace a spirit of compromise.

We believe that the United States, NATO and the Russian Federation have an opportunity to establish a diplomatic framework that will allow them to resolve their differences. Their security and that of the entire world depend on them willingly taking that step, not in ushering in a new age of containment, provocation and proxy options. Compromise is not surrender. The special powers given to the Security Council's permanent members demand that they embrace that principle, if the United Nations is not to go the way of the doomed League of Nations.

Africa recalls the rejections of compromise and the search for total victory that led to the Cold War. We experienced that Cold War as a series of hot wars and interventions that deeply damaged our dreams for peace, development and competent inclusive Government. Our internal divisions and fragilities were weaponized at the altar of geopolitical rivalry. It confirmed the truth of the African saying that recognizes that, when elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers.

Given that the majority of the conflict situations the Security Council deals with are in Africa, we do not want them to serve as surrogates for a new Cold War. We in Africa therefore have a direct stake in de-escalation and a renewed faith in diplomacy. We have serious challenges to solve together. Rarely has the world more urgently needed a United Nations that can deliver ambitiously.

Kenya believes that there is still plenty of opportunity for the Normandy format talks, the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine and direct negotiations between the United States and the Russian Federation to produce a satisfactory outcome. We urge all those parties to ensure that their negotiations respect the security, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. Faith in innovative diplomacy may also allow for agreements between today's major Powers, inspired by the 1975 Helsinki accords, which delivered some stability to Europe during the Cold War. This time, however, such agreements need to advance the principle of non-interference in other parts of the world, and particularly in Africa.

In conclusion, it is critical that diplomacy and its acceptance of compromise as an inevitable outcome win the day. If there are future discussions to be held in the Security Council on this matter, let it be to announce a new era of cooperation.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing. I welcome the representatives of Ukraine, Belarus, Poland and Lithuania to today's meeting.

I would like to begin by noting that my country deems the holding of today's meeting to be timely, in line with our foreign policy principles. We also believe it to be relevant, as the Security Council must be informed about the current situation in Ukraine.

It is not in our interest to contribute to further polarizing the narrative. I will therefore simply state what, for Mexico, are the basic principles when addressing the issue, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. In this case, I will refer to three of them: the prohibition on the threat or use of force in international relations, the principle of non-intervention and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

With regard to the first principle, the mere escalation of tensions in Eastern Europe is a potential threat to international peace and security, and it is

therefore within the purview of the Council, pursuant to Article 39 of the Charter. For that reason, and in the light of the prevailing mistrust, it is important to try to avoid any type of action that could be considered to be hostile by any of the parties, however slight it may seem. However, undoubtedly, the remarks we just heard from the representative of the Russian Federation were encouraging. He was very clear in reiterating, here in the Council, that there is no planned invasion of Ukraine. I believe I repeated what he said word for word. If that is indeed the case, that is good. It is a unilateral statement of non-aggression.

In keeping with what the Secretary-General and others here in the Chamber have stated, Mexico maintains that there is no military solution to the issue. On the contrary, preventive diplomacy and dialogue must prevail as a means of de-escalation, and, as we heard, there are various channels to achieve that — the Geneva talks, the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy format.

With regard to non-intervention, we reiterate the importance of respecting the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine in full compliance with international law, the Charter of United Nations and General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV). It is also up to the Security Council to determine, if necessary, the existence of an act of aggression, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 3314 (XXIX). That is reinforced by the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes. States have the duty to resolve their disputes by peaceful means, as established under international law. Mexico has defended, defends and will continue to defend the use of diplomacy over force. Diplomatic channels with regard to the issue facing us remain open; they have not been exhausted.

What must not be put in doubt is the responsibility of the Council to carry out its preventive work and measure up to dealing with what the circumstances demand. I firmly believe that, in holding this meeting, we are doing that and fulfilling our mandate without exceeding or falling short of it.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, for her informative briefing.

The United Arab Emirates is closely monitoring recent developments. In the context of our discussion today, we would like to focus on the following aspects.

First, my country firmly believes that the dispute in Europe requires a serious dialogue among the various States of the region based on the values of stability, coexistence and peace. We stress the importance of reaching a negotiated solution to this issue through the available mechanisms and with the support of regional organizations. In that regard, we refer to the Normandy format and the initiative of the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe that aims to initiate a genuine dialogue on European security to address the security concerns of the countries of the region. We also welcome President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's appeal for calm. We hope to build on it for establishing further confidence in the region.

Secondly, my country welcomes the announcement made at the Normandy format meeting on 26 January, at which the Russian Federation and the Republic of Ukraine confirmed their intention to implement an unconditional ceasefire in eastern Ukraine. We are counting on the various initiatives currently under way to enable dialogue, including between the United States and the Russian Federation. Diplomatic efforts must be supported and provided the opportunity to achieve the desired results. My country also stresses the importance of maintaining security and stability, as well as the centrality of the Minsk agreements and the need to adhere to them and ensure their implementation. That will contribute to reaching a comprehensive regional understanding that maintains the security and stability of the countries concerned and addresses all their legitimate concerns.

Thirdly, escalation must be avoided, as it could have a significant negative impact on civilians and exacerbate the fragile humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine. In that regard, we stress the importance of taking into account the humanitarian needs of civilians and preventing the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the region.

Fourthly, respect for, and adherence to, international law is essential to ensure that the situation in Eastern Europe does not deteriorate further. We also stress the importance of the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and good-neighbourliness, which are imperative for the maintenance of international peace and security.

In conclusion, my country reiterates the importance of constructive dialogue to resolve differences. The role

of the Security Council, as the organ responsible for maintaining international peace and security, is essential to providing a diplomatic platform that enables States to present and resolve their differences peacefully.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Norway.

Let me start by expressing Norway's strong support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. That includes the Crimean peninsula and its territorial waters. Norway is deeply concerned about the Russian large-scale military build-up near Ukraine's borders and in occupied Crimea. It is unprovoked and unjustified. Further escalation can have devastating humanitarian consequences. Through its harsh statements and unrealistic demands, Russia is currently challenging the security architecture in all of Europe. The crisis therefore not only affects the region but represents a clear threat to international peace and security.

Russia has repeatedly accused NATO of increasing tensions. I would like to underline that the Alliance is defensive and voluntary. We do not seek confrontation. At the same time, we cannot and will not compromise on the principles on which the security in Europe rests. We stand ready to discuss security concerns. Norway supports a European security order based on international law and national sovereignty. We cannot allow this to be replaced by spheres of influence.

Every country has the right to freely choose its security alignment. We call on Russia to de-escalate and engage constructively in dialogue through the established international mechanisms in good faith. Furthermore, Norway underlines its support for the existing international frameworks for the sustainable and peaceful resolution of conflict in accordance with international law. Russia has itself repeatedly invoked in many other Council discussions the principles of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. Norway calls on Russia to now respect those principles when it comes to Ukraine.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the United States has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I cannot say that I am surprised by my Russian colleague's comments, but I am disappointed.

I cannot let the false equivalency go unchecked. I therefore feel that I must respond.

Let me be clear: there are no plans to weaken Russia, as claimed by our Russian colleague today. On the contrary, we welcome Russia as a responsible member of the international community. But its actions on the border of Ukraine are not responsible. The threats of aggression on the border of Ukraine — yes, on its border — are provocative. Our recognition of the facts on the ground is not provocative. The threats of action if Russia's security demands are not met are provocative. Our encouraging diplomacy is not provocative. The provocation is from Russia, not from us or other members of the Security Council.

We have made clear our commitment to the path of diplomacy. I hope that our Russian colleagues will also choose that path and engage peacefully with the international community, including Ukraine. I say to Russia simply this: its actions will speak for themselves, and we hope and encourage that it make the right choices before the Council today.

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I had not planned on entering into a conversation between Russia and the United States at this meeting. We said everything we wanted to say in our statement today. However, we simply do not understand the threats, provocation and escalation by Russia being referred to by the representative of the United States. However, when I heard her statement, I heard no reference to the Minsk agreements or to resolution 2202 (2015), which is very telling. That is the context that we need to use when we are talking about the Ukrainian crisis, and the United States is looking at this from a completely different angle.

Finally, I would like to apologize to Council members, and I ask the representatives who will speak after me not to interpret my departure as a walkout in protest. As we are about to assume the presidency of the Security Council tomorrow, I have to meet with the Secretary-General, and I cannot re-schedule the meeting because of the schedule to the Secretary-General.

The President: I wish to again remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five

minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

I now give the floor the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine): I would like to immediately apologize that my statement may not be within the five-minute limit, especially given the length of the Russian intervention.

I would like to express gratitude to the Norwegian presidency for convening this briefing of the Security Council, of the need for which I spoke exactly a fortnight ago with Her Excellency the Foreign Minister of Norway during our meeting in New York. I express our thanks to the United States, which, as a member of the Security Council, in close coordination with Ukraine and partners, requested today's briefing. And, of course, I express our appreciation for the briefing by Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo.

It is a duty and a need for the Security Council to be fully informed in the case of grave threats to international peace and security. What is going on along the border with Ukraine — where the Russian Federation continues its military build-up — falls under that qualification.

It is important that Ukraine's voice be heard today in the Security Council and not be lost in translation, as the position of my country has been delivered by a foreign ambassador in the Russian language. I ask the deputy to Mr. Vassily Alekseevich to tell him that my leadership speaks its own language and has its own ambassadors and spokespersons. There is therefore no need to interpret the words of Ukrainian officials in a foreign language, especially if it is done the way Humpty Dumpty spoke of the meaning of the words, even if Lewis Carroll appears to be a favourite writer of top Russian diplomats.

Against the backdrop of an unprecedented sequence of high-level diplomatic contacts over the past few weeks, a serious discussion in the Security Council is required more than ever to present facts, to listen to each other's positions and concerns and to outline further actions towards de-escalation.

The fact is that about 112,000 Russian troops have been amassed around Ukraine's borders and in Crimea, and together with the maritime and aviation components, their number reaches about 130,000.

Another fact is that the Russian troops are also being deployed to Belarus for the Union Resolve 2022 joint drills to be held from 10 to 20 February. They include, in particular, Iskander missile divisions, S-400 Triumf and Pantsir anti-aircraft systems, Sukhoi Su-35 4++ generation fighters.

On top of that, on 26 January, the Russian fleet started another military drill in the Black Sea with the involvement of frigates, patrol ships, missile ships, assault landing ships and minesweepers. This reminds us of the ongoing heavy militarization of the temporarily occupied Crimea, the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov by Russia, which poses a serious threat to Ukraine, all littoral States and, thereby, the region.

The significant reinforcement of combat capabilities of the Russian occupation forces in Donbas is another worrisome trend. Currently, these formations consist of up to 35,000 personnel, including around 3,000 servicemen of the Russian Armed Forces, on command posts and in other critical combat positions. In the border areas outside Government control, illegal border crossings by cargo trains and truck convoys, delivering arms supplies to the Russian armed formations in Donbas, are a routine practice. Reports of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) provide ample evidence of various illegal activities in the border areas. It is no surprise that restrictions of the OSCE SMM freedom of movement are on the increase, in particular in non-Government-controlled areas close to the Ukraine-Russia border.

On 22 December 2021, the Trilateral Contact Group reached another understanding on resuming the ceasefire regime. Nevertheless, shooting, shelling and sniper fire on Ukrainian positions and systematic use of attack unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) against Ukrainian troops have not stopped. We have lost 12 servicemen, killed in action, and 14 have been wounded since 22 December 2021. Just a few days ago, on 25 January, armed formations of the Russian Federation once again attacked the positions of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the area of Pyschchevyk, Donetsk region, using an attack UAV. VOG-17 fragmentation grenades dropped from that UAV resulted in severe injuries to two Ukrainian servicemen.

The current impasse in the consultations process within the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group continues on practically all tracks, while the decisions

adopted by the Normandy format leaders during their December 2019 summit in Paris remain unimplemented. Over the past year and a half, we have seen deliberate efforts by the Russian side to obstruct Trilateral Contact Group activities and even to prevent the finalization of the arrangements agreed, including at the expert level, within the Trilateral Contact Group in the security and humanitarian areas.

All this is accompanied by Russia's stubborn denial of being a party to the armed conflict that has been raging for eight years now in the Donbas region of Ukraine, attempts to impose a so-called direct dialogue with its puppet occupation administrations, as well as its refusal to engage in substantive discussion on a political settlement of the conflict.

The question is: Why are all these Russian forces there? We have asked this question in different forums and have sent our own clear messages. Ukraine is not going to launch a military offensive neither in Donbas, nor in Crimea, nor anywhere else. Ukraine sees no alternative to a peaceful resolution of the ongoing conflict and the restoration of its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Yet we are also seeing a surge in Russian disinformation campaigns, including false accusations of Ukraine plotting a military attack. That is not going to happen. This is direct evidence of Russia's unwillingness to de-escalate and prepare to justify its possible further aggression. We are well aware of Russia's history of ploys and provocations, and we will do everything possible to prevent another Mainila-type provocation by Russia.

Once again, I have clear instructions from my Government to reiterate today the absence of any aggressive intention, as well as Ukraine's strong commitment to peace.

Today we heard from the Russian side that it does not intend to launch a war against my country, although perhaps one should rather speak about launching a new phase of the Russian aggression. That is a very important message, as we still lack credible explanations from Russia concerning its actions and military movements. Based on experience, we cannot believe Russian declarations, but only practical moves to withdraw troops from the border.

Ukraine strongly rejects any attempt to use the threat of force as an instrument of pressure to make

Ukraine and our partners accept illegitimate demands. There is no room for compromise on principal issues. Ukraine's most principled position is that we have the inherent sovereign right to choose our own security arrangements, including treaties of alliance, which cannot be questioned by Russia. Moreover, that right is enshrined in many international legal instruments to which Russia itself is also a party. Ukraine will not bow to threats aimed at weakening Ukraine, undermining its economic and financial stability and inciting public frustration. That will not happen, and the Kremlin must remember that Ukraine is ready to defend itself.

At the same time, we support the need to keep diplomatic channels with Russia open, if that prevents a shift to military tools. My President has recently reiterated that he is ready to meet with his Russian counterpart. If Russia has any questions for Ukraine, it is better to meet and talk than to bring troops to the Ukrainian borders and intimidate the Ukrainian people.

For Ukraine, the first priority today is to achieve a sustainable and unconditional ceasefire in Donbas. The ceasefire regime must be guaranteed and reliable and, on that basis, further steps can be taken. The intensification of the work in the Normandy format, including at the level of the leaders of the four countries, is an important prerequisite for next steps towards lasting peace in Donbas. We are ready to resume Normandy Four talks in all formats. The recent meeting of political advisers on 26 January in Paris, despite many differences, offers hope for a continuation of the negotiation process, which Ukraine will staunchly support.

Despite the Russian attempt to impede the briefing from being held, we believe that the Security Council and the wider United Nations membership have received today some very important information. The members of the Security Council need to take that information into account so as to make an informed decision, when appropriate, on acting swiftly and decisively in employing preventive diplomacy under Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations, which enshrines the Security Council's responsibility to investigate any dispute or situation that might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute.

After listening to the Russian Ambassador today, I would like to ask how long Russia will pursue its clear attempt to push Ukraine and its partners into a Kafkaesque trap. Still, I should perhaps acknowledge that it was important to hear the Russian envoy speak

today, and I must end by repeating what my Foreign Minister recently said:

“If Russian officials are serious when they say they do not want a new war, Russia must continue diplomatic engagement and pull back the military forces it has amassed along Ukraine’s borders and in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. Diplomacy is the only responsible way.”

Let us judge by actions, not by riddles and semantic puzzles.

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

Mr. Rybakov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The Republic of Belarus continues to maintain its consistent and principled position that it is unacceptable to resolve any conflict by force. Having made significant efforts to settle the conflict in Ukraine, our country remains ready to do everything possible to restore dialogue and mutual understanding in the region.

There is no alternative to the Minsk agreements, which have played a key role towards the peaceful resolution of the crisis. The negotiation process within the Trilateral Contact Group, as well as the practical implementation of the agreements in the intra-Ukrainian conflict zone, will put the peace process in Ukraine on a sustainable, positive trajectory.

The proposal of today’s topic by the United States delegation for consideration by the Security Council is another attempt to artificially ignite tensions in the region, purely as an instrument for political accusations. Such actions serve only to heighten mistrust and in no way contribute to resolving disagreements.

Despite the concerns frequently expressed by representatives of the Republic of Belarus in international negotiation forums and during bilateral contacts, the build-up of military forces near our western and southern borders not only continues but is also becoming threatening in nature. Despite repeated calls for dialogue and cooperation, including in the area of arms control, the pressure being exerted on Belarus by certain countries is only increasing. Our suggestion to return to negotiations is not being reciprocated by our Western partners.

Incidentally, I would like to draw members’ attention to the fact that we have heard here today references to the Budapest Memorandum. I urge members to reread

the contents of that document as they pertain to the Republic of Belarus and pay special attention to the pledges therein not to exert any coercive economic measures upon Belarus. I would also ask members to recall the numerous packages of economic sanctions imposed by individual States against us.

In view of the current difficult situation, the Belarusian and Russian leaders have taken the decision to jointly assess the preparedness of the armed forces of the two States to ensure military security, taking into account the commitments of our military-political alliance. Within the framework of those agreements, it was decided to check the preparedness of Union State response forces in February.

The main objectives of the preparedness check of our armed forces are to assess the combat readiness and capabilities of our military command and control bodies to take joint actions to guarantee the security of the Union State; exercise in coordinated operations to neutralize threats on the borders of the Union State caused, *inter alia*, by the migration crisis and the need to stabilize the humanitarian situation; to organize the defence and protection of strategically important facilities; to curb and ward off external aggression during defensive operations; to counter terrorism; and to protect the interests of the Union State.

As part of the final stage of those activities, a joint Belarusian-Russian exercise known as Union Resolve 2022 will take place from 10 to 20 February, during which joint training and combat drills with control targets will be carried out. We note that these activities of a regional grouping of troops to ensure the military security of the Union State are regularly practiced during joint exercises and are purely defensive in nature and pose no threat to our European partners or neighbouring countries.

The Republic of Belarus continues to strictly observe all of its obligations under international and regional arms control treaties. Incidentally, all information about the forthcoming military exercises can be found on the official website of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Belarus. A few days ago, on 28 January, President Aleksandr Lukashenko, when responding to questions, stated that war is possible only in two cases, namely, if Belarus or our ally, Russia, were to be attacked.

Responding to the various insinuations against Belarus in relation to the internal Ukrainian situation,

we would once again like to recall that we are ready to continue to provide all the necessary assistance in resolving the conflict in Ukraine, including by creating the necessary conditions for the activities of the Trilateral Contact Group and negotiations in any other possible forums and formats.

Today many people in the world talk about the need for a broad dialogue on international security issues. President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko came up with the initiative to hold such a dialogue under the provisional name “Helsinki-2” a few years ago. Unfortunately, that idea has not yet been implemented.

Belarus is sincerely interested in a speedy settlement of the regional crisis solely on the basis of dialogue and mutual respect.

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

Mr. Szczerski (Poland): Poland is grateful for the convening of today’s meeting of the Security Council, as we are increasingly concerned over Russia’s continuous large-scale military build-up on the border with Ukraine, both in the territory of Russia and in the territory of Belarus, including the continuous redeployments of troops and prepositioning of military hardware and offensive weapons. We cannot keep quiet because what is happening in our neighbourhood constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security, reaching far beyond our region and continent.

The current security situation in eastern Europe unfortunately follows a pattern of precedents, with the Russian Federation being the destabilizing actor in the region at least since 2008 and the war in Georgia to 2014 and the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula. As we speak, the frozen conflicts in eastern Ukraine, the Georgian breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova are unresolved, undermining the stability and regional security of that part of the world.

We cannot keep quiet because what is happening in our neighbourhood constitutes the outright violation of the fundamental principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Poland strongly adheres to the principles of international law, such as the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, the inviolability of frontiers and the non-use or threat of force. We call upon all Member States to act in the same spirit.

We know very well from our country’s history that a political order based on spheres of influence brings about no positive results. It is here in the United Nations where it is our duty to protect the principles of international law, strongly condemn any threat of the use of force and work together to dismantle spheres of influence in order to maintain peace.

What is at stake today is not only the subordination of Ukraine and the creation of the so-called buffer zone in Eastern and Central Europe. The real threat is to shake the very foundation of the security architecture in Europe by undermining tenets of international law, such as the inviolability of borders and the freedom to choose one’s own security arrangements, among others. Unfortunately, that may have a global impact and contribute to the deterioration of international security, not to mention a possible humanitarian crisis, and there are other revisionist Powers that may follow suit.

Poland deeply believes in the power of preventive diplomacy. Holding the chairmanship-in-office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), we stand open to facilitate talks on European security within the organization. The OSCE can provide the right venue to discuss matters of concern, since it is the broadest regional format. We call for the constructive engagement of all participating States in order to find a peaceful solution to the current crisis.

Let there be no doubt that the current status quo is not a solution at all. Living in constant fear of another frozen conflict is against the commitment of the United Nations to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours. With the Winter Olympics less than a week away, let us do whatever we can to maintain the Olympic peace in Eastern Europe.

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

Mr. Paulauskas (Lithuania): Let me thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting on such an important issue and for granting us an opportunity to speak. I deliver this statement on behalf of the Baltic States—Estonia, Latvia and my own country, Lithuania.

First, let me reiterate my country’s unwavering support for Ukraine’s sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We strongly condemn the clear violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity through

acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces since February 2014.

We do not recognize and continue to condemn the illegal annexation of Ukraine's Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by Russia. We remain concerned over the increasing militarization of the peninsula and the severe deterioration of the human rights situation there.

In that context, let me add that we welcome the establishment of the International Crimean Platform launched at the kick-off summit that took place on 23 August in Kyiv, and we support the implementation of its joint declaration. We invite other States Members of the United Nations to join that initiative as well.

The conflict in Ukraine has claimed around 14,000 lives, displaced 1.5 million persons and resulted in countless suffering on both sides of the contact line in eastern Ukraine.

We reiterate our full support for the efforts towards a peaceful and sustainable resolution of this conflict, namely, in the Normandy format, the Trilateral Contact Group and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), including its Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. Yet, despite all international efforts, until now we see little progress towards a resolution of this conflict. Ukraine's constructive approach has not been reciprocated by Russia.

We condemn Russia's continued aggressive actions and threats against Ukraine and call on Russia to de-escalate the situation and abide by international law. We call on Russia to immediately stop fuelling the conflict by providing financial and military support to the armed formations that it backs and to withdraw Russian military troops and materiel from the eastern border of Ukraine and the Crimean peninsula.

Despite all the diplomatic efforts, Russia further escalates and continues the military deployment around Ukraine's borders. Moreover, Russian troops are deployed in Belarus as well. That adds up to the current escalation and is of direct concern to us.

The Kremlin continues to use the false narrative that Russia is forced to defend itself from a threat, even as the opposite is true. It is Russia that is threatening Ukraine and other neighbours by positioning over 100,000 troops. Russia is not a victim, as it attempts to portray itself. It is the aggressor, strengthening its security at the expense of others. Through its own actions in the Georgian breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the Transnistrian region and the illegal annexation of Crimea, Russia has contributed to a significant deterioration of the security environment in Europe.

We reaffirm our full commitment to the core principles of international security enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the founding documents of the OSCE, including the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris for a new Europe, and others. That includes notably the sovereign equality and territorial integrity of States, the inviolability of frontiers and refraining from the use of force. The violation of such principles by Russia is an obstacle to a common and indivisible security space in Europe and threatens peace and stability in our continent.

The times of limited sovereignty in Europe are long gone. Notions of spheres of influence have no place in the twentieth-first century. States have the freedom to choose or change their own security arrangements. No third country has a veto right over the sovereign choices of independent and democratic States.

In response to the recent tensions, the European Union made clear in the December and January European Council conclusions that any further military aggression against Ukraine will have massive consequences and severe costs, including restrictive measures to be coordinated closely with our transatlantic partners,

We call on Russia to respect the principles of the United Nations Charter, de-escalate and engage in genuine dialogue. It is our duty as Members of the United Nations to defend the rules-based international system. The violation of its fundamental principles will have consequences for other parts of the world.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.