



Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

8623rd meeting

Thursday, 19 September 2019, 11.45 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation)

Members:

Belgium	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
China	Mr. Zhang Jun
Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
Dominican Republic	Mr. Singer Weisinger
Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
France	Mr. De Rivière
Germany	Mr. Heusgen
Indonesia	Mr. Syihab
Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
Poland	Ms. Wronecka
South Africa	Mr. Van Shalkwyk
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
United States of America	Mrs. Craft

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 11.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

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

Members of the Council have before them documents S/2019/756 and S/2019/757, which contain the texts of two draft resolutions. The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolutions.

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

Mr. Heusgen (Germany): I speak on behalf of the co-penholders on the humanitarian situation in Syria — Belgium, Germany and Kuwait.

For the past few months, we have endeavoured to draw the attention of the Security Council to the plight of the civilians in Idlib. We have taken an incremental approach to this matter, first, convening closed consultations, followed by formal meetings, and then attempts to issue press elements and a press statement. However, it has proven impossible to reach agreement in this Chamber on any public statement of the Security Council.

All the while, the violence in Idlib has continued over the past month and has led to the displacement of more than half a million civilians and the deaths of more than 1,000 people. It has caused extensive damage to medical and educational facilities, as well as other civilian infrastructure. We remain convinced that the Council cannot stay silent and must act.

That is why we have submitted this humanitarian draft resolution (S/2019/756) calling for a cessation of hostilities. We negotiated the draft resolution in a transparent manner and with a thorough process, and engaged extensively and in good faith with all Council members on the text. The outcome of those negotiations is now before the Council.

We believe that the draft resolution is balanced, has a purely humanitarian focus and also acknowledges that counter-terrorism measures must be taken in accordance with international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution. The Council has a clear responsibility to fulfil today. Many lives are at stake. We need to do all we can to live up to our obligations.

We are well aware that there is another initiative on the table, which was neither shared nor discussed with the majority of Council members in advance. No round of negotiations took place. That contravenes what is agreed in paragraphs 80 and 81 of note 507 (S/2017/507), which clearly states that the drafting of resolutions should be carried out in an inclusive manner, enabling the participation of all Council members, ensuring that penholders can engage in timely consultations with Council members, and allowing for the convening of at least one round of informal consultations. Furthermore, the focus of this other project is different and provides an insufficient reflection of the complexity of the situation we are faced with in Idlib today. On behalf of the co-penholders, we urge all Council members to vote in favour of our draft humanitarian resolution.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Russian Federation.

Today, we will vote on the draft resolution submitted by the humanitarian troika of Kuwait, Germany and Belgium (S/2019/756). First, we should define what goals have been set and which are actually being pursued by its authors. Since the beginning of the discussion, they have said that they have been guided exclusively by humanitarian considerations, are not pursuing hidden objectives of any kind and do not wish to undermine the unity of the Security Council. If that were true, we would support the draft text without hesitation. However, regrettably, the content of the draft resolution and the course of its preparation are clear indications of the real objectives of our colleagues — to save the international terrorists who are entrenched in Idlib from their final defeat and present Russia and Syria as being guilty of creating the situation in Idlib.

I would like to emphasize from the start and in particular the fact that the authors of the draft text have ignored the need to combat terrorists is the very factor that does not allow us to support the draft resolution before us. In that way, the humanitarian penholders

have not taken into account the decisions that have been coordinated in the Security Council. While calling on us to comply with the Sochi memorandum of understanding on Idlib of 17 September 2018, the sponsors stubbornly refused to include in the draft resolution the key provision that the ceasefire does not cover terrorist groups.

We experienced *déjà vu* throughout the work on the draft resolution. Time and again, the humanitarian work of our colleagues coincides with another area falling into the hands of and under the control of terrorists, as occurred in eastern Ghouta and Aleppo and is now occurring in Idlib. It is strange — although not strange to us — that they did not demonstrate their humanitarian ideals when Raqqa was being razed to the ground, which we have addressed dozens of times in the Council. Each time, they sing the same song. As the Syrian Government forces move closer to the strongholds of the terrorists, those terrorists suddenly become the representatives of the Syrian opposition fighting against the regime of Mr. Al-Assad.

The representative of the United Kingdom convinced us recently that there were more infants than terrorists in Idlib. Improbable and unsubstantiated statistics about mass movements of people have emerged. Where are those people going? Where will they live afterwards? Various sources, including United Nations sources, cite population statistics in Idlib that vary by hundreds of thousands. Furthermore, we increasingly hear that Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham has allegedly become an emancipated responsible structure, a kind of civilian administration that is striving to allow people to live peacefully in those areas. We also heard that said about Al-Nusra, its predecessor. We should underscore that both groups are listed by the Security Council as terrorist organizations.

Lastly, another important point to note is the fact that the humanitarian troika hastily introduced the draft resolution and did everything to accelerate its negotiation because of the reported mass murder of civilians in Idlib. However, the situation is very different. First, no large-scale operations have been or are being conducted in Idlib. The province is observing a ceasefire that is periodically undermined by terrorists. It is the terrorists alone who violate the ceasefire. Secondly, the reliability of the data fed to the mass media and later used by our colleagues in the Security Council is dubious. On Monday, 16 September, we gave a detailed press conference at which we provided irrefutable data

to demonstrate that the allegedly flagrant cases of air strikes by Russia and Syria on civilian infrastructure in Idlib were falsifications. The de-confliction mechanism is being used for misinformation.

Today, the representative of the United States began her statement by saying that, once again, we are hearing about air strikes on hospitals. We, however, did not hear Ms. Mueller make that claim. She noted that the situation had changed since 31 August. With regard to hospitals, I will provide two examples of that issue, which we also mentioned at the press conference. The Kafr Zeta hospital had allegedly been bombed but, instead, we saw that the coordinates provided were for a dugout shelter with a makeshift medical warehouse four kilometres from the hospital itself. With regard to the Maarat Al-Numan central hospital, which had also allegedly been bombed, it was a police post 10 kilometres from the hospital itself, which was being used as a weapons depot. The two hospitals had not been damaged. The underground cell and the police post had not been bombed either. That information had been conveyed to us by the United Nations through the de-confliction mechanism. The coordinates had been provided to the Organization by reliable sources in Idlib because, as is very well known, the United Nations is not present on the ground in Idlib. It was only in July that we received 12 sets of such false coordinates. We showed photographs of before and after the alleged bombings. The buildings and facilities, including medical facilities, were untouched.

I understand that this situation is unpleasant and uncomfortable for some members of the Council. It is no coincidence that no Western media houses from those present at my press conference had the courage to provide any information on this matter. We agree that there can be no military solution to the Syrian conflict, but only a political one, as is the case with any conflict, regardless of its location. However, to ease the process, it might be a good idea to remove from Syria all foreign armed groups whose presence in the country is illegal if we wish to advance the political process.

We believe that we cannot be guided by lies and misinformation when taking decisions in the Security Council, even if such lies and misinformation are beneficial to someone. It is unacceptable and immoral to speculate about the suffering of civilians who are hostages of the terrorists patronized by some of our Western colleagues. Furthermore, we all understand that a position taken by our Western colleagues that

was not constructive from the outset and did not change during the course of work on the draft text demonstrates that their genuine objective is to force Russia to use its veto on the Syrian issue.

From the start, we warned the sponsors that in its current form their draft resolution was doomed to failure. They knew it and they know it. Despite that warning, they will put the draft resolution to the vote in order to deliberately undermine the unity of the Council. I would like to ask the authors of the draft resolution a few questions. What do they want to achieve and what will they achieve by doing that? What signal will they send to the international community? Do they wish to see us veto a draft resolution during our presidency of the Security Council, just before the beginning of the high-level week? Is that their contribution to the establishment of the constitutional committee?

I call on delegations that genuinely wish to see a solution to the situation in Syria and to depoliticize humanitarian issues to vote together with us against the draft resolution submitted by the humanitarian troika.

I shall now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolutions before it. I shall first put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/2019/756, submitted by Belgium, Germany and Kuwait.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Belgium, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, France, Germany, Indonesia, Kuwait, Peru, Poland, South Africa, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Against:

China, Russian Federation

Abstaining:

Equatorial Guinea

The President (*spoke in Russian*): The draft resolution received 12 votes in favour, two against and one abstention. The draft resolution has not been adopted, owing to the negative vote of a permanent member of the Council.

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

Mr. Heusgen (Germany): I take the floor again on behalf of the humanitarian co-penholders on Syria — Kuwait, Belgium and Germany.

As caretakers of the humanitarian situation in Idlib, we are deeply disappointed with the result of the voting. Once again, the Security Council will not be able to fulfil its duty to protect the lives of 3 million people, mainly women and children, in Idlib governorate. How can we explain to them and the world that, even on a purely humanitarian draft resolution, no consensus could be reached? We the co-penholders tried to achieve consensus among the members of the Council. As an honest broker, we tried to reach out and engage in a transparent and constructive manner. We were aiming for a focused text, built around clear humanitarian objectives, namely, the cessation of hostilities, the protection of civilians and the alleviation of human suffering. We received plenty of support for our initiative and thank everyone who has supported our efforts, especially those Council members that voted in favour of draft resolution S/2019/756.

Other members did not support us, and we regret that. Divisions are visible and ongoing. We tried hard in recent days to bridge gaps, which revolved around the issue of counter-terrorism. While we all stand firm in our resolve to combat terrorism, we once again reiterate our position that counter-terrorism operations do not absolve parties of their obligations under international humanitarian law. That is what we tried to reflect in the draft resolution we put forward. Unfortunately, that was not acceptable to some.

On the other hand, we saw another initiative put forward only yesterday without any transparent process. It was neither shared nor negotiated beforehand. We have seen such tactics in the past and regret their use. They can never lead to the unity in the Council that is so desperately needed. In terms of content, the other initiative does not focus on the protection of civilians or on human suffering and it does not prevent a humanitarian catastrophe — core issues the Council has to address.

Assistant Secretary-General Ursula Mueller, in her briefing this morning (see S/PV.8622), clearly described what all this is about. She gave us numbers and examples in a bid to measure a humanitarian disaster. We promise today that we will not stop here. The draft resolution was not adopted, but our work and our responsibility do not end here. We will continue to

use the instruments of the Council to address the most urgent humanitarian issues in Idlib and other places in Syria.

Let us join our efforts as we look ahead to the renewal of the cross-border mechanism at the end of the year. The mechanism is crucial for the survival of millions of Syrians. Being united on this upcoming issue is the least that we can do for the Syrian people, who have suffered greatly for the past eight years.

Finally, there is no military solution to the crisis in Syria. The only solution is a political one based on resolution 2254 (2015) and the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). We reiterate our strong support for the efforts of Special Envoy Geir Pedersen.

Mrs. Craft (United States of America): Today's vote on draft resolution S/2019/756, on a humanitarian ceasefire in Idlib, underscores the commitment of the international community to bringing peace and stability to north-west Syria. The Security Council must act to end the violence, in particular against civilians in Syria, and to enable humanitarian actors to provide assistance to the most vulnerable populations. After nearly nine years of conflict, the Syrian people deserve nothing less. The United States is proud to have voted in favour of the draft resolution, authored by Belgium, Germany and Kuwait, in order to uphold our shared responsibility to protect civilians whose lives are at stake. It is deeply regrettable that the Council was not able to agree to a ceasefire draft resolution that would have saved lives in Idlib, especially as the Al-Assad regime and its allies prepare to launch another offensive on the people of Idlib.

It is also regrettable that the Council cannot agree on a draft resolution that includes language that would have held the Al-Assad regime and Russia responsible for their vicious attacks against the Syrian people. Let there be no mistake: for five months the Al-Assad regime and its allies have engaged in attacks that have devastated civilians, as well as civilian infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals and water facilities. The Al-Assad regime and Russia were responsible for 1,031 civilian deaths in Idlib province between 29 April and 29 August, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

While they can continue to try to hide behind lies and disinformation in the Council today, there is no doubt that the regime and Russian forces responsible for those attacks must be held accountable for their actions.

The world knows that, despite their denials, Russian and Syrian planes dominate the skies in north-west Syria, and so far, the Russian Federation has failed to comply with the United Nations de-confliction arrangements intended to keep civilians and hospitals safe. The Al-Assad regime and its allies tell the international community that they are merely conducting counter-terrorism operations. But we have seen this before. What we are witnessing is not counter-terrorism but an excuse to continue a violent military campaign against those who refuse to accept the Al-Assad regime's authority. Russia's veto of today's draft resolution — Russia's thirteenth veto on Syria — represents yet another attempt to absolve itself and the Al-Assad regime of their culpability in the deaths of thousands of Syrian men, women and children.

Russia has unequivocally proven, through its actions in the Council and on the battlefield, that it has no interest in protecting Syrian civilians in Idlib, Aleppo, eastern Ghouta or Dara'a. Nor does it have an interest in a lasting humanitarian ceasefire. We are disappointed that China decided to be complicit in those activities, joining Russia in its decision to veto the draft resolution. What Russia cares about is protecting Bashar Al-Assad, at the expense of the lives and peaceful aspirations of the Syrian people. We once again call on Russia to join the international community in a process that will result in the definitive stabilization of the country.

Mr. Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Dominican Republic voted in favour of draft resolution S/2019/756, presented by Germany, Belgium and Kuwait, the humanitarian co-penholders on the Syrian Arab Republic. We acknowledge the herculean efforts of the co-penholders to achieve unity in the Security Council on a draft resolution that is crucial for the lives of 3 million civilians in Idlib. That is an aspiration shared by the Dominican Republic, and for which we have worked actively.

Throughout the negotiation process, the Dominican Republic remained convinced that the overriding need to put an end to hostilities and protect the civilian population in north-west Syria would prevail over all other interests. Unfortunately, that is not what happened. Today the Council was not up to the task of meeting the expectations not only of the United Nations but also those of a population beaten down by years of conflict. It is impossible not to feel a sense of

failure and disappointment in the light of what we have just witnessed.

However, it also compels us to think about how we are tackling one of the most significant challenges the Security Council has faced in recent times and its impact in resolving this conflict — its polarization. The political process that is finally moving in a direction that seems acceptable to all parties deserves an unequivocal response from the Security Council in the form of a resolution that, first, establishes an unconditional ceasefire and, secondly, recognizes the need to ensure its impact on the ground through a monitoring and accountability mechanism and to maintain as safe a space as possible for humanitarian assistance to reach populations in acute need.

We believe that this draft text managed to address the concerns of all Council members in a balanced way that respected the humanitarian spirit underpinning it. We stress in particular the emphasis in the text we all negotiated on the need for counter-terrorism measures to be fully aligned with international humanitarian and international law and for all parties to uphold their obligations to protect civilian populations and infrastructure.

The text we have been unable to adopt would have established a ceasefire starting on 21 September. That very day sees the beginning of a new school year in the Syrian Arab Republic. Are the conditions in place for the children Idlib can go to class without fear? Are schools protected? Are teachers protected? Are children protected?

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): There were two draft resolutions on the table today. The humanitarian penholders' draft resolution (S/2019/756) would have protected civilians. The Russian and Chinese draft resolution (S/2019/757) imperils them.

We thank the humanitarian penholders, Belgium, Germany and Kuwait, for their considerable efforts to incorporate the views of all Council members in drafting the text on which we have just voted. This was a balanced text that reflected the dire situation in Idlib and rightly called for a lasting ceasefire, the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure and humanitarian access. The draft resolution was vitally needed. Since the Council's first emergency humanitarian session to discuss Idlib on 10 May, we have focused repeatedly on the indiscriminate violence against civilians there. Civilian deaths and displacement continue to increase.

There is little time left to prevent a catastrophic worsening of the humanitarian situation.

As well as establishing an unequivocal ceasefire, the text that Russia and China today vetoed set out clearly the importance of adhering to international legal obligations. A vetoed draft resolution does not alter the fact that there can be no excuse for targeting civilians. Indeed, the deliberate targeting of civilians is a war crime.

By contrast, the Russian and Chinese text on which we will vote next pretends that the humanitarian situation in Idlib is caused solely by terrorists rather than by the indiscriminate aerial bombardment that is being carried out with scant regard for the principles of distinction and proportionality. The exemption for counter-terrorism activity, which Russia proposes, seems designed to allow indiscriminate attacks to continue. We have heard Russia's explanation that it is striking at terrorists, but, even if that were true, it still has legal obligations, including to ensure the proportionality of its actions.

I am afraid that over the years in Syria, we have seen the reality of the Al-Assad regime's military action and that of its Russian ally, in particular its use of air strikes. We all saw what happened after the Security Council adopted resolution 2401 (2018) and the deaths of civilians that followed. Russia's and China's text would be of no service to those on the ground who so desperately need the protection of the international community.

The fight against terrorism cannot be an excuse for indiscriminate attacks or, worse, targeted attacks on civilians. We cannot in good conscience support a text that would allow this. We appeal to all Council members to join us in voting against the Russian and Chinese text.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Peru shares the United Nations assessment of and concern regarding the grave humanitarian impact on the civilian population of the escalation of violence in north-west Syria and therefore supports all initiatives that are aimed to protect that population. We therefore thank the delegations of Germany, Belgium and Kuwait, in their capacity as co-penholders for humanitarian issues in Syria, for their considerable efforts to achieve a compromise acceptable to all members of the Council on the content of the draft resolution (S/2019/756) put to the vote this morning. We further appreciate the

fact that the final text managed to satisfy many of the concerns expressed by our delegation in the course of negotiations, in which we participated constructively with a view to achieving a truly effective cessation of hostilities and provide genuine relief to the civilian population suffering in Syria. We underscore, moreover, the emphasis the draft placed on respect for international humanitarian and human rights law in all situations and circumstances, which includes, of course, in the fight against terrorism.

Given all of the foregoing, we were able to vote in favour of the draft. Peru therefore notes with grave regret that the draft resolution submitted by the co-penholders, which we viewed as balanced and timely, could not be adopted.

In conclusion, we reiterate the need to ensure that the Council devote greater effort to seeking unity on such delicate matters so as to discharge the lofty responsibilities that have been entrusted to us.

Mr. Van Shalkwyk (South Africa): As mentioned in our statement to the Council earlier (see S/PV.8622), my delegation continues to be very concerned about the devastating human tragedy unfolding in Syria, in particular the situation in and around Idlib. The highest priority of the Council should be to stop the killing and end the suffering of innocent civilians. There has to be an immediate end to the violence and talks must begin to reach a Syrian-led political transition reflecting the will of the Syrian people.

South Africa condemns all human rights abuses, in particular violations of the rights of vulnerable groups such as women, children and ethnic minorities. South Africa also condemns the lack of respect for international humanitarian law.

We welcome the initiative taken to develop a resolution to create an environment necessary to provide those in need with much-needed humanitarian support. However, my delegation is concerned at the politicization of the humanitarian situation. We instead believe that the Council should strictly focus on helping those caught in the middle of this devastating conflict. It is for this reason that South Africa voted in favour of the co-penholders' draft resolution (S/2019/756), as we believe that the dire humanitarian situation on the ground outweighs our concerns regarding some elements of the text.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Côte d'Ivoire decided to support the draft resolution introduced by the co-penholders on humanitarian issues in Syria (S/2019/756). We did so because, while we firmly support the fight against terrorism, we are nonetheless convinced that efforts in that regard must take into full account norms established regarding respect for international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law.

In our consistent calls for dialogue to resolve the Syrian conflict, Côte d'Ivoire also underscores that military operations, wherever and under whatsoever circumstances conducted, must respect international law and human rights. International norms make it incumbent on the parties to a conflict to apply the principles of distinction and proportionality and oblige them to take necessary measures to protect civilians in conflict.

While my country commends the importance that the two draft resolutions (S/2019/756 and S/2019/757) give to the humanitarian situation in the country, which has suffered a number of years of deadly conflict, it nevertheless condemns the deeply differing approaches that they support. Unfortunately, the Council is once again deeply divided. Côte d'Ivoire regrets that neither draft resolution found unity among the Council because the parties did not exhaust the opportunities for dialogue needed in such circumstances.

We therefore reiterate our call for further dialogue among Member States, which is the only way to achieve a consensus draft text that takes into account the concerns of all the parties concerned.

Mr. De Riviere (France) (*spoke in French*): France regrets that we did not reach an agreement today in response to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Idlib. We welcome the efforts of Germany, Belgium and Kuwait to try to reach a balanced draft text that would have merited our unanimous support.

While the situation in Idlib has continued to deteriorate in recent months, I call on all of us to demonstrate our responsibility and to work together to find a compromise in the coming days. Those who are directly involved have the responsibility to ensure respect for international humanitarian law. The situation in Idlib and, more generally, in Syria requires that we have a constructive dialogue within this body. It is in that spirit that France, for its part, remains ready to work.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we reiterate our support for the statements made by the representative of Germany on behalf of the penholders at the first meeting this morning (see S/PV.8622), as well as at this meeting.

We regret and express our disappointment that the Council has failed to shoulder its responsibility. History will undoubtedly remember this meeting and the positions of all Security Council members on the balanced humanitarian draft resolution S/2019/756, put forward by the State of Kuwait, Germany and Belgium, which sought to protect civilians in Idlib by calling for a cessation of hostilities there so as to prevent further suffering of its population. The people, including the elderly, children and women of Idlib, will remember the result of the voting on this draft resolution and will be harsh in their judgment of the Security Council.

The failure of the Council to adopt a draft resolution on a merely humanitarian issue is added to a series of Council failures on the Syrian issue. For many years, there has been no real and tangible progress in the Council towards ending the suffering of the Syrian people. The use of the veto today means that the lives of millions of Syrians in north-west Syria will continue to be jeopardized, as the United Nations has repeatedly warned against the emergence of the worst humanitarian situation of the twenty-first century if military operations continue there.

The United Nations figures reflecting the scale of the humanitarian suffering in Idlib were the main reason for our action and the submission of the draft resolution, as penholders, which was negotiated transparently and inclusively with all members of the Council for three weeks. A counter draft resolution was submitted. It was not negotiated. It was put in blue yesterday. That clearly demonstrates the sharp division in the Council on the Syrian issue even though our objective is purely humanitarian.

The military escalation in north-western Syria since late April has led to the displacement of more than half a million people and the killing of almost 1,000 civilians, half of whom are women and children. Health care, educational and civilian facilities have been heavily damaged. Such developments and violations of international humanitarian law in Idlib did not prompt the Council to take a unified and correct position. We reiterate our condemnation of the targeting of civilians by any party, as well as attacks on hospitals and

health-care facilities. Those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law should be held accountable.

Terrorism is a serious scourge that threatens international peace and security. We all agree on and are decisive in combating terrorism wherever it occurs, including in Idlib governorate. However, we reiterate what has already been said by many Council members and by the Secretary-General himself, namely, that counter-terrorism operations do not exempt parties from meeting their commitments under international humanitarian law, including the commitment to protecting civilians and civilian facilities, as well as the principles of distinction, proportionality and caution.

In conclusion, I thank all Member States that supported the efforts of the penholders and voted in favour of the draft resolution. We reiterate that the failure of the Council to adopt the draft resolution will not deter or discourage us. We will pursue our efforts to protect civilians and to improve the humanitarian situation in Syria.

We once again stress that there is no military solution to the crisis in Syria. The only solution is through a political settlement that takes into consideration the legitimate aspirations of the brotherly Syrian people and upholds the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria, in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex).

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): We fully subscribe to the statement made by the representative of Germany on behalf of the three penholders. Let me to make a few remarks in my national capacity.

First, we deeply regret the fact that certain members of the Council were not able to support draft resolution S/2019/ 756, on the humanitarian situation in north-western Syria, which we proposed. From the beginning, the three co-penholders worked in a transparent and constructive manner. We did our utmost to bring together the different positions up to the last day of negotiations.

For us, the protection of human lives should be at the heart of any resolution on Idlib. By not achieving consensus on the draft text, whose purpose is purely humanitarian, the Council has unfortunately failed the people of Idlib.

Belgium remains resolutely determined to combat terrorism. That is the collective will of the Council but, for us, one thing is clear: counter-terrorism operations do not absolve the parties to a conflict of their obligations under international humanitarian law. The parties must respect the norms applicable to armed conflict and the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution. Bombing civilians, schools and hospitals has nothing to do with fighting terrorism. To the contrary, all it does is to create fertile ground for more terrorism.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China voted against draft resolution S/2019/756, on the humanitarian situation in Syria, which has been put to the vote just now.

The Security Council closely follows the humanitarian situation in Syria and has convened meetings to that end many times. With regard to the issue of Idlib, since 31 August the Russian and Syrian Governments have been implementing the ceasefire in Idlib, which in general has been upheld. The diplomatic efforts of the relevant international stakeholders are ongoing and the situation in Idlib is developing in a positive direction. In that context, to steamroll a draft resolution that has major controversies towards a vote is clearly not constructive. Such a move will not achieve the desired outcome.

Terrorist organizations continue to expand their sphere of influence in the north-west region of Syria. That is the source of the humanitarian issue in Idlib and poses a grave risk to safety and security in the region. The Council should be united in tackling jointly this grave challenge. China has constructively participated in a negotiation of the text and has proposed reasonable revisions. However, unfortunately the draft resolution that was just put to the vote did not touch upon the essence of the issue or address China's core concerns. For that reason, China voted against the draft resolution.

The humanitarian situation in Syria is a very complicated and sensitive issue. All categories of humanitarian issues in Syria should be considered in a comprehensive manner and addressed in a balanced way, instead of only selectively focusing on certain issues, much less politicizing a humanitarian issue. The international community must fully respect the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria; fully listen to the views of the Syrian

Government; and seek a comprehensive solution to the Syrian issue by political means.

At the same time, we should pay close attention to the post-war reconstruction of Syria and its economic and social development and help the Syrian people live peaceful, stable and happy lives.

China also attaches great importance and pays close attention to the humanitarian situation in Syria. For that reason, Russia and China are proposing an alternative draft resolution (S/2019/757) that takes into consideration humanitarian and counter-terrorism issues in Syria in a comprehensive manner. The draft includes a call for the observance of international law in counter-terrorism efforts and to ensure humanitarian access, and it reflects the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people. We hope that all Council members will support this draft.

I must point out here that China firmly rejects the groundless accusations made by the representatives of the United Kingdom and the United States against China. China has the right to make an independent decision on how it votes, according to the rights and wrongs of a situation and proceeding from the interests of a certain people. No country has the right to make wilful accusations such as this. I would also like to point out that the current situation and suffering of the Syrian people are precisely the result of the wrongful conduct of some countries, and it is those countries that should reflect on their behaviour.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Russian Federation.

We are submitting a draft resolution on Idlib (S/2019/757) as part of the effort to rectify the humanitarian situation in Syria. Unlike the other draft resolution (S/2019/756) — I have already spoken about our reason for vetoing it — our text is characterized by an exclusively humanitarian approach and does not contain any politicized or controversial passages. It is aimed at maintaining the ceasefire that was entered into on 31 August in order to continue the fight against terrorism and to guarantee humanitarian access to Idlib.

The representative of the United States, when speaking in explanation of vote on this draft, said that the Council could not reach an agreement on the ceasefire. But we do not need to, because the ceasefire has been in effect in Idlib since 31 August. It is ironic

that the first party to violate the ceasefire was the United States Air Force, on the very day the ceasefire entered into force, on 31 August.

We have also been urged to stop the brutal attacks in Syria. I think the United States should direct such appeals to itself. We remember well how the United States Air Force fought terrorists in Iraq, Mosul and other areas. We remember how it abided by international humanitarian law there. Our Russian Aerospace Forces do not raze whole cities to the ground; they only make strikes against targets where terrorists are located if there is reliable and verified intelligence, while avoiding any attacks that might put the civilians at risk.

I certainly do not believe that any member of the Security Council can speak against any of the points in our draft resolution. Today we have an opportunity to reach an agreement on the humanitarian situation in Syria. But if there are such objections, then we and the entire international community would be very interested in hearing them.

We encourage colleagues to take the following into account in voting on the Russian draft.

The armed-combat phase in the Syrian conflict has essentially come to an end. Those who are genuinely interested in a political settlement have joined in the process. A lot of work has already been done, and we must support this concerted effort, including by the United Nations, instead of using humanitarian issues to achieve political aims. The only ones who are prolonging the war, with a view to destroying the Syrian State and causing suffering to civilians, are the terrorists. Attempts to shield them or present them as deradicalized opposition are unacceptable.

In addition, as our draft stipulates, the international community should take all of the measures necessary to improve the humanitarian situation in Idlib. We hope that a constructive approach will be taken by the members of the Security Council in supporting our draft.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/2019/757, submitted by China and the Russian Federation.

A vote was taken by a show of hands.

In favour:

China, Russian Federation

Against:

Belgium, Dominican Republic, France, Germany, Kuwait, Peru, Poland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Abstaining:

Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Indonesia, South Africa

The President (*spoke in Russian*): The draft resolution received two votes in favour, nine against and four abstentions. The draft resolution has not been adopted, having failed to obtain the required number of votes.

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

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): Poland voted against the draft resolution contained in document S/2019/757. Let me reiterate that it is both our moral and legal obligation to provide immediate, full, safe and unhindered access to humanitarian aid and to prevent the human catastrophe unfolding in Idlib province. It is equally important that all activities undertaken by States aimed at countering terrorism be fully in line with their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law. Countering terrorism must not serve as a pretext for violations of human rights, nor can there be any justification for the indiscriminate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Poland continues to strongly condemn any acts of terror and remains deeply committed to the fight against terrorism. The draft resolution proposed by the Russian Federation and China is missing this important point. Therefore, we were not in a position to support it.

Mr. Syihab (Indonesia): My delegation is taking the floor following the voting on the two draft resolutions (S/2019/756 and S/2019/757).

Indonesia has always called for unity within the Security Council for the very urgent task of saving people's lives. That has always been our priority. We share the message the Secretary-General delivered yesterday during the press conference at the outset of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly: "Put people first. Their needs. Their aspirations. Their rights." That applies to the 3 million people in Idlib;

they need to be protected. Their aspirations are to stay safe, and their right is to live in peace.

In that regard, it is indeed regrettable that the Council could not reach consensus. Indonesia voted in favour of the draft resolution submitted by the co-penholders, since the draft text contains critical elements that are necessary to immediately enhance our efforts in alleviating the suffering of the people in Idlib governorate and prevent any further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the area. The process of negotiating the text was lengthy and complex, with many divergences among the Council members. We therefore thank the co-penholders for their hard work.

While we appreciate the efforts of Russia and China in formulating the other draft resolution, we consider that the potential of the text to address the real situation on the ground has not been fully explored. The text was introduced only yesterday, and the Council was not able to comprehensively discuss it. We also believe that, at this critical juncture, the humanitarian situation in Idlib needs a resolution that fully captures the urgent need to immediately alleviate the people's pain, frustration and suffering. Indonesia sincerely believes that we need a breakthrough to save those people's lives. As I mentioned this morning, the Council needs to ensure that it is not too late to respond to the humanitarian situation in Idlib (see S/PV.8622).

It is imperative for the Council to agree to avoid the politicization of any humanitarian situation. Only through such a collective agreement will the Council be able to effectively fulfil its mandate. My delegation is very hopeful that the Council will continue exploring ways to address that very important issue in unison.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): We abstained in the voting on the two draft resolutions S/2019/756 and S/2019/757 to demonstrate our dissension over the lack of understanding and unity within the Security Council on an issue that is so vital and important as the Syrian conflict, in which many human lives — including those of civilians, women, children, pregnant women and people with special needs — are being sacrificed. That division and lack of understanding are all the worse given our efforts to address a grave humanitarian situation, such as that currently prevailing in Idlib.

We had hoped that the negotiations would broaden and deepen on the draft resolutions presented by the penholders in a spirit of flexibility and good will,

taking into account, above all, the critical situation of the civilian population in Syria, especially in Idlib, and setting aside the geostrategic interests of countries with major influence on the parties to the conflict. We had hoped to repeat our experience of a few days ago with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, when we were ready to give up the relevant draft resolution for lost until, happily, we reached an understanding and voted unanimously. Why can we not do the same with the humanitarian situation in Syria and the chemical weapons in that country?

That is why we decided to abstain in the voting on both draft resolutions.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Once again, we find ourselves in the Security Council, facing a surreal, absurd scene that the three Western permanent members of the Council keep repeating as they don the mantle of the humanitarian penholders. Since the last briefing delivered by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (see S/PV.8593), they have engaged in drafting a biased political draft resolution (S/2019/756) — not a humanitarian one — under what they call a ceasefire in north-west Syria.

It is now confirmed that the ink of that pen dries up when it comes to the war crimes and crimes against humanity that were committed and are still being committed by what is called the international coalition, led by the United States and its proxies from terrorist organizations and affiliated illegitimate militias. The ink of that pen also dries up when it comes to the illegal foreign presence on the territories of my country, be they United States, British, French or Turkish. It dries up, too, when it comes to the repeated Israeli aggressions, encouraged by the silence of the Council and the immunity provided by some permanent members of the Council to the practices of the Israeli-occupying authorities for decades.

Some colleagues have said that combating terrorism does not exempt us from respecting our relevant commitments under international humanitarian law. However, I have not heard those same colleagues say, for example, that producing terrorism does not exempt one from respecting commitments under international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. Both international law and the provisions of the Charter

take precedence over international humanitarian law, or they are at least on equal footing. But if international humanitarian law is to be respected, the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and international law must first be upheld.

History will remember this meeting because it was sought to disrupt the Russian presidency, as was the case on 8 October 2016 when the Russian Federation presided over the Council (see S/PV.7785). Attempts were made by some countries at that time to introduce a draft resolution to disrupt the Russian presidency of the Council. It is a case of history repeating itself, because the objective of this meeting is not to provide humanitarian help the Syrian people, but rather to misuse this agenda item politically and embarrass the Russian presidency.

As with previous such resolutions adopted by the Council, the draft resolution (S/2019/757) before us sets forth in the second preambular paragraph that the Security Council reaffirms “full respect for the sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic”. However, the practices of the penholders have proved the existence of a significant gap between the principle and the application of that particular paragraph. The penholders of the humanitarian slogan have violated the sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic, which is unacceptable.

How can the humanitarian penholders undertake their duties and lead that movement, which is supposedly underpinned by humanitarian drivers, at a time when they have called for this meeting and presented a draft resolution without genuine coordination or consultation with the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic? It is our delegation that is concerned, first and foremost, in the discussion of such a draft resolution. How can they disregard the fact that the Syrian Government has agreed to a ceasefire in the de-escalation zone in Idlib, starting on 31 August, while maintaining the right to respond to any violation by terrorists, in line with the Astana agreement, on establishing the de-escalation zones, and the Sochi agreement?

We have the right to wonder why the co-penholders fail in their draft resolution to make any reference to excluding terrorist groups from the cessation of hostilities. It is known to all that the Astana agreement on establishing de-escalation zones does not include the armed groups designated by the Security Council as terrorist entities. The agreement provided for a number

of pledges, including compelling the armed groups that signed the Astana agreement to disengage from terrorist organizations, especially Da’esh, the Al-Nusra Front and other affiliated groups.

Both the Astana and Sochi agreements underlined the right of the Government of Syria and its allies to counter terrorist organizations, regardless of their names. All of that is absent in the draft resolution submitted by the humanitarian penholders. How can those humanitarian penholders claim to be earnest on the humanitarian situation in Syria when they fail to include, in the draft resolution, the main reason behind the humanitarian crisis in the country, which is terrorism supported, unfortunately, by some countries that are members of the Council? They also disregard the fact that there are thousands of foreign terrorist fighters in Syria.

By way of example, we note that the German Federal Government announced recently, in response to a parliamentary question submitted by Konstantin Kuhle, an internal affairs expert of the German liberal party, that the number of German foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq amounts to 500 terrorists, of whom approximately 360 are still fighting in the ranks of terrorist organizations. These are the German Government’s statistics, which underline what has been confirmed — the presence of thousands of terrorists from Europe. How can my colleague, the Permanent Representative of Germany, ignore that important information issued by his own Government? How can he fail to make any reference of the need to counter the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters and for their countries and masters to withdraw them from Syria?

By the way, I would like to touch upon what my colleague the representative of Kuwait said in the most recent Council meeting on this topic (see S/PV.8609), that the Salafist movement in Kuwait did not exist and that the terrorist Al-Mteiri did not exist either. I have here a poster distributed by the Salafist movement on the streets of Kuwait. We can see pictures of Kuwaiti nationals under the banner “Wage war — jihad in Syria”. They are all Kuwaiti members of the Kuwaiti Salafist movement. Here is another such poster.

I have also a copy of a *New York Times* article that my colleague the representative of Kuwait also said did not exist. It speaks of Mr. Al-Mteiri, a Sergeant in the Kuwaiti army. It says,

(spoke in English)

“Ghanim al-Mteiri gathers the funds and transports them to Syria for the rebels fighting President Bashar al-Assad. Mr. Mteiri — one of dozens of Kuwaitis who openly raise money to arm the opposition — has helped turn this tiny, oil-rich Persian Gulf state into a virtual Western Union outlet for Syria’s rebels, with the bulk of the funds he collects going to a Syrian affiliate of Al Qaeda. One Kuwait-based effort raised money to equip 12,000 rebel fighters for \$2,500 each. ... Donors earn ‘silver status’ by giving \$175 for 50 sniper bullets, or ‘gold status’ by giving twice as much for eight mortar rounds.”

(spoke in Arabic)

The American Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has produced two studies on the Kuwaiti Salafist movement and on the support it provides to terrorism in Syria and Iraq. The Kuwaiti representative said that if I had any names or documents, I should present them. Here I am, presenting those documents. Anyone who wants a copy can get it from the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations in New York.

How can the humanitarian penholders and sponsors of the draft resolution claim that they are earnest about the humanitarian situation when they have participated from day one in the illegitimate so-called Global Coalition against Da’esh, which has not combated terrorism in any way? Instead, it has intentionally and systematically destroyed Syrian infrastructure, including bridges over the Euphrates River, grain silos, schools, hospitals and safe villages. It has killed thousands of civilians and has saved Da’esh terrorist leaders in the two towns of Hajin and Baghouz in Deir ez-Zor and in Raqqa city, in order to recycle them and use them in other countries as the moderate terrorist democratic opposition.

How can the humanitarian penholders claim that they are earnest about humanitarian issues when the draft resolution disregards the dangerous announcement of the United States and Turkey about reaching an agreement on establishing a so-called safe zone on Syrian territories and starting joint patrols? Such an agreement would complicate and prolong the crisis in Syria by establishing new facts on the ground in areas where the forces of those two occupying countries are illegally deployed.

How can the humanitarian penholders claim that they are earnest about humanitarian issues when they contribute to economic terrorism by imposing unilateral coercive economic measures with grave catastrophic consequences for Syrians? Such measures undermine the ability of the Syrian Government to respond to the people’s daily needs.

In conclusion, based on all this, my Government would like to thank all countries that have voted against the draft resolution, especially the Russian and Chinese delegations, and those that abstained in the voting in order to uphold the principles of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations — first and foremost, respect for the sovereignty of States and non-interference in their internal affairs.

The President *(spoke in Russian)*: The representative of Kuwait has asked for the floor to make an additional statement.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) *(spoke in Arabic)*: At the outset, I would like to apologize to the Security Council for asking for the floor at this late hour.

I did not really want to deviate from the topic under discussion. However, the representative of the Syrian delegation referred to Kuwait more than once, and presented some documents that are merely newspaper articles. The objective is clear — to attack Kuwait in an attempt to characterize the crisis in Syria as a terrorist crisis. The representative maintains that the main reason for the crisis in Syria is terrorism. However, it was not at all a terrorist crisis at the beginning.

The little clips that he presented, such as those published in Kuwaiti newspapers or the article in the *New York Times*, were all published in 2012 or 2013. He likes to refer to clippings of such articles in every meeting. I wonder why my colleague the Syrian representative enjoys repeating what has been published in newspapers. I would have preferred him to talk about Kuwait’s formal position so that we could respond, instead of referring to announcements made by individuals seven years ago and attempting, in one way or another, to link the Kuwaiti Government with terrorism. He claimed at last meeting (see S/PV.8609) that he is attached to the Government of Kuwait more than I am, but it is clear that the main objective is to defame Kuwait.

I have already responded to the information on terrorists and individuals he brought up from 2012

and 2013. I said that if Ambassador Ja'afari has any proof or evidence, he should bring it forward. Why has the Government of Syria not provided those documents, if they were reliable, to the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999)? If such individuals are terrorists and have committed gross violations, such as genocide or crimes against humanity, he can present the evidence to the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, established by the General Assembly. Such documents can always be presented to that well-known Mechanism so that everyone who has committed a crime in Syria can be held accountable.

We are among those countries that adopted General Assembly resolution 71/248, establishing the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism so as to ensure that people are held accountable for crimes they commit in Syria. However, Syria rejected that Mechanism that is now functional. It is therefore up to Ambassador Ja'afari to present any evidence he wants. As I said last time, I wish that he would refer to United Nations documents and not just press cuttings that are not wholly accurate. At times, the *New York Times* publishes articles in favour of Syria, but in many instances it publishes articles that are critical of the Government of Syria. I do not want to address these articles. We always rely on statements issued by the United Nations and its various organs, in particular concerning the gross violations committed in the various governorates of Syria. Crimes have been documented that have been confirmed by satellite images. There are documents and witnesses; they cannot be challenged. Therefore, we would like Ambassador Ja'afari to rely on such documents. If there is an individual or group of people who he thinks have committed crimes against the people of Syria, he should present evidence to the sanctions committee or to the Mechanism, which his country voted against it.

Ambassador Ja'afari criticized the penholders at length from the beginning of his statement. He claimed that Israeli aggression was not under the spotlight. We constantly condemn Israeli aggression against Syria and underscore the security, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria. When the United States endorsed the sovereignty of Israel over the Golan, we were among the countries that called for discussions

here at the Security Council and for the adoption of a draft resolution pertaining to this issue. However, Syria opposed this request and did not want us to come to the Security Council. Members did not want us to come to the Security Council in order to present a draft resolution that would have condemned the sovereignty of Israel over the Golan.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic has requested the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, my country is deeply attached to brotherly relations with Kuwait. Each time that I have spoken about the presence of Kuwaiti terrorists in Syria, I have very clearly stated that I was not targeting the Government of Kuwait. However, we must draw the Kuwaiti Government's attention to the existence of these terrorists and those who sponsor terrorism. They are Kuwaiti citizens responsible for promoting terrorism and raising funds to be sent to terrorists in Syria. In other words, there are Kuwaiti citizens who kill Syrians on Syrian territory. I do not understand why my colleague the representative of Kuwait is so sensitive when we talk about Kuwaiti terrorists in Syria. There are Belgian terrorists, French terrorists, British terrorists, Australian terrorists and so on. There are terrorists from 100 different Members of this international Organization in Syria, who are fighting and killing Syrians.

Not one of those nationalities represented here has been particularly moved. This information was included in a formal report issued by a subsidiary committee of the Security Council involved in counter-terrorism. Why is there such excessive sensitivity when we say that there are Kuwaiti terrorists fighting in Syria and killing Syrians who belong to a Salafist movement? How can we reject such remarks when the Carnegie Institute has published two studies on the Salafist movement in Kuwait? What I am holding up are not press cuttings but posters that were distributed in Kuwait by a number of individuals, some of whom are members of the Kuwaiti Parliament. Those individuals have raised hundreds of millions of dollars to send to Syria and support terrorism. Many articles have been published by several newspapers, including the *New York Times*. We have lot of proofs and evidence that we have submitted to the Security Council and to subsidiary bodies responsible for the fight against terrorism.

We pair words with deeds. We have sent hundreds of pieces of evidence to the Counter-Terrorism Committee about the presence of foreign terrorist fighters in Syria. They include Kuwaiti nationals. There are Syrian terrorists fighting the Syrian Government. Should I be sensitive if someone told me that there are Syrian terrorists fighting against the Syrian Government in Syria? No, because it is a fact. There are Syrian terrorists and foreign terrorist fighters who are fighting the Syrian Government on behalf of their outside users. We are very transparent. We are not fabricating stories. Everybody in the Council knows what we are talking about. Reports have been published by the Council on the issue of foreign terrorist fighters in Syria. Four or five years ago, the Council denied that there were foreign terrorist fighters in Syria. Today, the Council has moved from total rejection to complete acknowledgement of the fact that there are foreign terrorists in Syria.

Many members are simply competing with us and with our allies in the fight against this foreign terrorism. They are liars and hypocrites. We should not be sensitive when we speak about our pain. Hundreds of thousands of Syrians have been killed by terrorists. Terrorists have destroyed our country's infrastructure as a result of foreign interference. I do not want a draft resolution. We have 22 resolutions that must be implemented. Do we really need any more resolutions? We have 12 resolutions aimed at addressing terrorism. Let us implement them. Let us implement those 12 Security Council anti-terrorism resolutions. That will end the problem. But if we say something and then behave in an entirely contradictory manner, that is the height of hypocrisy.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): The representative of Kuwait has requested the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I apologize once again for taking the floor.

I shall begin where the Syrian representative ended, asking the Security Council to implement its own resolutions on counter-terrorism. I, in turn, call on the Syrian authorities to implement the resolutions of the Council on chemical weapons and political affairs, foremost among which is resolution 2254 (2015). That is the official position of Kuwait in public meetings of the Council. He knows Kuwait's official position very well. We want a political solution in Syria — one that

is based on Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2254 (2015) and the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). I do not think that this position should bother our brothers in Syria.

Another position concerns the fight against terrorism, which does not exempt any party from its responsibility to respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law. That is our position and we always reiterate it. We are consistent in our position with those of the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, as well as international law, the Charter of the United Nations and relevant Security Council resolutions.

Concerning what the Syrian representative said about the existence of Kuwaiti terrorists, he always refers to documents with the names of Kuwaiti citizens who are fighting in Syria. We are aware that there are foreign fighters in Syria. That is why Kuwait and a group of States have sponsored a General Assembly resolution on human rights in Syria, the text of which demands the exit of foreign fighters, condemns them and prohibits their presence in Syria to fight for any party. We know also that certain militias are fighting alongside the Syrian Government. Some of the militias in the region are considered by many countries around the world to be terrorist militias. There are nationals of the same country fighting on both sides. That is why we have presented a draft resolution demanding the exit of all foreign forces.

The reason I am taking the floor is that the representative of Syria cites numbers and gets his information from the press, claiming that a sergeant, as stated by the *New York Times*, raised \$400 million. That is in addition to an earlier claim that an individual managed to raise billions of dollars and sent weapons. That is beyond reasoning. When there is evidence, we take action against them. We reject the very idea that individuals have links to terrorist groups.

At the beginning of the crisis in Syria, no one had heard anything about Daesh or the Al-Nusra Front. At the time, the international community and League of Arab States adopted resolutions in the interest and support of the Syrian people. Then resolutions were adopted to suspend the membership of Syria in the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Its membership is still suspended to date.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): While I respect the right of delegations to make additional statements,

and I will give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, I feel that our discussion has become somewhat stuck and that it is time to end it. I ask members to abide by this decision and be brief.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I apologize for taking the floor for a third time, I will not be long.

The last thing I want is any personal sparring between my colleague the Ambassador of Kuwait and myself. I look after the interests of my people. What I am saying is directed to him and to all present here. We are no longer a member of the League of Arab States since it came to the Council in an attempt to pit it against us and militarize the situation in Syria. Therefore, my colleague the Ambassador of Kuwait is wrong to cite the League of Arab States as a credible reference. We are a member neither of the League of Arab States nor of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Therefore, to us those two organizations are not credible pertaining to any political position that is binding for the Government of my country.

We do not get information only from the press. We have a responsible Government that has robust intelligence service and institutions. We also have tens of thousands of documents that we have obtained from terrorist hideouts, documents written by terrorists, containing vast amounts of information demonstrating that certain Gulf parties are complicit in sponsoring terrorism in Syria. This is a proven fact. We have sent the Council hundreds of letters containing names, addresses, accusations and places. We still have a lot more information that will be revealed in due time. All Council missions that visit us and are involved

in counter-terrorism are stunned when they receive information from Damascus. Members should ask the head of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team for the outcome of his latest visit to Damascus. We do not rely on newspaper articles only; we have proven and established information and confessions, a great deal of which has been sent to the Security Council.

Maintaining the error is worse than the error itself. Let us stop doing that. Support is being provided to terrorism in Syria and Iraq. Did Daesh and the Al-Nusra Front, this human garbage, appear out of thin air? Who sponsored those terrorists and issued them visas? Who allowed them to move across international capitals? Who gave \$2,500 to each terrorist in order to work as a sniper and kill Syrians? Who trained them? How are they being redeployed from Idlib to Nigeria, Algeria, Afghanistan and Yemen? We are asking all these questions to professional diplomats, not to amateurs. It is a big issue.

What we are suffering today will hit others tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. If Council members are negligent about fighting terrorism in Syria, terrorism will beset them all. Monsters have come to us from Europe, Arab States and Central Asia. They are human-shaped monsters. They must be returned to their homes if international humanitarian law is to be enforced. Let the monsters return to the countries and capitals they came from. We do not want them. We have the right to fight them until the very last among them. It is a matter of sovereignty under international law.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.