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Official Records

President: Ms. Espinosa Garcés. (Ecuador)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Korneliou (Cyprus), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 74 (continued)

Promotion and protection of human rights

(c) Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives

Report of the Third Committee (A/73/589/Add.3)

Draft amendment (A/73/L.60)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now continue to hear explanations of vote before the voting.

I first give the floor to the representative of the Sudan to introduce draft amendment A/73/L.60.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Unfortunately, the consensus, if not unanimity, that the General Assembly enjoyed while voting on a number of issues has been undermined through an initiative launched by several States, in particular our friends in the European Union, to include a call to join the International Criminal Court in draft resolutions that deal with such issues. Over time, such referrals have led to extreme polarization, particularly following the decision taken by some States to refer to the authority of the International Criminal Court as an integral part of their foreign policies. Those States seek to link humanitarian assistance and economic cooperation with

the stance of other countries towards the Court. That has coincided with the Court's attempts to single out Africa and its leaders exclusively, which has had serious political and strategic repercussions for countries that are targeted by the Court if they try to depart from its regional jurisdiction on the African continent.

The number of cases that are currently before the Court, the pending cases in its chambers and the exorbitant amount of money spent on each case very clearly illustrate that the International Criminal Court has not succeeded and will not succeed in effectively fulfilling its mandate, given its unacceptable selectivity, while it claims to be an independent judicial body. Those issues add to the danger posed by the Court due to its flagrant activity, clear preference and political bias, while trying to single out African leaders with arrest warrants and putting political considerations before reconciliation, peace and post-conflict rehabilitation. All those factors pose an imminent danger for social peace and national unity in developing countries. The Court has simultaneously undermined peace and justice.

With regard to draft resolution I, entitled "Situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea", since 2014 we have faced serious obstacles from proponents of the Court. In accordance with the rules of procedure, we therefore wish to introduce draft amendment A/73/L.60, which proposes the deletion of operative paragraph 12. We call on Member States to vote in favour of it.

Mr. Hassani Nejad Pirkouhi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I deliver this statement in relation to draft

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Agenda item 34**Prevention of armed conflict****(a) Prevention of armed conflict****Note by the Secretary-General (A/73/295)****Draft resolution (A/73/L.47)****Draft amendment (A/73/L.68)**

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine to introduce draft resolution A/73/L.47.

Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine): Draft resolution A/73/L.47, which I have the honour to introduce today under sub-item (a) of agenda item 34, entitled “Prevention of armed conflict”, focuses on a pressing legal and political issue — the problem of the militarization of the occupied territory of Ukraine, in particular the Crimean peninsula and respective parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. The draft resolution addresses a matter of fundamental concern to my country and, I believe, the broader United Nations membership.

The Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol have been occupied by the Russian Federation since February 2014. The attempt to annex that sovereign Ukrainian territory was not recognized by the international community, which was confirmed by resolution 68/262, on the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Following the Russian Federation’s occupation of Crimea, it has progressively militarized the Crimean peninsula, which includes in particular destabilizing transfers by Russia of weapon systems, including nuclear-capable aircraft and missiles, weapons, ammunition and military personnel to the territory of Ukraine.

The occupation and subsequent militarization of Crimea led to the expansion of the area of use of Russian warships and military aircraft in the Black Sea region and far beyond in the entire Mediterranean basin. As such, that activity has far-reaching consequences for security in not only the Black Sea region, but also the whole of Southern Europe, as well as North Africa and the Middle East.

Multiple military exercises conducted by Russian armed forces in Crimea and in the area reflect Russia’s aggressive policy towards Ukraine and other Black Sea littoral States. Such exercises also entail considerable

long-term negative environmental consequences in the region.

The Russian Federation is also actively militarizing the Sea of Azov by increasing the number of warships and their expansion to the whole territory of the Sea. As an example, in October the Russian Government allocated a huge designated area in the Sea of Azov to the Russian Defence Ministry. That area is located just 65 kilometres from the city of Mariupol, one of Ukraine’s largest seaport cities.

The progressing militarization of the Sea of Azov not only has implications for maritime trade and supplies into Ukraine, but also poses an additional military threat to Ukraine and is leading to an escalation of the security situation in the region. The illegal construction of the Kerch Strait bridge between Russia and temporarily occupied Crimea has substantially contributed to that threat, in particular by facilitating further militarization of Crimea and the involvement of additional Russian maritime and other forces in the area under the pretext of protecting the bridge and its infrastructure.

As a result, on 25 November a group of Ukrainian naval vessels was deliberately attacked by the Russian border guard patrol in the Black Sea near the Kerch Strait. Russia adopted a shoot-to-kill policy by openly firing at the Ukrainian servicemen and then ramming the Ukrainian vessels, which were in the process of conducting legitimate and peaceful transits to a Ukrainian port.

That attack represents yet another blatant and barefaced act of military aggression against Ukraine by the Russian Federation. Three Ukrainian military vessels were shot at and then seized by the Russians in the waters beyond the 12-mile zone in the Black Sea on their way back to Odessa port. Twenty-four Ukrainian servicemen were seized and imprisoned, with six wounded, including two in critical condition, and paraded on Russian television as part of a show trial. The provocative actions of the Russian Federation in the Sea of Azov were condemned by Security Council member States during the briefing requested by the delegation of Ukraine on 26 November (see S/PV.8410). The Secretary-General, in turn, also sounded an alarm.

Given the current volatile security situation in the mentioned areas and its far-reaching negative implications, Ukraine, together with Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic,

Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, submitted draft resolution A/73/L.47, “Problem of the militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov”. That group was later joined by Belgium, Greece, Hungary, Liechtenstein, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Malta, New Zealand, Slovakia and Spain. We are very grateful for that strong solidarity and support.

The main goal of the draft resolution I am introducing today is to urge the Russian Federation to withdraw its military forces from Crimea and to stop the illegal occupation of Ukraine’s territory. By bringing before the General Assembly the issue of the militarization of Crimea, Ukraine and the other co-sponsors do not seek confrontation or politicization. Rather, we believe that it is a matter of the utmost importance for every Member State to fully support the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

I believe that the draft resolution will enjoy the same support and constructive attitude on the part of Member States that has been displayed concerning other General Assembly resolutions on Ukraine. I urge all Member States to vote in favour of the draft resolution. Such a vote will demonstrate their strong commitment to the fundamental principles of international law and the United Nations Charter.

Ukraine is also convinced that the progressive militarization of the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol in Ukraine by the Russian Federation and Russia’s continued aggressive acts, threats and use of force against Ukraine, in violation of the United Nations Charter, will have far-reaching consequences for international peace and security. The issue therefore constitutes an important question, as envisaged in rules 83 and 84 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. Thus, the decisions on the draft resolution and draft amendment A/73/L.68 shall be made by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to introduce draft amendment A/73/L.68.

Mr. Mamdouhi (Islamic Republic of Iran): On behalf of the delegations of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Nicaragua, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, I have the honour to introduce draft amendment A/73/L.68 to draft resolution A/73/L.47. The draft amendment was submitted on 13 December.

But before introducing the draft amendment, we deem it necessary to reiterate our principled position on Russian and Ukrainian disputes. We firmly believe that debates on multifaceted issues of a highly political and controversial nature within the setting of the General Assembly will have little, if any, utility in furthering efforts to achieve a workable solution to an issue on which agreements were decided in Minsk in 2015, endorsed by Security Council resolution 2202 (2015). While there is an agreed international mechanism in place, which is supported by the Security Council, referring the dispute to the General Assembly could bring out existing differences and sow division among Member States, instead of achieving a resolution. Such action could even undermine the internationally recognized agreed settlement format on Ukraine.

We need to give the already agreed mechanism more time and refrain from taking hasty decisions. Our principled position is to support a peaceful solution to the Ukraine and Russia dispute, and we firmly believe that the issue must be resolved by the States concerned. Any solutions outside of that framework will not work unless endorsed by both Russians and Ukrainians. A prestigious representative organ should not prematurely engage itself in a debate that has been on the Security Council agenda since the occurrence of the events that prompted it.

As for our draft amendment, I should point out that it contains three new operative paragraphs, to be incorporated after the current paragraph 5 of the draft resolution. Furthermore, it proposes that a new phrase be added to the end of the current paragraph 6. After the inclusion of the proposed new paragraphs, the paragraphs of the draft resolution, from paragraph 5 onwards, shall therefore be renumbered accordingly.

Regarding the substance of the draft amendment, according to the proposed new paragraphs, both Russia and Ukraine are urged to conduct a full, transparent and evidence-based investigation of the incident in question, with a view to holding accountable those responsible for the aggravation of the situation. The draft amendment

also stresses that the incident and subsequent measures taken should not affect the implementation of the binding decision adopted within the United Nations, namely, Security Council resolution 2202 (2015), of 17 February, on the issue. In addition to endorsing the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements and welcoming the declaration by the Presidents of Russia, Ukraine and France and the German Chancellor in support of the package, the resolution calls on all parties to fully implement the measures.

Moreover, the draft amendment proposes that a reference to the 2003 treaty between Russia and Ukraine on cooperation in the use of the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait be added at the end of current paragraph 6, as we believe that the treaty should be seen as the relevant legal instrument in force between the parties concerned in the exercise of navigational rights and freedoms.

The proposals put forward are in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, especially as they call on the parties to exercise restraint, respect each other's sovereignty and the inviolability of borders and refrain from inflammatory rhetoric, which, in our view, is key to de-escalating tension. The proposals intend to contribute to restraining both parties and call on them to avoid any further escalation of the situation, which is in line with encouraging the parties concerned to find a peaceful solution to the dispute, as called for by the United Nations Charter.

Furthermore, the proposals in the draft amendment have been taken from agreed texts, some of which were adopted by the Assembly in its resolution 68/262, of 27 March 2014, on the subject. In paragraph 3, it urges all parties to immediately pursue the peaceful resolution of the situation with respect to Ukraine through direct political dialogue and by exercising restraint, refraining from unilateral actions and inflammatory rhetoric that may increase tensions and fully engaging with international mediation efforts.

It was the original intention of our delegations to submit those proposals during the informal consultations on the draft resolution. However, as no consultations were convened, we have no other option but to present the proposals in the form of a draft amendment.

Last, but not least, the proposals are of a general nature and fully respect the sovereignty of both Russia

and Ukraine. As a result, they do not take sides with either of the parties concerned. We invite all Member States to support the inclusion of the proposals in the draft resolution and to vote in favour of the draft amendment.

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/73/L.47.

The representative of Ukraine has stated that, in his view, a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting is required for the adoption of the draft resolution and draft amendment A/73/L.68.

As I see no objection, may I therefore take it that a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting is required for the adoption of draft resolution A/73/L.47 and draft amendment A/73/L.68?

It was so decided.

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

Mr. Al Arsan (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation would like to express its position on draft resolution A/73/L.47.

We are concerned about the practice of certain delegations of using sub-item (a) of agenda item 34, entitled "Prevention of armed conflict", as a tool to put forward politicized and non-consensual draft resolutions. That practice by the authors of such draft resolutions is based on exclusion, singularity and overlooking the established working mechanisms of the General Assembly, which call for holding consultations, taking into account the concerns and positions of States and providing ample time for arriving at consensual draft resolutions.

In principle, the Syrian Arab Republic opposes General Assembly draft resolutions whose main objective is to apply political pressure and worsen disagreements among Member States uselessly, while even overburdening the agenda of the General Assembly and depleting the energies and human as well as financial resources of the United Nations in a way that undermines the fundamental purposes and principles of the Charter.

A draft resolution such as the one contained in document A/73/L.47 becomes, regrettably, a means

for political politicization, discord and dispute, rather than bringing us together to achieve peace, security and development for all, without exception or discrimination. The legal interpretation and political position of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the situation in the Republic of Crimea is based on the fact that the results of the referendum that took place on 16 March 2014 are reflected by the current stable situation in the region.

We reaffirm that the draft resolution before us now is politicized and unbalanced, in particular its paragraphs 6 and 7, which we consider an unsuccessful attempt by the authors to impose biased views that do not serve the cause of stability in the region. Those paragraphs allow certain Governments to exploit the current situation between two historic neighbours, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, in order to impose political pressure on Moscow.

However, despite our principled position in opposing such draft resolutions, we, alongside the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, have submitted amendments contained in document A/73/L.68. That is a sincere and positive attempt on our part to contribute some form of balance, credibility and realism to the draft resolution.

In conclusion, my delegation calls on Member States to vote in favour of the amendments to which I referred. If those amendments are not adopted, then we call on Member States to vote against draft resolution A/73/L.47. Our position today in opposing the politicization of the work of the General Assembly is based on our respect for the Charter and international treaties that govern the situation in the Republic of Crimea. It is also based on our commitment to the rules of procedure and to avoiding the General Assembly from dealing with such politicized issues and overburdening its agenda with non-consensual draft resolutions, particularly when they do not lead to the settlement of disputes at the international level and do not contribute to international peace and security in that region or the world at large.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We very much appreciate the efforts of some of our colleagues from various Member States to bring a little balance to Ukraine's hateful draft resolution A/73/L.47. We understand their desire to introduce some objectivity into even one element of this draft text on the incident in the Kerch Strait on 25 November.

I believe that many here today have realized the true goals of this overt act of provocation by Kyiv aimed at achieving two main objectives, the first of which is arresting the free fall in the ratings of the current post-Maidan authorities, above all President Poroshenko, who is running for re-election for a second term, and the second, in violation of the General Assembly's established working norms, adopting an openly politicized anti-Russian resolution. Today we are seeing the apogee of those efforts, which were given a green light by various Western countries in the Security Council's meeting on 26 November (see S/PV.8410).

I would like to remind the Assembly that on the evening of 25 November, three Ukrainian military vessels violated the rules of peaceful passage through Russia's territorial waters in the Black Sea, in an area that was Russian before 2014, and set a course for the Kerch Strait. They did not respond to the border guards' legitimate demands and carried out dangerous manoeuvres that threatened normal navigation. Just for information, there were 166 civilian vessels in the adjacent area at the time.

The Ukrainian vessels' violation of Russia's sovereignty left the Russian border guards with no choice but to use force. Any country's border control personnel would have done the same in the situation. However, thanks to the high level of professionalism shown by our guys, we managed to avoid any casualties. Three of the Ukrainian servicemen were slightly injured by fragments of ship equipment and were given medical assistance, with no threat to their lives. All 24 members of the crew were arrested and given access to Ukrainian consuls, while the impounded ships are in the port of Kerch. Criminal proceedings are under way and the investigation is ongoing. We intend to affirm the provocative nature of the Ukrainian authorities' actions with documentary proof in court. The actions of Ukraine in the Black Sea are in themselves a violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the standards of international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, whose articles 19 and 21 fully define the rules of peaceful passage and coastal States' rights to ensure their security.

If anyone is still unclear about this after these clarifications, I would like to add the following. The incident on 25 November was not accidental. Ukrainian military vessels intentionally entered the Kerch Strait from Russia's territorial waters. I want to emphasize

once again that those waters were Russian even before Crimea's reunification in March 2014. On board those vessels were two Ukrainian security officers, who identified themselves as such. It seems that from the very beginning Kyiv planned to sacrifice the crews of the three ships, tasking them with opening fire on the Russian border guards. However, common sense fortunately stopped them carrying out that criminal act.

In an attempt to cover its tracks, Ukraine's Ministry of Defence concealed material information on the events of 25 November in the Kerch Strait, which Assembly members may verify for themselves. Kyiv was well aware of the rules for the passage of ships through the Kerch Strait and complied with them from 2014 until recently. Indeed, on 23 September two Ukrainian ships freely passed under the Crimean bridge with the help of Russian pilot vessels.

Incidentally, the Ukrainian delegation has continued to mislead everyone regarding the United Nations assessment of what occurred, including during their submission of their draft resolution. I would like to quote the words of Ms. DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, in the meeting on 26 November:

"Regrettably, a serious security incident took place yesterday near Crimea, close to the Sea of Azov. I wish to underline that the United Nations currently cannot independently verify the circumstances surrounding the incident." (*S/PV.8410, p. 2*)

There is therefore no clear assessment from the United Nations of the incident, and there cannot be one. In other words, we are dealing with carefully planned and ongoing act of provocation that is still going on under our noses in this Hall. It was made possible thanks to the approval of the United States and a number of European Union countries that are playing a confrontational game with the Kyiv authorities, and we can see that most of those countries have sponsored the draft resolution.

I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to the fact that rumours began to be spread about the situation in the Sea of Azov several months ago. Our assurances that we are not planning to create military bases or military infrastructure in the area were not taken into account. The forces we have there are essential to navigation safety and the protection of the Crimean bridge. Our random checks of vessels are also carried out in strict legality, and all these measures for

protecting critical infrastructure are extremely urgent given the regular calls from Kyiv and across the ocean for blowing up the bridge.

As long as we are talking about militarization, we should be looking at Ukraine, which has declared its intention to establish a military naval base in Berdyansk and has been systematically closing various areas of the Sea of Azov for firing artillery, and yet the draft resolution says nothing about that.

I have no desire even to comment on the Ukrainian draft resolution. It not only has nothing to do with reality, it also contains outright lies and disinformation. It is clearly one-sided and provocative. Its purpose, like others that the Ukrainian delegation has previously submitted and will undoubtedly do again in the future, is not to solve problems but to polarize Member States, divide the General Assembly and give Kyiv's foreign masters a further opportunity to count heads and ensure that the number of countries supporting Ukraine's destructive policy in the region has not diminished.

This is not the first time that the General Assembly has allowed itself to be dragged into internal political games contrived in Kyiv, Washington and Brussels, and it is extremely dangerous. That is how to undermine the authority of our most representative international platform.

Unfortunately, nothing about the attitude or working methods of the authors of the draft resolution can be said to be constructive. They did not trouble to hold even one round of consultations to ascertain Member States' views of this initiative. If such consultations had taken place, many inconvenient questions would have been raised. For example, why is there no reference in the document to the 2003 bilateral treaty between Russia and Ukraine on cooperation in the use of the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait, which the authors of the draft amendments before us have inserted? After all, it is what regulates passage through the Kerch Strait. I will explain why. It is because that document proves that Russia's actions during the incident on 25 November were completely legitimate.

We intend to vote in favour of the aforementioned reasonable amendments (A/73/L.68) to the Ukrainian draft resolution, which call on both parties to exercise restraint and refrain from inflammatory rhetoric. It would be odd if we did not to support that conciliatory message. Unfortunately, however, no amendments can change the provocative essence of Ukraine's draft

resolution. My delegation will therefore vote against it, and we urge all sensible delegations to do the same.

We urge those who intend to support the Ukraine's provocative action despite everything to think about the message that they are sending to Kyiv. By voting for these kinds of draft resolutions, in practice they are enabling Petro Poroshenko to continue destroying his own citizens, undermining peace in the region and dragging his neighbours into confrontations. That is hardly consistent with the purposes and principles of the General Assembly.

Mrs. Van Eerten (Netherlands): The Kingdom of the Netherlands will vote against draft amendment A/73/L.68, which is not in line with the core message of draft resolution A/73/L.47 and contradicts the facts on the ground.

Let us be clear that the root cause of the current tension in the region was the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation. In its original form, the draft resolution once again calls on the Russian Federation to end its illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula, to restore the territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders and to respect the Charter of the United Nations. The Kingdom of the Netherlands therefore asks the representatives in this Hall to vote against the draft amendment.

Ms. Schoulgin Nyoni (Sweden): As one of the many co-sponsors of draft resolution A/73/L.47, Sweden has closely followed the drafting of the text. We also follow the situation on the ground in the region with great concern, as it is playing out in our own neighbourhood. It is clear that the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014 was a flagrant breach of international law and that the progressive militarization of Crimea and parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov are of the utmost concern, with dangerous regional and global implications.

We consider the proposed draft amendment A/73/L.68 as an attempt to distort the core message of the draft resolution and we believe that it contradicts the facts on the ground. Sweden will therefore vote against the proposed draft amendment and respectfully asks the representatives present to do the same.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): Let me thank Minister Kyslytsya for his introduction of draft resolution A/73/L.47. We call on all States to reject draft amendment

A/73/L.68, presented by the Islamic Republic of Iran, and to support the draft resolution, entitled "Problem of the militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov", which reflects the serious situation on the ground correctly and in a balanced manner.

Russia's provocative actions in the Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov resulted in a dangerous escalation of tension. The recent incidents are in keeping with Russia's persistent policy towards Ukraine — creating aggression to destabilize the country. Poland underlines that the illegal use of military force by the Russian Federation against Ukraine in the region of the Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov constitutes a flagrant violation of both international law and the bilateral agreements concluded between Russia and Ukraine.

Through its illegal annexation of Crimea and by directly assisting separatists in eastern Ukraine, Russia violated the basic premises of a rules-based international order. Russia's recent actions against Ukraine are clearly part of its ongoing breaches of the fundamental principles of international law. No country has the legal right to benefit from its own illegal actions. We believe that the international community must rigorously react in the face of Russia's systematic violations of its own obligations under international law. Our common response must be strong enough to discourage Russia from crossing other red lines. We cannot forget that, under international law, all States have a duty not to recognize as lawful serious breaches of obligations arising under peremptory norms, such as the prohibition of aggression. It is important to emphasize the legal character of that obligation. Not to recognize such actions as lawful is not a matter of taking a political decision or approach; it is a legal requirement.

Recognition of Crimea as part of the Russian Federation is in itself a violation of international law because it constitutes a form of support for a State that breaches peremptory norms in an attempt to legalize an unlawful situation. Poland therefore does not, and will never, recognize Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and reaffirms its enduring support for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. Furthermore, Poland calls for the unconditional release of the vessels, crew and equipment without delay, since Russia's attack on and seizure of the Ukrainian vessels, as well as its capture of Ukrainian servicemen, were illegal. Recent developments have clearly demonstrated

that the infrastructure that Russia treats as critical, be it the Kerch Bridge or the pipeline, serve as a pretext for its illegal militarization. That is a worrying sign for the future and undermines regional stability and international peace and security.

Ms. Plepytė (Lithuania): I have the honour to speak on behalf of Estonia, Latvia and my own country, Lithuania. As co-sponsors of draft resolution A/73/L.47, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania strongly reject and oppose the amendments to the draft resolution put forward by the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic, contained in document A/73/L.68.

The proposed draft amendment contains hostile amendments that have the sole intention of disrupting the adoption of the draft resolution and changing its meaning. The amendments distort the current reality in the occupied territories of Ukraine, as well as in the adjacent areas of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. The amendments do not have any legal or factual background. The events that took place in the Black Sea on 25 November constitute a blatant violation of international law and bilateral agreements by the Russian Federation. Russia once again showed complete disregard for the norms of international law and, for the first time since the annexation of Crimea and the instigation of conflict in eastern Ukraine, openly and directly attacked the Ukrainian navy with military force. In that context, we once again express our strong support for the draft resolution, as it fully reflects the real situation on the ground and calls for appropriate and realistic action. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania will vote against the draft amendment. Accordingly, we urge all Member States to reject the blatant attempt to distort the draft resolution and to vote against the draft amendment.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I am taking the floor to urge all Member States to vote against draft amendment A/73/L.68. The amendments that it contains have been proposed by representatives of a tiny group of countries that have supported Russia's actions in the face of resolution 68/262, which was adopted with 100 votes in favour and upholds the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

The amendments seek to distort the facts, sow confusion and frustrate the adoption of draft resolution A/73/L.47, proposed by Ukraine, on which we will vote shortly. Above all, in paragraph 6 of the draft amendment, the text creates the misleading impression

that territorial waters were violated during the incident. We must be clear — there was no such violation. The Russian authorities have admitted using force to seize the three Ukrainian naval vessels. They have also acknowledged opening fire during the incident, injuring three servicemen. That incident happened in international waters in the Black Sea when Ukrainian vessels were moving away from the Crimean coast. It is important to note that Crimea and its territorial waters are internationally recognized as part of Ukraine.

I listened with interest to the Russian representative's comments, but no evidence has been offered by Russia to back up its claims. In paragraph 7 of the draft amendment, the text, if inserted into the draft resolution, would seek to justify Russia's arrest and prosecution of the 24 detained Ukrainian servicemen. That language would provide Russia with insurance that its actions are in line with a United Nations resolution and therefore justifiable. The draft amendment risks being misused by Russia.

However reasonable the sponsors may sound, their aims are unreasonable. It is for those reasons that the United Kingdom will vote against the draft amendment and urges others to do the same. The essence of the issue is our common belief that States must not use force in their international relations, including to acquire territory or to change borders, which is inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine): One of the most toxic features of this discussion is that a small number of countries that cannot help lapsing into repetitive violations of international law and the Charter of the United Nations have given us an earful of post-truths, manipulative statements, distortions and blatant lies. I would therefore like to bring our discussions back to the legal realm. Draft amendment A/73/L.68, proposed by Iran, contains amendments to draft resolution A/73/L.47 that are not acceptable to its sponsors, as we have just heard, on the following grounds.

The proposed amendments do not have any legal or factual background and do not meet the provisions of current General Assembly resolutions, notably resolution 68/262, "Territorial integrity of Ukraine", adopted on 27 March 2014 by an overwhelming majority under the same agenda item. What happened on 25 November in the Black Sea is not an incident, as the Russian propaganda machine consistently states. It is yet another violation by the Russian Federation of the

United Nations Charter and a deliberate armed attack by Russian military forces against Ukraine within the neutral borders of the Black Sea. The Russian Federation brutally violated Ukraine's right as a coastal State in Ukraine's territorial waters, intervened in its freedom of navigation in an international strait and violated Ukraine's rights in that exclusive economic zone.

As a result, Ukrainian sailors and vessels were captured by the Russian Federation. In violation of the Geneva Conventions, Russia is treating the captured crew members as criminals and is conducting a so-called criminal investigation, as we have just heard. How can the General Assembly be expected to support a draft amendment that does not meet the requirements of international humanitarian law? That is nonsense in a civilized world. Ukraine has already initiated arbitral proceedings against the Russian Federation with regard to violations of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Ukraine also informed the arbitral tribunal of Russia's recent violations of 25 November, which aggravated the dispute.

Ukraine is committed to solving all disputes by peaceful means, in accordance with the United Nations Charter. Having said that, my delegation calls for a recorded vote on draft amendment A/73/L.68, which Ukraine will vote against, and asks other delegations to do the same. I also once again call on delegations to vote in favour of draft resolution A/73/L.47.

Mr. Simonoff (United States of America): The United States will vote against draft amendment A/73/L.68 and urges all delegations to do the same. We reject the notion of equivalency contained in the draft amendment. We do not support the General Assembly calling on both States to take action when the Russian Federation is the sole Member State to have repeatedly and shamelessly engaged in aggressive activities directed against Ukraine, including the purported annexation of Crimea and the aggressive activities in the Kerch Strait.

The United States is pleased to co-sponsor draft resolution A/73/L.47, which highlights serious concerns about the militarization of Crimea and Russia's recent unprovoked attack on Ukrainian naval vessels in the Kerch Strait. Russia's attack is a dangerous escalation in its ongoing aggressive activities towards Ukraine. The United States reiterates its call on the Russian Federation to immediately release the 24 captured Ukrainian crew members and the three detained vessels.

In short, the United States calls on all Member States to vote against the draft amendment and to vote in favour of the draft resolution.

Ms. Agladze (Georgia): I would also like to speak against draft amendment A/73/L.68, proposed by the Islamic Republic of Iran. The draft amendment substantially harms the very essence of draft resolution A/73/L.47 and gravely distorts the real situation on the ground in the occupied territories of Ukraine, as well as in the adjacent areas of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. It lacks any legal or factual background and contravenes the provisions of current resolutions, including resolution 68/262 on the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

On 25 November we witnessed a violation by the Russian Federation of the Charter of the United Nations in a deliberate armed attack by the Russian armed forces against Ukraine in the neutral waters of the Black Sea. The Russian Federation brutally violated Ukraine's right as a coastal State in Ukraine's territorial waters, infringing upon the freedom of navigation and violated Ukraine's right in its exclusive economic zone. Furthermore, the Russian Federation captured Ukrainian sailors and vessels and treated the crew members as criminals.

Having said all that and in reaffirmation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, Georgia will vote against the draft amendment and calls on other Member States to also vote against it.

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

The General Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/73/L.47, entitled "Problem of the militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov".

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

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to those delegations listed on the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of A/73/L.47: Belgium, Greece, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Malta, New Zealand, Slovakia, Spain and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The Acting President: In connection with the draft resolution, the General Assembly has before it draft amendment A/73/L.68. In accordance with rule 90 of the rules of procedure, the Assembly shall first take a decision on the draft amendment. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Burundi, Cambodia, China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nauru, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Serbia, Singapore, South Sudan, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zimbabwe

Against:

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Belize, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kiribati, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Vanuatu

Abstaining:

Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Bhutan, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Cameroon, Chile, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Guinea, India, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Mexico, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, United Arab

Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Yemen

Draft amendment A/73/L.68 was rejected by 64 votes to 25, with 60 abstentions.

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/73/L.47, entitled "Problem of the militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov". A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Belize, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kiribati, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Vanuatu

Against:

Armenia, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Burundi, Cambodia, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Serbia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Bhutan, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Cameroon, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Fiji, Guinea, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi,

Malaysia, Mali, Mexico, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Viet Nam, Yemen

Draft resolution A/73/L.47 was adopted by 66 votes to 19, with 72 abstentions (resolution 73/194).

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

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We regret the results of the vote that has just been held, but we are encouraged by the fact that many States abstained and want nothing to do with this pernicious Ukrainian enterprise. However, we have to conclude that today we have seen the formation of a group of Member States, mainly members of NATO and the European Union (EU), that through both their action and lack of action have encouraged their Ukrainian protégés to commit new crimes and acts of provocation in the region on behalf of Western political ambitions. It is those States, in most cases guided by their infamous bloc discipline, that feature on the list of authors and sponsors of Ukraine's undertaking.

Thanks to this, the Kyiv regime continues to get the message that anything is permitted, all will be forgiven and Russia will be blamed for all its sins and crimes in advance and without exception. Thus it is Russia, without any evidence, that is accused of being behind the five-year fratricidal war in Donbas, despite the fact that the Kyiv regime has presented no evidence for the alleged Russian aggression behind which it is hiding, unless we count the fake stuff that Ukraine's President periodically likes to beguile the international community with and that any expert can see is false.

On the other hand, there is plenty of proof that Ukraine's armed forces and various volunteer battalions are waging war on their own citizens, shooting and killing women, the elderly and children. That is not something the Assembly wants to see, because it is not convenient. It is members' successors who will

ultimately make judge the situation fairly, ashamed of the hypocrisy and this unprincipled position, just as ordinary Americans today are ashamed of America's dishonourable campaign in Viet Nam. Unfortunately, there are many current situations of which future United States citizens will be ashamed, with Ukraine being one of the most vivid examples.

Instead of the United States bringing the Maidan regime to its senses and making it listen to the voice of its people, it is supplying it with weapons and all kinds of support, including military support. Such action suggests that Washington is not just trying to pit two brother peoples against each other but to unleash a full-scale war between them, while brainwashing its NATO colleagues about the alleged Russian threat. Incidentally, there is only one worldwide threat today, the American threat, and that is becoming clearer and clearer to many people.

One of the subjects of resolution 73/194 is Russian Crimea. I want to emphasize that Crimea is Russian because there has been no other Crimea for a long time. This annexed, occupied, militarized territory exists only in the draft resolutions of our Ukrainian colleagues, who are apparently still experiencing phantom pains. It is they themselves who lost Crimea and the Crimeans when they began to threaten them in the wake of the anti-constitutional coup. The Crimeans made a choice in order to preserve their identity and be able to honour the memory of those who freed their land from the fascists and refused to collaborate with the occupiers. Through their choice, the Crimeans saved themselves from the war and destruction with which citizens of eastern Ukraine just like them are paying a heavy price for their attempts to claim those rights.

Many tourists visit Crimea today, including hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians, who can see with their own eyes that what the Maidan authorities say is not true. No matter how many phoney resolutions they and their Western sponsors and those who are afraid to oppose them in the spirit of EU and NATO democracy, that will change nothing in or around Crimea. The key to solving all the regional problems that have arisen since 2014 lies in Kyiv, and more specifically in Washington, from whence Kyiv is governed.

Incidentally, we should point out that the Ukrainian delegation got entangled in lies even in its statement today. Mr. Kyslytsya stated that the recent incident occurred in neutral waters, if I correctly understood

his English. However, on 11 December right here in this Hall, the representative of Ukraine stated that the incident in question, which in her view involved the capture of Ukrainian ships, occurred in Ukraine's exclusive economic zone (see A/73/PV.49). My advice to Ukraine is that if it is going to lie, it should make sure that the lies all match. That will improve its believability.

As far as Russia and the Crimeans are concerned, the issue of Crimea's ownership has been resolved once and for all. Crimea was, is and will be Russian. None of Ukraine's pitiful attempts at sanctions, resolutions or provocations will change that. It is very disappointing that Kyiv and its Western sponsors in the General Assembly have submitted yet another highly politicized, phoney and utterly false concoction. Such behaviour clearly tarnishes the reputation of the Organization.

Mr. Tozik (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Belarus has carefully followed the events in Ukraine and the developments in the situation in the eastern region of our neighbour to the south. Peace and harmony in Ukraine are of vital importance to Belarus. A peaceful settlement of the conflict, an end to the violence, the prevention of armed clashes and the compliance of the parties to the Minsk agreements remain the only true basis for effectively resolving the crisis. Belarus intends to continue to provide all assistance necessary to restore peace in Ukraine and to ensure the conditions necessary for holding negotiations in Minsk in any format, including at the highest level, as was done in February 2015.

Today we supported the submission by a group of States of the draft amendments contained in document A/73/L.68 to resolution 73/194, which are constructive and balanced and could serve as a comprehensive reflection of the situation. We did not vote for the resolution as a whole in view of our consistent position on that kind of document.

For example, the resolution contains references to resolutions 68/262, 71/205 and 72/190 to which Belarus objected. It makes no reference to the Minsk agreements, which is crucial, it is essentially confrontational and narrows the possibilities for seeking a peaceful solution to the situation. It has no provisions regarding contributing to the maintenance of international peace and security or preventing armed conflicts, and it includes accusations against one country alone. No

similar requirements are made of other States that are building a military presence in the region.

Such documents should call for a preliminary study within the framework of existing United Nations procedures, including at the expert level, which was not done in this case.

Mr. Margaryan (Armenia): We are following with deep concern the increasing tensions related to Crimea and the developments in the area of the Black Sea. Armenia shares a rich history of friendship with the peoples of Russia and Ukraine. We hope that the parties concerned will exercise the utmost restraint to de-escalate the situation in order to open the way for negotiations. We are confident that the solution to the crisis can be achieved strictly through peaceful means, based on the norms and principles of international law.

On a general note, Armenia reiterates its long-standing position that an enduring solution to the conflict situation between the parties can be achieved only through negotiations, in the established format and on the basis of the implementation of relevant agreements.

Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine): Since the Russian representative has problems understanding English, I will say a few words in Russian.

(*spoke in Russian*)

It seems that everyone in this Hall — the more than 40 sponsors and almost 70 countries supporting resolution 73/194 — should be ashamed. Only the Russian Federation is not ashamed. Throughout its almost 28 years as a member of the Security Council, the Russian Federation has violated the Charter of the United Nations many times, including its most fundamental provisions. In politics, and also in psychology and psychiatry, such behaviour is called aggressive mimicry. In this type of behaviour, the aggressor tries to present itself as the victim and behaves as if it were the victim. But in both politics and psychology there are ways and means to fight that aggressive mimicry.

(*spoke in English*)

It is with great appreciation that we note that resolution 73/194 on the urgent and pressing issue of armed aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine has been adopted today, with its clear evidence of total disregard by Russia of its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, as well as other bilateral

and multilateral international treaties. It is evident that the Russian Federation is certainly not a peace-loving State. Today, with the adoption of the resolution on a situation that is of genuine concern not only to Ukraine but also to the international community as a whole, we have passed a critical juncture in condemning the pattern of destructive activity of the Russian Federation in the region and beyond, thus reaffirming the ability of the General Assembly to discharge its responsibilities in the sphere of the maintenance of international peace and security.

In that regard, we would like to express our deepest and sincerest gratitude to all those who participated in the negotiation of the draft resolution and all those who, under unprecedented pressure by Russia, have stayed courageous and remained committed to the foundations of the Organization. Ukraine is absolutely convinced that the issue of international peace and security represents a core pillar of the Assembly's work. Therefore, my delegation will continue its efforts to bring to the attention of the United Nations the situation in the parts of the sovereign territory of Ukraine that are occupied by the Russian Federation. I take this opportunity to also call on all Member States to actively participate in the Assembly's consideration of its newly introduced agenda item 67, "Situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine", at a meeting to be held in February 2019.

Mr. Gafoor (Singapore): I am taking the floor to explain my delegation's vote in favour of both the amendment contained in document A/73/L.68 and resolution 73/194. As a small country, Singapore is deeply committed to multilateralism and respect for international law. Singapore opposes the annexation of any country or territory, as it is a clear violation of international law. We object to any unprovoked invasion of a sovereign country under any pretext. Singapore reaffirms the principles of respect for territorial integrity, non-interference in the domestic affairs of a sovereign State, respect for sovereignty and the rule of law. Singapore therefore opposes the annexation of Crimea.

In March 2014, Singapore expressed its opposition to the annexation of Crimea by voting in favour of resolution 68/262, entitled "Territorial integrity of Ukraine" (see A/68/PV.80). In our view, the resolution that we have just adopted (resolution 73/194) is intrinsically linked to resolution 68/262. Unlike resolutions 71/205 and 72/190 on the human

rights situation in Crimea and Sevastopol, the crux of resolution 73/194 is related to the question of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Singapore also reaffirms its consistent view that all countries must adhere to international law and support the right to the freedom of navigation, as provided for by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Singapore echoes the call of the Secretary-General to avoid any risk of further escalation and we urge all parties to exercise restraint, take immediate steps to de-escalate tension and resolve the crisis peacefully, in accordance with international law.

Mr. Chang (Republic of Korea): My delegation voted against the amendment contained in document A/73/L.68 and abstained in the voting on resolution 73/194.

While emphasizing the importance of peaceful resolution through dialogue, my delegation would like to note that today's vote does not constitute a departure from its position of 27 March 2014, when it voted in favour of resolution 68/262 (see A/68/PV.80), reaffirming its commitment to the sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

Ms. Krisnamurthi (Indonesia): Let me start by reaffirming our basic principle to respect and support the territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. Indonesia's principled and consistent position respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and is a fundamental principle of relations among nations. Indonesia is therefore opposed to any action of annexation against any sovereign country or territory, as that would contravene the aforementioned principles as well as international law.

With regard to the current situation in Crimea, Indonesia stresses the importance of dialogue and diplomacy among concerned States in order to resolve the ongoing problems in Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. In so doing, Indonesia encourages the States concerned to take the measures necessary to de-escalate tensions. We are of the view that some of the elements of resolution 73/194 may further escalate tension among the concerned States and further alienate them from initiating possible peaceful efforts, including through direct political dialogue.

Based on those considerations, while in favour of the amendment contained in document A/73/L.68, which was proposed by several delegations, Indonesia abstained in the voting on resolution 73/194. Indonesia calls on all concerned parties to manage the crisis, promote the peaceful settlement of the situation and consistently uphold and respect international law.

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

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

Mr. Dabouis (European Union): The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania; the European Free Trade Association country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

The European Union (EU) reaffirms its full support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. The EU recalls that the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula by Russia in 2014 remains a direct challenge to international security, with grave implications for the international legal order that protects the unity and sovereignty of all States. The EU condemns that violation of international law and underlines that it does not and will not recognize the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula by Russia. The EU recalls that the construction of the Kerch bridge constitutes a further violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We refer to the declaration made by High Representative Federica Mogherini on behalf of the EU on the escalating tensions in the Azov Sea, issued on 28 November, in which the EU expressed its utmost concern about the dangerous increase of tensions in the Azov Sea and the Kerch Strait, which had led to the seizure of Ukrainian vessels and their crews by Russia, with shots being fired at them, wounding several Ukrainian servicemen. We underscore that the EU was dismayed at that use of force by Russia, which, against the backdrop of increasing militarization in the area, is unacceptable.

The EU strongly calls on Russia to unconditionally release the seized vessels and their crew and equipment, without delay. The EU expects Russia to

ensure unhindered and free passage through the Kerch Strait to and from the Azov Sea, in accordance with international law. We also recall the EU call for all parties to exercise the utmost restraint to de-escalate the tension.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 34.

Agenda item 116 (*continued*)

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

(b) Election of members of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law

The Acting President: The 30 outgoing Member States are as follows: Armenia, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Denmark, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Hungary, Indonesia, Japan, Kuwait, Liberia, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mexico, Namibia, Panama, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Zambia. Those Member States are eligible for immediate re-election.

I should like to inform members that the following States will continue to be represented in the Commission on International Trade Law: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Brazil, Burundi, Chile, Colombia, the Czech Republic, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Mauritius, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, the United States of America and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Those 30 States are therefore not eligible for election.

The General Assembly will now proceed to the election of 30 members to replace those members whose term of office will expire on 7 July 2019.

In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, the election shall be held by secret ballot. I should like to recall, however, paragraph 16 of General Assembly decision 34/401, whereby the practice of dispensing with the secret ballot for elections to subsidiary organs when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled should become standard unless delegations specifically request a vote on a given election.