

**UNITED
NATIONS****MEETINGS COVERAGE**GENERAL ASSEMBLY > PLENARY >
SEVENTY-THIRD SESSION, 56TH MEETING (PM) (CONTINUED)GA/12108
17 DECEMBER 2018

General Assembly Adopts Resolution Urging Russian Federation to Withdraw Its Armed Forces from Crimea, Expressing Grave Concern about Rising Military Presence

The General Assembly today adopted a resolution urging the Russian Federation to withdraw its military forces from Crimea and end its temporary occupation of Ukraine's territory without delay, but rejected an amendment that would have called on both sides to investigate an incident in November involving the seizure of three Ukrainian vessels and crew.

In adopting the resolution "The problem of 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" (document A/73/L.47), by a recorded vote of 66 in favour to 19 against, with 72 abstentions, the Assembly expressed concern about the use of force by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, including seizing three Ukrainian vessels on 25 November. It also called for the release of Ukraine's vessels and crew members it captured.

By terms of "L.47", the Assembly called for the utmost restraint to de-escalate the situation immediately. It also condemned the Russian Federation's construction and opening of the Kerch Strait bridge between the Russian Federation and temporarily occupied Crimea, which facilitates the further militarization of Crimea.

The Assembly further condemned the increasing military presence of the Russian Federation in parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. It called on the Russian Federation to refrain from impeding the lawful exercise of navigational rights and freedoms and stressed that the presence of Russian troops in Crimea is contrary to the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

The representative of Ukraine, introducing "L.47", said the text's main goal is to urge the Russian Federation to withdraw from Crimea. "It is a matter of utmost important for every Member State to support the principles laid out in the United Nations Charter," he said. Having seen increased militarization of the Crimean peninsula since Russia's occupation began in 2014, he said Russia's aggressive policy towards Ukraine and other Black Sea States entails long-term negative consequences in the region.

The representative of the Russian Federation, following the adoption of the resolution, expressed regret that the text went up for vote, but was glad to see so many delegations abstain. Ukrainian armed forces are waging war on their own citizens, shooting at women, children and the elderly. The United States is providing weapons to Ukraine in an attempt to pit two brotherly people against one other. Kyiv is run by Washington, D.C., he said, adding that Crimea has always been and will always be a part of the Russian Federation.

Prior to taking action on "L.47", the Assembly, by a recorded vote of 64 against to 25 in favour, with 60 abstentions, rejected a draft amendment (document A/73/L.68) proposed by Iran's delegation. The draft would have had the Assembly urge both States to exercise restraint and respect for each other's sovereignty and would have called on both to conduct a full independent investigation into the 25 November incident.

In other business, the Assembly considered a report of the Credentials Committee (document [A/73/600](https://undocs.org/en/A/73/600)) (<https://undocs.org/en/A/73/600>), containing the draft resolution "Credentials of representatives to the seventy-third session of the General Assembly", which it adopted without a vote. Iran's representative said that, while his delegation joined consensus, it had reservations about sections in the report that could be construed as recognizing the Israeli regime.

The Assembly also elected 30 members to the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law to serve six-year terms beginning on 8 July 2019.

Delivering statements today were representatives of Iran, Syria, Netherlands, Sweden, Poland, Lithuania, United Kingdom, United States, Georgia, Belarus, Armenia, Singapore, Republic of Korea and Indonesia. A representative of the European Union also spoke.

The General Assembly will meet again tomorrow at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 18 December to take up human rights questions.

Action on Draft Resolution

SERGIY KYSLYTSYA, Deputy Foreign Minister of [Ukraine](#), introducing the draft resolution "The problem of 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" (document A/73/L.47), said the text is of fundamental importance for his country. Since February 2014, the above-

mentioned region and city has been occupied by the Russian Federation. Following the Russian Federation's occupation of Crimea, it has progressively militarized the region. Such activities have wide-reaching consequences for the surrounding area and also for North Africa and the Middle East.

Indeed, he said, the Russian Federation's aggressive policy toward Ukraine and other Black Sea States entail long-term negative consequences for the region. On 25 November, a group of Ukrainian servicemen were attacked by the Russian Federation, representing yet another blatant violation of international law. The Russian Federation also shot at and seized three Ukrainian vessels. Some 24 servicemen were captured, some were seriously wounded, while others were "paraded" on Russian television. The main goal of the today's draft text is to urge the Russian Federation to withdraw from Crimea. "It is a matter of utmost importance for every Member State to support the principles laid out in the United Nations Charter," he said. He also urged all Member States to vote in favour of the resolution.

The representative of Iran, speaking also on behalf of Nicaragua, Syria and Venezuela, introduced the amendment contained in document A/73/L.68. Debating in the General Assembly a multifaceted issue of a controversial and political nature will have little if any utility in furthering efforts towards a workable solution, he said. Pointing to the Minsk Agreement in 12 February 2015 that was endorsed by the Security Council through resolution 2202 (2015), he said that referring the issue to the Assembly risked undermining an internationally agreed format for a settlement in Ukraine. "We need to give more time to already agreed mechanisms and refrain from making hasty decisions," he said, emphasizing that "L.68" would urge both sides to carry out a full, transparent and evidence-based investigation with a view to holding those responsible for aggravating the situation. The incident and any subsequent measures should not affect the implementation of binding decisions adopted by the United Nations, including resolution 2202 (2015).

Without a vote, the Assembly then agreed to a proposal by the Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine that adoption of the draft resolution require a two-thirds majority of Member States present and voting. The same majority would apply for the draft amendment.

The representative of Syria, speaking on "L.47", expressed concern that certain delegations are using the agenda item, "Prevention of Armed Conflict", to put forward politicized draft resolutions that lack consensus. He described the proposed text as "an instrument for politicization and political blackmail" that would lead to discord and dispute. It is an attempt to impose a biased view that fails to serve the cause of regional stability. It also enables some well-known Governments to benefit from the state of relations between Ukraine and the Russian Federation to put more political pressure on Moscow. Meanwhile, the proposed amendment is a sincere and positive attempt to add balance and realism to "L.47".

The representative of the Russian Federation welcomed attempts to bring some balance to an "odious" draft resolution that aimed at stopping a freefall in the ratings of the President of Ukraine as he sought re-election for a second term. Recalling the events of 25 November, he said the violation of Russian sovereignty by Ukrainian vessels left Russian border guards with no choice but to use force with a high level of professionalism that resulted in no fatalities. Ukraine's actions were in violation of the United Nations Charter and international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. "L.47" is one-sided and provocative, aimed at polarizing Member States and creating a divide in the General Assembly. Not for the first time, the General Assembly is being drawn into political games being played by Kyiv, Washington, D.C., and Brussels. Had the co-sponsors held consultations, they would have heard a raft of uncomfortable questions.

The representative of the Netherlands said his delegation would vote against the draft amendment, which is not in line with "L.47" and went against facts on the ground. He recalled that the draft resolution calls on the Russian Federation to end its illegal annexation of Crimea, restore Ukraine's territorial integrity and respect the United Nations Charter. He invited Member States to vote against the proposed amendment.

The representative of Sweden said it was clear that the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation was a flagrant breach of international law. Expressing serious concern at the militarization of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, he said "L.68" is an attempt to distort the core message of the draft resolution.

The representative of Poland called on all States to reject "L.68" and to vote in favour of the original resolution, which reflects the seriousness of the situation on the ground. The Russian Federation's provocative actions have resulted in a dangerous escalation of tensions. Its recent use of military force constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and bilateral agreements between the Russian Federation and Ukraine. No country has the right to benefit from its illegal actions. Poland does not and will never recognize the Russian Federation's illegal annexation of Crimea.

The representative of Lithuania, also speaking on behalf of Estonia and Latvia, said the proposed amendment distorts the reality on the ground. "L.47" does not have any legal or factual background, she said, recalling that the events of 25 November were a display of the Russian Federation's blatant dismissal of international law. She expressed strong support to draft resolution "L.47" as it reflects the situation on the ground.

The representative of the United Kingdom urged all Member States to vote against the amendment proposed on "L.68", particularly in paragraph 6, as it suggests that national borders were violated. The amendment risks being misused by the Russian Federation. For these reasons, the United Kingdom will vote against the amendment.

The representative of Ukraine said the amendment proposed by Iran is not acceptable, as it does not have any legal or factual background. The Russian Federation brutally violated Ukraine's rights in its exclusive economic zones. The General Assembly cannot be expected to support an amendment that ignores violations of international law. He called for a recorded vote on the draft amendment and urged delegations to vote against it.

The representative of the United States said his delegation would vote against "L.68" and encouraged others to do so as well. The United States does not support the General Assembly calling on Ukraine and the Russian Federation to act when the latter is the sole Member State to have engaged in aggressive activities directed at the former. The events of 25 November were a dangerous escalation of the situation by the Russian Federation. As such, he called on the Russian Federation to release the 24 Ukrainian crew members and three detained vessels. He went on to call on Member States to vote against "L.68" and in favour of "L.47".

The representative of Georgia said amendments contained in "L.68" would, among other things, substantially harm the core essence of "L.47". For this reason, her delegation would vote against "L.68".

The Assembly then rejected draft amendment "L.68" by a recorded vote of 64 against to 25 in favour, with 60 abstentions.

It then adopted draft resolution "L.47" by a vote of 66 in favour to 19 against, with 72 abstentions.

The representative of the Russian Federation, explaining his delegation's position, expressed regret that the resolution went up for vote, but was glad to see so many delegations abstain. The Kyiv regime is receiving signals that all will be forgiven. Ukrainian armed forces are waging war on their own citizens, shooting at women, children and the elderly. The United States has a lot of grounds for shame today, one example being Ukraine. The United States is providing weapons to Ukraine in an attempt to pit two brotherly people against each other. There is only one threat to the world today: the United States threat. Kyiv is run by Washington, D.C., he said, adding that Crimea has always been and will always be a part of the Russian Federation.

The representative of Belarus said his country will continue to provide assistance to bring peace to Ukraine. He expressed support for the group of States that submitted today's draft amendment, on the grounds that it was constructive and balanced. Belarus did not, however, support Ukraine's draft resolution, which is one-sided.

The representative of Armenia, noting his country's rich history of relations with both the Russian Federation and Ukraine, expressed hope that the concerned parties will exercise utmost restraint. Armenia is confident that a solution to the crisis can be reached through peaceful means, based on the principles and norms of international law.

The representative of Ukraine said that the Russian Federation was engaging in "aggressive mimicry" by presenting itself as the victim. It is evident that the Russian Federation is not a peace-loving State, he said, adding that by adopting the resolution, the international community passed a critical juncture in condemning Moscow's destructive pattern of action in the region and beyond. He went on to express Ukraine's appreciation for those Member States that participated in drafting the resolution while remaining courageous in the face of pressure from the Russian Federation.

The representative of Singapore said that, as a small nation, his country is deeply committed to multilateralism and respect for international law. Emphasizing Singapore's opposition to the annexation of Crimea, he said today's resolution is intrinsically linked to General Assembly resolution 68/262. All Member States must uphold the right of freedom of navigation as set out in the Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The representative of the Republic of Korea said his delegation voted against the amendment and abstained from the resolution. The Republic of Korea's position today remains the same as in March 2014, when it voted in favour of resolution 68/262, affirming its commitment to the sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

The representative of Indonesia, emphasizing his country's principled and consistent position on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, underlined the importance of dialogue and diplomacy between the concerned States regarding Crimea. As they do so, they must also take necessary measures to de-escalate tensions.

The representative of the European Union recalled that the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation 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. Referring to the bloc's declaration on 28 November regarding the dangerous increase of tensions in the Sea of Azov and Kerch Strait, he said the European Union calls "strongly" on the Russian Federation to release the seized Ukrainian vessels and crew members and to ensure free and unhindered access through the Kerch Strait in accordance with international law.

United Nations Commission on International Trade Law

The General Assembly elected 30 members to the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) to replace those whose term of office will expire on 7 July 2019.

The following 16 countries were declared elected to UNCITRAL for six-year terms beginning 8 July 2019: Algeria, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, South Africa and Zimbabwe (from the African States); Croatia, Hungary, Russian Federation and Ukraine (from the Eastern European States); and Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico and Peru (from the Latin

American and Caribbean States).

Another 14 countries were elected by secret ballot: China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Republic of Korea, Singapore and Viet Nam (from the Asia-Pacific States) and Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Switzerland and United Kingdom (from the Western European and Other States).

The following States will continue to be represented in the 60-member Commission: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Brazil, Burundi, Chile, Colombia, Czech Republic, India, Iran, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Mauritius, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, United States and Venezuela.

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