

Beat: Politics

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Introduction of Draft Resolution

SERGIY KYSLYTSYA (Ukraine), introducing the draft resolution titled “Suspension of the rights of membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights Council” (document A/ES-11/L.4), said that one early morning of April 1993, United Nations delegates had coffee, kissed their loved ones and went to the Headquarters, to do business as usual. That same morning, United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali sent a Special Rapporteur to investigate extrajudicial arbitrary executions in Rwanda and reported that a more robust United Nations response was needed. The findings that abuses could be precursors to genocide were largely ignored by the overstretched Secretariat of the Organization.

In early April 1994, the Security Council received letters in which the Rwanda Patriotic Front reminded Member States that “when the institution of the United Nations was created after the Second World War, one of its objectives was to see to it that what happened to the Jews in Nazi Germany would never happen again.” In 1994, Rwanda was a non-permanent member of the Security Council, which allowed its “genocidal regime” to influence other members Council with its view of the situation, just as the Russian Federation’s presence on the Council today allows it “to spread lies almost daily”, he said.

In April 2006, in New York, on the docks by the Hudson River, a “state of the art ocean liner was launched”, he said, which was then “docked on the shores of Lake Geneva” and named the Human Rights Council. The adoption of the resolution establishing the Human Rights Council was the culmination of five months of consultations. The ocean liner is going towards icebergs, he said, and it might seem that it should have been named the Titanic instead of the Human Rights Council. “We need to take action today to save it from sinking,” he said, noting the situation in Bucha and dozens of other Ukrainian cities and villages, where “thousands of peaceful residents have been killed, tortured, raped and abducted and robbed by the Russian army”. This, he stressed, shows how far the Russian Federation has strayed from its initial aspirations in the human rights domain. This case is unique and today’s response is obvious, he said. The Russian Federation’s diplomatic note Wednesday stated that the collective effort to preserve the credibility of the Human Rights Council was considered as an approach to preserve “domination and total control in the world”.

This is “the same perverted logic of the aggressor trying to present itself as a victim”, he said. If the Russian Federation is expelled from the Council, it is its own choice.

The draft resolution “L.4” is the result of the collective effort of a cross-regional group of two dozen States, with more than 50 Member States co-sponsoring it. He called upon all responsible Member States to support the draft. Addressing those who might opt to be bystanders on the vote and to abstain, he quoted Eli Wiesel’s words to President Bill Clinton in 1999: “Indifference elicits no response. Indifference is not a response. Indifference is not a beginning — it is an end. And indifference is always a friend of the enemy, for it benefits the aggressor, never his victim whose pain is magnified when he or she feels forgotten.” The genocide in Rwanda was largely a result of indifference, he said, noting that the United Nations did not respond to warnings in the Security Council and the General Assembly a year before the tragedy that is commemorated every year on 7 April.

Today, delegates will have the chance to prove that they are not indifferent bystanders, he said. “All you need to do is to press the ‘Yes’ button,” he said. “On the other hand, pressing ‘No’ means pulling a trigger and means a red dot on the screen. Red as the blood of the innocent lives lost. And this image of the red bloody dots on this screen will stay with you — and all of us — as long as memory does not fail us. Think about it. Thank you”.

Explanations of Vote Before the Vote

The representative of the Russian Federation said the draft resolution under consideration has no relationship to the actual human rights situation on the ground, adding that it is an attempt by the United States to maintain its dominant position and an attempt at human rights colonialism in international relations. It is also an attempt to move those who wish to conduct an independent foreign policy to the periphery of international relations. There is a crack that has appeared in the human rights architecture that is decades in

the making, he said, noting that the possible exclusion of the Russian Federation from the Human Rights Council could be a dangerous precedent.

As practice has shown, Western approaches in dealing with acute human rights problems in certain countries have not really been successful, he said, stressing that not a single conflict was resolved, but only exacerbated, mainly due to the use by Western countries of sanctions and military intervention.

The Russian Federation throughout its membership in the Commission on Human Rights and the Human Rights Council has consistently defended the principle of cooperation based on mutual respect and equal status, he said. Its priority has always been to strengthen constructive dialogue involving all interested sides in defending and promoting human rights. He rejected the untruthful allegations against the Russian Federation based on “staged events and widely circulated fakes”, calling on all Member States to really consider their decision and vote against the attempt by Western countries and their allies to destroy the existing human rights architecture.

The representative of Kazakhstan called on all parties to cease hostilities, stating that the humanitarian situation in Ukraine is dire and that his country has already sent it three planes carrying over 50 tons of goods. He noted, however, that adoption of the draft resolution currently before the Assembly will not contribute to the settlement of conflict. The negotiation process must not be undermined, and all fora must be used to resolve it, including the Human Rights Council. Recalling that membership in the Council can be suspended following the confirmation of gross violations of human rights, he said this requires the collection of unbiased data. Today’s vote should be preceded by an investigation under relevant international mechanisms. For those reasons, he affirmed that his delegation will vote against the draft resolution.

The representative of Venezuela said the promotion and protection of human rights must be addressed in a constructive manner, with dialogue and cooperation, and human rights should not be used to attack sovereign States. He expressed his regret that divisions today have increased among members of the United Nations, cautioning: “That is the wrong path.” Such a track may create consequences that will take generations to overcome and will impact the living conditions of vulnerable groups around the country, where people are already suffering due to the increased cost of food and transportation. Also warning about the start of a new arms race, he said the international community faces the danger of a conflict between world Powers “that will destroy mankind as we know it today”. The draft resolution before the Assembly is an example of the politicization of human rights. “Without the Russian Federation, there is no possible peace agreement in Europe,” he said, underscoring that the draft will push the world towards a more acute phase of the conflict.

The representative of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea voiced concern that some countries continue to push confrontation and distrust, instead of prioritizing the easing of tensions and seeking a political and peaceful solution to the current crisis in Ukraine. He rejected any politically motivated initiative and lack of objectivity, impartiality and transparency, noting that reported atrocities against the civil population in Ukraine have not yet been officially verified or proven based on real fact or evidence. An independent investigation must be made, and substantive time and effort are required in that regard, he stressed, pointing out that some Member States are acting very recklessly for their political goals by submitting the draft resolution and adding that such political and unilateral action will not help solve the problem at all. Noting the efforts by the Russian Federation to address the humanitarian situation in and around Ukraine, he said the draft resolution is another example of political confrontation aimed at tarnishing one Member State on the United Nations stage.

The representative of Iran underlined the need for a peaceful settlement to the conflict under international law, including international humanitarian law. Affirming that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States must be respected, he expressed concern over the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in and around Ukraine. Calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities by all parties and unimpeded access for humanitarian aid, he said the international community must support continued direct negotiations between the Russian Federation and Ukraine. The text under consideration is politically driven, he said, and his delegation opposes the exploitation of United Nations human rights machinery for political ends. Stating that the exploitation of paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution A/RES/60/251 deepens confrontation and attenuates constructive dialogue between countries, he said his delegation will vote no on the draft resolution before the Assembly.

The representative of Syria condemned the politicization of human rights by some countries and the targeting of the Russian

Federation on the pretext of dealing with humanitarian issues in Ukraine. He stressed the need to reject such politicization and underscored the importance of objectivity and non-discrimination in human rights issues. The coordinated Western move to denounce the Russian Federation has no relation to human rights in Ukraine or anywhere else. It is an effort by Western countries to impose their control over the rest of the world. The resolution establishing the Human Rights Council stressed that all human rights are interlinked and that they should be treated in a just and equitable way. However, some States use double standards when dealing with human rights issues, focusing on the situation in certain countries in a manner that serves their own political purposes while ignoring grave violations perpetrated in the full sight of the world. What the Palestinian people have been exposed to at the hands of the Israeli occupation forces is the best proof of that, he said, noting that his delegation will vote against the resolution.

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