



# Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

**9587**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Monday, 25 March 2024, 3 p.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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<i>President:</i>	Mrs. Shino . . . . .	(Japan)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria . . . . .	Mr. Koudri
	China . . . . .	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Ecuador . . . . .	Mr. De La Gasca
	France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
	Guyana . . . . .	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
	Malta . . . . .	Ms. Gatt
	Mozambique . . . . .	Mr. Buanahagi
	Republic of Korea . . . . .	Mr. Sangjin Kim
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sierra Leone . . . . .	Mr. George
	Slovenia . . . . .	Mr. Žbogar
	Switzerland . . . . .	Mrs. Chanda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Wood

## Agenda

Threats to international peace and security

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

### Adoption of the agenda

**The President:** The representative of France has asked for the floor.

**Mr. De Rivière** (France) (*spoke in French*): Several delegations, including France, have expressed strong reservations in recent weeks about this initiative of Russia, put forward without any prior consultation with Serbia. I had requested that we discuss the topic in consultations on 6 March, nearly three weeks ago. And at the time, I had indicated that Russia could, if it wished, organize a discussion or a meeting on the topic in the context of an Arria Formula meeting. That option is still available.

Russia ignored those comments. I recall that the Security Council does not meet on the basis of an agenda item unilaterally put forward by one of its members. It must be agreed by consensus or subject to discussion. Therefore, today we do not have any other choice but to object to the provisional agenda just announced by the President.

The Security Council is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. It is hard to see how today's meeting would meet that requirement. Russia has argued that the situation in Kosovo is a topical matter for the Council to address. It is therefore surprising that it would, at the same time, object to the participation of Kosovo in this meeting.

Let us be serious — indulging in pure historical retrospection and commemorating anniversaries is not the role of the Security Council. The Russian Federation affirmed that very statement in the Chamber in 2015 (see S/PV.7481), noting that we needed to leave history to the historians and justice to the tribunals.

It is clear, even for Russia, that the topic proposed for today will not contribute in any way to advance the settlement of the dispute. Russia has yet again wasted the resources of the Council. It is cynically using the issue of NATO's military intervention in 1999 in order to disseminate its revisionism and, above all, is seeking to justify its war against Ukraine in that manner, as it did previously to justify its aggressive foreign policy on Georgia in 2008 and on Crimea in 2014. And it is doing so to the detriment of the concerned parties, starting with Serbia, which, we repeat, was not consulted before this initiative was launched.

Indeed, there is no alternative — for Serbia or Kosovo — to reaching an agreement to settle their differences in a lasting manner. The Council needs to focus on the present and the future.

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

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to express our principled disagreement with France's attempt to challenge the convening of the Security Council meeting requested by Russia on the issue of the twenty-fifth anniversary of NATO's aggression against Yugoslavia.

These days the entire world is remembering the victims of the tragic events in the Balkans, which were caused by NATO's illegal aggression under the false slogan of humanitarian intervention in circumvention of the Security Council against security of a sovereign State. I understand that the representatives of NATO around this table find this inconvenient to hear and discuss, but it is a reality that is not only historical, but is also related to what is happening in the Balkans now.

I would like to recall for the benefit of our French colleagues, who positioned themselves as being very knowledgeable on Security Council procedures, that the meeting that we requested had already been convened by the Japanese presidency and immediately confirmed through the network of political coordinators. The meeting is in the Council's programme of work for the month of March, which is widely available through the Security Council Affairs Division website. It is slotted for 25 March in the programme of work, which was disseminated properly yesterday by the Security Council Affairs Division, with the approval of the presidency.

It is only today that we found out that the French delegation was planning to challenge the convening of this meeting. The fact that all of this had been published in the programme of work means that the presidency had already issued its preliminary decision on whether to convene the meeting. Mr. De Rivière is therefore proposing that we challenge the ruling made by the presidency. We would therefore like to have a proper formulation of the question to be put to the vote. Who among the members of the Security Council is objecting to this meeting today?

**The President:** I understand that the representative of France objects to the adoption of the agenda.

I now intend to put the provisional agenda to the vote.

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

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): That is not what I said. What I said is that the ruling to convene the meeting has been made. What we are calling into question is not the agenda for the meeting today, but rather the holding of the meeting itself. Therefore, the question that needs to be formulated is — Who is against the holding of the meeting in question today?

**Mr. De Rivière** (France) (*spoke in French*): The interpretation is exactly the opposite of what the Permanent Representative Russia said. I was never consulted on the holding of such a meeting. We adopted the programme of work on 1 March, without this meeting being on the schedule. No members of the Council were consulted, so I think they need to be consulted on the holding of this meeting.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like, Madam President, to put a question to you — did you issue a ruling about the convening of this meeting?

**The President**: I understand that to be a question for the presidency. We did not include this agenda item in the programme of work when our presidency began, so I think it is appropriate to pose the question whether we should hold a meeting on this provisional agenda.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to recall for your benefit, Madam President, that you confirmed the holding of this meeting, as did the Security Council Affairs Division.

**Mr. De Rivière** (France) (*spoke in French*): Let me repeat for the members of the Security Council that the agenda is a collective decision taken by all Members of the Council. It does not belong to a single member or to the presidency; it belongs to all 15 members of the Council, collectively. The question of whether to hold such a meeting was never posed to the 15 members. I therefore suggest that the presidency put the agenda to a vote.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): In that case, according to the interpretation of Permanent Representative De Rivière, all of the letters about holding meetings are meaningless, as is the programme of work.

**The President**: We did call for a meeting, but the agenda was a provisional agenda. I therefore intend to put the provisional agenda to the vote.

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

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are not talking about the provisional agenda. We are specifically talking about the meeting.

**The President**: We did call for the meeting, but currently the agenda is a provisional agenda. I would therefore like to put the provisional agenda to the vote.

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

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): You are now steering the deliberations in the Chamber, Madam President, and we can only expect that you will correctly formulate the question to be put to a vote. Doing so is your right, and we cannot take it away from you. We can only comment on the decisions that you are making, and we will comment if you formulate the question in such a way that we consider to be incorrect.

I simply wanted to draw the attention of the members of the Security Council to the fact that we invited a briefer to the meeting. Ivica Dačić, the Acting Prime Minister of Serbia, is in the Chamber, and it is unworthy of us to have this performance right here in front of him. I would like the members of the Security Council to take that into account and respect the people who come here to take the floor in front of the Security Council.

**Mr. De Rivière** (France) (*spoke in French*): The Russian Federation once again launched this initiative without consulting Serbia, which is forced to accept this fait accompli. Since 1 March, my delegation and several other delegations have explained that to the Serbian delegation and told its members clearly and repeatedly that this meeting would not take place and encouraged them to discourage their political leaders from traveling here. Therefore, there is no reason to feel any pressure from our Russian colleague.

Lastly, I invite our Russian colleague to organize an Arria Formula meeting with the participants. He can do so later this afternoon or tomorrow. It is his choice.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I apologize to the representative of France, but the statement that we did not consult the representatives of Serbia is, at the very least, misleading, to put it mildly. I have here a letter to the Permanent Mission of Serbia with regard to the participation of the Acting

Prime Minister of Serbia in today's meeting. Moreover, information about this meeting was circulated through the network of political coordinators, and no one expressed any objection to it until today, when we found out from the Permanent Mission of France that it was going to oppose the holding of this meeting.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): I want to make a couple of points here.

Members of my Mission tried to consult with Russia on this meeting and were rebuffed at least twice. Therefore, this meeting was clearly not put to a decision of the membership, and as I have said, there were no consultations at all.

We support your efforts, Madam President, to put the provisional agenda to a vote.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I do not know what the United States representative means when he says they "were rebuffed". Yes, we had arguments about this meeting. That happens about other meetings too, but it does not lead to such an inappropriate reaction as the one we are witnessing today in this Chamber.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): I apologize for taking the floor again. To address the concern expressed by the representative of the Russian Federation, when I say "rebuffed", I mean that we tried to engage, and Russia would not engage with us on this issue.

**The President**: I would like to make it clear that, as the presidency, we have to adopt the agenda first and can then proceed to the invitation.

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

*A vote was taken by a show of hands.*

*In favour:*

Algeria, China, Russian Federation

*Against:*

None

*Abstaining:*

Ecuador, France, Guyana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

**The President**: The provisional agenda has not been adopted, having failed to obtain the required number of votes.

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

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We regret the fact that you, Madam President, put to the vote a question that was different from the one that should have been. However, if the members of the Security Council are not ready to support the holding of the meeting we requested for 3 p.m. on 25 March, today, under the agenda item "Threats to international peace and security", then here and now we officially request a new meeting, namely an open briefing under the agenda item "Maintenance of international peace and security" to discuss the consequences for international peace and security that resulted from the NATO aggression against Yugoslavia. We request that it be scheduled at 3.30 p.m. on 25 March with the same briefers.

**Mr. Geng Shuang** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Twenty-five years ago, without the authorization of the Security Council and bypassing the United Nations, NATO flagrantly launched a military strike against the sovereign State of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, thereby starting an illegal war in the Balkans. Twenty-five years have passed since the start of the war, but the tension in Kosovo is still high, and the wounds of the countries and the people of the Balkans have not yet healed.

Still experiencing wars, Europe is mired in a security dilemma. Wars waged against sovereign States under the pretext of human rights or humanity and violations of the Charter of the United Nations and international law continue to take place from time to time. The impact of that war 25 years ago is far from over, and the warnings and lessons it brought about remain profound.

In view of that, China supports the holding of a meeting of the Security Council on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the NATO bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in order to take stock of and reflect on that important historic event and to discuss and debate how to uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, practice true multilateralism, advocate fairness and justice and safeguard international peace and security under the current circumstances. Regretfully, some members raised doubts about that, and the Security Council just

had a vote on that issue. We are disappointed to see the result of the voting.

Before I conclude, I am compelled to say that, during the NATO bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia 25 years ago, there was a deeply painful day that the Chinese people will never forget. On 7 May 1999, local time, NATO, led by the United States, launched multiple precision-guided missiles and bombed the Chinese Embassy in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, resulting in the death of three Chinese journalists, the injury of more than 20 Chinese diplomatic personnel and the destruction of the entire Chinese diplomatic premises. That was a flagrant violation of China's sovereignty, a serious offense to the sentiment of the Chinese people and a gross violation of international law and the basic norms governing international relations.

The Chinese people do not preach hatred, but they will never forget history. The Chinese people do not advocate responding to violence with violence, but they will never allow the recurrence of such a historic tragedy.

**Mr. Žbogar** (Slovenia): Slovenia regrets the situation in which we find ourselves today.

When Slovenia joined the Security Council, it had a clear goal in mind — to contribute to building trust in order to secure a better future for all. Proposals such as the one at hand do not contribute to building trust but rather seek to divide and politicize this organ, and that will not lead us towards a more secure future. For that reason, Slovenia decided to abstain in the voting on the question of whether the meeting should be held.

Twenty-five years ago, Slovenia was a member of the Security Council with a war raging in its immediate neighbourhood in the Western Balkans. What we remember is immense suffering and killing of civilians and masses of refugees. We remember war. We recall the Council's inability to act when needed. We remember failed peace initiatives, and we remember the fear of recurrence of ethnic cleansing.

The former Yugoslavia dissolved into devastating wars. Each of its nations went through difficult ordeals, some more tragic than others. But it was a painful period for each and every one. Three decades later, the wounds are still healing, but they still hurt. We do not see a value in reopening them. The countries do not have a common narrative about the history of wars on the territory of former Yugoslavia. All countries,

however, agree on their common future — to join the European Union and its peace project.

We appeal to the Russian Federation and all other members of the Security Council to remain focused on the main role of this organ: to maintain international peace and security. As we witnessed just this morning, the Council is strongest when united. We believe that more efforts should be made in that regard.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): Let me be clear. Today's procedural vote was entirely predictable and avoidable. It is unfortunate that the Russian Federation has wasted the Council's time by insisting on moving forward with the meeting, even though it never had the requisite support. There is there is a saying for that kind of approach: "my way or the highway". Fortunately, that is not the way the Council works.

The United States has nothing to hide regarding its support for NATO's 1999 Operation Allied Force. NATO actions were necessary and legitimate to end ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. The United States voted to abstain in the voting today because of Russia's approach. While we can support a meeting, in the appropriate format, that addresses the impacts of events from 1999, we cannot support a meeting that so blatantly instrumentalizes the tragic events of the past century to further a propaganda campaign. The fact that Russia raised objections to Kosovo's participation today further shows its intentions.

Let us also be clear that the meeting Russia called for is not about the Council discharging its responsibilities to maintain international peace and security. It is about the Kremlin's self-serving efforts to thwart stability throughout the Western Balkans, manipulate the Council to peddle its propaganda and inflame regional tensions in pursuit of its destabilizing ambitions in the region. The United States will continue to support responsible discussions in the Council, as it did with the 8 February meeting with the President of Serbia and Prime Minister of Kosovo (see S/PV.9545), and looks forward to the Council's discussion next month on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

**The President:** I take note of the request from the Russian Federation to convene an open briefing at 3.30 p.m. today, but, as that is very short notice, the presidency will consult with the members of the Council and then inform them accordingly.

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

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): It is not the first time, Madam President, that I have had to express regret over the decisions you have made today.

We requested the convening of a meeting on the twenty-fifth anniversary of NATO's aggression against sovereign Yugoslavia, the consequences of which continue to adversely affect the deteriorating situation in the Balkans. Despite the cynical statements made by our Western colleagues, this is not a historical issue. The situation in Kosovo remains on the agenda of the Security Council and is being actively discussed. Moreover, as we all know full well, recently the situation there has suffered a catastrophic deterioration. In order to understand how to establish lasting peace on Serbian soil, we need to talk about the true causes of the current escalation.

On 24 March 1999, a United States-led coalition of countries of the so-called "defence alliance", invaded the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia under the pretext of stopping the ethnic cleansing allegedly taking place in Kosovo. In reality, the Yugoslav police and military were fighting an exhausting battle against Kosovo-Albanian terrorist gangs in the province. The infamous Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), whose leaders are now on trial in The Hague, ruthlessly massacred the Serbians and Albanians who were disloyal to them. However, Western propaganda portrayed the KLA thugs as freedom-loving rebels and the warriors of the good, whereas the legitimate authorities of Yugoslavia, who were trying to uphold constitutional order, were portrayed as criminals. Cynical provocations were organized to demonize the Serbs.

NATO's aggression against a sovereign country lasted 78 days and resulted in unimaginable suffering, numerous victims and catastrophic devastation for its population. That is what NATO members on the Security Council did not want to hear. NATO's aggression against Yugoslavia was an egregious violation of international law, including the fundamental purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and the norms and principles of international humanitarian law. Also seriously undermined was the authority of the Security Council, which never authorized the alliance's forceful actions against Yugoslavia. The Council was simply presented with a *fait accompli*.

Since the beginning of the bloody collapse of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which was

staged and sponsored by the United States, Germany and others, and the attack on Yugoslavia, the alliance has undermined the existing security architecture that has ensured peace in Europe for decades upon decades. That is the signature destructive characteristic of NATO.

The attack against Yugoslavia launched a series of large-scale aggressions by the United States and its allies around the world: against Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan and Syria. The outcomes of those adventures are very well known. The 2014 anti-constitutional coup d'état in Kyiv also tracks its roots there.

Some colleagues on the Security Council would probably say that the events of 25 years ago are history and have no relevance today, but any reasonable person will see that the destruction of a sovereign State led to the growing chaos today — not just in Kosovo, but in the Balkans as a whole. That is exactly what we were going to discuss today. I think everyone can agree that this matters for the work of the Security Council, which adopted resolution 1244 (1999).

Finally, since the representative of France stated today that the provisional rulings of the presidency have no force, we can no longer trust written communications from the presidency. We are therefore compelled to insist that the agenda of all future Security Council meetings be approved by procedural vote. Let us call this established precedent the "De Rivière clause".

**Mr. De Rivière** (France) (*spoke in French*): I will be very brief.

First, on the issue of Kosovo, my colleagues around this table will recall that, on 8 February, the President of Serbia, Mr. Vučić, asked to be heard by the Council, given the situation in Kosovo. The Council immediately accepted his request. Kosovo was also invited to participate (see S/PV.9545). The Security Council remained seized of the issue of Kosovo and the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999). We will of course continue to help the parties to move towards a settlement. President Vučić is always welcome at this table. We have no objection to that.

Secondly, perhaps I missed something, but it seems to me that we just now held a procedural vote, which resulted in a determination that no meeting would be held. I therefore invite you kindly, Madam President, to adjourn this non-meeting.

*The meeting rose at 3.40 p.m.*