

The Amateur Computerist

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Tribute to Vitaly Churkin: Ten Years at the UN

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Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 1
Georgia: Resolutions Spark Controversy	Page 3
Can the Security Council Calm Tension in Korea?	Page 8
UNSC Helped Calm Tension in Korea	Page 11
Lessons from UNSC Resolution 1973 on Libya	Page 20
Defending UN Charter by Veto	Page 27
UNSC Approves 90 Day Syria Observer Mission.	Page 34
UN Fails to Condemn Ukraine Attack on RF Embassy	Page 40
Amb. Churkin's 2015 SC Presidency Press Briefing	Page 44
Women Ask BKM to Initiate Korea Peace Process	Page 48
UNSC Tribute to Memory of Vitaly Churkin.	Page 52

Introduction

We dedicate this issue of the *Amateur Computerist* as a tribute to the life and work of the Russian Ambassador to the UN Vitaly Churkin who for over 10 years provided a bulwark against the efforts of certain powerful nations at the UN to use the Security Council as part of their toolbox to bring forcible regime change to various governments that did not acquiesce to their demands.

Ambassador Churkin's sudden passing on February 20, 2017 took many of us with such surprise that even weeks later it was hard to believe this terrible news. Ambassador Churkin was the Permanent Representative

at the UN for the Russian Federation from April 2006 until his passing in February 2017. As such he provided an important presence for more than 10 years on the UN Security Council. This issue of the *Amateur Computerist* is published as a tribute to the special contribution he made, in particular to the activities of the Security Council, and in general to the United Nations over this period.

The issue has two parts. The first part is a selection of articles that appeared first in *OhmyNews International* until 2010 and then on the netizenblog, blogs.taz.de/netizenblog. These articles provide a small sample of the day-to-day activities in the Security Council and the role of Ambassador Churkin in such day-to-day activities.

It was in observing such daily happenings that one could only but admire Ambassador Churkin's skill as a diplomat presenting the principles that guided his actions rather than, as some of the other members of the Security Council, stooping to vitriol and personal attacks in response to disagreements among the diplomats.

The second part of the issue presents comments from some of the Ambassador's colleagues presented as a part of the Security Council meeting held on February 21, 2017 in response to the passing of their colleague.

While a number of the Ambassadors who attended this Security Council meeting offered some comment, we have only included in this issue those comments which expressed something in addition to condolences to the family or colleagues in the mission. The comments presented at this meeting demonstrated the high regard with which Ambassador Churkin was held by many of his colleagues.

Our editor, Ronda Hauben has a special reason to express gratitude for the presence of Ambassador Churkin at the UN. Her accreditation to cover the UN began approximately six months after Ambassador Churkin began his presence at the UN. Thus she had the privilege of learning from him that diplomacy is both a skill and an art. He was a master of both. While others may have had the ability to garner more votes for a resolution when there was disagreement among the five permanent representatives, Ambassador Churkin had the ability to explain the rationale of his vote and thus to defend the fact it was within the scope of the charter to exercise a veto on the particular issue. On the other hand, those forcing a

vote when they were aware there was not yet agreement on the text they were promoting, demonstrated their own failure to work toward a text all permanent members could support.

Ambassador Churkin will be missed by many of those who were privileged to be at the UN during the 10 years he enriched the scope of the discussion and debate. He demonstrated by his deeds the importance of respecting the different viewpoints represented on the Security Council while representing your own national position.

It is with a heavy heart that we say we will miss Ambassador Churkin. We can only hope that some of Ambassador Churkin's skill and art of diplomacy will somehow be passed on and mastered by others. This has the potential to set the basis for a more peaceful world.

[Editor's Note: The following article appeared in *OhmyNews International* on Aug. 23, 2008 at: http://english.ohmynews.com/articleview/articleview.asp?no=383465&rel_no=1]

Georgia: Resolutions Spark Controversy Online Discussion Reflects Vigilance Over Georgian, Russian, NATO Actions

by Ronda Hauben
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The Russian ambassador to the United Nations told journalists that the resolution he proposed to the Security Council has been put in blue so that it could be voted on. This resolution is one of two contending draft resolutions put before the Security Council in the controversy in the council over Georgia and South Ossetia. Once a Security Council resolution has been put into this form, it can be put to a vote of the Security Council after 24 hours.

While the controversy that exists inside the council is being reflected

in some degree in the international mainstream media, the manifestation of it is even more remarkably demonstrated in the netizen media of online discussions and commentary, blogs and online media of many varieties. (See for example, the blog vineyardsaker [<http://thesaker.is/>] or the commentary on [<http://www.digitaljournal.com/>]. These were just two examples of many thoughtful blogs where analyses and substantial online discussion filled the Internet on this issue.)

The public presentation of competing resolutions is relatively unusual with respect to Security Council activity. While there are often differences among the delegates, such differences are less often presented in public proceeding. Instead, a form of scripted activity agreed to in advance more regularly takes place, especially when public action is taken on resolutions.

Also, it is not so common that Security Council activity is the subject of netizen discussion and commentary. To have public scrutiny of Security Council controversy sets a basis for the delegates to treat their actions with more consideration of the public concerns than is often obvious.

The Russian resolution presented to the Security Council on Tuesday refers to the six points of the cease-fire agreement that was signed between Georgia and of Russia.¹ Following is the text of the resolution the Russian delegation submitted to the Security Council on Tuesday and announced to be put in blue on Wednesday:

The Russian Federation Draft Resolution

The Security Council, Recalling all its previous relevant resolutions,

1. Endorses the following plan agreed in Moscow on August 12, 2008: President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev and President of the Republic of France Nicolas Sarkozy support the following principles of resolving the conflicts and call on the parties concerned to adhere to these principles:

- a) do not resort to the use of force;
- b) definitive cessation of hostilities;
- c) free access to humanitarian aid;
- d) withdrawal of the Georgian forces to their permanent bases;
- e) withdrawal of the Russian Federation forces to the line prior to the beginning of hostilities; pending the establishment of international

mechanisms the Russian peacekeeping forces take additional security measures;

f) opening of international discussion of lasting security and stability arrangements for South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

2. Calls upon the parties concerned to implement the abovementioned plan in good faith.

The French Draft Resolution

A French draft resolution, which had been presented to the council on Monday, relates to two of the items from the six principles, rephrased, and adds the issue of support for the territorial integrity of Georgia as the essential focus.

The resolution states:

The Security Council, Recalling all its previous resolutions on Georgia, including resolution 1808 of 15 April 2008 (S/RES/1808); and reaffirming in this context the commitment of all Member States to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders;

1. Demands full and immediate compliance with the cease-fire agreement to which the parties have subscribed;

2. Demands the immediate withdrawal of Russian forces to the lines held prior to the outbreak of hostilities, and the return of Georgian forces to their usual bases;

3. Decides to remain actively seized of the matter.

(“TEXT-Draft U.N. Security Council resolution on Georgia,” Reuters, Aug. 19, 2008)

Some Security Council Delegates Explain Their Positions

Vitaly Churkin, the Russian ambassador to the UN, talking to journalists about the draft resolution submitted by Russia, explained that it is important to have the UN Security Council play a constructive role in the process of implementing the peace framework signed by Georgia and Russia. He said that he had presented the draft resolution to the French Ambassador several days earlier and had not heard any vehement objections to it (Vitaly Churkin on the situation in Georgia, Stakeout, Aug.

20).

Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the deputy representative from France to the UN, said that the draft resolution submitted to the council by France limited itself to two elements from the six principles of the agreement because the Security Council will have a number of issues to deal with and should be looking at the priorities, the first of which is the withdrawal of Russian forces from Georgia (Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Stakeout, Aug. 20).

The deputy representative to the Security Council from the U.S., Alejandro Wolff, describing his support for the French resolution and objection to the Russian, focused on asking what the Russian intentions are with regard to Georgia (Alejandro Wolff, Stakeout, Aug. 20).

At the public meeting of the council held on Tuesday to consider what to do about the Georgia situation, the council members who are also members of NATO spoke in favor of the proposed French draft resolution. The Russian ambassador explained his problems with the proposed resolution.

The only other council member to speak was the ambassador from Costa Rica, Jorge Urbina. He said that the situation should not be viewed as a European issue or as one that concerns “only the great economic and military powers.” Although he said that the smallest states of the UN also were concerned about what was happening, he didn’t express any viewpoint toward the French draft resolution or the six-point agreement between Russia and Georgia (see meeting notes from Security Council Aug. 19 meeting, S/PV.5961).

Georgia’s actions² on Aug. 7 in first calling a truce and then sending its troops to attack Tskhinvali, the capital of South Ossetia, would seem difficult to understand outside of the context of its aspirations to join NATO. The existence of its regions that have declared their autonomy was, according to some news reports, given as one reason for the objections to its request for membership.

Some analyses argue that Georgia gambled that if it was able to defeat the South Ossetians by a military attack on Tskhinvali, that would have removed one of the objections to Georgia’s admission to NATO. A problem with such reasoning, however, is that the history of the Ossetian struggle for independence from Georgia demonstrates that military means cannot be a way to solve the controversy over the autonomy issue for

South Ossetia.

Such analyses propose that the Georgian assault was based on a strategy that even if the military attack failed, it would provoke Russia to respond militarily and that would solicit support for Georgia's bid to be part of NATO.³

While the struggle goes on at the Security Council, an even more fierce battle is raging between the mainstream Western media and the online netizen journalism. This issue has solicited many responses from people around the world. Some of the responses refer to the media campaign the U.S. government waged to create a pretext to invade Iraq as the reason netizens must be vigilant with respect to the coverage by the mainstream Western media of the conflict.

One such comment advised Russia to support online discussion and commentary in response to Western mainstream media views and misrepresentations. This is proposed to be as important as any other new military defense.

Notes:

1. The Six Principles in the Agreement Signed by Russia and Georgia are as follows, with additions Sarkozy made after the signing:

1. No recourse to use violence between the protagonists. Sarkozy: This applies to everyone: Ossetians, Abkhazians, Georgia in its entirety and Russians.

2. The cessation of hostilities.

3. The granting of access to humanitarian aid.

4. The return of Georgian armed forces to their usual quarters.

5. Russian armed forces to withdraw to the positions held before hostilities began in South Ossetia. Russian peacekeepers to implement additional security measures until an international monitoring mechanism is in place. Sarkozy: These measures affect only the immediate vicinity of South Ossetia and in no instance the entire territory of Georgia.

6. The opening of international discussions on the modalities of security and stability of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. ([Deutsche Presse Agentur \[DPA\]](#))

2. See the blog by an R T journalist sent to report on Tskhinvali on Aug. 8: Mikehalid Lebedev Blog <http://www.russiatoday.com/features/news/29163> See also the meeting of the Security Council early on Aug. 8 about Georgia's military action against South O s s e t i a http://english.ohmynews.com/articleview/article_view.asp?menu=c10400&no=383370&rel_no=1

3. One such analysis is contained in an Opinion article in the *Moscow Times* on Aug. 13.

A similar analysis is offered by Mikhail Gorbachev in an op-ed “Russia Never Wanted a War” published in the *New York Times* on Aug. 20, 2008

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/20/opinion/20gorbachev.html>.

An earlier version of this article appears on my blog, netizenblog at: http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2008/08/21/contending_draft_resolutions_on_georgia_before_the_un_security_council/

[Editor’s Note: The following article appeared on the netizenblog on Dec. 19, 2010 at: http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2010/12/19/securitycouncil_korean_tension/]

Can the Security Council Act to Calm Rising Tension on Korean Peninsula?

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In a statement to the press issued early Saturday evening, December 18, Vitaly Churkin, the Russian Ambassador explains that “This morning (Saturday morning) I sent a letter to the current President of the Security Council – the delegation of the United States requesting an emergency meeting of the Council be called on the situation in the Korean peninsula.”¹

He explains that he took this action because, “We believe that the Security Council must send a restraining signal to the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and the DPRK (North Korea) and help launch diplomatic activity with a view to resolving all issues of dispute between the two Korean sides by political and diplomatic means.”

Rule 2 of the Security Council’s Provisional Rules of Procedure, states that:

“The President shall call a meeting of the Security Council at the request of any member of the Security Council.”²

No meeting of the Security Council took place on Saturday in

response to Churkin's request.

Churkin's statement explains that, "the President of the Security Council declined to convene such a meeting today (Saturday). We regret that." He maintains that "such a step by the President is a departure from the practice existing in the Council."

In his statement, Churkin indicates that the U.S. delegation had promised that there would be a meeting of the Council convened on Sunday, December 19 at 11 a.m. (N.Y. time), and that information about the Security Council meeting would be circulated to members of the Council, the UN Secretariat and the media.

"We assume that nothing will happen in the interim that would bring about a further aggravation on the Korean peninsula," said Churkin in his statement to the press.

The notice from the Secretariat to journalists about a Sunday meeting of the Security Council, however, indicated only that closed "consultations would be held at 11 a.m. on Sunday December 18, with a view to a formal meeting."

The U.S. government has been encouraging South Korea to carry out a live fire drill in the contested waters of the West Sea. This is an area that the two Koreas have previously recognized needs to be treated as a peace zone because it is a particularly dangerous site where hostilities between the two Koreas can easily break out.³

Calling for live fire drills in these waters is creating what Bill Richardson, the Governor of New Mexico and a long time envoy to North Korea calls a "tinderbox."

In a statement released by his office late Saturday night, Richardson said:

"I hope that the U.N. Security Council will pass a strong resolution calling for self-restraint from all sides in order to seek peaceful means to resolve this dispute."⁴

Supporting the need for Security Council action to help lessen the tension, Richardson said:

"A U.N. resolution could provide cover for all sides that prevents aggressive military action."

A draft press statement that is being proposed by the Russian Ambassador to the Security Council, which was made available to a UN

correspondent would “stress the need” to “de-escalate” tension in the relations between North Korea and South Korea.⁵ It would call for “a resumption of dialogue and the resolution of all problems....”

Also the press draft requests that the Secretary-General dispatch a special representative to North Korea and South Korea “to consult on urgent matters and to settle peacefully the crisis....” In February 2010 the Secretary-General had sent a four person delegation from his office to consult with North Korea. Reporting back to the press from that trip, one of the envoys explained that among the issues raised were how to phrase the disagreements in a way that it recognized the interests of the different parties to the controversy and what sequence was acceptable to take up the problems.⁶

In a situation where there is a danger of a new Korean war, can the Security Council act to make a difference?

Notes:

1. Statement by Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the UN, Saturday, Dec. 18, 2010 at 6:21 p.m. E-mail to press.
 2. Provisional Rules of Procedure of the Security Council.
<http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/scrules.htm>
 3. Ronda Hauben, “Escalating Tension on the Korean Peninsula and the Role of the UN,” taz.de, November 29, 2010.
http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2010/11/29/escalating_tension_korea/
 4. Colum Lynch, “Russia Presses for UN Role in Mediating Crisis in the Koreas,” Saturday, December 18, 2010. <http://turtlebay.foreignpolicy.com/blog/16159>
 5. “Security Council to Meet as S. Korea set on Exercise,” *The Boston Globe*, Sunday, December 19, 2010 http://www.boston.com/news/world/asia/articles/2010/12/19/security_council_to_meet_as_skorea_set_on_exercise/?rss_id=Boston.com+%2F+Bos+ton+Globe+--+World+News
 6. Ronda Hauben, “UN-North Korean Talks Hint at a Peace Treaty on the Korean Peninsula,” *Global Times*, February 21, 2010.
<http://opinion.globaltimes.cn/commentary/2010-02/506799.html>
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[Editor's Note: The following article appeared on the netizenblog on Jan. 17, 2011 at:

http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2011/01/17/un_sc_mtg_dec_19_korea/]

UN Security Council Helped Calm Tension on Korean Peninsula

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One of the most perilous situations of the past year was the conflict on the Korean Peninsula that was brought to the UN Security Council in what was the last week of its 2010 session.¹

On Saturday December 18, Vitaly Churkin, the Russian Federation Ambassador to the UN, requested an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council to be held on Saturday.

In what Ambassador Churkin called “a departure from the practice of the Council,” the U.S. ambassador to the UN, Susan Rice, as President of the Security Council for the month of December, declined to hold a meeting until the following day.² Instead she scheduled consultations to start at 11 a.m. on Sunday, December 19, with a view to the possibility of holding a formal meeting later in the day.

On Sunday, 50 or more journalists gathered at the stakeout outside the UN Security Council. Ambassadors and other representatives of the 15 nations on the council gradually filtered into the Security Council chambers. Also arriving were representatives of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), of the Republic of Korea (South Korea), and B. Lynn Pasco, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

U.S. Ambassador Rice, acting as the President of the Council for December, arrived at around 11:20 a.m.

The Security Council members held bi-laterals, closed consultations, took a short lunch break, and had a closed meeting as part of its emergency session.

Little actual information was provided to journalists waiting in the press stakeout area about what was happening. The emergency session came to a close, approximately eight hours after it had begun. When the

emergency session was over, Ambassador Churkin came to the press stakeout to report to journalists. He said that council members had failed to reach the unanimous agreement needed to issue a press statement. The draft press statement the Russian Federation had proposed had been revised at least twice, but still did not achieve the unanimous agreement needed to issue it as a document from the Council.

In the draft press statement, the Russian Federation urged the two Koreas to show restraint in their actions. Also the draft proposed that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appoint an envoy to help the two Koreas to peacefully resolve the problems causing the current crisis situation. The blog “Turtle Bay” reported obtaining a copy of the original Russian Federation draft statement.³ Here is the reported draft posted on the blog:

The Members of the Security Council have considered in an emergency meeting of the Council on 18 December 2010 a dangerous aggravation of the situation in the Korean peninsula. They heard a briefing by _____.

The Members of the Security Council called upon all parties concerned to exercise maximum restraint and to avoid any steps which could cause a further escalation of tension in the Korean peninsula and the entire region.

The Members of the Security Council stressed the need to undertake efforts to ensure a de-escalation of tension in the relations between the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, resumption of dialogue and resolution of all problems dividing them exclusively through peaceful diplomatic means.

The Members of the Security Council requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations to dispatch without delay his special representative to the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to consult on urgent measures to settle peacefully the current crisis situation in the Korean peninsula.

The Members of the Security Council also requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations to stay in close coordination with other countries concerned in this regard.

In response to objections raised by some of the other Council

members, Ambassador Churkin told journalists he had revised the statement. The blog Inner City Press reported that in one of the revised drafts, Ambassador Churkin, the Chinese representative, and others on the Security Council had agreed to wording that said that the members of the Security Council “condemned the shelling” of 23 November 2010.⁴ The draft did not attribute blame for the shelling, reflecting the fact that both sides had done shelling.

The Council, however, was not able to come to an agreement on the text. Ambassador Churkin expressed his regret that the emergency meeting had not been called on Saturday afternoon as he had requested. He felt that would have provided more time for Council members to work out wording they could all agree on.

In response to a question to him from a journalist about the danger of what was happening on the Korean Peninsula, Ambassador Churkin responded⁵:

As you know, I don't even want to go into the general subject.... I know its very complicated. This area has very complicated geography, very complicated geopolitical history if you will.

I don't even want to go into the general issue of whether or not it is prudent to conduct military exercises in a disputed area, but we know it is better to refrain from doing this exercise at this time. That is why we asked the Republic of Korea to refrain from conducting this exercise at this particular time.

Ambassador Churkin stressed the seriousness of the situation. Also he explained that there appeared to have been general agreement among council members for his proposal that the Secretary-General appoint an envoy to work with the two Koreas and other involved countries to negotiate a means to settle the disputes causing the crisis situation. Ambassador Churkin stressed the importance of the Secretary-General appointing an envoy, especially since some of the parties were not willing to go back to the six party talks. Thus there was no other means for a diplomatic process to be implemented, “no game plan.”

Despite the fact that the Council had not come to agree on a press statement which also would have supported the appointment of an envoy, Ambassador Churkin expressed his hope that the Secretary-General would

go ahead and appoint an envoy. Also he expressed his hope that the Security Council consultations and meeting, even though it hadn't reached an agreement on a press statement, would have an impact to lower the tension in the region.

A little while later, Ambassador Rice came to the stakeout. Though she held the rotating presidency of the Security Council for December, she only spoke in her national capacity presenting the views of the U.S. on the issue. She indicated that the U.S. insisted on a "clear-cut condemnation of the November 23rd attack by DPRK on the ROK," but that there was no "unanimity on that point" among members of the Security Council.

When Ambassador Rice was asked about the proposal to ask the Secretary-General to appoint an envoy, she responded⁶:

I think there would have been probably room for agreement in some form of recommendation that the Secretary-General consider what he might be able to do in his good offices capacity.

The next day, Monday, December 20, Wang Min, the Chinese deputy Permanent Representative spoke to the press at a stakeout. He said, "Yesterday, China supported Russia's proposal to call for an urgent meeting of the Security Council (on) the situation in the Korean Peninsula.... The meeting was positive and of great importance."⁷

Also on this Monday, South Korea held its military exercise firing into the contested waters. North Korea refrained from responding militarily.⁸

On Tuesday December 21, at an informal meeting of the Security Council, Ambassador Wang, expressed his view of the seriousness of the situation that had developed on the Korean Peninsula. He said that the tension on the Korean Peninsula between the North and South had been very high "especially in the past two days it came close to fighting a war."⁹

At the noon briefing held on Monday, December 20, the day following the emergency Security Council meeting, journalists asked Farhan Haq, the Acting Deputy Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, about the possibility of an envoy being sent to the Korean Peninsula by the Secretary-General. Despite the unanimity expressed at the emergency Security Council session about the Secretary-General appointing an envoy,

the idea met with reluctance on the part of the spokesperson for the Secretary-General. Following is an excerpt from the press conference on December 20 with the deputy spokesperson for the Secretary-General¹⁰:

Question: (Y)esterday in this all-day Security Council meeting about DPRK [Democratic People's Republic of Korea] or the Korean peninsula, both Ambassador [Vitaly] Churkin, Ambassador [Susan] Rice and they both seemed to say that all 15 members were supportive of the idea of the Secretary-General naming a Special Envoy to the Korean peninsula. They didn't end up adopting a statement because of disputes about who to blame or who to condemn. But is it something that, I guess...what does the Secretary-General think of that idea and is he actually going to name an envoy?

Acting Deputy Spokesperson: Well, first of all, the Secretary-General did send Mr. [B. Lynn] Pascoe earlier this year to the Korean peninsula, and so he has already taken some initiative regarding efforts to deal with the question of good offices in the Korean peninsula itself. However, in terms of appointing an envoy, what we are doing at this stage is waiting to see what kind of unified decision, if any, the Security Council can take on the question of the Korean peninsula. As you yourself pointed out just now, they didn't come to any decision yesterday, and I don't know whether there will be a statement by the Security Council. But if there is one, we would respond to that.

Question: But there is...I guess the question was asked of Ambassador Churkin whether he thought that the Secretary-General should go forward. In the sense of, are you saying that you can only go forward if you have some kind of press statement or do the statements of the President of the Council saying....

Acting Deputy Spokesperson: No, no, as I pointed out, Mr. Pascoe went, I believe in February of this year, as it was. So, it's not dependent on action by the Security Council. However, in this case, the Security Council had been working out different types of language, and we would wait to see what it

is that they have to say before responding to it.

Question: So has Secretary-General completely ruled out appointing a Special Envoy for DPRK?

Acting Deputy Spokesperson: No, it's just fitting at this stage for a matter that's under consideration by the Security Council for us to wait to see what it is, what decision that they come to. Yes, Khaled?

Question: What we're saying is that what is under consideration by the Council and the statement, and concerning, as you know, Matthew said, who is to blame and who is to condemn, but both Mr. Churkin and Mrs. Rice said yesterday there was agreement on the need for an envoy, different from the task taken by Mr. Pascoe in February. So, what does the Secretary-General feel about that?

Acting Deputy Spokesperson: Well, if there is an agreement among Council members, we are sure that that can manifest itself in a unified position taken by the Security Council and we'd await that.

Question: But he said he (the Security Council -ed) had a unified position on the envoy, but not on the condemnation issue. That's what he said.

Acting Deputy Spokesperson: Well, like I said, if they can agree on any particular point, we would await that particular agreement and respond in kind.

This reluctance to appoint an envoy for the Korean Peninsula expressed by the Secretary-General's Deputy Spokesman could be considered all the more surprising when taking into account an interview with Ban Ki-moon in November 2006 after Ban Ki-moon was chosen to be the UN Secretary-General (for the 2007-2011 term). In the interview published in the Korean newspaper *Hankyoreh*, Ban said that once he was Secretary-General, he would appoint an envoy to help to resolve the tension on the Korean Peninsula. The Deputy Spokesman for the Secretary-General, however, now responding to questions from journalists, said that Ban would wait for the Security Council to take action on the issue of the envoy. Following is an excerpt from the November 2006 interview with Ban Ki moon. Professor Moon Chung-in of Yonsei

University is asking the questions for Hankyoreh¹¹:

Q: It is unfortunate that the North Korean nuclear situation has worsened, despite your will to resolve it as the Foreign Minister. The North Korean nuclear issue is not one limited to the Korean Peninsula or North Korea, but rather is a global issue and one of importance to the UN. Are you stressing this resolution of this issue as Secretary-General only because you could not resolve it as Foreign Minister?

A: Secretary-General Kofi Annan also carried a large interest in [resolving] the North Korean issue and appointed a special envoy to North Korea, but he could not set foot in the country during his 10-year tenure. As for Special Envoy to North Korea Maurice Strong, he was implicated in an unsavory affair and resigned midway through his term. I will appoint a politician or diplomat with the confidence of the international community, someone who has the trust of both North and South Korea to actively push the issue forward. The envoy must be one to impel the six-party talks to action when they stagnate, and must be prepared to play a direct role when necessary. I am even ready to intervene directly when intervention is called for.

Q: The UN created the North South cease-fire agreement. Although both Koreas, the U.S.'s and China's roles are important in transforming the cease-fire regime into a peaceful order, the UN must participate to reach a legal and systematic conclusion. What plans do you have to spur the creation of a peaceful order?

A: Fundamentally, this issue must be discussed between the U.S. and North Korea, but the UN must decide how to help as it is inextricably linked with the problem, and UN specialists must come to an agreement.

Under Article 99 of the UN Charter, the Secretary-General has the ability to act in situations where there is a danger to international peace and security¹². He can ask the Security Council to act in a situation. Hence it is all the more surprising that Secretary-General Ban would insist on waiting for the Security Council to act, when it is his prerogative under the

UN Charter to ask the Security Council to act. Similarly, he has the ability in what is referred to as “his good offices” to send an envoy to help to resolve tension in a volatile situation, an action Ban has taken with other situations, but which he has not taken with regard to the escalating tension on the Korean Peninsula. As the Deputy Spokesman noted, Ban did send some of his staff to Pyongyang in February 2010, so he recognizes he is not dependent on the Security Council to undertake a peace initiative.¹³ Yet in the four years of his tenure thus far as UN Secretary-General, he has not yet acted on the commitment he made in November 2006 to appoint an envoy to engage in efforts to resolve the tension on the Korean Peninsula.

Despite the fact that the Security Council did not issue a press statement, and the fact the Secretary-General has not appointed an envoy, the actions by Ambassador Churkin on behalf of the Russian Federation and others on the Security Council did succeed in bringing international public attention to the crisis situation on the Korean Peninsula.

Ambassador Churkin took the initiative to request an emergency meeting of the Security Council to ask South Korea to refrain from its planned firing drill on the contested waters surrounding Yeonpyeong Island, and to ask North Korea to refrain from responding.

Both the Chinese and Russian foreign ministries sent representatives to both North and South Korea to urge them to settle their disputes via dialogue.

Also a number of articles appeared in the English language Chinese press on the crisis situation, some of which were critical of the provocative actions taken by South Korea and of the U.S. government for encouraging such actions.¹⁴

As Ambassador Churkin told journalists after the December 19 Security Council meeting, “I would like to think that this meeting of the Council will have an impact on the situation.”

Looking at the subsequent events, it appears that indeed the fact that the Security Council held an emergency session on December 19 did help to support a process to calm the escalating tension on the Korean Peninsula, at least temporarily.

Notes:

1. Ronda Hauben, "Can the Security Council Act to Calm Rising Tension on Korean Peninsula?," Dec 19, 2010, blog at taz.de

http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2010/12/19/securitycouncil_korean_tension/

2. Churkin refers to Rule 2 of the Provisional Rules of Procedure for the Security Council as the basis for expecting the Security Council to be called to meet on Saturday in response to his request. Rule 2 reads: "The President shall call a meeting of the Security Council at the request of any member of the Security Council."

<http://www.un.org/doc/sc/scrules.htm>

3. Turtle Bay blog, December 18, 2010 http://turtlebay.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/12/18/russia_pushes_deeper_un_role_in_mediating_crisis_in_the_koreas

4. Inner City Press, December 20, 2011.

<http://www.innercitypress.com/usun5ruskor122010.html>

5. Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, at a Media Stakeout on the Situation on the Korean Peninsula, 19 December 2010, (start 06:14) <http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/webcast/2010/12/russian-federation-representative-vitaly-churkin-security-council-media-stakeout.html>

6. Remarks by President of the Security Council, Ambassador Susan E. Rice, United States Permanent Representative, at a Media Stakeout on the Situation on the Korean Peninsula, 19 December 2010 <http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/webcast/2010/12/united-states-representative-susan-rice-security-council-media-stakeout.html>

7. Ambassador Wang Min, Deputy Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of China, at a Media Stakeout on the Situation on the Korean Peninsula, 20 December 2010 <http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/webcast/2010/12/wang-min-representative-of-the-democratic-republic-of-china-security-council-media-stakeout.html>

8. "Commentary: Applause for North Korea's restraint," *Global Times*, December 22, 2010 <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90780/91343/7238754.html>

9. "Korea Tensions came close to 'war'," said China Diplomat, December 22, 2010, http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/1100526/1.html

10. "Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General," Farhan Haq, Acting Deputy Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, UN, December 20, 2010. <http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs/2010/db101220.doc.htm>

11. "[Interview] Next UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon," Interviewer Moon Chung-in, *Hankyoreh*, November 3, 2006, translated into English by Daniel Rakov. <http://www.hani.co.kr/popups/print.hani?ksn=169339>

12. "The Secretary-General may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security," Article 99, UN Charter <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter15.shtml>

13. Ronda Hauben, "UN-North Korea talks hint at a peace treaty on the Korean Peninsula," *Global Times*, February 21, 2010 <http://opinion.globaltimes.cn/commentary/2010-02/506799.html>

14. See for example: "S. Korea playing by dangerous cliff," Editorial, *Global Times*, December 23, 2010. <http://opinion.globaltimes.cn/editorial/2010-12/603638.html>

“Korean brothers advised not to go to war game,” People’s Daily Online, December 21, 2010. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90780/91343/7238108.html>
L. Hongmei, “U.S., insidious harm to Korean Peninsula,” People’s Daily Online, December 21, 2010. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90002/96417/7238362.html>
“New ROK drills add to tension on peninsula,” People’s Daily Online, December 27, 2010. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90777/90851/7242721.html>

[Editor’s Note: The following article appeared on the netizenblog on Dec. 14, 2011 at: <http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2011/12/14/lessons-from-unscr-1973-on-libya/>]

Lessons from UN Security Council Implementation of Resolution 1973 on Libya

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I – Introduction

As is customary, a press conference was held by Ambassador Vitaly Churkin to mark the beginning of the Russian Federation’s Presidency of the Security Council for the month of December 2011. Ambassador Churkin’s comments in this press conference provide insight into an important problem in the structure of the Security Council that became evident in the course of the implementation of the Security Council resolutions against Libya.

The press conference was held on December 2. There is video of the press conference for those who are interested in viewing the conference itself.¹

Though other issues were brought up, many of the questions asked by journalists related to the Russian Federation’s views concerning Security Council action on Libya and Syria.

II – Critique of Implementation of SCR 1973 on Libya

During the press conference Ambassador Churkin revealed that NATO had been asked for a “final report...summing up their view of their complying or not complying, of performing or not performing under the resolutions of the Security Council.” But no summary had been received from NATO. Ambassador Churkin said it was his understanding that NATO was not planning to send the Security Council any summary.

The importance of this revelation is that during its military action against Libya, NATO claimed it was acting under the authorization of UNSC Resolution 1973 (SCR 1973). Yet when asked to provide the Security Council with an evaluation of how its Libyan campaign complied with the actual resolution, apparently NATO did not see itself as being held accountable to the Security Council.

This situation reinforces the observation made by some inside and others outside the Council.² The Council passed SCR 1973, but it had no means of monitoring or controlling how this resolution was implemented. Thus the implementation of this Security Council resolution on Libya reveals a serious flaw in the structure of the Council itself.

Some members maintained that the resolution called for a cease fire and political settlement of the conflict in Libya.

Other Security Council members began bombing Libyan targets, and brought NATO in to carry out a bombing campaign against military, civilian and infrastructure targets in Libya. Ironically, NATO claimed such bombing was about the protection of civilians.³ Similarly a self appointed “Contact Group” on Libya set as its goal, regime change in Libya. Members of the Security Council who expressed opposition to these activities, arguing they were contrary to SCR 1973, had no means to stop such usurpation of Security Council control over the implementation of the resolution.

The December 2 press conference with Ambassador Churkin helped to illustrate and examine this problem.

In an earlier Security Council meeting, Brazil had indicated it was planning to do a concept paper on the “responsibility while protecting” under the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) concept.⁴ Brazil’s two year term on the Security Council will be over at the end of December, but no such concept paper has yet been presented. When Churkin was asked what he

could tell journalists about the progress on this paper, he said, “My understanding is that it is going to be a serious process, a fundamental process of revisiting those things.”

On the issue of the Security Council’s summary of what had happened in the course of implementing Resolution 1973 against Libya, Ambassador Churkin explained the dilemma this posed for the Council. “As to lessons learned, this is a much broader issue which unfortunately I think we cannot put together as council members. It is something for round tables, academics, politicians to discuss in various fora. We discussed that. We have had a number of discussions of the various lessons we have learned, and the things we need to do or not to do.”

He recommended looking back at the Security Council meetings held in open chambers, particularly at the statements he had made in his capacity as the Russian Federation Permanent Representative. “I minced no words about some of the conclusions that need to be drawn from our Libyan experience,” he said, “But I am sure the Libyan experience is something that will have an impact of such importance that this will be a subject of attention for years to come.”

Asked whether the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) concept had been misused by the Security Council, Ambassador Churkin responded, “This is a very dangerous thing.” This was not only the view of his delegation, but also of others both on the council and outside of the council, he explained.

“That is something that makes the life and work on the Security Council very difficult because words are no longer what they used to be. They have different meanings,” he said, offering as an example the implementation of the No Fly Zone on Libya contained in SCR 1973.

He described how, “No Fly Zone in the good old world, used to mean that nobody’s flying. That you prevent aircraft from being used against civilians.”

“In the brave new world,” though, said Churkin, “No Fly Zone means freewheeling bombing of the targets you choose to bomb in whatever modality and mode you want to bomb. Close air support ok. Bombing a television station, OK. And that is a matter of grave concern.”

The significance of there being such a big difference in how words are being used, Churkin explained, was that, “Now we have to think not

only about the words and concepts, but about the enormous ability of some of our colleagues to interpret the world out of them. And this is a very serious issue.”

“We need to return to the Council, to our interaction and cooperation with our colleagues, a clear understanding of what we mean,” maintained Churkin.

Demonstrating the significance of this discrepancy between how different members of the Council interpreted the words of resolutions, Churkin pointed out that in the case of Libya, there had been reports that the Gaddafi regime was using airplanes to bomb civilians. (But no evidence was ever presented to support these claims, at the time, or since.)⁵

There were, however, no such reports about Syria. How then could there be “such uncritical enthusiasm” for setting up a No Fly Zone for Syria, Churkin wondered. Where was this enthusiasm coming from?

“Is it,” he asked, “an indication that in fact when they are saying that they don’t plan any military action (against Syria-ed), they don’t really mean it? When they talk about a no fly zone, they are already planning targets to bomb in Syria?”

Referring to the implication of this problem, Churkin noted, “On various issues which can have dramatic repercussions for regions and countries, and unfortunately this is clearly the case about Syria and about Iran and about some other issues, so it is not a perfect day for diplomacy, a perfect day to work in the Security Council.”

III – Security Council Action Against Syria

In response to several questions from journalists asking about the Russian Federation’s view of what action was appropriate with respect to Syria, Churkin explained the principles that should guide such action.

“We think it’s the role of the international community to try to help resolve internal crises by promoting dialogue,” Churkin told journalists, “This is what we have been doing with our contacts with the Syrian authorities, opposition, and the Arab League.”

Referring to the proposal of the Arab League to conduct a monitoring mission in Syria, he explained, “We think that the Arab League has a unique opportunity to play a constructive role in Syria.”

This required, however, that the Arab League be willing to consider Syria's proposed amendments to the Arab League proposal, rather than just offering Syria an ultimatum that it had to accept the Arab League proposal with no negotiations over it, said Churkin.

"We think the Syrian government's proposed amendments to that plan could have been considered," he explained. "Personally I looked at the two texts. I haven't seen in the texts anything which couldn't have been bridged there with some negotiations on the modalities of the deployment of that mission."

Concerned that, "this opportunity to really mediate between the government and the opposition is not lost," Churkin proposed that the Arab League economic sanctions imposed on Syria were "counterproductive."

Comparing Security Council action on Syria with its action on Yemen, Churkin said that Russia was able to "exercise our position of principle" in Security Council Resolution 2014 (2011) about Yemen, "by encouraging dialogue and political accommodation on the basis of the Gulf States initiative."⁶ In the case of Yemen, Churkin noted, the Security Council and the international community had rallied in support of the action that Russia proposed.

But when it came to Syria, he described how Russia and China had proposed a resolution that "had many of the same elements which were contained in the resolution which was adopted on... Yemen." In the case of Syria, however, the Russian-Chinese sponsored Resolution, was not supported by several other members of the Council.⁷

"So I think in Yemen the international community can be proud that even in a situation with bloodshed and very serious conflict in a country we were giving a strong signal in favor of dialogue and of political accommodation and this is what we achieved," said Churkin.

"What we don't understand," he noted, "is why if that can be done in Yemen, why that can't apply to Syria."

Furthermore, in the case of Syria, he said, the Security Council met with opposition from some of the capitals, to any form of dialogue to resolve the Syrian conflict. The governments opposed to dialogue, he reported, took the position that there was, "no way dialogue can help. That those who go into dialogue they should stop it immediately," and that

“there is no future in the Arab League initiative.”

Such action is, he proposed “something very counterproductive. And this is something that has exacerbated the situation in Syria.”

While maintaining that there is “no prescription for different countries” since they are all structured differently with regard to their traditions and political set up, Churkin proposed that there is a general attitude and principles that can be applied in a general way. This is that “the international community is not there to smell blood and to fan confrontation. But the international community is there to prevent further bloodshed and to encourage dialogue.”

Reflecting on the importance of such an international effort in favor of domestic dialogue, Churkin said, “This is what the United Nations is all about. This is what the Security Council is about.”

IV – Concerns about Libya

With respect to Gaddafi, Churkin said members of the council, including Russia, thought that what happened to Gaddafi is something that shouldn’t have happened.”

Ambassador Churkin was asked whether the Security Council was concerned about the conditions in Libya for those who had supported the Gaddafi government and particularly, about the situation of Saif al Islam Gaddafi and whether it was conceivable he could get a fair trial in Libya when there was no functioning legal system in the country.

Churkin responded that these concerns about the situation in Libya had been discussed very often and the delegation of the Russian Federation and of a number of other countries had raised these concerns. Also he spoke to concern over the plight of migrant workers in Libya. “We directed the UN mission in Libya to pay proper attention to these issues,” he said.

He indicated that they would continue to follow these issues closely.

V – Conclusion

Ambassador Churkin’s press conference was an important and all too rare example of a press conference held by a member of the Security Council which helps to shed light on the workings of the Council. All too

often the problems that develop in the course of Security Council activity are shrouded in shadows and kept from public view. This is contrary to the obligations of the Council, which is obliged to report on its actions to the General Assembly in annual and special reports under the UN Charter, Article 15(1). Members of the General Assembly responding to the annual report from the Security Council ask for more analytical reports, rather than just summaries of the activities that have gone on over the year.

In his December 2 press conference, Ambassador Churkin shared some of the problems that developed in the Security Council over the course of the implementation of the resolutions on Libya. In the process he has helped clarify what future difficulties in the Security Council will be given a failure to understand and resolve the problems he has outlined. By helping to reveal the difficulties in the functioning of the Security Council, Ambassador Churkin has provided important details that need further attention and consideration.

Notes:

1. Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation and President of the Security Council for the month of December 2011 on the Programme of Work of the Security Council for the month.

<http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/webcast/2011/12/press-conference-ambassador-vitaly-churkin-president-of-the-security-council.html>

2. See for example the critique of Resolution 1973 by the Concerned Africans, "An Open Letter to the Peoples of Africa and the World from Concerned Africans," July 2011.

<http://www.concernedafricans.co.za/>

See also Mahmood Mamdani, "A Ugandan's Perspective: What Does Gaddafi's Fall Mean for Africa." <http://www.unaentimes.com/2011/10/>

3. For some of the examples of NATO's bombing of civilians that went on during its military campaign against Libya see:

Global Civilians for Peace in Libya <http://globalciviliansforpeace.com/tag/bombing/>

"Libya: War Without End" by Stephen Lendmain, ThePeoplesVoice.org, October 30, 2011. <http://www.thepeoplesvoice.org/TPV3/Voices.php/2011/10/30/libya-war-without-end>

4. See Nov. 9, 2011 meeting of the Security Council on Protecting Civilians in the Situation of Armed Struggle, S/PV.6650, pg. 16. Ambassador Viotti said: "The Brazilian delegation will shortly circulate a concept paper. It elaborates on the idea that the international community, as it exercises its responsibility to protect, must demonstrate a high level of responsibility while protecting." <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/PRO/N11/585/43/PDF/N1158543.pdf?OpenElement>

5. Actually no evidence was ever presented that airplanes were ever used to bomb civilians under the Gaddafi government. It was only under NATO that there is evidence that airplanes were used resulting in the bombing of civilians. See for example:

<http://globalciviliansforpeace.com/reports>

“Despite detailed investigation we could not find any evidence that the three regions of Tripoli cited in UN resolution 1973 had been subjected to government forces bombardment nor that their had been fighting between government troops and the people, we received many testimonies to the contrary.”

6. See SCR 2014 (passed October 21, 2011)

[http://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?Open&DS=S/RES/2016\(2011\)&Lang=E](http://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?Open&DS=S/RES/2016(2011)&Lang=E)

7. See for example Ronda Hauben, “UN Security Council Challenges Hidden Agenda on Syria,” taz.de http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2011/10/27/security_council_veto_on_syria/

[Editor’s Note: The following article appeared on the netizenblog on Feb. 11, 2011 at:

<http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2012/02/11/defending-the-un-charter/>]

Defending the UN Charter by Use of the Veto: The SC Resolution on Syria

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Up until the Arab League Observer Mission had been sent to Syria on December 24, 2011, there had been two main narratives describing what was happening in Syria. One was that the violence in Syria was by the government against its people. The other was that the violence was also perpetrated by armed groups attempting to destabilize Syria. There had been no independent way to judge between these two narratives. The Observer Mission Report of January 22 provided such an independent judgment.¹

The Observer Mission determined that there were armed opposition elements in Syria. (Paragraph 71) The original protocol setting up the Observer Mission did not take into account this aspect of the situation. By detailed observations in the Report, the Observer Mission documented that there were armed opposition elements attacking civilians and government

officials, blowing up trains and pipelines, civilian buses and killing not only Syrian civilians but also a French journalist.² (Paragraphs 25, 26, 27, 44, 75)

The Observer Mission Report noted that as a result of the Mission's insistence on a complete end to violence, the problem of violence by the Government forces and exchange of gunfire with armed elements in Homs and Hama had receded. "The most recent reports of the Mission," the Report stated, "point to a considerable calming of the situation and restraint on the part of those forces."

The Report documented that the Observer Mission witnessed peaceful demonstrations by both the opposition and the supporters of the government while the Mission was on the ground. (Paragraph 30)

Also, the Report said that, "The most important point in this regard is the commitment by 'all sides' to cease all aspects of violence thereby allowing the Mission to complete its tasks and ultimately lay the groundwork for the political process." (Paragraph 79) The Report warned that discontinuing the Mission "could lead to chaos on the ground". (Paragraph 81)

To seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Syria, the continuation of something like the Observer Mission would be needed. The Report concluded that there needed to be an "expansion of and a change in the Mission's mandate." (paragraph 79) Also the Mission needed political, media and technical support to fulfill its mandate. (Paragraphs 80, and 82)

The dominant states in the Arab League, however did not support changing the protocol to include the problem represented by the armed groups in Syria, as recommended by the Report. Instead, the Arab League introduced a plan to require President Assad of Syria to step down and to turn over power to the Vice President to fulfill a plan drafted without the Syrian government's agreement.³ This ignored the recommendations of the Report of the Observer Mission, and substituted the imposition of an Arab League political plan for Syria in place of the recommended modification and continuation of the Observer Mission. The Arab League political plan had as its aim the removal of the Syrian president, as opposed to creating a peaceful solution so that the Syrian people could make the political changes they desired in a Syrian determined process.

The Arab League brought their regime change political plan to the

UN Secretary-General asking him to submit it to the Security Council. The Arab League was seeking the UN's endorsement for its plan.

The Arab League submitted a letter to the UN Secretary-General requesting a meeting of the Security Council. The letter listed several enclosures.

Though the Report of the Observer's Mission (Report) to the UN was listed as one of the enclosures, this document was not included in the material originally sent to the UN.

The Russian Ambassador, however, insisted that the Report be submitted to the UN Security Council. No Security Council discussion of the Arab League plan was to be held until the Report was submitted to the Security Council. Also it was to be treated as an official document of the UN and translated into the six official languages as is customary of official documents.

Russia had requested that the Security Council hold a session to discuss the Report. Russia also requested that the head of the Observer Mission, General Mohammed Al-Dabi, be invited to the Security Council to discuss the Report. Russia's request to the Security Council to discuss the Report was not accepted, even though there were other Security Council members who agreed about the importance of the report. Instead some members of the Council wanted to schedule the Security Council to discuss the Arab League plan on Monday, January 30. Other members wanted the meeting on Tuesday, January 31 to give Security Council members time to read the Report.⁴

On January 31, as part of the Security Council meeting, the Report was officially circulated in English and Arabic along with the letter from the Arab League to the Secretary-General. The Arab League, represented by its Secretary-General Nabil Elaraby and the current rotating chairman of the League, Prime Minister Al-Thani of Qatar, presented its plan to the Security Council. They discouraged the Security Council from asking to meet with Al Dabi. Though some members of the Security Council recognized the importance of the Report, the discussion in the Council was diverted to the Arab League plan for Syria.

Subsequently, a draft Security Council resolution was submitted by Morocco. Though Russia also had submitted a revised version of the Resolution it had submitted weeks before, the discussion turned to the

Moroccan draft.⁵ The issue in contention over this draft was whether the Council would agree to “fully support” the Arab League plan for regime change in Syria.

The recommendations of the Observer Report presented the need to expand the protocol agreed to by the Syrian government and the Arab League to include a provision related to the presence of armed groups and the violence perpetuated by them. The Arab League proposal for regime change in Syria ignored this issue. The Security Council members differed on the need to make an independent judgment about whether the Arab League plan fit the criteria of Chapter VIII in the UN Charter. This provision of the Charter requires that regional actions supported by the Security Council be consistent with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations. (Article 52(1))

On Saturday, February 4, the Russian Federation submitted several amendments to the draft resolution, amendments it said would enable Russia to support a resolution on Syria.⁶ It asked that these amendments be discussed before taking a vote on the draft resolution.

To deal with the problem of armed groups and violence perpetuated by them, Russia proposed that a line be added to the Security Council Resolution that would not only demand the withdrawal of the government’s military forces from conflict areas, but in conjunction would require that armed groups be prevented from taking advantage of the vacuum to occupy those areas.⁷

Also the Russian Federation identified another important loophole in the draft Security Council resolution. The Arab League plan required that President Assad step down and turn over negotiations for a political transition to his vice president. This is essentially a call for Assad to agree to a forced regime change for Syria. If Assad were to resist, which one would expect of the head of State of a nation being attacked by armed insurgents who are killing civilians and destroying infrastructure. Then what? The arbitrary and mandatory time deadlines would provide a pretext for the advocates of foreign intervention to claim that the UN supports intervention into the internal affairs of Syria. This is what had been done with Libya. The Russian amendments proposed the need to change the mandatory time deadlines in the Arab League timetable to make the deadlines advisory, instead of mandatory. Mandatory time deadlines could

be used as a pretext to violate the UN Charter which prohibits foreign interference in the internal affair of a member state. (UN Charter, Article 2(7))

The request for time to discuss the amendments was denied, leading to a vote on the draft resolution at a public meeting of the Council on February 4. Russia and China as expected by all, vetoed the resolution. Chinese Ambassador Li Baodong supported Russia's request for continued consultations as "reasonable."⁸ He said that it was "regrettable" that Russia's request for a few days of discussion on its proposed amendments had not been honored.

Referring to the Charter to explain why China vetoed the resolution, Li Baodong said:

(T)he sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria should be fully respected. The actions of the Security Council on the Syrian issue should comply with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter....

"Under these principles," he said, "China has taken an active part in the consultations on the draft resolution, and supported the efforts made by the Arab League to facilitate a political settlement of the Syria issue and maintain stability in the region. Like many Council members, China maintains that, under the current circumstances, to put undue emphasis on pressuring the Syrian government, prejudge the result of the dialogue or impose any solution will not help resolve the Syrian issue, but instead may further complicate the situation."

Talking to journalists at a media stakeout at the UN, Russian Ambassador Vitaly Churkin described some of what led to his nation's veto of the proposed Security Council resolution.⁹ "As Syrian forces were pulling out, armed groups were moving in. We were trying to address that situation," he explained. To support a peaceful political solution to the crisis in Syria as required by the UN Charter, both sides capable of substantial violence had to be observed and called on to be restrained and to cease all acts of violence, thereby allowing the Mission to complete its tasks and, ultimately lay the groundwork for a political solution.

Commenting on the impact on Russia of the Security Council action on Libya, a columnist for Russia Today (RT), Fyodor Lukyanov, explains that, "Russia has drawn lessons in Libya last year after Moscow refrained

from using its veto in the UNSC, paving the way for ‘humanitarian intervention’ by NATO. The ‘no-fly’ mandate was almost immediately shifted into a regime change operation led by France and Britain. Russia felt its cooperation had been abused.”

The result of this experience, Lukyanov argues, is that, “Russia opposes any call for Bashar al-Assad to resign because ultimatums of this kind will mean entering onto a path whose final destination is invasion. This is because the UNSC will not allow its demand to be ignored, while it is unlikely that Assad will be in any hurry to fulfill it.”¹⁰

At a media stakeout after he spoke with the Security Council on Wednesday, February 8, Ban Ki-moon said that he had told the Security Council that the Arab League Secretary-General had spoken with him on the phone and asked the UN Secretary General about setting up some sort of Observer Mission in Syria in conjunction with the UN. The question this raises is whether such a possible joint Observer Mission would take into account the recommendations of the January 22 Observer Mission Report. The obligations of the UN Charter require that the UN Security Council act in line with the UN Charter, rather than just endorsing the actions of regional organizations even if such actions are in violation of the UN Charter.¹¹

The struggle continues at the UN Security Council to find a way to support a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Syria without violating the Purposes and Principles of the UN Charter. The February 4 veto was in the words of the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov, “the (United Nations) Charter at work.”

Notes:

1. “League of Arab States Observer Mission to Syria: Report of the Head of the League of Arab States Observer Mission to Syria for the period from 24 December 2011 to 18 January 2012” http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/Report_of_Arab_League_Observer_Mission.pdf

The official UN document distributed January 31 2012 at the UN contained the Observer Report as Enclosure 4 of S/2012/71

2. See for example, Ronda Hauben, AI Observer Report Corrects Media Narratives about Syria, taz.de January 31, 2012 <http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2012/01/31/observer-mission-report-syria/>

3. Security Council S/2012/71, Enclosure 1 “Elements of Arab Plan to Resolve the Syrian

Crisis,” January 30, 2012

Enclosure 1 listed the following steps to be taken in Syria:

1. Govt of national unity formed within 2 months. The President should grant his Vice-President full powers to fulfill transition phase
 2. Within 3 months of its formation free and fair elections should be held for a constituent assembly
 3. This should prepare a new draft constitution for approval by popular referendum and an electoral based on that draft constitution
 4. I was told that Security Council members received a copy of the Observer Mission Report sometime on Friday, January 27.
 5. Draft resolution S/2012/77 <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N12/223/75/PDF/N1222375.pdf?OpenElement> vetoed on February 4, 2012.
 6. Mathew Lee, “Russian Amendments Condemn Armed Groups, Only ‘Take Into Account’ AL,” *Inner City Press*, February 4, 2012.
<http://www.innercitypress.com/syria1rusam020412.html>
 7. Change proposed by Russia from the text of the Resolution on Syria. Resolution said: 5d) withdraw all Syrian military and armed forces from cities and towns, and return them to their original home barrack;
Russia’s requested change:
Requested change said: 5d) withdraw all Syrian military and armed forces from cities and towns, and return them to their original home barrack; in conjunction with the end of attacks by armed groups against State institutions and quarters and towns.
 8. UN Transcript, Security Council Meeting on Middle East Situation (February 4, 2012) – Syria, S/PV.6711 , p. 9-10 <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/PRO/N12/223/56/PDF/N1222356.pdf?OpenElement>
 9. Stakeout, Vitaly L. Churkin (Russian Federation) on Syria, Security Council Media Stakeout, February 4, 2012 <http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/webcast/2012/02/h-e-mr-vitaly-i-churkin-russian-federation-on-the-situation-in-syria-security-council-media-stakeout-2.html>
 10. Fyodor Lukyanov, “Why is Russia so Resolute on Syria?,” RT, February 3, 2012 <http://rt.com/politics/columns/unpredictable-world-foreign-lukyanov/russia-syria-assad-un/>
 11. Ban Ki Moon at stakeout at Security Council on February 8, 2012.
<http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/webcast/2012/02/un-secretary-general-ban-ki-moon-on-the-middle-east-security-council-media-stakeout.html>
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[Editor's Note: The following article appeared on the netizenblog on April 23, 2012. It can be seen at: <http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2012/04/23/unsc-approves-90-day-observer-mission-to-syria/>]

Second Track Challenged as UNSC Approves 90 Day Observer Mission to Syria

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I – Security Council Authorizes UN Observer Mission

At a stakeout for journalists on Saturday after the vote on Security Council Resolution 2043, Russia's UN Ambassador Vitaly Churkin explained that the text was carefully worded to signal all, including the opposition, to refrain from violence and to support the implementation of Special Envoy Kofi Annan's 6 point plan. This resolution (S/2012/2043) provides the authorization for up to 300 UN observers to be sent to Syria for a period of up to 90 days.¹ The resolution states that the "mandate of the Mission shall be to monitor a cessation of armed violence in all its forms by all parties and support the full implementation of the Envoy's six-point proposal."

Differences about some of the provisions of the resolution had been resolved by changes made to the draft resolution in a 3-1/2 hour consultation held by Security Council members on Friday evening. Ambassador Churkin expressed satisfaction that the Security Council resolution he had initiated provided the basis for the resolution approved by the Security Council on Saturday in a unanimous vote of all 15 members.

II – Statements After the Vote

Statements made by several of the members of the Security Council after the vote help to shed light on the situation the UN observer mission can expect to encounter in Syria. In his statement, South African Ambassador Baso Sangqu referred to a letter to the Security Council members received earlier in the week. In that letter, the UN Secretary General

reported that the Syrian government had welcomed the Advance Team of the observer mission, and that “despite some challenges, the Advance Team has enjoyed freedom of movement and has not observed major military concentrations or conflict.”

“We welcome the news,” Ambassador Sangqu said, “that the advance team has been able to visit hotspots of the conflict, including Homs and that they have observed calm and an end to major hostilities.” He noted that, “The deployment of the advance team has already proven to be a calming influence as violence has decreased during its presence. This marked decrease in violence should now be sustained.”

In his statement after the vote, Indian Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri thanked the Russian delegation for introducing the resolution. “This is a significant step in the Council’s collective support for the efforts of the joint Special Envoy, Mr. Kofi Annan,” said Ambassador Puri.

The Indian Ambassador observed, “it is a matter of satisfaction that Mr. Annan’s efforts over the last seven weeks have resulted in an improvement in the situation in Syria. Even though there have been reports of violations, the cease-fire that came into force on 12 April has been observed by all parties in a large part of Syria.” Ambassador Puri called for an expeditious deployment of the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) which the Security Council had just authorized.

China’s Ambassador Li Baodong expressed the hope that, “the Supervision Mission will fully respect Syria’s sovereignty and dignity, act in strict accordance with the authorization of the Security Council, adhere to the principles of neutrality, objectivity and impartiality, and play an active and constructive role in pushing for a sustained cessation of violence in Syria.”

In his comments after the vote, Ambassador Churkin, expressed his view that, “The resolution establishes a clear framework of responsibilities for all parties to end the Syrian violence and for the need for cooperation with the UN observer mission and the Special Envoy.” He called upon the “external players involved in the Syrian question” to behave “responsibly” and to act in accordance with the provisions of resolutions adopted by the Security Council. In that regard, he pointed to the fact that the UN Security Council is the body which holds primary responsibility for

matters of international peace and security. Other formats like the “groups of friends” that met in Tunis, Istanbul or Paris, should follow the resolutions of the Security Council and not undermine its work, he said. Similarly, he expressed the sentiment that “the Libyan model of action should remain forever in the past.”

While other delegations on the Security Council like those of Portugal, Pakistan, and Morocco pointed to the obligations of all in the Syrian conflict to honor the cease fire and cease violent acts, the US Ambassador Susan Rice focused her criticism solely on what she referred to as the “Assad regime.” And she threatened that if the Syrian government did not provide for “full freedom of movement for UN personnel” and other demands that she enumerated, the U.S. would “pursue measures against the Syrian government.”

The text of the resolution, however, contains no provision for “full freedom of movement for UN personnel” to be provided, as Ambassador Rice demanded. To the contrary, the resolution calls on the Syrian government to ensure the effective operation of UNSMIS by ensuring that unimpeded and immediate freedom of movement and access as necessary “to fulfill its mandate.” The mandate is not open ended but is specifically written. The mandate is “to monitor a cessation of armed violence in all its forms by all parties and support the full implementation of the Envoy’s six-point proposal.”

After all Council members who had asked to speak had been called on, the Syrian Ambassador Bashar al-Jaafari made a statement to the Council. He noted that there were statements made in the Security Council session in support of the resolution and statements contrary to it. He pointed to the fact that there was no reference in the resolution to the “Assad regime” as the US Ambassador had mischaracterized the Syrian government. Similarly, he noted the mischaracterizations of the violence in Syria. He pointed out that such mischaracterization had been critiqued in the Arab League Observer Report. (para 30, Arab League Observer Report)²

Examples presented in the Report provided convincing evidence that there were armed militants carrying out violent acts in Syria. Also the Arab League Observers noted in their Report that while they were in Syria, peaceful opposition protests that they observed had not been

disrupted by the Syrian government. (para 71, Arab League Observer Report)

Ambassador Jaafari characterized as topsy turvey blaming crimes by armed insurgents on the Syrian government. He hoped that the UN Observer Mission would help to dispel the media misinformation about the situation on the ground in Syria, as the Arab League Observer Mission Report had done.

III – Safety Issues and Lessons from Arab League Observer Mission

During the stakeout held by the Russian Ambassador after the Security Council meeting, one journalist asked a question referring to the danger of sabotage of the UN Observer Mission as had happened with the Arab League Observer Mission. This earlier mission was discontinued just as it documented the actual existence of an armed insurgency that was responsible for substantial violence in the Syrian conflict.

The Russian Ambassador acknowledged that the UN observers going to Syria would be facing a “daunting task.” He was concerned for their safety and noted that Russian observers would be part of the UN Mission. It would be their duty to report objectively, he explained, and he hoped that the international community would support their objective reporting.

In the Security Council process of planning for this Second Observer Mission to be sent to Syria, there appears to have been little attention paid to building on the lessons described in the Arab League Observers Report. The Report of the Arab League Observers was included as Enclosure Number 4 in the document S/2012/71 (p. 11-46) distributed at the January 31, 2012 meeting of the Security Council. In the Report, problems of the insufficiency of transportation and communication equipment were particularly noted, as was the need to make available adequate “administrative and logistic support” and “media and political support to create an appropriate environment that will enable it to fulfill its mandate in the required manner.” (Para 83) (See Also Para 64, 65,68 and 69, VIII)

The Report describes the experience of the Arab League Observers, both their successes and the problems they faced. In so doing it provides a basis to predict what problems will need to be solved and what difficul-

ties can be expected for the UN Observer Mission to Syria. Ambassador Churkin and several other members of the Security Council recognized the challenges that the UN Observer Mission will face, but the frequent distractions presented by those governments that are hopeful they can bring about regime change in Syria appear to hinder the needed consideration in the Security Council of how to build on the lessons of the Arab League Observer Mission.

IV – Netizen Comments

In an online discussion of a report on RT (Russia Today TV and streaming video) about the most recent Security Council Resolution authorizing the UN to provide for the observer mission in Syria, one netizen pointed to the problem of foreign support for the armed insurgency in Syria.³ As part of a longer comment, this netizen criticized the UN saying:

The UN has failed in its duties to protect Syria from outside interference by remaining silent on the continued arming/funding of the ‘opposition’ by the U.S./U.K./ Israel/Turkey and their Arab allies. (Anon, April 22. 00:08)

Another netizen commenting on the need for accurate reporting about the role of the armed insurgents wrote:

Let’s hope the monitors have the guts to tell the UN the role that the terrorist opposition plays in the mayhem. Unlike Ban-Ki-Moon, who blames it all on the govt. forces. (CON, April 21. 2012. 19:49)

A netizen comment on the irony represented by media reports which are in sharp contrast to the reality on the ground:

Despite the UN’s ‘peace plan’ being fully rejected by both the Syrian rebels and their Western and Arab League backers who have openly pledged cash, weapons, and support for them to continue fighting in full violation of the proposed cease-fire, the Western media has instead accused the Syrian government of failing to meet its obligations.... (Tony Cartalucci, April 21, 2012. 23:12)

Yet another netizen pointed to the lack of logic of much of Western reporting about the armed insurgents in Syria:

It is absurd to try to enforce a cease fire, when only (the) Government has signed the accord. The militants did not bother. And in the meantime, all Western governments are concerned about is the “right of Syrians to protest.” Fantastic. Let them just get in the streets, so that the bombers can blow them up and blame the Government. Militants are giving interviews in (the) Western press – *Der Spiegel* – about their executions of civilians suspected of supporting (the) regime!... If anywhere on (the) planet such armed extremists try to take over neighborhoods, the entire force of that country will be brought to bear on them, and nobody would shed a tear if they all get blasted into oblivion. But in Syria, we glorify them? And why? I am not sure, but it seems to me that Saudi Arabia and the Gulf do not like the fact that in Syria EVERYBODY can practice openly any religion – and is safe.... (Bianca, April 22, 2012. 06:54)⁴

Responding to such comments, another netizen wrote,

....I salute the discerning readers of this thread. (Igor, April 22, 2012. 13:38)

Such extracts from comments of netizens discussing the UN Security Council activities demonstrate that the situation in Syria is of concern to people around the world.

Security Council Resolution 2043, some of the statements made in the Security Council after the vote, and the Arab League Observer Mission Report paint a more accurate than usual picture of the crisis in Syria. Considered in light of sample netizen comments and other articles⁵ on the Internet critiquing mainstream media coverage of this crisis, a more accurate view of the crisis emerges which will be needed if the means is to be found to resolve the conflict.

Notes:

1. S/RES/2043 (2012) “The situation in the Middle East”

http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc_resolutions12.htm

The draft resolution was S/2012/245 <http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N12/306/08/pdf/N1230608.pdf?OpenElement>

2. The Arab League Observer Report <http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/>

GEN/N12/219/03/doc/N1221903.DOC?OpenElement

“Letter dated 24 January 2012 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, Enclosure 4. League of Arab States Observer Mission to Syria
“Report of Head of the League of Arab States Observer Mission to Syria for the period from 24 December 2011 to 18 January 2012,p. 11-22.”

Another copy of the Arab League Observer Report is online. The url is:

<http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/s2012-71ArabLeagueObserverMission.pdf>

3. <http://rt.com/news/un-security-council-monitors-syria-635/comments/>

4. “Ulrike Putz, “An Executioner for Syria’s Rebels Tells his Story,” *Der Spiegel*, March 29, 2012 <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,824603,00.html>

5. A couple of other recent articles documenting media misrepresentations of what is happening in Syria include: <http://english.al-akhbar.com/blogs/sandbox/surprise-video-changes-syria-timeline>, <http://www.syrianews.cc/syria-security-council-unscc-increases-observers-607.html>, <http://tunisianquestfortruth.wordpress.com/2012/02/06/samples-of-media-distortion-of-facts-about-syria-1-fake-pictures/> (contains some disturbing images)

[Editor’s Note: The following article appeared on the netizenblog on June 25, 2014 at: <http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2014/06/25/failure-at-un-to-condemn-ukraine-attack-on-embassy/>]

Failure at the UN to Condemn Ukraine Attack on Embassy of the Russian Federation

by Ronda Hauben
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On Saturday June 14, there was a violent attack on the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Kiev, Ukraine. A crowd gathered which included Right Sector members and the Ukrainian acting Foreign Minister who had been appointed after the February 21-22 unconstitutional change of government that had taken place in Ukraine.

The building was pelted with stones, firecrackers and paint. Windows were broken. Cars belonging to Embassy staff were overturned and vandalized. Fireman put out a fire that had been started, but through the mayhem Ukrainian law enforcement officials did nothing. The failure

of law enforcement officials to protect the Embassy is in violation of the [Vienna Convention on Consular Relations](#) (1963) which describes the actions and standards of behavior expected of host countries with respect to such an attack on another nation's Embassy.

Article 31 of the Vienna Convention includes the obligation: The receiving State is under a special duty to take all appropriate steps to protect the consular premises against any intrusion or damage and to prevent any disturbance of the peace of the consular post or impairment of its dignity

Not only did the Ukrainian officials fail in their diplomatic obligations, but a similar failure to support the fulfillment of this provision of the Vienna Convention marked the actions of the UN Security Council and initially, the spokesperson's office of the UN Secretary-General.

It is a usual and expected procedure at the UN Security Council that when an embassy is attacked to issue a press statement condemning the attack.

The Ambassador to the UN for the Russian Federation, Vitaly Churkin, speaking to reporters at the UN Security Council stakeout on June 16, the Monday following the attack, explained that he had sent out a press statement for the approval of members of the Security Council. A press statement requires the approval of all members of the Council, which was what he expected to happen. No statement was issued, however, because the Lithuanian Representative failed to approve it.

During the consultations held at the Council on Monday, Ambassador Churkin explained that several other members of the Security Council expressed their regrets that the Council had failed to issue a statement condemning the Saturday attack on the Russian Federation Embassy. Later some journalists speaking with members of the Lithuanian delegation reported that the Lithuanian delegation had not approved the statement asking that the Council also issue a condemnation of the downing of a Ukrainian military plane in Eastern Ukraine.

Asking that a statement condemning an assault on an Embassy be issued contingent on the issuing of a condemnation of some other situation can always be used as a means of disguising one's failure to support the diplomatic obligations of the Vienna Convention. But the diplomatic obligations of the Vienna Convention are not conditional on other

circumstances. They are specified obligations.

The failure to adhere to the obligations of the Vienna Convention was not merely a disease infecting the UN Security Council in this situation.

It is also the usual practice in such a situation for the UN Secretary-General's Office to issue a condemnation of any attack on an Embassy. Over the June 14-15 weekend, however, no such condemnation of the attack was issued by Ban Ki-moon's office. On Monday, June 16, when the Deputy Spokesperson for the Secretary-General was asked about this breach in obligation, he responded that the Secretary-General did not want to take any action that would inflame the situation.

To call a condemnation of an attack on an Embassy something that will inflame a situation, is akin to calling the Vienna Convention requiring that the host country protect an Embassy, an inflammatory act.

But the Vienna Convention is an agreement to protect against inflammatory acts, not the cause of an inflammatory action.

At a stakeout on Monday, June 16, Ambassador Churkin was asked about the failure of the Secretary-General's Office to issue a statement condemning the attack. He responded that he was surprised but he would look into the situation.

While the Secretary-General's Office did not issue any condemnation of the attack on the Embassy during the weekend of June 14-15, on June 14, it issued a [condemnation](#) of the downing of a Ukrainian military plane in Eastern Ukraine.

The failure to condemn the attack on the Embassy of the Russian Federation was a breach in obligation by the UN Secretary-General's Office.

On Tuesday, June 17, the Deputy Spokesman for the Secretary-General announced a second condemnation of the downing of the Ukrainian military plane. This time, however, the announcement included a statement about the need to protect an Embassy.

The Deputy Spokesman [announced](#):

The Secretary-General condemned the growing violence in Ukraine, including the downing of a Ukrainian military airplane. The Secretary-General also decried acts such as the attack on the Russian embassy in Kyiv, which only increase

tension. I would like to add that he condemns that attack and urges the Ukrainian authorities to abide by their international commitments to ensure the inviolability of all diplomatic missions and personnel.

Though the UN Security Council and the UN Secretary-General's office both initially exhibited serious failures with regard to their obligations in the situation with the Embassy of the Russian Federation that occurred on Saturday June 14 in Kiev, the Deputy Spokesperson for the Secretary-General later stated a condemnation at a press briefing.

There were netizens discussing the situation on blogs on June 14-15, however, who were expressing their concern, not only at the attack on the Russian Federation's Embassy, but also at the failure of the UN Security Council and of the UN to meet its obligations to be a force for peace in such a situation. By the UN Security Council's failing to condemn the attack, one comment on the MoonofAlabama blog [noted](#), the UN was "tacitly giving their official blessing to it."

Another post in a thread on the Vineyard Saker blog [commented](#) about UN Security Council members blocking a criticism of the attack on the Russian Embassy. "This effectively kills the Vienna Convention. In fact, this pretty much kills the U.N. And makes all embassies of all nations fair targets. Welcome to the new Dark Ages, ladies and gentlemen. BOPOH, 15 June, 2014 01:20"

And another [comment](#) on the same thread maintained that the failure of the Security Council to condemn the attack on the Embassy of the Russian Federation meant that, "The UN is now a totally defunct organization that is going the same way as the organization before it, the league of nations...."

[Editor's Note: The following article appeared on the netizenblog on Sept 22, 2015 at: <http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2015/09/22/amb-churkins-2015-sc-presidency-press-briefing/>]

Ambassador Churkin's September 2015 Security Council Presidency's Press Briefing

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On September 2, 2015 the UN press briefing room was filled with journalists.¹ Vitaly Churkin, the Russian Federation's Ambassador to the UN arrived in a cheerful mood for his press conference for UN accredited media. The Russian Federation holds the rotating presidency of the Security Council for the month of September 2015. This is a significant month for the UN as it is the month that traditionally brings heads of state and government from around the world to the New York headquarters for the opening of the United Nations General Assembly. This year is somewhat special, however, as the UN is also celebrating its 70th birthday. A larger than usual number of heads of state and government will travel to New York to contribute to this special occasion.

Ambassador Churkin's conduct of what is the traditional press conference held by the new president set a notable example of how a Security Council member holding the rotating monthly presidency should interact with the press.

While the recent tendency among several of the current Security Council members has been to shorten the time of the press conference where they take questions, Ambassador Churkin welcomed questions and the press conference continued for almost an hour.

His responses to questions were in general forthright and helped to clarify some of the spectrum of views of those on the Security Council. Similarly he explained how progress had been made on a recent resolution, thereby giving a sense of how the previous frequent stalemates that have occurred on the Council could be averted.

Perhaps one of the most controversial issues relating to the Security Council procedures is the fact that the UN Charter provides the right of veto over Security Council decisions to the five Permanent Members of the Council. Recently conflicting views among members of the Security Council on the Syrian conflict have resulted in some vetoes of resolutions that were tabled for a vote by the Council before there was adequate negotiation over the points in contention.

Some members of the Security Council and other UN members are campaigning to weaken the right of the Permanent Members of the Council to use the veto. Also there are calls for increasing the number of members on the Security Council, with some UN member nations maintaining the need to give some of the new members the veto, while there are other UN member nations trying to limit any further nations that would be granted the veto.

One question to Ambassador Churkin was about his views on the proposals for Security Council Reform.

Ambassador Churkin responded that there were two basic issues in the reform controversy. One had to do with the expansion of the Security Council. This issue is: Should the expansion include new permanent member seats or just a lengthening of some of the terms of elected members? This might involve a new category of members, called "Intermedia Members." Ambassador Churkin observed that he didn't see any consensus on this issue. Until there is such a consensus it was unlikely, therefore, that there be any change decided by UN members about this issue.

A second issue in Security Council reform efforts, he explained, is a proposal to limit the veto of permanent members in the case of "mass atrocities." Ambassador Churkin explained why he felt such a proposal was unworkable. The proposal is that a decision by a yet undetermined number of members of the UN, whether it be 50 or 100, or by the Secretary-General or the High Commissioner for Human Rights, that war crimes were happening, would trigger a prohibition against a permanent member using the veto.

The problem with such a proposal, he explained, was that this is a political world. It is not so difficult to put together 50 members of the General Assembly or 100 to deprive a permanent member of the Security

Council of his or her veto. The number is not important, Ambassador Churkin argued, as it could be 150. That would mean, however, members of the General Assembly infringing on the prerogatives of the Security Council. Churkin also noted that “you cannot say that every resolution in a dire situation is a good resolution and not going to be used for political purposes....”

It is the veto, he maintained, which allows members of the Security Council to produce balanced decisions which make it possible for the minority opinion to be reflected in the work of the Security Council.

And he pointed to what happened in the Security Council in 2011 with the resolution against Libya. There were those hoping the veto would have been used to stop the passage of Security Council Resolution 1973.

Sometimes as in a case like that of Libya, the absence of the veto can produce a disaster, he noted.

Ambassador Churkin was asked whether the U.S. and the Russian Federation could work together in the Security Council on the situation in Syria.

In response to this question, he offered a recent example of how they had worked together. Ambassador Churkin described how he was first given a draft resolution by the U.S. on the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The U.S. is the pen holder in drafting resolutions on Syria. He recognized that he would have to veto the draft resolution unless there were needed changes.

But in this case, the U.S. was willing to negotiate with the Russian Federation to create a resolution that both the U.S. and the Russian Federation could agree to. Through contacts at the level of national Ambassadors between the U.S. and the Russian Federation, and then through negotiation between the Russian Federation’s Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, and the U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry, a new draft resolution was prepared which the Russian Federation was able to support. Churkin explained that this was a tedious process and that Kerry and Lavrov even had a meeting with the Saudi Foreign Minister on the resolution. There were also meetings with the Syrian opposition and the Syrian government. The result was S/RES/2235 (2015) and support for the work of the UN Secretary-General.

There were a number of other questions raised during Ambassador

Churkin's press conference. One of the questions was whether there was anything the Security Council could do to stop the attack on Yemen.

Ambassador Churkin explained that what was happening in Yemen was a very dramatic situation. That it was well known that the U.S. and the U.K. are providing all kinds of support for the operation against Yemen. These two nations, who are Security Council members, share the responsibility for what is going on in Yemen. Such a military campaign produces a lot of civilian casualties. The way it looks now is that the mood to continue fighting is prevailing over the need to produce a political program, he said.

Another question concerned the lack of action by the Middle East Quartet in helping to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Ambassador Churkin pointed out that the Quartet was important as it provided an international framework to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian crisis.

Going through the calendar of the Security Council for the month of September, Ambassador Churkin especially pointed to a Security Council meeting planned for September 30, 2015. It would be held at the Foreign Minister level of representation. During the meeting, with Foreign Minister Lavrov as Chair, the Russian Federation would present a proposal for a United Front against terrorist groups.

The Security Council press conference lasted 50 minutes, in sharp contrast with the ever shorter press conferences held by some other members of the Security Council when they held the rotating presidency. Such a period of time gave Ambassador Churkin a chance to hear questions and to present responses that helped to shed light on the workings of the Council and the obstacles and successes of the efforts of different member nations in helping the Council to make progress or to be stymied in its efforts.

This press conference provided an example of the kind of press conference that can help the press to provide better coverage of the work of the Council.

Note:

1. <http://webtv.un.org/media/watch/sc-president-vitaly-i-churkin-russian-federation-on-the-security-council-programme-of-work-in-september-2015-press->

[Editor's Note: The following article appeared on the netizenblog on Oct. 5, 2016. It can be seen at: http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2016/10/05/women_asking_to_participate_in_peace_treaty_process/]

Women Peace Activists Ask Ban Ki-moon to Initiate a Process for a Peace Treaty to End Korean War

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On Tuesday, September 27, 2016, women peace activists held a press conference at the Interchurch Center across from the United Nations Headquarters building in N.Y.C. They announced that they had delivered a letter signed by more than 100 women asking UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to initiate a peace process which will lead to a peace treaty between the U.S. and the DPRK by 2020.

They explained that with 100 days left before the Secretary-General completes his second five year term at the head of the UN Secretariat, he has an obligation to fulfill on a promise he made in a speech in 2007 where he stated:

Beyond a peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue with North Korea, we should aim to establish a peace mechanism, through transition from armistice to a permanent peace regimen.

In their letter the peace activists reminded the UN Secretary-General, "We look to you to leave behind a legacy of diplomacy for peace in Korea, Northeast Asia and the World."

In the past few weeks, journalists who are part of the UN press corps have asked the Secretary-General if he has any intention of using his little time left as Secretary-General to do something to work toward a peaceful resolution of the tension on the Korean Peninsula. Secretary-General Ban

Ki-moon's last term in office will expire on December 31, 2016.

In response to the questions posed by these reporters, the Secretary-General replied that he has no special plans.

It is to the credit of these women peace activists that they continue to call on the Secretary-General to fulfill on the obligation of his office to work to lessen the tension on the Korean Peninsula. But whether their efforts will lead to any action on the part of the Secretary-General or not does not detract from the importance of such efforts on the part of journalists and peace activists.

The peace activists holding the press conference pointed out that currently tensions are especially high on the Korean Peninsula. The combination of military exercises by U.S. and South Korea, the U.S. bringing B1 bombers to South Korea, and the North Korean nuclear tests leave the situation on the Korean Peninsula as one with no obvious means of lessening the tension.

During the press conference, one of the speakers, Suzy Kim, described a meeting held by the peace activists in February 2016 in Bali, Indonesia.

The International peace activists group Women Cross the DMZ (WCDMZ) had invited a South Korean women peace delegation and a North Korean women peace delegation to meet with them to discuss how to work toward the signing of a peace treaty between the U.S. government and the North Korean government that would end the Korean War. In order to make the arrangements for their meeting, there was a need to get permissions from the South Korean government and the North Korean government for the women from their respective countries to meet with each other. While the delegation of WCDMZ peace activists got the needed permission from the North Korean government for the proposed meeting, the South Korean government would not approve such a meeting. Therefore, the international peace activists decided to hold separate meetings with the North Korean women and the South Korean women.

The WOMENCROSSDMZ.org web site includes a summary which describes the Bali meetings and includes a statement of principles created by the North Korean women and the international peace activists. Following is the statement:

MEETING AGREEMENT

Bali Indonesia, February 10, 2016

(Between WCDMZ International Delegation and DPRK Delegation)

1. We will make active efforts for public education and awareness raising regarding the situation on the Korean Peninsula, and the need for an end to military action that further aggravates the situation.
2. We will work together as Korean and international women, in efforts to improve inter-Korean relations and achieve peaceful reunification of Korea, in the spirit of prior inter – Korean agreements such as the June 15 North and South Joint Declaration, 2000.
3. We will carry out work toward the achievement of lasting peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. This includes the removal of various political and physical hindrances to peace and reunification, replacement of the Armistice Agreement with a peace treaty, and the eventual denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the entire world.
4. We will promote women’s leadership at all levels of peace-building, including preventing armed conflict and participating in peace negotiations. International women will actively work to urge each government to support women’s involvement in the Korean peace process, as provided for in UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

Such a statement provides a guide for a transnational peace building campaign. The statement is an expression of the need for peace negotiations toward replacing the Korean War Armistice Agreement with a peace treaty and the eventual denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the rest of the world.

The summary of the February Bali meeting offers a demonstration of the value of including women in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in peace negotiations for the Korean Peninsula.

The importance of implementing UN Resolution 1325 in the conflict on the Korean Peninsula was also raised at an October 3, 2016 press conference at the UN marking the Russian Federation assuming the

October 2016 rotating presidency of the UN Security Council. On the agenda for the October 2016 schedule is a UN Security Council meeting on October 25 which will be an open debate on UNSC Resolution 1325.

A question raised by a journalist and the response from Ambassador Vitaly Churkin at the October 3 press conference helps to support the need for women peace activists to be part of the peace process in difficult conflict situations like the Korean conflict.

Following is the slightly edited transcript of this question and Ambassador Churkin's response:

(Journalist): "Yes, I have a question about (Security Council Resolution-ed) 1325. There are women, international women peace activists who went from North Korea and South Korea, and met with women in both countries. And now they sent a letter to Ban Ki-moon asking him for a process towards a peace treaty (between the U.S. and North Korea-ed) and also to involve women in the process. And here we have the situation with North Korea where the Security Council has not made any progress. And they (the international peace activists-ed) are saying we need women involved in doing this, women working for peace.

Is there any way you see of doing this, any way you see to have 1325 actually implemented so you get some help toward having a peace development?"

Response from Ambassador Churkin:

(Ambassador Churkin): "Well, You know what we believe is that, this is an extremely difficult situation. And the cycle of action and counter action which we have seen in the past few years, actually since 2005 when this deal of September 19 fell through, it is not working.

So we do believe we need to try some creative thinking. We don't have some specific immediate proposals, but certainly, DPRK testing and then U.S. and others conducting some higher level military maneuvers there, you know, beefing up their military presence, that does not help at all.

In that creative thinking, it may well be the greater involvement of women could be one of the elements that might move the situation forward."¹

By recognizing the need for and importance of contributions for the peace process mandated by UNSC Resolution 1325, Secretary-General

Ban Ki-moon would do well to favorably respond to the letter from the international women peace activists.

Note:

1. See webcast for Oct 3, 2016 press conference with Ambassador Churkin: <http://webtv.un.org/media/watch/ambassador-vitaly-churkin-of-the-russian-federation-president-of-the-security-council-of-october-2016-press-conference/5153898747001> (at 33:08-33:58, and 33:59-34:42)

[Editor's Note: On Feb 20, 2017 Vitaly Churkin died suddenly in his office in NYC. Churkin had been the Permanent Representative the Russian Federation to the United Nations for over ten years. At the Feb. 21 meeting of the Security Council, the Security Council Members and other Member States paid tribute to Ambassador Churkin. Most of those tributes follow.]

UN Security Council Tribute to the Memory of His Excellency Ambassador Vitaly Churkin

The meeting was called to order Feb. 21, 2017 at 10:10 a.m.

The President: As members know, yesterday the Council adopted a press statement on the passing of the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations (SC/12724). As President of the Security Council, I propose that the Council observe a minute of silence in connection with the death of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. The members of the Security Council observed a minute of silence.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (spoke in Russian): The Russian delegation is grateful for the warm words and expressions of condolence on Russia's irreparable loss of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. We have lost an outstanding diplomat, a great professional, a talented orator and polemicist, and a soulful and kind-hearted person. He had

encyclopedic knowledge that he often applied in practice, delving into the finer points of all issues discussed. Working at the forefront of international diplomacy and occupying the most critical posts, Vitaly Ivanovich defended the positions of his country for more than 40 years.

Thanks to his talent and brilliant mind, he often found solutions to what seemed to be impossible situations. He always sought ways to unify efforts and strike a balance of interests, while carefully listening to the views of his partners in debates. That is why he was respected by all who worked with him, even those who may not have agreed with his approach. The hundreds of calls and letters of condolence that continue to flow into the Russian Mission bear witness to that.

Vitaly Ivanovich will always remain in our memory as a principled diplomat of the highest calibre, a leader who demanded much but also upheld the highest standards. I again thank everyone for their kind words.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (spoke in Spanish): In a press communiqué issued yesterday, the Government of Uruguay expressed its deepest sorrow over the passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, noting that he was a highly seasoned diplomat who represented his country responsibly and earnestly and whose talent, professionalism and dedication were recognized by all his colleagues.

The Government of Uruguay offers its sincere condolences to the family of Mr. Churkin and to the Russian Government its sincere condolences for their terrible loss. We should have wished to express to Vitaly personally our great admiration of his professionalism and our pleasure in sharing his experience, knowledge and honest work.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (spoke in Chinese): China is deeply shocked at and regrets the untimely passing of Ambassador Churkin following a brief illness. We express our deep sorrow at his passing and offer our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and the Government and the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation.

As the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation for over 10 years, Ambassador Churkin was an able, experienced and senior diplomat. He made enormous contributions to the United Nations and multilateralism. He worked right up to the last minute of his life as an exemplar of dedication and professionalism, and was thus an outstanding

representative of diplomats. We are deeply saddened by his passing, which is a loss for the entire United Nations diplomatic corps. Ambassador Churkin was a good friend to many of us present here. He was sincere and kind. Although we mourn his passing, his memory will remain with us forever. He will be deeply missed. May he rest in peace.

China joins with the Russian Federation and other Council members in playing an active role in upholding multilateralism and the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, the maintenance of world peace and the promotion of common development.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): Let me say from the bottom of my heart that the passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin is a great tragedy, not just for his family and Russia but for the Organization and multilateral diplomacy, at a time when the United Nations is needed more than ever. One need not delve into this at length. These are not normal times. This is a period when we need a person like Vitaly — a patriot for his country, no doubt, but also a diplomat whom we could trust at a time when that quality is not found in abundance. He would never mislead you and was a person who allowed space for mutual accommodation. One thing is very clear — he left us a time when people like him are needed the most. On behalf of my Government, I want to express condolences to his family, his colleagues, the United Nations family and the Government of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Arancibia Fernández (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (spoke in Spanish): I should like at the outset, on behalf of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, to offer our most sincere condolences to the bereaved family, the Mission of the Russian Federation, the Government and the people of Russia on the passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, who was a great exponent of global diplomacy.

The Bolivian Mission to the United Nations regrets the loss of one of the most brilliant Ambassadors in our forum — a fervent defender of multilateralism who always managed to build bridges for dialogue and agreement between diverging positions, thereby resolving the most difficult issues, as with the cease-fire agreement in Syria, which was a milestone that would not have been possible without Ambassador Churkin's work and commitment to peace. His principled position was also apparent in other situations, such as that in Palestine and his opposition to neocolonialism.

Lastly, on behalf of Ambassador Llorentty Solíz, who is traveling and therefore not able to attend today's meeting, I extend our most sincere condolences to the family of Ambassador Churkin. Ambassador Llorentty Solíz considered him a brilliant colleague and a close, beloved friend. We appreciated his eloquent speeches, which contributed greatly to the debates held in this Chamber. May his soul rest in peace.

Mr. Vassilenko (Kazakhstan) (spoke in Russian): We were saddened to learn yesterday of the untimely passing of Vitaly Ivanovich Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations. On behalf of Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov and the entire Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, we convey to him our deepest condolences to the bereaved family and to the Russian delegation on the passing of such a brilliant diplomat.

Vitaly Ivanovich Churkin was an outstanding individual who defended the interests of his country and made a significant contribution to strengthening the principles of multilateral diplomacy. Saddened by the news, our Minister, who used to be the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations, said:

“The passing of Vitaly Ivanovich, with whom I worked for the past three years in the United Nations, is for me a personal tragedy. It is an intolerable loss for the whole diplomatic corps. He was an outstanding person, a good friend, a reliable ally and a true professional. We shall always remember him. May he rest in peace.”

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I was deeply shocked and saddened by the news of the passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. I happened to meet him on Sunday at lunchtime; coincidentally, we were seated next to each other at a restaurant. He was with his wife, I was with my wife, and we were all very happy at the time. In fact, he had arrived a bit after I did, so I did not realize that he was there. I suddenly heard a voice saying, Koro, what do you recommend? I looked back and there was Vitaly, looking happy, looking very well and with his usual big smile.

We happened to be of the same age, so while a lot of heated discussions took place in the Chamber and in the consultation room, I always had something that I felt for him. He was certainly a great, true, outstanding diplomat. He worked hard for his country, but at the same time we all loved him for his humour and his willingness to try to resolve

issues. May he rest in peace.

Ms. Haley (United States of America): I should like to express the deepest condolences of the United States on the passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. I did not have the honour of working with Vitaly for very long, but his diplomacy will be long remembered. He was a fierce advocate for his country. He was a consummate diplomat. He was brilliant, wise, gracious and funny. He could spot even the narrowest opportunities to find a compromise. Having spent the early part of his career in the United States, Vitaly also recognized the value of closer ties between our two countries.

Vitaly's passing is a shock to all of us and a great loss. Let me once again, on behalf of the United States, offer our thoughts and prayers to Vitaly's family, to our colleagues at the Russian Mission and to the people of Russia. God bless.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): Like others, I should like to express my deepest personal condolences to the delegation of the Russian Federation and to the family and friends of Vitaly Churkin. Vitaly was an exceptional diplomat and a truly remarkable man. We disagreed on many issues, but I always found him to be an honest and decent colleague, no matter the issues, no matter the positions. It has not really sunk in yet that he has died. I will remember him every day. My thoughts go out to Irina, to their children, to their family, to Petr, to all the members of the Russian delegation, to all Russian diplomats everywhere.

I will always remember the lessons that I learned from Vitaly. He was a diplomatic giant, a maestro of the Security Council. May he rest in peace.

Mr. Delattre (France) (spoke in French): On behalf of France and on my own behalf, I should like to pay special tribute to our colleague and friend Vitaly Churkin. I should like to convey to his wife, Irina, and to his family our most sincere condolences and our deepest sadness, which I would also convey to all of the Russian Mission.

Vitaly Churkin was an exceptional representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations. Beyond our differences, we always worked in a spirit of mutual respect and personal friendship. Vitaly Churkin was more than an exceptional diplomat, more than a fearsome negotiator; he was a master of diplomacy. He was one of the most talented

diplomats I ever met. We will miss him greatly, and his spirit will remain here in the Security Council with us. I will never forget him.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (spoke in French): Among the many, many expressions of sympathy we have heard since yesterday in memory of our illustrious colleague Vitaly Churkin, whose affection and friendship we shall sorely miss, one in particular struck me, and I should like to reiterate it here:

(spoke in English)

“With Ambassador Churkin’s passing, the United Nations has lost a highly intelligent, frank, wise and dynamic presence and a diplomat committed to the dignity of the Security Council.”

(spoke in French)

As was already done by the Foreign Minister of Senegal yesterday in a letter to his counterpart, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mr. Sergey Lavrov, I would like personally and on behalf of my entire delegation to convey to Ambassador Iliichev our most heartfelt condolences on the passing of a person whom many of us so rightly considered to embody the spirit of the Security Council.

The Secretary-General, as has been said here, has contributed to a surge in diplomacy. Once again I would quote Mr. Churkin himself, in 2011, who, in this very Chamber, said the following:

(spoke in English)

“We also understand the concern that the Council may too often resort to Chapter VII of the Charter, including the application of sanctions. In that regard, we stress that the Russian Federation has consistently called on the Council to make more active use of the toolkit of preventive diplomacy and to invest in the development of mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes. The provisions of Chapters VI and VIII should be fully exploited. Sanctions and the use of force to settle conflict are appropriate when all possibilities for peaceful settlement have been exhausted, the threat to international peace and security is clear, and the decision to resort to Chapter VII enjoys the broadest possible support of Council members.” (S/PV.6672, pp. 3-4)

(spoke in French)

I would ask Mr. Iliichev to convey to the members of his delegation and to the bereaved family and the Government and the people of the

Russian Federation our most heartfelt condolences. May Vitaly's soul rest in peace.

Mr. Cardì (Italy): I also wish to express my personal sorrow and that of my authorities for the loss of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. He was an outstanding diplomat. Above all, he was a loyal colleague, someone who was always transparent and able to serve the best interests of his country. He was also a friend. I admired him — we admired him — and we will miss his professional abilities and his warm, personal human touch. Our condolences go to his wife and children and the rest of his family, his friends, Mr. Iliichev and his other colleagues at the Russian Mission, and the Russian authorities.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (spoke in Arabic): My country's delegation would like to express its most sincere condolences to the Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations as well to the Government and the people of Russia for the passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. In our view, Ambassador Churkin was an exceptional diplomat when it came to the United Nations and the Security Council. He deserved the respect of all the delegations. Thanks to his professionalism and credibility, his sudden passing is a great loss not only for Russian diplomacy but also for the Security Council, the United Nations and multilateral diplomacy.

Ms. Söder (Sweden): When I arrived in New York last night to take part in today's debate on European security, I was met by the news that Ambassador Vitaly Churkin had passed away. The Swedish Government, our Permanent Representative Olof Skoog, who is traveling, and I are deeply saddened by this news. I would like to express our sincere condolences to the family of Vitaly Churkin, to our colleagues in the Mission, here represented by Mr. Iliichev, to the Russian Government and to the people of the Russian Federation.

On a personal note, let me say that I will certainly miss the lively and fruitful conversations I had during almost all of my visits here in New York in the last few years. Vitaly Churkin will certainly be greatly missed.

The President: I now give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: I was flying yesterday evening from Lisbon to New York when, during the flight, one of the flight attendants came to me with a small note saying that it was coming from the Captain. The note said that Vitaly Churkin had passed away. I must confess that my

first reaction was not to believe it. I had not had the opportunity to work with him for a long time, as has happened with many other members of the Security Council, but I always felt that he was one of those persons who represent life itself.

Unfortunately, it was not a joke in bad taste, nor was it misinformation; it was the truth. I believe that Vitaly Churkin was not only an outstanding diplomat, but an extraordinary human being who possessed a unique combination of intelligence, knowledge, and firmness in the expression of his beliefs. He was also a man with a remarkable sense of humour and an enormous warmth that would make us all feel a natural tendency to become friends.

I want to express my deepest condolences to Mrs. Irina Churkina, to Vitaly's family, to the Government and the people of the Russian Federation, and most especially to Vitaly Churkin's colleagues in the Russian Mission and in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

I think Vitaly's passing represents a deep loss for all of us at the United Nations, including for the members of the Security Council, where his distinctive voice was ever present over the past decade and where that voice will indeed be missed in the sessions to come.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement....

Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus) (spoke in Russian): Vitaly Ivanovich Churkin died yesterday. He was a leading Russian diplomat and a key figure in the Security Council, representing his country in a mature manner for more than a decade. We mourn the loss of our colleague and friend. We extend our condolences to his family and friends. We are grateful to the members of the Security Council for the words of condolences that they expressed on what is a loss to us all. At the same time, it must be recognized that the President of the Security Council did not use this opportunity to pay tribute to the doyen of the Security Council with a statement from the President, as would have been appropriate.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): At the outset, let me express our sincere condolences to the Russian delegation on the sudden passing away of Russia's Permanent Representative, Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. At this hour of sadness and disbelief, our deepest sympathies go to his family and the Mission of the Russian Federation in New York.

Mr. Pedersen (Norway): I would first like to express my heartfelt

condolences to his family, friends and colleagues at the Russian Mission on the passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. Ambassador Churkin was a highly respected colleague who sought to find solutions through compromise and great diplomatic skill. I always appreciated our conversations. We have lost an extraordinary diplomat and friend. May he rest in peace.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (spoke in Spanish): With the permission of the Security Council, I would like to begin my statement by echoing the many heartfelt condolences expressed today over the passing of our friend, Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. His sudden departure is an irreparable loss not only for his family, to whom we extend our sympathy and solidarity, but also to the Russian Federation, which Ambassador Churkin served with dedication and patriotism, and to the United Nations, which lost an exceptional figure committed to inclusive multilateralism, the respect for international law and the peaceful settlement of disputes. We convey our affection and admiration to Ambassador Ilichev and his delegation for the work carried out by Ambassador Churkin at the United Nations and the mark he left on us all as a remarkable diplomat, teacher and human being. We regret that the Council has not been able to issue a declaration in memory of Ambassador Churkin. It is a matter of humanity, all the more so given his distinguished career as a diplomat.

Mr. Mnatsakanyan (Armenia): Like others, we were deeply shocked, saddened and grieved by the news of the passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, a great man, a great friend and a great professional. (spoke in Russian) We express our sincere condolences to Vitaly's family, his wife, Irina, and his children, and to our colleagues and friends at the Russian Mission. This is a great loss for us all. (spoke in English) Vitaly was a man of wisdom; his wit and his professionalism will be greatly missed. But his memory will remain with us.

Ms. Wilson (Australia): Let me begin by offering our heartfelt condolences to the colleagues, family and friends of Ambassador Churkin following his sad and untimely passing. As many have noted, Ambassador Churkin was an accomplished diplomat and representative. We will greatly miss his presence at the United Nations and particularly in the Security Council, where he played such a strong and formative role over

many years.

Mr. Blanchard (Canada): Following the death of our colleague, Ambassador Churkin, I would like to begin by expressing my most sincere condolences to his wife, Irina, his family, the entire Russian mission and the Russian people for their great loss. In addition to his exceptional legacy here at the United Nations, Vitaly Churkin left many good memories during his time as ambassador to Canada between 1998 and 2003. A few weeks ago I was having a discussion with Prime Minister Chrétien who was the Prime Minister during that period. Prime Minister Chrétien told me that he had fond memories of his relationship with Ambassador Churkin.

Mr. Mavros (Cyprus): At the outset, I would like to express our deep sadness about the death of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, a prominent and highly experienced diplomat who skillfully represented Russia at the United Nations for more than a decade and contributed to the promotion of the United Nations agenda.

Mr. Taula (New Zealand): I thank Ukraine for convening today's open debate. With great sadness I, too, wish to acknowledge the passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. New Zealand had the honour of working side-by-side with that outstanding diplomat over the last two years. I would like to convey the deep condolences of the New Zealand Permanent Mission to the Russian Federation, and particularly to the members of the Russian delegation here in New York. Ambassador Churkin served his country with distinction and was deeply respected by all who worked with him. He will be greatly missed.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (spoke in French): Allow me, first of all, to express my deepest condolences to the Russian Mission for the loss of Ambassador Churkin, who was also well-known in Belgium where he had also been stationed and where tribute was paid to him this morning.

Mrs. Abdul Hamid (Malaysia): At the outset, I wish, on behalf of the Government of Malaysia, to extend our deepest condolences to the Government and the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation, as well as to the family of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, on his sudden passing. Our Mission had the opportunity to work closely with him, especially during the past two years during Malaysia's membership in the Council,

and we will miss his presence and friendship tremendously.

Mr. Milanovic (Serbia): Before I proceed to make my statement, I would like to take this opportunity to pay my respects to one of our own. Yesterday, Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, passed away in his office, hard at work representing his country and promoting the great causes of the United Nations. A stalwart of our Organization and a friend, he will be missed by all of us and we all owe him our utmost respect and gratitude. Our condolences also go to his family and colleagues from the Russian Mission.

Mr. Perovic (Montenegro): Let me begin by offering my sincere and deepest condolences to the Government of the Russian Federation, the family and the friends on the passing of our respected colleague, His Excellency Mr. Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): In honour of your presidency, Sir, let me try to say this in Ukrainian: “I thank you very much, Mr. President.” I also thank you for being here at this late hour in our proceedings. I should like to begin by offering our deepest condolences on the sad demise of Ambassador Churkin yesterday and through you, Sir, especially to his wife and children. He was an important interlocutor for the Kingdom of the Netherlands during his mandate on the Security Council, and he will be sorely missed.

Mr. Madрахimov (Uzbekistan) (spoke in Russian): At the outset, I want to express our sincere condolences in connection with the sudden death of the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, Vitaly Ivanovich Churkin. We were stunned and deeply saddened by this news. The memory of this wonderful and bright person will always remain with us. We offer our support and condolences to the family of Vitaly Churkin and all our colleagues in the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation. (spoke in English)

Mr. Panayotov (Bulgaria) (spoke in Russian): At the outset, I should like to express the sincere condolences of the Government of Bulgaria in connection with the passing of an outstanding diplomat and human being, the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Ambassador Vitaly Ivanovich Churkin. (spoke in

English)

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (spoke in Russian): We would once again like to thank the delegations that have expressed their condolences on the death of the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, Mr. Vitaly Ivanovich Churkin. Their support at this difficult time is very important to us.

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