

- Home
- Secretary-General
- General Assembly
- Security Council
- Economic and Social Council
- International Court of Justice

MEETINGS COVERAGE
SECURITY COUNCIL

9295TH MEETING* (PM)

SC/15243
27 MARCH 2023

Security Council Rejects Draft Resolution Establishing Commission to Investigate Sabotage of Nord Stream Pipeline

The Security Council failed today to adopt a resolution, put forward by the representative of the Russian Federation, which would have established an international independent investigative commission into the September 2022 "acts of sabotage" committed on the Nord Stream gas pipeline in the Baltic Sea.

By a vote of 3 in favour (Brazil, China, Russian Federation) to none against, with 12 abstentions, the Council rejected the draft resolution, owing to a lack of sufficient votes in favour.

The resolution, if adopted, would have requested the Secretary-General to establish an international, independent investigation commission to conduct a comprehensive, transparent and impartial international investigation of all aspects of the act of sabotage on the Nord Stream 1 and 2 gas pipelines — including identification of its perpetrators, sponsors, organizers and accomplices.

It would have outlined the commission's composition, deciding that it would comprise "impartial and internationally respected experts" selected by the Secretary-General, and be furnished with an adequate number of experienced and impartial staff.

Further by its terms, the Council would have requested the Secretary-General to report to it within 30 days on recommendations for the proposed specific modalities of the commission, and encouraged Member States — including those conducting their own relevant national investigations — to fully cooperate and share information with the commission.

Speaking before the vote, the representative of the Russian Federation said his delegation was proposing the establishment of a United Nations-led, independent investigation into the Nord Stream gas pipeline attacks due to its "serious and very well-founded doubts" about the transparency of national investigations currently being conducted, namely by Denmark, Germany and Sweden. A more comprehensive and transparent investigation is needed, he stressed, especially given the emergence of new facts and media reports about the Nord Stream incidents. He also warned that "precious time is being wasted" and that national investigations could go on for years.

China's representative, expressing regret over the draft resolution's failure, said that an international investigation would not, in fact, conflict with the national ones currently under way. A United Nations-led investigation could play a coordinating role and make the findings of other studies even more authoritative. Launching a United Nations-led investigation is also the best way to respond to broad international speculation, he said, adding that blocking the Council from launching such an investigation only raises suspicions that "something is hidden behind the scenes".

The representative of Brazil emphasized that any proposal by a Council member must be considered in a respectful and objective manner. Noting that preliminary information from European authorities indicate that the Nord Stream incidents were an act of sabotage with the possible involvement of a State actor, he cited the importance of more comprehensive efforts on the United Nations part to understand the attack. He encouraged those responsible for ongoing national investigations to share their conclusions with the Council as soon as possible.

The representative of the United States, rejecting unfounded allegations about his country's role in the act of sabotage on the Nord Stream pipeline, said the international community cannot tolerate damage to critical infrastructure. However, the text put forth by the Russian Federation was not an attempt to seek the truth, but rather to discredit the work of ongoing national investigations which might not reach conclusions that align with their predetermined narrative.

Switzerland's delegate, noting her delegation's abstention, echoed expressions of concern about the events at the Nord Stream pipelines and condemned such attacks against critical infrastructure. However, Denmark, Germany and Sweden are currently conducting national investigations to shed light on the facts of those events, she said, calling on the Council to wait for their results. Mandating an additional investigation would not be beneficial at this stage, she added.

The representative of Gabon, pointing out that Africa has hosted many international inquiries and independent experts over the years with implications for State sovereignty, said his delegation abstained because arguments about national investigations have routinely been ignored on his continent. "No one will accept these morality lessons anymore," he stressed, declaring that today is "a good day for sovereignty of individual States, but a bad day for transparency and independence".

Also speaking were the representatives of Ghana, Ecuador, Malta, Japan, United Kingdom, France, Albania and the United Arab Emirates.

The representatives of the Russian Federation and the United States took the floor several additional times.

The meeting began at 3:04 p.m. and ended at 3:52 p.m.

Action

VASSILY A. NEBENZIA (Russian Federation), speaking at the meeting's outset, said today the Security Council will vote on a draft resolution calling for the establishment of an international investigation into the acts of sabotage committed against the Nord Stream pipelines in September 2022. Citing his delegation's "serious and very well-founded doubts" about the transparency of various national investigations currently being conducted into those incidents by some States — which are refusing to cooperate with other affected countries, such as the Russian Federation — he said those nations are "deliberately and consistently trying to mislead the Security Council". He drew attention to several letters sent to the President of the Council by the Russian Federation in recent months demonstrating that exclusion, stressing that nothing can be expected from those States "apart from empty words".

Against that backdrop, he said, another, more comprehensive and transparent investigation is needed. That is especially true given newly emerging facts about the Nord Stream incidents, and reports emerging in media reports. The only argument colleagues have raised about launching an international investigation is the need to wait for national investigations to be completed, he said. Responding to that point, he warned that "precious time is being wasted", and those investigations could go on for years. He also cautioned about possible efforts to hide evidence and "clean up the crime scene", emphasizing that the recent discovery of an unidentified item in one of the Nord Stream gas pipelines further underscores the urgent need for an impartial study.

The Council then voted on the draft resolution, with 3 votes in favour (Brazil, China, Russian Federation) to none against, with 12 abstentions. The text was rejected, having failed to obtain the required number of votes.

Statements

ROBERT A. WOOD (United States), voicing his categorical objection to unfounded allegations about his country's role in the act of sabotage on the Nord Stream pipeline, said the international community cannot tolerate actions to damage critical infrastructure. However, he pointed out that the text put forth by the Russian Federation was not an attempt to seek the truth; it was an attempt to discredit the work of ongoing national investigations which might not reach conclusions that align with their predetermined narrative. The national investigations by Sweden, Denmark and Germany are transparent and impartial, and must be allowed to conclude. Therefore, the United States did not support the draft resolution and abstained, he added. He went on to question the true intent of the Russian Federation in choosing to put forth a resolution that had such little support, emphasizing the need for the Council to not allow spurious allegations to distract it from more pressing matters that deserve its attention and resources.

MICHEL XAVIER BIANG (Gabon) said that today's vote is a "requiem" for establishing responsibility — in an independent, impartial manner — for an illegal act with international consequences. Noting that Africa hosts many international inquiries and independent experts with implications on State sovereignty, he said that he did not know whether "to be happy or sad about this turnaround". His delegation abstained because it was "confused", he noted, recalling arguments advanced whenever similar questions pertained to African countries and underscoring that "no one will accept these morality lessons anymore" regarding matters that affect international security. The situation now is left unclear, and up to the initiative of States. However, he observed that States act according to their own interests, adding: "It is a good day for sovereignty of individual States, but a bad day for transparency and independence."

CAROLYN ABENA ANIMA OPPONG-NTIRI (Ghana) noted that her delegation abstained from the vote not because it is against international investigations, but because it recognizes that — at this stage — there are three ongoing investigations by competent international authorities that are committed to a fair impartial process. However, she continued, her Government took note of the expression of some dissatisfaction with the conduct of the current investigative processes. It may be premature to advocate for parallel international investigations under the auspices of the United Nations. Against this backdrop, she called on all parties to exercise restraint and cooperate in good faith with international investigations currently under way and avoid unilateral actions that could potentially undermine efforts to establish the facts. She further emphasized that the ongoing international investigations need to be expedited and should keep the Russian Federation's authorities informed.

ANDRÉS EFREN MONTALVO SOSA (Ecuador) said his delegation decided to abstain from the vote because the text remains insufficient. Nothing can justify attacks against civilian infrastructure, he stressed. It is essential to avoid speculation which could heighten tensions in the region and inhibit the search for the truth. National investigations currently under way by Denmark, Sweden and Germany must be carried out, he said, reiterating his country's trust in the probes process.

FRANCESCA MARIA GATT (Malta) said that, unfortunately, until this point, the information presented in support of the draft lacks credible evidentiary evidence. Furthermore, investigations by Denmark, Germany and Sweden are ongoing, and it is important to allow these national processes to be concluded without interference. Therefore, she said, Malta abstained in the vote on the basis that any investigatory action by the United Nations would be premature and undermine the integrity of these ongoing national investigations, which are being comprehensively undertaken by the directly affected parties.

RICCARDA CHRISTIANA CHANDA (Switzerland), noting her delegation's abstention, echoed expressions of concern about the events at the Nord Stream pipelines, which, according to available information, are due to acts of sabotage. Condemning such attacks against critical infrastructure, including energy infrastructure, she noted that Denmark, Germany and Sweden are currently conducting national investigations to shed light on the facts, and advocated waiting for their results. Mandating an additional investigation would not be beneficial at this stage, she added.

SHINO MITSUKO (Japan) said that, while deeply concerned about the incident which happened to the Nord Stream pipelines, her country abstained from this resolution. The Council should first allow the national investigations to be completed. Based on those results, the Council may then discuss ways forward as necessary, she said.

JAMES KARIUKI (United Kingdom), condemning the acts of sabotage carried out on the Nord Stream pipelines, voiced support for the national investigations being carried out by Denmark, Germany and Sweden. It is not appropriate for the Council to initiate another one now. Moreover, the Russian Federation has shown that it is not serious about an impartial investigation, he said, recalling that its officials claimed weeks ago that they already knew who was responsible for the Nord Stream attacks. In addition, Moscow's apparent concern for civilian infrastructure is hard to take seriously amid its relentless attacks against such infrastructure in Ukraine over the past year, he said.

ISIS JARAUD DARNAULT (France) recalled her country's concern over the two underwater explosions that hit the Nord Stream pipeline on 27 September 2022, which were attributed to a deliberate act of human origin. France abstained on the resolution precisely because an investigation into the incidents is currently under way by Germany, Denmark and Sweden. There is no reason to doubt the investigations' seriousness and impartiality, and they must be allowed to conclude. Further, she voiced regret at the Russian Federation's choice to request a vote it knew it would lose in advance and expressed amazement at its zeal in asking the United Nations to conduct an inquiry when it has already attributed responsibility in the matter.

FERIT HOXHA (Albania), recalling his country's previous expressions of concern over the sabotage, supported the promptly launched, ongoing investigations by Denmark, Germany and Sweden. While he also supported investigative efforts by the United Nations whenever they are mandated, he said that initiating a parallel international investigation would not currently add value. He went on to stress that any attempt to discredit or politicize ongoing investigations — including by deliberately accusing other States or relying on press elements "artificially put together" — is wrong and unhelpful. Adding that all States are obliged to protect civilian infrastructure — a requirement, rather than "a menu to choose from" — he underscored that the Russian Federation's credibility on this matter "is at least dubious, and at the most, cynical", considering what it is doing to Ukraine. He said this is why his delegation abstained.

GENG SHUANG (China) expressed his delegation's support for the draft resolution and for the creation of an independent investigation into the Nord Stream pipeline incidents. He voiced regret over the results of today's vote, noting that, in fact, an international investigation would not conflict with the national ones currently under way. A United Nations-led investigation could play a coordinating role and make the findings of other studies even more authoritative. It has been more than six months since the explosions, and evidence must be collected as soon as possible, he stressed, warning against letting the national investigations get dragged down. Launching a United Nations-led investigation is also the best way to respond to broad international speculation, he said, adding that blocking the Council from launching such an investigation only raise suspicions that "something is hidden behind the scenes".

Mr. NEBENZIA (Russian Federation), said that, after the vote, there ought to be no suspicion as to who was behind the acts of sabotage to the Nord Stream pipeline, pointing to the "basic fact" that the United States and its allies have done all they could to ensure that no international investigation takes place into the incidents that occurred in September 2022. While Washington, D.C., publicly threatened and undermined the gas pipeline, the media has put out contradictory and absurd versions of who and what did it, he added. For its part, the Russian Federation has tried to correspond with Denmark, Sweden and Germany on their national investigations; however, they refused to correspond appropriately. Noting that the national investigations, without his country's participation, may last years, he asked the representative of the United States what was so "predetermined" in the text his country put forth, adding: "As we say: liar, liar, pants on fire." If the United States wanted to bring perpetrators to justice, they would act differently, he said, adding that the vote represented "a litmus test" to see if the rules would be upheld and if responsibility would be accorded for egregious acts. "Today's vote is proof that our former Western partners do whatever they want and get away with it," he said, adding that his country would do what it could to counter the ongoing vicious circle of the West, which was preventing the Council from carrying out its functions.

LANA ZAKI NUSSEIBEH (United Arab Emirates) condemned the 22 September 2022 sabotage as a criminal act that caused severe environmental harm and endangered global energy security. Sabotage against transboundary energy infrastructure gravely concerns the international community, and the principles of sovereignty and international cooperation are vital in addressing threats to global energy security. Recognizing the importance of ongoing investigations by Denmark, Germany and Sweden, she stressed the need for national authorities to conduct thorough inquiries and share their findings with relevant actors in a transparent manner. She went on to say that her delegation abstained as national investigations continue, urging an expansion of recent cooperative efforts and the creation of a clear deadline for such investigations' conclusion. Emphasizing that global energy security is vital for every country, she reiterated the "paramount importance of protecting energy infrastructure".

RONALDO COSTA FILHO (Brazil) emphasized that any proposal by a Council member must be considered in a respectful and objective manner. Brazil engaged constructively in the negotiations from the start and proposed amendments with the aim of bridging different positions and trying to build consensus, he said, adding that his delegation voted in favour of the draft. Preliminary information provided by the authorities of European countries indicate that this was an act of sabotage with the possible involvement of a State actor. Six months after the explosions, the international community still does not know what caused them. The caution which with the issue has been handled by the authorities of Denmark, Germany and Sweden is understandable, he observed, stressing that Brazil's vote should not be perceived as criticism of the conduct of the investigation, but as recognition of the importance of more comprehensive efforts on the part of the United Nations. Each proposal at the Security Council must be analysed on its own merits, he noted. Since the explosions in the Baltic Sea represent a threat to international peace and security, a Commission established by the Secretary-General will be well-suited to assist this Council in its decision. In view of rejection of the proposal, he encouraged those responsible for ongoing investigations to share the conclusions with the Council as soon as possible. The seriousness of this issue requires a quick and transparent response, he asserted.

Mr. WOOD (United States), responding to statements made by the representative of the Russian Federation, said Moscow has directly blamed Washington, D.C., for carrying out the Nord Stream attacks. It is clear that Moscow is not interested in an impartial investigation, and has already decided who is guilty; it is only playing politics. He hoped the Russian Federation will show the same concern about Ukraine's critical civilian infrastructure as it is now showing about the Nord Stream pipelines.

Mr. NEBENZIA (Russian Federation) responded by citing recent revelations that United States journalist Seymour Hersh. He asked the representative of the United States to explain a statement made by President Joseph R. Biden, long before the Nord Stream incidents, to the effect that he wanted those pipelines to be destroyed.

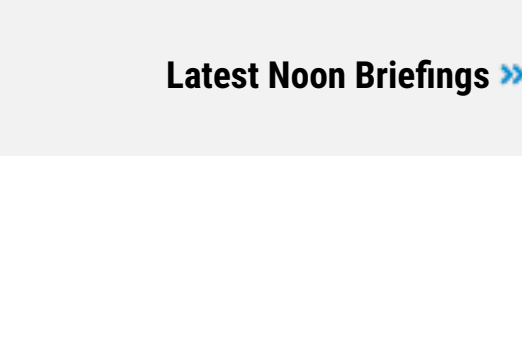
Mr. WOOD (United States), responding again, said posing a question without any real intent is part of the playbook of the Russian Federation's delegation. The United States does not base its policies based on reporting by a single individual, he said, emphasizing that charges made about supposed American culpability for the Nord Stream attacks "are just flat out wrong, plain and simple".

Mr. NEBENZIA (Russian Federation), in response, said he had, in fact, asked the United States delegate a direct question about a real statement made by President Biden.

Highlights

- Security Council 2022 Round-Up**
New York, 2022
- Highlights of General Assembly 77th Session**
New York, 21 Sep - 30 Dec 2022
- United Nations Water Conference 2022**
New York, 22-24 March 2023
- Sixty-Seventh Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**
New York, 6-17 March 2023
- Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries**
Doha, 5-9 March 2023

Daily Noon Briefing



30 MARCH 2023

In Vanuatu, the World Food Programme's Pacific Humanitarian Air Service today transported 15 metric tons of critical medical and food supplies for over 250,000 people, about 80 per cent of the population, that have been impacted by the two category 4 cyclones and earthquakes that hit the country in early March.

[Latest Noon Briefings >>](#)

