

'DISTURBED' INDIA ABSTAINS FROM VOTE

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The vote had to be postponed twice, for an hour at a time, as the U.S. and Albanian diplomats, the “penholders” of the resolution, tried to build a consensus for the draft.

However, according to officials who saw the draft, the original version was too strong, as it invoked UN Chapter VII, which authorises the use of force against Russian troops in Ukraine. After several rounds of heated negotiations, the U.S. agreed to soften the resolution and drop the Chapter VII reference, which is believed to have ensured that China, which had earlier voted with Russia, abstained from the latest resolution, leaving Russia alone in voting against it.

India's decision to continue to abstain, as it did in the past, was seen as disappointing by Western countries, which had lobbied hard all week with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla to shift India's position, where it has consistently refused to criticise Russia for its intervention. Mr. Kyslytsya said he was “saddened” that a “small handful of members” seemed to be “tolerating” the war.

Government officials said India has been speaking to all parties including Russia and Ukraine to return to the negotiating table. They also pointed out that while there was no reference to Russia's actions in any of their statements, India's language had grown tougher over time, and the latest statement made a specific mention, not there earlier, of respecting the “sovereignty and territorial integrity of states.”

Ahead of the vote, the U.S. had said any UNSC member to vote “No” or “Abstain”, would face the charge that they “do not uphold the charter, and align with the aggressive and unprovoked actions of Russia”.

Delivering India's explanation of vote, PR T.S. Tirumurti said it was a “matter of regret that the path of diplomacy was given up.” He called on states to return to dialogue to settle their differences.

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