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President: Mr. Bozkir (Turkey)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Commemorative meeting on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

Agenda item 124

Commemoration of the abolition of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade

The President: In accordance with paragraph 4 of resolution 73/345 of 16 September 2019, the General Assembly will hold a commemorative meeting on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. I will now make an opening statement from the rostrum.

Statement by the President

Last week, I convened a commemorative meeting on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (see A/75/PV.57). However, one day a year is not enough to reconcile the legacy of four centuries of brutality. Slavery firmly established the stark inequality that exists around the world today, because the wealthiest took everything from those who had the least. The transatlantic slave trade defined our world, and the sense of supremacy that justified it is not gone from our world. Families were divided by an ocean that their loved ones never consented to cross, an ocean that took the lives of 20 per cent of all captives on the transatlantic voyage. Africa, robbed of its peoples, continues to grieve. Enslaved people were reduced

to the status of chattel and stripped of their freedom, dignity and identity. Violence replaced autonomy.

That trauma is hereditary. Not only do the descendants of the 15 million victims of the transatlantic slave trade have to grapple with the pain and grief of their ancestors, but every day they navigate a world built by them but not for them. The enslaved worked stolen lands and raised the children of their abusers, all the while suffering, and those in the middle — free men and women who benefited from an industrial revolution that was made possible through slave labour — did not stand up for the oppressed but were passive, complicit.

Today, modern forms of slavery continue to exist. As of 2016, more than 4.3 million people were estimated to be in modern slavery, 71 per cent of them women and girls. Shockingly, children account for one in four of those enslaved today. The coronavirus disease pandemic risks creating a setback to our common efforts to end modern slavery as widespread job losses, rising poverty, the closure of regular migration pathways and a reduced scrutiny of labour standards increase vulnerability and push more people towards exploitive employment. When society does not tackle the inhumane treatment of our fellow human beings, every individual is complicit.

If we are to defend the Charter of the United Nations and uphold the rights of the people we have pledged to serve, we have to be vigilant. Today I want to remind the Assembly that when those around us look away and turn their backs on injustice, each of us has a responsibility to step in. We cannot stand by while the

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people we serve suffer. We cannot permit gaslighting. We cannot shy away from honest discussions about reparatory justice. Here in the General Assembly, we are working on the modalities of the high-level meeting of the twentieth commemoration of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the political declaration, as well as on a permanent forum on people of African descent. We will also meet again in May on the occasion of the midterm review of the International Decade for People of African Descent. I hope that those efforts are conducive to healing for people of African descent and for the world as a whole.

We must stand up for what is right and learn the lessons of the past. This global injustice has not just ended neatly, after exactly 400 years. Laws have not changed attitudes, and the weight of shackles endures. Let us continue working to end discrimination and slavery in all its forms, and to achieve equality and justice for all. I repeat what I expressed last week, and let us keep repeating it until it is understood and internalized by all. Black lives matter.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres.

The Secretary-General: Today we honour the memory of the millions of people of African descent who suffered immeasurably under the evils of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. We remember the humility and resilience of those who endured, and we acknowledge the immense contribution that slaves and their descendants have made to the economies and culture of the countries to which they were forcibly transported. We must never forget the daily terror experienced by enslaved peoples, the unthinkable acts of cruelty they endured, the daily reminder that they could lay claim to nothing, not even their own children. But the slave traders and owners failed to rob the enslaved peoples of dignity and agency.

We remember enslaved peoples' acts of resistance and demands for justice. We recall the courage of leaders such as Queen Ana Nzinga of the Kingdom of Ndongo, now Angola, and Toussaint Louverture of Saint-Domingue, now Haiti, and the peoples they led. As we honour those whose names we know, we acknowledge the daily courage of the millions whom we will never know except as names on inventory lists drawn up by slave owners, traders and insurance agencies. We support the initiatives to reclaim, recover and reconstitute the history of those were enslaved.

We also acknowledge that racism is both a cause and a legacy of slavery and recognize that the impact of the slave trade remains visible in racial injustices and inequalities today. Ending slavery's legacy of racism is a global imperative for justice.

The transatlantic slave trade is a global history that continues to resonate. It created and sustained a system of exploitation that existed for more than 400 years. It devastated the economies of those it enslaved and strengthened the colonial project, enriching its multitude of beneficiaries at the expense of the lives of the enslaved. The racism at the core of the system built on slavery condemned Africans to a second-class status. To justify the slave trade, Africans were consistently portrayed as less than human. Racist tropes circulated widely, incorporated into sermons, pamphlets and cultural expressions and given legitimacy by pseudoscience and legislation.

While the transatlantic slave trade ended more than two centuries ago, the ideas that propelled it remain alive today. In Europe, the United States and elsewhere, white supremacists are organizing and recruiting across borders. According to the Anti-Defamation League, white supremacist propaganda reached an all-time high in 2020. We must counter all lies of racial supremacy. The irrefutable fact is that we are all equally part of one race — humankind. When we forget that basic fact, we imperil ourselves. Repeated acts of racism by people and institutions expose the impact of slavery's legacy.

Last year, they helped to galvanize a worldwide movement for justice and an end to racism. We must build on that momentum. Our Organization is built on the demand for global justice and an end to racism and inequality. That must include action to redress the wrongs of history. We need to acknowledge and correct the long-lasting effects of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. By tackling inequities and inequalities, building inclusive communities and economies and educating people about history, we truly honour the memory of the victims of slavery. On this Day of Remembrance, let us commit anew to a world where justice prevails and where all can live with dignity, in peace and freedom.

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

Before proceeding further, and as indicated in my letter dated 3 March, I would like to consult members with a view to inviting Ms. Lisa Coleman, Senior

Vice-President for Global Inclusion, Diversity and Strategic Innovation and Chief Diversity Officer at New York University, to make a keynote statement on this occasion.

If there is no objection, may I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly, and without setting a precedent, to invite Ms. Lisa Coleman to make a keynote statement at this commemorative meeting?

It was so decided (decision 75/560).

The President: In accordance with the decision just taken, I now give the floor to Ms. Coleman.

Ms. Coleman: It is an honour to be here today for the General Assembly's observance of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

First, I hope that everyone is taking good care and I thank all the people who made it possible for me to be here today.

Secondly, I would like to thank all the front-line and behind-the-scenes workers whose labour is often uncounted and who continue to make sacrifices for our well-being. I would also like to recognize that many of our international institutions are located on the unceded lands of indigenous peoples.

Lastly, as we all know, we are here to honour, remember and recognize lives taken through violence and the pernicious legacies of racialized slavery. We are also here to honour our ancestors and those who have fought for human dignity and to end slavery and its lasting effects, and to honour the strength and continuing contributions, cultures, joy and resilience of black people globally. Let us take five seconds of silence to honour, recognize and reflect.

Some keep saying that this is a new normal or hope that we return to normal. I hope that we do not. I hope that we strive to do better and be better so that when the next disruption — the next pandemic — happens, we are more ready, more committed and more aware in order to address big issues such as the Sustainable Development Goals and ongoing inequities. To do that, I believe we must embrace a new “different”, as opposed to a new normal, through new transformational strategies of innovation and engagement and by doing race differently and globally.

Race became a scientifically validated social construct that justified unfree labour systems

and benefited those defined by white racial supremacy — landowners and elite power holders, knowledge producers and sociopolitical engineers. The extraction of human life and labour was honed through distinct, pervasive forms of colonialism, expansion and imperialism throughout the Americas and, of course, the entire Atlantic world, and racism built on deeply entrenched stereotypes, fears and sometimes deep-seated hatred of targeted groups is one of the pervasive results. Whether in the context of the 1918 flu pandemic, the Depression of the 1930s, the ongoing AIDS or coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemics, racial and ethnic disparities, among others, persist and mythologies about the black body still surface, dating back to the birth of theories of eugenics, and the results continue to be tragic and often deadly.

We need think only about the various effects, such as wealth differentials; incarceration rates; notions of who counts as a citizen that date back to the three-fifths rule in the original United States Constitution; who gets labelled a terrorist and who does not; racialized ideas of patriotism; whose lives matter; digital divides; environmental injustice and images of Africa and black people as backward or criminal. Those are legacies that continue to affect our institutions and day-to-day engagements. And as we have seen with the daily assaults on black people in grocery stores, parks and restaurants, the impact is multilayered. Patterns of inequity and racism are maintained. They are not inevitable. They are not innate or natural. They are not fixed, but they are deeply entrenched. Scholars such as Nell Irvin Painter, Audrey Smedley, Matthew Frye Jacobson, Karen Brodtkin and many others have traced the circuitous history of race, from early Roman times and through histories of enslavement legitimized by ethnocentrism. The impact remains. Race became what Smedley refers to as a fulcrum, around which North American and globalized forms of racial groupings were scaffolded, maintained and normalized as natural.

Knowledge production, that is, science in the colonial context, with its connection to arts, education and so on, served and continues to serve as a powerful tool in creating the illusion of race as a legitimate biological category and of some races as superior and virtuous. Through science and what we have discovered, we also know that race is not a biological or genetically valid way to understand humankind. We also know that race and racism are no less real in the lives of those whom they affect. The real and deadly impact and

consequences of deeply rooted racism are exemplified in the murders of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade and Dion Johnson. Far too often, we still blame the victim, from Emmett Till to George Floyd.

Many ask why protests have occurred all over the world in the past year. It is because anti-blackness is transmutable. It is everywhere. Think of Brazil and affirmative action and the legacies of slavery there that efforts are being made to address; or of the way in which Africa is still often referred to as if it were a country, even though it is almost four times the size of the United States, and how it is often thought of as Third World, although places in countries such as Nigeria are outpacing some European areas in terms of technological achievements.

In many cases blackness is still seen as a deficit in and of itself, with no attempt to adjust that lens to see how the deficits are the result of centuries of extraction of resources, historical erasures and stereotyping and nationally and socially sanctioned practices of exclusion and racism. For example, African-American women and men were the first to die of COVID-19 in Chicago, Illinois, and 70 of the first 100 recorded deaths in the United States were of African-Americans. The woefully inadequate response to the loss of black lives set a devastating course that could have been mitigated. Early in the pandemic, the press accused black people of not wearing masks enough and not following the rules, when what it should have been doing was comprehensively investigating exposure rates because of labour differentials, which are a direct result of the legacy of slavery — the concentration of people of colour in lower socioeconomic areas.

I would be remiss if I did not also mention the anti-Asian violence and the recent tragic loss and murders in Atlanta. The fact is that anti-Asian violence is also deeply rooted in our legal and social systems. Understanding legacies, histories and intersections of systemic inequality is foundational to creating global transformation. I am the Senior Vice-President for Global Inclusion, Diversity and Strategic Innovation at New York University. In South Africa, that role is normally called Chief Transformation Officer, and that is how I think of myself. I am drawn to that concept because of the emphasis and insistence on reckoning with deeply rooted power differentials and tough contestation, which leads to innovation and the quest for different ways of doing and being — that is, the transformational. That is not to suggest that South

Africa is doing everything perfectly. Rather, I draw on the approach in order to focus on power-related inequities and racism, which are deeply woven and embedded into systems.

Efforts to dismantle legacies of slavery such as apartheid and its aftermath, and to transform our societies, must reckon with the truth about historical power relations, oppression and dispossession. Across the globe, in protests in the United States, Europe, the East and the West, individuals are calling for that reckoning, and for transformation. Transformational actions will dismantle the intersectional inequities and global legacies so that we can create and learn from the losses in order to do more and do differently, so that black peoples globally can thrive.

In conclusion, we must demystify and dismantle global forms of oppression and inequity and build on many of the things that we already do, as was mentioned earlier. We must continue to create spaces and undo the vulnerabilities that fuel and legitimize violence and stifle the ability to thrive. We must undo the things that support modern-day slavery. We must keep rights consistent for all. And when laws suggest that rights are not consistent, we must reconcile, tell the truth and co-create. We must learn our histories, so we do not repeat them again. And we must remember that with sorrow, there is also black joy.

We must remember that black people are not deficits but rather assets who can help create transformative possibilities, because the African diaspora is a global constellation of communities representing a vast array of rich and diverse histories, cultures, heritage and identities that live and innovate and create new possibilities, even in direct contrast to the oppressive structures and practices that have been laid bare. We must remember that it will take investments in black peoples and cultures globally to be ready for the future of work to address our Sustainable Development Goals and climate disruptions and deal with the changing world and all that comes with it. I end with a quote by one of my favourite authors, James Baldwin. “The world is before you and you need not take it or leave it as it was when you came in”.

The President: I thank Ms. Coleman for her statement.

I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Mr. Ilyassov (Kazakhstan): On behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States, it is my great honour to affirm that we join the Assembly today in solemnly remembering all who came enslaved across the Atlantic for generations and perished tragically as victims of ownership and control.

For more than 400 years, more than 15 million men, women and children were the victims of the tragic transatlantic slave trade, one of the darkest chapters in human history. The slave trade and slavery are among the worst violations of human rights in the history of humankind and are at the heart of the situations of profound social and economic inequality, hatred, bigotry, racism and prejudice that continue to affect people of African descent today.

We must also not forget the millions caught in modern-day slavery. It is regrettable that despite all the progress that has been made, this evil scourge persists 75 years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights prohibited it in 1948. The global community must redouble its efforts to bring an end to this injustice. Not to do so is to be complicit. We should ask why poverty and deep social stratification leading to human bondage persist. No adult or child should be subject to the barbaric practices of human trafficking for cheap labour, sexual purposes, organ transplants, ancestral debt bondage, bonded or forced labour, domestic servitude or the unlawful recruitment of child soldiers.

We are also concerned about the challenges posed by large-scale migration, crisis and conflict. We condemn violence against women as a weapon of war and societal destabilization that degenerates into hate crimes and speech. In that regard, the Asia-Pacific Group expresses its profound concern about the rise in violence against Asians and people of Asian descent, especially following the horrific shooting death of six women of Asian descent in and around Atlanta in March. The Asia-Pacific Group expresses its full support for the victims and their families and stands in solidarity with all who face racism and other attacks on their human rights. It is high time to take real measures to address systemic racism and racial discrimination.

The Asia-Pacific Group stands resolutely with others who are striving to at least mitigate, if not abolish, modern slavery — Sustainable Development Goal 8 — by 2030. We will do so through a collaborative effort to implement all of the 16 other interconnected

Sustainable Development Goals, because only a comprehensive strategy will guarantee the common future of present and coming generations.

Historically unprecedented levels of underemployment or unemployment, the loss of livelihoods and uncertain economic prospects have hit the most vulnerable the hardest. We must ensure that the poorest are not pushed into bonded or forced labour or lured into slavery for survival. The situation demands the continued assessment and review of the legal frameworks for criminal law and the strict enforcement of labour rights and security regulations. Disseminating awareness at the source areas of trafficking is also necessary. Given that a large share of modern slavery can be traced to migration, it is vitally important to have improved national, regional and global migration governance and stricter border controls, and to train border police, airline and shipping crews, as well as workers in the hospitality industry, to detect victims of trafficking and prevent forced labour. Gender and age must be taken into account in developing policy responses, as 71 per cent of all victims are women and one in every four is a child. Similarly, it will be critical to improve victim identification in order to extend protection to more victims of modern slavery, the vast majority of whom who are currently unidentified or unattended.

Equally important are measures to ensure both witness and victim protection for women and girls, as well as men and boys, especially those recruited as child soldiers. We should make greater efforts to work with communities, local elders and religious leaders in order to tackle deeply entrenched traditions, stereotypes and biases against victims.

Finally, we call on donor countries to support the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, launch local projects to empower victims to become change agents, build coalitions and have their voices heard. The Asia-Pacific Group stands ready to join hands with all other regional groups to address the tragic and persistent consequences of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade and to ensure dignity, liberty and prosperity for all.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Pary Rodríguez (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC).

First, I would like to express our gratitude to you, Mr. President, for convening today's commemorative plenary meeting on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, observed annually since 2008, on 25 March, in accordance with resolution 62/122. I would also like to thank Ms. Lisa Coleman, Senior Vice President for Global Inclusion, Diversity and Strategic Innovation, and Chief Diversity Officer at New York University, for her participation in today's meeting.

We deplore the fact that as a result of the coronavirus disease pandemic, the commemorative meeting in 2020 on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade was postponed. Today we remember the 15 million Africans forcibly removed from their homelands. The transatlantic slave trade sowed deep inequalities within societies. Economies prospered at great human cost. Entire industries were built on the suffering of fellow human beings. A minority amassed great riches and power, while those who toiled were denied their most basic human rights. Today we honour and remember those men, women and children who were brutalized under a system of slavery that endured for more than 400 years. The legacy of the inhumane slave trade is the large population of people of African descent in the Americas. Nearly 96 per cent of those who were enslaved arrived in South America and the islands of the Caribbean.

Descendants of Africans have made an enormous contribution to the social, economic and cultural development of the Americas. However, the descendants of those who were enslaved continue to face social and economic inequalities, intolerance, prejudice, racism, discrimination and are ignored in public policy at the national level. In that context, the members of GRULAC deeply deplore the massive human suffering created by slavery and the slave trade and consider this forum appropriate for remembering the victims of such tragedies.

However, despite its abolition, slavery continues in modern forms to this day, such as violations of the right to self-determination, human rights and dignity.

Racism and prejudice are also legacies of a barbaric system in which human beings are regarded as different or less than. We therefore welcome this year's theme, which reflects the global movement to put an end to injustices rooted in the slave trade and to teach history in a way that acknowledges the impact of slavery on today's world and spurs action to address its lasting effects. In that regard, we must take collective action to reduce inequalities, eliminate racial discrimination and end modern slavery. According to the International Labour Organization, 40 million people are trapped in modern forms of slavery today. Children account for a quarter of victims, while 71 per cent of those enslaved are women.

We cannot be indifferent to injustice. It is incumbent on each and every one of us to uphold the human rights of everyone, everywhere. Throughout the International Decade for People of African Descent, GRULAC has urged member States to adopt, implement and strengthen policies and programmes that combat hate speech, xenophobia, racism and racial discrimination. We must take collective action to reaffirm our commitment to implementing the Durban Declaration, agreed at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. Inequalities emerge from the shadows of ignorance and complacency, and when discrimination and hate speech are a scourge in themselves, we cannot let down our guard in rooting out racism and prejudices that sow division.

The member States of GRULAC join the wider international community in observing this important day to highlight the struggle and recognize the achievements of people who were emancipated from slavery. It is a day to reflect on the past and take stock of and cement our determination to confront today's challenges of inequality, intolerance, racism, xenophobia, discrimination, poverty, colonialism and modern slavery. It will undoubtedly be a challenge to educate present and future generations about the causes, consequences and lessons of slavery to ensure that this period in the history of humankind is never repeated. The International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade provides us with an opportunity to honour and remember those who suffered and died, but it is also a chance for us to raise awareness about the dangers of racism and prejudice today.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Hawke (New Zealand): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

Today we honour the memories of the women, men and children, especially those of African descent, who were enslaved over four centuries of the transatlantic slave trade. They suffered under the most horrific and inhumane circumstances imaginable for the economic and political gain of those who enslaved them. The perpetrators took away everything from the enslaved — their freedom, their voices and their dignity. That terrible legacy in our shared history continues to haunt us to this day. Today, we also honour the heroic actions of the enslaved and the abolitionists who acted in the face of grave danger and adversity, determined to ensure human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

Nowadays, millions worldwide still fall victim to slavery and human trafficking and too many must continue to fight against hatred and discrimination. Slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and forced marriage entrap more than 40 million people, according to the International Labour Organization data, while systemic racism and racial discrimination continue to prevent many from living in safety, dignity and prosperity.

This year's theme, "Ending Slavery's Legacy of Racism: A Global Imperative for Justice", brings the enduring, pervasive and devastating impact of slavery into focus. It reminds us that racism has deep roots, built on centuries of systemic oppression and suffering. We must promote greater knowledge of the ties between our present and our past through ongoing learning and discussion. We must be vigilant in both recognizing and standing up against racism, prejudice and all forms of slavery. We must honour the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its article 4, which states that no one shall be held in slavery or servitude, and that slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

We would like to recall our remarks at last week's event to mark the International Day of the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (see A/75/PV.57). Respect for diversity and mutual understanding are key building blocks for peace, justice, inclusion and prosperity.

Ignorance breeds intolerance. We must jointly commit to building a global culture, based on mutual understanding and dialogue, inclusive of the full range of different perspectives, celebrating diversity of thought, history and belief and making special efforts to give centre stage to the voices of those with lived experiences of racism. Our commitment to respecting and promoting human rights must be the foundation on which we act. We urge States that have not yet done so to consider ratifying or acceding to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, as well as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and in particular its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and to fully implement them. We further encourage all States to continue to strengthen their national policies and their cooperation with the United Nations system to combat racial discrimination and human trafficking. We honour the victims and survivors of slavery by vigilantly fighting injustices, racial inequalities and human rights violations and abuses today, so that we may progress to a better tomorrow.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening us today to commemorate this important International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. I also thank the Secretary-General for his participation and Ms. Coleman for her powerful words.

A little over 400 years ago, enslaved people were forced onto the shores of the colony of Virginia. As Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield said last week (see A/75/PV.57), that was the origin of our original sin. The statistics are horrifying — an estimated 12.5 million Africans were put on slave ships in the transatlantic trade and more than one in 12 died during the Middle Passage. After they arrived on our shores, they were auctioned off like chattel, forced into hard labour, beaten, raped, killed and deprived of all forms of freedom. On those scarred backs, they helped build America, my country. Even the White House was constructed by enslaved people.

Throughout the history of the United States, many have seen the inherent indignity and the inhumanity of slavery, the utter moral wrongness of one human being

enslaving another. Former slaves such as Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglass shared their stories, working with abolitionists to convince my country to abolish this monstrosity. Americans of all stripes risked their lives and opened up their barns, shops, cellars and attics to serve as way stations on the Underground Railroad. Those courageous enslaved Americans who were able to escape to the North told their own children that they deserved freedom, justice and dignity. Somehow, they remained hopeful that chattel slavery would not endure. Eventually that hope burned so bright and the calls for abolition rang so loudly that they could not be ignored. Yet those who defended slavery chose instead to tear the United States apart with a civil war. After the Emancipation Proclamation, the Thirteenth Amendment to our Constitution made permanent the illegality and immorality of chattel slavery, but as Ms. Coleman so eloquently said, the fight against white supremacy was still far from over. Newly freed slaves were barred from most jobs or from voting in my country. They faced regular terror and violence. But they kept fighting for their rights, through lynchings, segregation and the legal regime of Jim Crow.

On this day of solemn remembrance, as we face the effects of the coronavirus disease pandemic, we remind ourselves that we are still working to disentangle ourselves from slavery's wicked web. Too often, black Americans are funnelled into overcrowded schools, receive poor treatment in hospitals or are unfairly denied jobs, housing and access to capital. And of course slavery's legacy rears its ugly head most clearly in my country's policing and criminal justice system. The tragic, senseless killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and so many other black Americans have catalysed a new reckoning with racial justice. The Black Lives Matter movement has spread across our country and around the world. Today, we proudly say that black lives matter.

And now the White House, the same one that was built by enslaved peoples, is doing everything in its power to right those wrongs and make an equal and just America for all. In his very first week in office, President Biden put forward a strategy to embed racial justice and equity across the entire federal Government. He took immediate action on issues such as redressing housing discrimination and eliminating privately run prisons, in order to directly oppose what have become institutions of white supremacy. The new United States Administration is also deeply committed

to addressing the scourge of modern-day slavery, both domestically and overseas. Internationally, we have renewed our commitment to working with global and multilateral partners in order to address the vast scale and complexity of human trafficking and the systematic disparities that marginalize certain communities and embolden traffickers.

The Biden-Harris Administration is also putting racial equity at the centre of United States foreign policy. Last week at the Human Rights Council, the United States delivered a joint statement signed by more than 155 countries condemning racism and racial discrimination. As we resolve to do more to address the legacy of past transgressions, manifested today in systemic racism, we continue to struggle. As Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield said last week, racism is the problem of the society that produces the racist, and in today's world, that is every society. So let us join together to pay tribute to the millions of victims of slavery and to remember the pain, suffering and violence that have been passed down from generation to generation. And then let us honour them and their legacy by taking swift action to end racism and root out oppression wherever it remains.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Guyana, who will deliver a joint statement on behalf of the Group of African States and the Caribbean Community.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): I thank the Secretary-General for his participation and Ms. Coleman for her insightful remarks.

I am honoured to speak on behalf of the 68 member States of the Group of African States and the Caribbean Community (AfCAR). The horror of slavery separated 12 million Africans from their motherland and created a diaspora in the Caribbean. Separated from our families, we are now here, standing reunited with one voice. Given that historic reality and linkage, it is indeed fitting that AfCAR's first statement within the United Nations should come as we commemorate the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, which is being held under the theme "Ending Slavery's Legacy of Racism: A Global Imperative for Justice". This annual meeting provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the progress made in our collective endeavour to eliminate all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance, which gave rise to one of

the most horrific enterprises in human history. This year, it comes at a time when racial discrimination all over the world prompts the plaintive cry of “Black Lives Matter”. Irrespective of the country in which they reside, the children of Africa deserve to live and to do so with dignity. And the social and economic structures that prevent that must be dismantled.

In 2015, the beginning of the International Decade for People of African Descent, Member States stood in solidarity as we erected the *Ark of Return*, a permanent memorial designed not only to honour and remember victims but also to pay tribute to those who fought to secure fundamental human rights and freedoms for their descendants. The memorial stands as a reminder that we should never cease to denounce all vestiges of racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance, as well as modern-day slavery, while promoting the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. On this day, the memorial and other related activities have particular resonance in the hearts and minds of the millions of Africans and people of African descent whom we represent. But a memorial must be more than a symbol of the remembrance of history. It must be a call to action for the creation of a meaningful and sustainable future and the prevention of any repetition of the events we now call to mind.

We commend the ongoing efforts of Member States and the continued support of the Secretary-General, the Department of Global Communications, UNESCO and other international agencies and urge them to further raise awareness about the impact and legacy of slavery. We also advocate for a broadening of discussions on ways in which the international community can tackle the related complex historical, sociocultural and economic issues. We note from the Secretary-General’s most recent report (A/73/88), issued in June 2018, that activities related to the United Nations Remember Slavery programme have increased, both in number and quality. There has also been an increase in the use of social-media platforms and strengthened partnerships with Member States and civil society to raise awareness about the *Ark of Return* and issues covered by the educational outreach programme on slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

It is a travesty, however, that decades after the abolition of the odious and nefarious enterprise that was the transatlantic slave trade, people of African descent continue to confront systemic and structural

forms of hatred, built on deeply entrenched mindsets and attitudes, which deny them their human rights and dignity. The events of 2020 sparked by the death of George Floyd in the United States, together with the birth and growth of the Black Lives Matter movement, have brought into sharp focus the need for greater attention to be given to addressing the legacy of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. That legacy can be seen today in the entrenched and systemic racism that results in discrimination against people of colour all over the world. They are more likely to be unemployed, to have less access to jobs, opportunities, housing and education, and in fact to be criminalized and suffer inequity and injustice in all aspects of social and economic activity.

That reality has been tragically borne out during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which has revealed deep disparities in care and outcomes for persons of African descent, as well as other minorities who are disproportionately affected and killed by the virus. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean noted recently that since Afro-descendants have worse indicators of well-being than their non-Afro-descendant peers, they represent one of the groups most vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic, in terms of both infection and mortality. Those disparities are attributed to multiple factors relating to marginalization, discrimination, limited access to health care, bias in the provision of care, economic inequality and overcrowded housing and environmental risks. We need urgent action on the part of Governments to address these issues, which have resulted in social exclusion and the perpetuation of racism, prejudice and discrimination.

Despite the inclusion of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10, which focuses on reducing inequality within and among countries, none of the SDGs calls explicitly for the eradication of systemic racism and racial discrimination. That has implications for the overall delivery on the promise to leave no one behind. We therefore welcomed the historic debate on racially inspired human rights violations, systemic racism, police brutality and violence against peaceful protests convened in June 2020 during the forty-third session of the Human Rights Council, and the Council’s subsequent unanimous adoption of its resolution 43/1, which mandated the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, together with United Nations experts, to prepare a global report on systemic

racism and the excessive use of force against people of African descent by law enforcement. That is a step in the right direction, at a time when issues of systemic racism and police violence around the world are under increased international scrutiny.

We also look forward to the debate on the midterm review of the International Decade for People of African Descent, which will be held later this year. It will provide an important opportunity to deepen our analysis and review of existing mechanisms in order to identify gaps in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It will also offer an opportunity for all relevant stakeholders to exchange views on the broad range of recommendations emanating from several agencies and institutions, including the Pan American Health Organization, the United Nations Population Fund and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. More importantly, the review will enable discussions on how the global community can tackle the pandemic, while emphasizing the importance of implementing participatory policies that are culturally relevant and free from racism and that promote equality and rights for all persons of African descent. This is an opportunity for us to move beyond discussion to taking tangible steps to ensure that the post-COVID-19 world is one in which racism is finally eliminated. In that regard, reparations are pivotal for establishing restorative justice and creating opportunity and equity for those whose limbs and lives were used, without mercy or remuneration, to build societies and strong economies.

There is much work to be done. We must continue to take concrete steps to eliminate the scourge of racism and act decisively to safeguard human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. We encourage all to support the ongoing public educational outreach so as to ensure that the legacies of slavery are dismantled once and for all. Slavery was inflicted on us. We continue to carry its heavy and residual burden, but the multilateral system can guarantee that the stain of slavery is finally lifted from the lives of people of African descent. In that fight, the Assembly can be assured of the unstinting commitment of the member States of the African Group and the Caribbean Community.

As I close, I call on all my African and Caribbean brothers and sisters in this Hall and all who support the Black Lives Matter movement to stand for five seconds.

Mr. Pedroso Cuesta (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the convening of today's commemorative meeting. We also thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

Commemorating the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade is crucial in today's environment, marked as it is by disturbing manifestations of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia in some of the world's most developed societies. For Cuba, the issue is particularly symbolic because we are immensely proud of our African roots and heritage. As a consequence of the cruel and inhumane trade whose victims we are remembering today, approximately 1.3 million enslaved Africans arrived in Cuba as labour to replace that of the indigenous population, which had been virtually exterminated by the colonial Power. The Cuban nation and its culture, unique features and forms of popular religion are a profound mixture that cannot be explained without taking account of its African contribution. In our struggle for independence and self-determination, freed slaves and their descendants were leading players. As we pay tribute to the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, we therefore also pay tribute to our people's roots.

The crime against humanity committed against the people we are remembering today is linked to the structural inequality, racial discrimination, prejudices and exclusion that even now, in the twenty-first century, continue to affect people of African descent. As the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, said at the Durban Conference,

"The inhuman exploitation imposed on the peoples of three continents, including Asia, marked forever the destiny and lives of more than 4.5 billion people living in the Third World today whose poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and health rates as well as their infant mortality, life expectancy and other calamities — too many, in fact, to enumerate here — are certainly shocking and harrowing. They are the current victims of that atrocity, which lasted centuries, and the ones who clearly deserve compensation for the horrendous crimes perpetrated against their ancestors and peoples."

It is a moral duty to ensure that reparations and full compensation reach the peoples and groups affected by this horrendous and ongoing crime. The developed countries have been the beneficiaries of conquest,

colonization, slavery and the transatlantic slave trade and are therefore responsible for the extermination linked to them. For that reason, we support the just claim raised by the member States of the Caribbean Community. It is also only fair that there should be special and differential treatment towards developing countries, particularly those in Africa, where their international economic relations are concerned. As a general rule, those of us whose nations are yesterday's colonies are subject today to an unfair international order that may have changed in name but not in essence, because it continues to promote the wealth of a few at the expense of a vast impoverished majority.

The coronavirus disease pandemic has turned a harsh spotlight on the inequities of the world in which we live today. How many doses of the millions of vaccines produced have reached developing countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America or the Caribbean? And in the developed countries, is there equal access to those vaccines for people of African descent and migrants? The best tribute we can pay to the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade in today's world, in addition to the necessary remembrance, is to show international solidarity with the countries from which those millions of people were snatched. For that reason, and based on its humanist stance, Cuba has continued to strengthen its international cooperation programmes in the area of health. Despite the unprecedented resurgence of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba by the United States, my country has sent more than 4,900 health professionals in 56 brigades to 40 countries and territories in order to support their efforts to address the pandemic. A majority of those professionals were sent to countries and territories in the Caribbean, Latin America and Africa.

The tribute we pay today means that we must address and find a solution to the root causes of the inequality, exclusion, racism and discrimination that have survived slavery and from which millions continue to suffer, especially people of African descent.

Mr. Ilnytskyi (Ukraine): At the outset, I would like to welcome today's important commemorative meeting, aimed at paying tribute to all victims of slavery and consolidating international cooperation in combating contemporary forms of slavery. Given the issue's importance, it is unfortunate that it was once again not possible to arrive at an agreed statement to be delivered on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, for the same reasons we cited last week with

regard to the Group's statement on the elimination of racial discrimination (see A/75/PV.57).

Slavery and the slave trade, including the transatlantic slave trade, are appalling tragedies in the history of humankind. It is beyond any doubt that slavery constitutes a crime against humanity and should always have been so. Slavery is a major source and manifestation of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Peoples in Africa, Asia and other parts of the world were victims of those acts and continue to be victims of their consequences.

As was mentioned at the commemorative meeting on racial discrimination last week, Ukraine, as a founding member of the United Nations, took an active part in the decolonization process. I would therefore like to reiterate our solidarity with all the peoples who have suffered from slavery and the slave trade. That said, I would like to underline that my people, the people of Ukraine, have also suffered from slavery. That scourge harmed Ukrainians for centuries, from ancient times until the end of the Soviet era. The greatest tragedy for my people was the three centuries that we endured as a part of the Russian Empire during our country's millennium-long history, three centuries marked by enslavement practices and a slave trade. The Ukrainian national poet Taras Shevchenko, who had been a serf in the Russian Empire, once said, "People, people, if you are asked to give away your mother for a piece of rotten sausage, you will".

It is true that a kind of apathy very often prevails in some societies. Unless something violent and shocking happens, an apathetic society will remain complacent while valuables replace values. In that regard, we should redouble our efforts to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals, aimed at ensuring peace and prosperity for all peoples in the world by taking urgent collective action in a global partnership.

Even in 1861, when the Russian Empire at last abolished serfdom as a slavery practice, the repression and exploitation of my people by Moscow did not disappear. In the twentieth century, Stalin's totalitarian regime continued its practice of conducting the State enslavement of Ukrainians through large-scale political repression, sending thousands to the Gulag and other forced-labour camps. Every peasant in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was enslaved through enforced collectivization and limitations on freedoms. It is hard to believe, but Soviet peasants did not receive

passports until 1974. In the pursuit of collectivization, Stalin inflicted genocide through a man-made famine known as the Holodomor, which was designed to crush Ukrainians' spirit of resistance and took millions of innocent lives. Ukraine therefore strongly condemns any glorification of totalitarian regimes, especially that of Stalin, although that glorification unfortunately continues in the Russian Federation, where Stalin's methods for persecuting people are widely used in internal and foreign policies today.

I believe that all crimes of slavery, whether committed in Africa, Asia, Europe or elsewhere, should be condemned and tribute paid to all of its victims. It is our moral and legal responsibility to prevent any repetition of such tragedies and to combat all existing modern forms of slavery, which still harm our societies. It is evident that despite its prohibition, slavery and slavery-like practices, in the form of trafficking of persons and other forms of modern slavery, persist and constitute flagrant violations of human rights. In Ukraine, we continue to receive worrying information about cases of human exploitation and trafficking in various areas of Ukraine that are still under foreign occupation. We believe that the United Nations, including the Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine and the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, should give due attention to the situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine through regular reporting.

The lessons of the past should urge us to address the scourge of slavery, including in all its contemporary forms. We must address its root causes, such as discrimination on any grounds and violations of international law, which fuel intolerance and ignorance and lead to conflict.

Mr. Kuzmenkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's meeting on such an important topic.

The Russian Federation attaches great importance to disseminating knowledge and improving awareness through the media of the causes, consequences, lessons and legacy of the slave trade. Current and future generations must not forget that tragic chapter in world history, and the States Members of the United Nations must take every possible measure to preserve the memory of the victims of the slave trade and its consequences.

However, it is also important to call a spade a spade. Slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, some of the greatest crimes against humanity the world has ever seen, have yet to be fully acknowledged and atoned for. Thanks to the inhuman policies of European colonial Powers and American landowners towards African countries, the peoples of the African continent were subjected to irreparable harm through the transatlantic slave trade. Above all, this is about the loss of millions of lives. The African men, women and even children who were brought to the Americas were not only forever separated from their homeland but subjected to torture and ill-treatment. Many died or lost their health working in inhumane conditions while others profited from their suffering. African countries lost millions of their countrymen whose labour was so essential to their societies' social and economic development. The consequences of that criminal and racist colonial policy are still felt today. We believe that it is justifiable to ask not only for an apology for the atrocities committed, but also for reparations for the moral and material damage suffered by African States.

We in the Russian Federation are proud of our country's contribution to the struggle of African States in the twentieth century for independence and in dismantling the unjust global colonial system. We express our solidarity with all who have suffered as a result of the slave trade, and we support efforts to restore historical justice and ensure accountability for the crimes of colonialism. We feel compelled to point out that the policies of aggressive neocolonialism pursued by Western States are still with us and represent a danger. Many States seeking to defend their sovereignty and pursue an independent foreign policy have been subjected to economic blockades, illegal unilateral sanctions and brazen meddling in their internal affairs. Such shameful practices are contrary to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and must be stopped.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting, which is timely and very significant. The slave trade and slavery represent the most appalling violations of human rights in the history of humankind. For more than 400 years, more than 15 million men, women and children were the victims of the transatlantic slave trade, marking the darkest chapter in human history. Even more terrifying is the fact that people of African descent continue to face racial discrimination,

prejudice, hatred and social injustice to this very day, which is an affront to the human conscience.

Secretary-General Guterres pointed out that while the transatlantic slave trade ended more than two centuries ago, the notions of white supremacy that underpinned it remain alive. Tens of millions of people of African descent in the United States continue to suffer all kinds of discrimination and injustice. Freedom and equality are merely represented in laws devoid of substance. After the George Floyd incident, people were outraged and chanted, “I can’t breathe”. And since the outbreak of the coronavirus disease pandemic in the United States, violence against Asian-Americans has increased significantly. According to statistics, between March 2020 and February 2021, 3,795 attacks and incidents of discrimination against Asians in the United States were reported, and hate crimes against Asians increased by 150 per cent in the country’s 16 largest cities. In the aftermath of the recent tragic shooting in Atlanta that claimed the lives of six innocent people of Asian descent, we cannot help asking who will be the next victims.

China notes that the United States has started to openly acknowledge its serious human rights problems. Coming to an understanding that systemic racism and white supremacy are ugly poisons that have long plagued it is a good start to acknowledging the problem. But addressing it is key. We hope that the United States will take concrete action to address its issues of racism, racial discrimination and police brutality, among other things, ensure the effective protection of the rights of its racial minorities, engage in international cooperation in a sincere and equal manner and stop spreading political lies and waging unprovoked smear campaigns on other countries. China is ready to work with other countries to combat all forms of racial discrimination, ensure that all people can live in dignity and build an inclusive, equal and free society.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in today’s commemorative meeting.

I thank representatives for their active participation today. As we strive towards 2030, the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade is an important reminder of the genesis of inequality. We will not succeed in our endeavours to leave no one behind if we forget those who were left behind and subjugated by society in the past. The statements we heard today demonstrate

that although the transatlantic slave trade ended long ago, the scars on the human psyche remain. We are still unpacking the impact of that moral failure. We are still navigating an unjust world. All of us have a moral obligation to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms, which persist as the legacy of slavery. I urge all Member States to engage constructively in our work on the twentieth commemoration of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the permanent forum on people of African descent and the midterm review of the International Decade for People of African Descent.

Our work is far from done. I hope that you will join me in a moment of personal reflection to remember the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

The Assembly has concluded its commemorative meeting to mark the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 124?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 7 (continued)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The President: I now invite the attention of the General Assembly to draft resolution A/75/L.68, circulated under agenda item 56, entitled “Questions relating to information”. Members will recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 18 September 2020, the General Assembly decided to allocate agenda item 56 to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee. To enable the Assembly to take action expeditiously on the draft resolution, may I take it that the Assembly wishes to consider agenda item 56 directly in plenary meeting and proceed immediately to its consideration?

It was so decided (decision 75/504 B).

Agenda item 56 (continued)

Questions relating to information

Draft resolution (A/75/L.68)

The President: The General Assembly will now resume its consideration of agenda item 56, to take action on draft resolution A/75/L.68, entitled “Global Media and Information Literacy Week”. I give the

floor to the representative of Australia to introduce the draft resolution.

Mr. Fifield (Australia): I have the honour to speak today on behalf of a core group of countries: Armenia, Burkina Faso, Chile, Costa Rica, Georgia, India, Jamaica, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Maldives, Morocco, North Macedonia, Qatar, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Serbia, Uganda, Ukraine and my own country, Australia. Together, under agenda item 56, we are pleased to present draft resolution A/75/L.68, entitled “Global Media and Information Literacy Week”.

By improving people’s ability to access and analyse information, media and information literacy skills enable them to critically evaluate and differentiate between various types of media in order to make informed judgments and sort fact from fiction. The development of media and information literacy is also essential to countering the spread of disinformation and misinformation, including combating false or misleading information that threatens to divide communities and delay the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. For those reasons, the draft resolution presented today seeks to proclaim the week from 24 to 31 October an annual Global Media and Information Literacy Week. It complements UNESCO’s adoption of its resolution 56 in November 2019, at the fortieth session of its General Conference, which also proclaimed an annual Media and Information Literacy Week, which UNESCO has already commemorated.

In the midst of a global pandemic, when people are forced to evaluate new information daily, we consider the draft resolution extremely timely, if not overdue. It is our hope that the Assembly’s adoption of the draft resolution will bring together academia, young people, non-governmental organizations, policymakers, print and broadcast media, Internet and communications companies, educators and citizens to promote universal media and information literacy skills.

The core group held three informal consultations on the draft resolution and maintained an open dialogue on the text throughout the consultation process. We extend our sincere thanks to the sponsors, who so far number 85, for their support, and to all delegations for their participation and constructive engagement during negotiations.

We trust that the draft resolution, which successfully underwent a silence procedure, will enjoy the consensus support of the Assembly.

The President: We will now proceed to consider draft resolution A/75/L.68. Before giving the floor for explanations of vote or position, I would like to remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats. I give the floor to the representative of the United States.

Mr. Leiby (United States of America): The United States appreciates Australia and Jamaica’s leadership and skilled shepherding of draft resolution A/75/L.68, and the core group’s decision to bring such an important topic to the attention of the General Assembly. We support efforts to highlight the importance of media and information literacy, the challenges of digital divides and data inequalities and recognize the importance of access to information. We also appreciate the draft resolution’s acknowledgement of the serious challenge posed by misinformation and disinformation and the need for Member State cooperation on this important issue.

We take a holistic approach to countering disinformation by promoting multi-stakeholder collaboration to raise awareness among vulnerable audiences and bolster societal resilience. That includes promoting a free and transparent news media environment and independent journalism, including by supporting investigative journalism and local news media. It also includes promoting media literacy and fact-checking as key ways to enable individuals to seek multiple sources of sources of information to assess the origins of information and the viewpoints and motivations of sources and to make informed judgments.

We appreciate the core group’s efforts to address some of our concerns in the most recent draft. However, we remain concerned about the eleventh preambular paragraph, which calls for balancing the fight against disinformation with respect for the right to freedom of expression. We strongly disagree with the idea that respect for human rights should be balanced against other objectives. States must respect their international human rights obligations and commitments, including in their efforts to counter disinformation. Member States must ensure that our approaches to countering disinformation do not inadvertently abuse or violate human rights and fundamental freedoms, which undergird free and open societies, including freedom of expression online and offline.

The President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of position before adoption.

The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/75/L.68, entitled “Global Media and Information Literacy Week”. I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. De Miranda (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to the delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of A/75/L.68: Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Austria, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bhutan, Bulgaria, Canada, Côte d’Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Kiribati, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Monaco, Montenegro, Namibia, Nauru, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey and Tuvalu.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/75/L.68?

Draft resolution A/75/L.68 was adopted (resolution 75/267).

The President: We will now hear statements after adoption. I give the floor to the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer.

Mr. Gonzato (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey; the country of the Stabilization and Association process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

I would like to express our appreciation to Jamaica for taking this initiative and to the core group of 12 countries for their hard work in bringing resolution 75/267, on Global Media and Information Literacy

Week, to the attention of the Assembly. We also thank the Permanent Missions of Jamaica and Australia, which as co-facilitators of the informal consultations ensured that all interested parties could engage meaningfully.

The EU supports the text because it addresses a significant challenge of our time. The EU and its member States are committed to media and information literacy in their internal policies, but also through EU development assistance in partner countries and by taking part in the meaningful activities organized by UNESCO since 2011. Enhancing media and information literacy globally is crucial to enabling citizens of all ages to navigate the modern information environment and make informed decisions. In a world where the wealth of sources is unprecedented and multiplied by online platforms, and where we always defend freedom of the press, identifying reliable, trustworthy information requires perhaps more skill and judgment than ever before. By supporting today’s resolution, the EU remains committed to ensuring that all people are equipped with the media and information literacy skills they need to participate as well-informed citizens in various aspects of public life.

(spoke in French)

In bringing the issue before the General Assembly, we acknowledge the progress that has been achieved to date by several countries, regional organizations and United Nations bodies in setting guidelines for the future. We are also committed to a genuinely comprehensive and inclusive approach to ensure that all stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, can contribute to this global effort — a multi-stakeholder approach that the Secretary-General has called for numerous times.

(spoke in English)

The resolution ensures that the promotion of media and information literacy takes place in accordance with the principles of freedom of opinion and freedom of expression, media independence and media pluralism. It also provides strong encouragement to fight disinformation and misinformation, an evolving challenge that must be addressed both online and offline while upholding freedom of opinion and expression and media freedom. We regret that difficult compromises had to be made with regard to some of the references to those freedoms.

In the text, we also recognize the leading role of UNESCO in organizing the Media and Information Literacy Week activities, including via greater youth engagement and leadership, but we also particularly address the role of the private sector and social-media platforms in this effort to empower all citizens. Social-media platforms play an increasingly critical role in addressing the challenges of misinformation and disinformation, including but not limited to the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the infodemic. The resolution is positive, well balanced, timely and action-oriented. We therefore invite all States Members of the United Nations and other relevant stakeholders to support its adoption and to engage both politically and practically in promoting its effective implementation worldwide.

(spoke in Spanish)

We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his efforts in this area, in particular the Verified campaign, announced in April 2020. The work of the Department of Global Communications has been key in combating disinformation, including pandemic-related disinformation, while simultaneously appealing to our shared humanity. We reiterate our support for this crucial endeavour while also recalling the importance of multilingualism, which is an essential pillar of the United Nations and an essential condition for its relationship with the peoples it serves.

(spoke in English)

In conclusion, you yourself, Mr. President, have also addressed the challenge of misinformation and disinformation in the context of COVID-19, including in your statement in December 2020 on responding to the infodemic and sharing best practices, and we strongly support your continued efforts in that regard.

The President: We have heard the last speaker under this item. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 56?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 7 (continued)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The President: I now invite the attention of the General Assembly to draft decision A/75/L.71,

circulated under sub-item (b) of agenda item 105, entitled “Report of the Disarmament Commission”. Members will recall that the General Assembly concluded its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 105 at its 27th plenary meeting on 7 December 2020. In order for the Assembly to take action on the draft decision, it will be necessary to reopen consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 105. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 105?

It was so decided.

The President: Members will also recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting on 18 September 2020, the General Assembly decided to allocate sub-item (b) of agenda item 105 to the First Committee. To enable the Assembly to take action expeditiously on the document, may I take it that the Assembly wishes to consider sub-item (b) of agenda item 105 directly in plenary meeting and proceed immediately to its consideration?

It was so decided (decision 75/504 B).

Agenda item 105 (continued)

Review of the implementation of the recommendations and decisions adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth special session

(b) Report of the Disarmament Commission

Draft decision (A/75/L.71)

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. De Miranda (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): The present statement is made in the context of rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

Under the terms of the second paragraph of draft decision A/75/L.71, the General Assembly would decide to postpone the 2021 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission to a later period to be decided by the Assembly. The adoption of the draft decision would not entail any budgetary implications with regard to the programme budget. Upon a further decision by the General Assembly on the date of the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, the Secretary-General would reassess the budgetary implications and advise the General Assembly, in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly. Furthermore, in accordance with

established practice, the date of the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission would be determined in consultation with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

The statement I just read out was distributed through the plenary space on the e-deleGATE portal and will be made available in the *Journal of the United Nations* under the e-Statements link for the meeting.

The President: The Assembly will now take action on draft decision A/75/L.71, entitled “Disarmament Commission”. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft decision A/75/L.71?

Draft decision A/75/L.71 was adopted (decision 75/519 B).

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 105.

Agenda item 130 (continued)

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations

(s) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

Draft resolution (A/75/L.69)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Tajikistan to introduce draft resolution A/75/L.69.

Mr. Mahmadaminov (Tajikistan): On behalf of all the members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), including China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Uzbekistan and my own country, Tajikistan, I have the honour to present for the Assembly’s kind consideration draft resolution A/75/L.69, entitled “Cooperation between the United Nations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization”. As members may be aware, the draft resolution is just a technical rollover from previous resolutions and we count on the Assembly’s continued support today to see it once again adopted by consensus, as has been the case with the previous resolutions on the subject.

According to the draft resolution, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is committed to acting consistently in line with the purposes and principles of the United Nations. It has become an essential regional organization for addressing security in the region, in all

its dimensions, including through cooperation with the relevant regional organizations. The member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are committed to pursuing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to achieving the peaceful settlement of regional disputes, as laid down under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations.

The member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization will make every effort to transform the SCO region into one of lasting peace, friendship, prosperity and harmony, in accordance with the Treaty on Long-Term Good Neighbourliness, Friendship and Cooperation among the States members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to promote cooperation in countering terrorism, including through the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure. In that regard, the SCO member States welcome the protocol on cooperation signed on 22 July 2012 between the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Another of the draft resolution’s main goals is ensuring cooperation between the SCO’s Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure and the Office of Counter-Terrorism, including the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, with a view to implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, and cooperation between the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, with due consideration of the memorandum of understanding on cooperation between those two entities signed on 25 March 2019. We believe firmly that strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and other entities of the United Nations system and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization will be instrumental in promoting the goals and objectives of the United Nations.

We should mention that the activities of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are aimed at strengthening peace, security and stability in the region; countering terrorism, drug trafficking and other types of transnational criminal activities; and promoting regional cooperation in various areas, such as trade and economic development, energy, transportation, agriculture and agro-industry, the regulation of migration, banking and finances, information and telecommunications, science and new technologies, the digital economy, customs, education, public health,

environmental protection and reduction of the danger of natural disasters, as well as other related areas.

We would like to note that the member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization support and appreciate the cooperation between the United Nations and the SCO and will continue their productive cooperation with a view to achieving our common goals. We would also like to take this opportunity to extend our deep appreciation to all States Members of the United Nations for their support and cooperation on the draft resolution.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/75/L.69, entitled “Cooperation between the United Nations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization”. I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. De Miranda (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I would like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to the delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/75/L.69: Azerbaijan, Belarus, Cambodia, Costa Rica and Kiribati.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/75/L.69?

Draft resolution A/75/L.69 was adopted (resolution 75/268).

(aa) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

Draft resolution (A/75/L.70)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Slovakia to introduce draft resolution A/75/L.70.

Mr. Mlynár (Slovakia): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/75/L.70, entitled “Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development”, on behalf of its main sponsors, that is, Spain and my own country, Slovakia.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has a long history of collaboration with the United Nations. Like the United Nations, the OECD was born from the ashes of the Second World War, and its founding document, the

Convention on the OECD, makes explicit reference to the purposes of the United Nations and the importance of economic growth and prosperity in their realization. In 1971, the Economic and Social Council decided to extend a standing invitation to the OECD to participate as an observer in the work of the Council. In 1998, the General Assembly invited the OECD to participate as an observer in its sessions and work. Some 20 years after that, in 2018, the OECD took the decision to establish a Permanent Observer Office at United Nations Headquarters to further develop that special partnership. Today, cooperation between the OECD and the United Nations system spans almost every policy area in the economic, environmental and social domains. That includes participation in the relevant bodies of both organizations, the exchange of data and analysis and targeted, joint initiatives in support of developing countries.

The main purpose of this biennial draft resolution is to enable us to profile the existing partnership between the United Nations and the OECD and illustrate the global convening power of the United Nations at a time when we find ourselves only a decade from the target date for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and faced with an unprecedented challenge of a truly global nature, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

We believe that draft resolution A/75/L.70 is streamlined, concise, highly relevant and institutional in nature. We hope that it will be received as solid ground for future deliberations. It welcomes the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and the OECD, within their respective mandates and in line with the priorities of member States, in order to accelerate the pace of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. It also emphasizes the importance of optimal coordination and cooperation between both organizations so as to create synergies within their respective mandates.

This is the first time that the General Assembly will adopt such a draft resolution. We believe that it is particularly fitting that it is happening in the context of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations and the sixtieth of the OECD. The unparalleled challenges that have been created by the COVID-19 pandemic further underscore the role that partnerships between the United Nations and organizations such as the OECD can and must play as we embark on a sustainable,

resilient and inclusive path to recovery. In our view, it is a good sign that we have reached consensus on such an important issue, particularly when the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic limited delegations to using challenging working methods and negotiating on an entirely virtual platform. Following a series of informal consultations, the compromise text of the co-facilitators was placed under the silence procedure, and I am pleased to note that the silence was not broken. It is therefore our hope that the General Assembly will adopt the draft resolution by consensus today.

In conclusion, on behalf of the main sponsors, I would like to thank the representatives of all the Member States that took an active part in the negotiation process for their constructive input. Our thanks also go to the Office of the Special Representative of the OECD to the United Nations for the advice and support provided to us throughout the consultation process.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/75/L.70, entitled “Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development”. I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. De Miranda (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should

like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to the delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/75/L.70: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kiribati, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Montenegro, Namibia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Uruguay.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/75/L.70?

Draft resolution A/75/L.70 was adopted (resolution 75/269).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (aa) of agenda item 130?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.