



General Assembly

Seventy-sixth session

13th plenary meeting

Friday, 24 September 2021, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Shahid (Maldives)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Salovaara (Finland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

Address by Mr. Suga Yoshihide, Prime Minister of Japan

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Japan to introduce an address by the Prime Minister of Japan.

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): It is my pleasure and honour to introduce to the General Assembly a pre-recorded statement by His Excellency Mr. Suga Yoshihide, Prime Minister of Japan.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Japan.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex I and see A/76/332/Add.8).

Address by Mr. Robert Abela, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Malta to introduce an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta.

Mr. Bartolo (Malta): I have the honour to introduce a pre-recorded statement by Mr. Robert Abela, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, in the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex II and see A/76/332/Add.8).

Mr. Zhang Jun (China), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Micheál Martin, Taoiseach of Ireland

The Acting President (spoke in Chinese): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Taoiseach of Ireland.

Mr. Micheál Martin, Taoiseach of Ireland, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (spoke in Chinese): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Micheál Martin, Taoiseach of Ireland, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Martin (Ireland): This week, in this Hall, a series of alarms have sounded. They have sounded for conflict; they have sounded for the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic; they have sounded for climate. We have heard the alarms; now we must respond. I believe that this is what the General Assembly, our

In accordance with decision 75/573, and without setting a precedent for mandated high-level meetings planned for future high-level weeks, the official records of the General Assembly will be supplemented by annexes containing pre-recorded statements submitted by Heads of State or other dignitaries, submitted to the President no later than the day on which such statements are delivered in the Assembly Hall. Submissions in this regard should be made to estatements@un.org.

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Assembly of Nations, was created to do — our purpose, our obligation. The United Nations is a symbol of hope for billions of people around the world: the United Nations flag, a beacon of peace across the globe; the Blue Helmets, guardians to the most vulnerable; United Nations convoys, a lifeline to millions. The obligation we assume in this Hall is to transform that hope, in the face of our common challenges, into a better future for all our peoples.

Today, the climate crisis threatens our very existence on this shared and endangered planet. The COVID-19 pandemic has cast a shadow over our world. It has deepened global inequality even as it has heightened our sense of interdependence. The people of the world now look to us, to the General Assembly Hall, to act and to lead. We cannot let them down. The simple fact is that we cannot succeed in addressing those global challenges without a strong, effective and fair multilateral system. As we begin to emerge from the shadow of the pandemic, let us do so more united in our resolve and firm in our conviction that the United Nations delivers for those who rely on it most. Let us commit to tackling this pandemic together, in order to make “leave no one behind” more than a mere slogan, in our words and, more importantly, in our deeds.

Vaccine inequity is a moral test for our global community. The rapid establishment of the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility and the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator represent multilateralism at its best. I urge all Member States to continue to support the COVAX mechanism. It is the only way we can meet the target of a fully vaccinated world by mid-2022. Ireland is in the process of donating 1.3 million vaccine doses to low-income countries, mainly through COVAX, with a further significant donation planned in 2022. Our support to global health since the outbreak of the pandemic now exceeds €200 million. The World Health Organization should remain at the heart of our global response to this and future pandemics. However, we must provide it with the political and financial support it needs to do that job. In Ireland, we have quadrupled funding to the World Health Organization in response to the pandemic. We must also consider change, where needed, to strengthen the multilateral architecture on pandemic prevention and response.

When we reflect on the last 18 months, one thing is clear. The pandemic caught the world off guard. It has put into stark relief the simple and regrettable

fact that we have not made sufficient progress in reducing poverty, increasing access to quality health care and education or combating the climate crisis. Had we made more progress in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), our societies would have been more resilient and better prepared to weather the storm, and lives would have been spared. We have less than a decade to achieve those ambitious global goals. But we have a rare opportunity now to build back fairer, greener and better. The SDGs provide us with the blueprint. So too, does *Our Common Agenda* — the Secretary-General’s vision for a future of global cooperation through an inclusive, networked and effective multilateralism. It is incumbent on all of us to grasp this moment to invest in a better world for all.

For Ireland, our membership in the European Union has shown us that pooling our sovereignty enhances rather than diminishes it; that abiding by international law brings immeasurable benefits; and that our commitment to multilateralism is not simply a stock phrase to insert into a speech, but is at the heart of who we are as a nation and a people. In my address to the Assembly last year (see A/75/PV.12), I assured Member States that Ireland was ready to assume its responsibility on the Security Council — a responsibility entrusted to us by our fellow members of the General Assembly. We do not take that responsibility lightly. Our own experience of conflict on the island of Ireland has taught us that building peace is painstaking, long and often frustrating. We expected that our time on the Council would reflect that complexity and would require stamina, ingenuity, compromise and determination. And so it has proved.

Every day for the past nine months, we have sought to use our voice to defend our principles and make progress towards a peaceful resolution of some of the world’s most pressing conflicts. Progress has not always been possible. Too often the Council has been divided. It is a lesson hard learned that when we in this building are divided, it is the most vulnerable who suffer the consequences. The promise of the Charter of the United Nations is to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Today I call on all members of the Council to set aside political differences and to work to uphold that promise.

Syria presents an urgent example of where that is needed. This year we marked 10 years of conflict in that country. For many, the conflict in Syria is

emblematic of the failure of the United Nations and of the Security Council in particular. On too many occasions, in the face of immense suffering, the Council chooses inaction. Often, in response, it has been the General Assembly that has stepped up and stepped in. It has taken bold action critical to the resolution of that conflict. With Norway, Ireland is leading work in the Security Council to ensure that humanitarian aid continues to reach all in Syria who need it. In July, the Council acted as one when it adopted resolution 2585 (2021), which ensured a continuation of the vital United Nations operation that provides aid to 3.4 million people in north-western Syria. But humanitarian aid cannot be a substitute for political will. What the 13 million Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance require most is a political solution.

Since January, Ireland has consistently urged the Council to act in response to the deteriorating situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. We have been horrified by reports of gross human rights abuses and violations, including widespread and systematic sexual and gender-based violence. For 10 months a humanitarian catastrophe has unfolded before our eyes, and the threat of famine looms large. That is unconscionable. We are speaking out clearly at this meeting today, as we have done in the Council for months. We must stand firm and united in support of the Secretary-General's call for a negotiated ceasefire, unimpeded humanitarian access and the restoration of basic services to all the areas affected, as well as a political solution to the crisis.

A hallmark of Irish foreign policy is our firm commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons. Next week the Security Council will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We are committed to achieving a successful and substantive outcome for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We warmly welcome the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. As Security Council facilitator for resolution 2231 (2015), on the Iran nuclear deal, we have engaged extensively to encourage a return to compliance by all parties. We welcome the commitment of the United States Administration to returning to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action agreement. We urge Iran to seize this opportunity to return swiftly to talks in Vienna and to come back into full compliance with the agreement, including by cooperating fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in May resulted in more lives lost, including the shocking deaths of more than 70 children. Ireland was deeply frustrated by the Security Council's inability to speak throughout this latest outbreak of hostilities. While we welcomed press statement SC/14527, agreed on 22 May, it was too little, too late. A comprehensive, just and lasting peace is possible. Ireland is committed to achieving a two-State solution, with a viable State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders, living in peace and security alongside the State of Israel, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States. Young people, Palestinians and Israelis, are losing hope that peace can be achieved. As leaders, we must act now. I call on the international community to come together to renew efforts for a just and lasting resolution, including through a reinvigorated Middle East Quartet.

The world has watched in horror at the violence and chaos in Afghanistan. Millions of Afghans are in need of urgent support, including those recently displaced by conflict, violence and intimidation. Full, safe and unimpeded access for humanitarian organizations and all of their personnel, regardless of gender, must be facilitated. The most vulnerable — women, girls, boys, men, LGBTQI persons and people with disabilities — must be protected. The situation of Afghan women and girls has been foremost in our thoughts. Over the past 20 years, Afghan women have asserted their rights and continue to do so. Those rights include full and equal access to education, the right to health care, the right to freedom of movement in their own country and the right to participate fully in public life. Women and girls have been educated in enormous numbers and have been leading and participating in all aspects of society. They refuse to be silenced, to be erased from public life. Our role and responsibility is to stand with them. So much has been achieved in the past 20 years. There can be no going back. For all of us in this Hall, we can and must agree that the rights of Afghan women and girls are a non-negotiable principle.

At its best, United Nations peacekeeping is a remarkable and meaningful expression of multilateralism and international solidarity. We have always seen that service as a noble and important calling. For more than six decades, Irish women and men have served. Every village, town and neighbourhood in our island has bid farewell to a Blue Beret upon deployment and counted the days to his or her return. Some never made it home. Today there are more than 500 Irish personnel serving

in United Nations and European Union peacekeeping and crisis-management operations. Every person who serves in a blue helmet deserves a mandate that matches the reality of the conflict on the ground and an assurance that resources in turn match mandates. Equally, the transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding is a critical moment, when sustainable peace is within our grasp but often at its most fragile. Security Council resolution 2594 (2021), led by Ireland and adopted unanimously earlier this month by the Council with the support of 97 members of the General Assembly, sends a strong and united message that the United Nations is committed to supporting its members through this sensitive juncture on the path to peace. There can be no gaps when it comes to protecting civilians.

In Ireland, we have learned the importance of an inclusive approach to building peace. Those who make war cannot and should not have a monopoly on the terms of peace. It is crucial to ensure that women, young people and civil society — often excluded — are at the centre of our shared work to build and maintain peace. The promotion of gender equality and the women and peace and security agenda is a golden thread throughout our work.

Human rights are universal and indivisible. They belong to us all. We will not falter in calling for full compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international refugee law. We will stand by the International Criminal Court, the cornerstone of the international system of criminal justice.

Yesterday, I had the privilege of presiding over a Council debate on climate and security (see S/PV.8864). As we heard from the Secretary-General on Tuesday (see A/76/PV.3), we can no longer deny the reality that climate change is the single greatest challenge facing our generation. Its impact on our environment and ecosystems is devastating, and our collective security is at risk. Time and time again, we have seen that the most catastrophic effects disproportionately affect the most vulnerable and the least responsible. We must deliver on the Paris Agreement commitments, and we will shortly have important discussions at the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 26). But we can see the adverse effects of climate change already exacerbating conflict and insecurity, compounding other drivers of conflict such as poverty, inequality and human rights violations.

We have ample evidence of that. As co-Chair of the Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security, along with the Niger, Ireland has worked throughout the year with our fellow Council members to better understand those links and inform the Council about the steps we can take to address climate-related security risks. We know that not all Council members are of one mind on that. My hope is that by working together, we can and will reach a shared understanding of how the Security Council can meet the challenge of climate and security. There is no time to waste. For that reason, in the coming days, Ireland will convene a discussion on a Security Council thematic draft resolution on climate and security.

At COP 26, we must all, North and South of this vulnerable planet, muster the courage to take bold and ambitious action. We need to keep global warming to as close to 1.5° C as possible. For its part, Ireland will reduce its emissions by 51 per cent by 2030 compared to 2018 levels. Along with our partners in the European Union, we will achieve net neutrality by 2050. It is also critical that we meet our collective commitment to providing \$100 billion in financing to developing countries. We cannot fail. Our future depends on it.

We can all identify times when we, the United Nations, have fallen short. The United Nations can only do what we ask of it when we, its members, allow it; when we deliver the resources, the support, the political will and the constructive engagement needed for it to deliver. As I stand here today, I am reminded of the ambitions, the goals and the dreams of billions of people. They have placed their trust in us, and they expect us to work together to solve the greatest challenges facing our global community. We know that with political will, we can be deserving of that trust. Ireland will continue to play its part, to build consensus and to advocate fiercely for the multilateral system and the people we have pledged to serve.

The Acting President (*spoke in Chinese*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Taoiseach of Ireland for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Micheál Martin, Taoiseach of Ireland, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania

The Acting President (*spoke in Chinese*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania.

Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Chinese*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Rama (Albania): It is a special honour to deliver this speech as the representative of a country that for the first time in its history is joining the Security Council, as a non-permanent member for the 2022-2023 term. The significance of that event for a State that until not so long ago was considered one of the most isolated and repressive countries in the world, and the sense of responsibility with which we take up that role, cannot be overstated. I would like to start by thanking all the States Members of the United Nations for their overwhelming support and trust.

Albania brings to the Security Council the perspective of a small but engaged country, aware of the burdens of the past and the challenges of the future, which has experienced first-hand the limits of isolationism and has discovered the opportunities of multilateral cooperation. Albania is now a country characterized by a respect for differences, tolerance of different religions and an appreciation of the contribution that every culture brings. We will sit on the Security Council with a clear agenda of priorities that reflect what modern Albania stands for — the promotion of peace and security; the peaceful resolution and mediation of conflict; respect for the rule of law and human rights for all; the increased participation of women and youth in decision-making; universal adherence to and full implementation of all non-proliferation and disarmament treaties and conventions; concrete and continued active commitment to the fight against international terrorism and violent extremism.

It is a special pleasure to return to this great house of peace in person and to be able to share our thoughts on today's world, including my country's efforts in facing one of our biggest shared challenges, the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which has inflicted terrible pain everywhere for more than 18

months. Like every other corner of the world, Albania has suffered from this devastating scourge. Today more than half of the Albanian population is vaccinated, and we expect to have the whole recommended population fully vaccinated within the next 10 months.

One of the big lessons of this tragedy is that no country can face it alone, and we now know that no one will be safe until everyone is. As we have seen far too often, without cooperation, solidarity and joint actions, the price we pay, individually and collectively, will only be higher. That is why at the height of the COVID-19 crisis last year, dozens of Albanian doctors and nurses went to Italy to help their colleagues in the Lombardy region; in return, we have been fortunate and grateful to welcome Italian doctors' assistance in the same fight at home. In that regard, I owe heartfelt thanks to the many who have helped us — to Turkey, which at really difficult moments made it possible for us to obtain the necessary doses to start mass vaccination; to the European Union Commission, which fought hard to speed up the provision of vaccines from the European Union to Albania and the Western Balkans; and also to the Governments of Italy, Greece, Croatia and Latvia, which were there for us with their vaccine donations, and to the Governments of Poland, Austria and Denmark, which have pledged to help us along the way. I cite those examples here in order to remind us all that only a common approach based on deeper solidarity, continued assistance and uninterrupted cooperation will enable us to prevail in this war for life. The sharp inequality in vaccine access — the only way to stop the virus — has once more highlighted how urgently we need a different approach, with global initiative, inclusiveness, solidarity and fairness, as well as trust in science. That is why we continue to advocate for international cooperation and support the proposal for a new international treaty on pandemic preparedness and response. We must be and stay together and resist any temptation to succumb to isolationism and nationalism. It is urgent that we improve vaccine access for all, because unvaccinated people carry the high risk of enabling the emergence of more dangerous and deadly variants that could reverse the gains so painfully made and expose us all to even more dire consequences.

If the 75 years of long and strong experience of the United Nations has taught us anything, it is that challenges to peace, development, justice, health and security need the contribution of all — rich and poor, big and small. We firmly believe that 75 years after its

founding, the United Nations remains the cornerstone of the multilateral rule-based world order.

With dialogue and concerted efforts, through the United Nations system as a whole, humankind has made remarkable gains in peace, security and development, in respect for human rights and human dignity, in empowering women and motivating youth, in helping hundreds of millions of people leave poverty behind. We must continue to build on these achievements. The people — our fellow citizens — are right to ask for more, for better and faster initiatives, and we must be up to the task.

Let us remind ourselves that our future, the future of humankind, is shaped by the way we respond and cooperate in the present. Multilateralism is challenged when selfish nationalism prevails. This is one of the most important lessons of the past. Multilateralism can be slow and sometimes frustrating, and it does not always produce quick results, but a world without shared rules, obligations and multilateral institutions is a nightmare that we know all too well.

We therefore cannot afford to lose faith in the multilateral system. We must work to reform it, not to undermine it, and certainly not abandon it. We share the Secretary-General's concerns in his report entitled *Our Common Agenda*, and we think that all States Members of the United Nations have the responsibility to contribute to increasing the functionality of multilateral institutions and mechanisms in order to make a tangible difference in people's lives.

It is exactly in this spirit that Albania successfully chaired the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2020, as part of its continuing engagement and efforts to strengthen peace, human rights, cooperation and equality in the OSCE area. The Ministerial Council of Tirana agreed on several new commitments on combating transnational organized crime, countering corruption and preventing torture in the OSCE region.

Climate change is another key priority in our national agenda. We do not need to have repeated extreme weather events, catastrophic flooding and unbearable heat waves to understand that the continued loss of biodiversity and the unsustainable use and degradation of ecosystems are causing profound and adverse consequences to millions of people and threatening peace and security. Convinced of the urgency to curb greenhouse-gas emissions in line with

the Paris Climate Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in July 2019, Albania became the first country in the region with an endorsed strategy on climate change and related action plans, with policy objectives and concrete actions designed to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. A special law on climate change was adopted in December 2020.

Further, in support of the objectives of the European Union (EU) Green Deal, Albania and other Western Balkan countries signed two declarations in November 2020, one on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans and one on developing a common regional market with a view to making the economy sustainable and climate neutral by 2050. As a net clean-energy producer, Albania is also actively engaged in doing its part to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions by 45 per cent in the next decade and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

The European integration process represents an anchor for Albania's future, and we look forward to the first intergovernmental conference to be held in accordance with the decision of the European Council to open accession negotiations with Albania. I have said it in Tirana, in Brussels and everywhere, and I want to repeat it from this rostrum: Albania has been ready for some time, and it is waiting for the EU to do its part.

European integration is a national priority goal. It is also a region-wide aspiration and the source of inspiration in a completely transformed regional context. All six Western Balkan countries have agreed to enhance economic cooperation by developing a common regional market based on EU rules and standards. We have entered the new and ambitious phase of cooperation, and, through the Open Balkan initiative, we are also working to concretely implement the four EU fundamental freedoms — freedom of movement of people, goods, services and capital — as proof that our region has taken ownership of those principles. We are convinced that it will generate economic growth, reduce unemployment, increase trade, investment and employment in the Western Balkans, and last but not least, make peace irreversible and help the resolution of conflicts once and for all.

The history of the United Nations is one of uninterrupted enlargement. It started with 50 members in San Francisco, and we are now at 193. Still, this large Assembly is not and will not be complete without one of the States of our region: the Republic of Kosovo.

More than once, the General Assembly has heard me call for the recognition of the independence of Kosovo from this rostrum. It is not an obsession, nor do I mention it just to pay lip service to the cause. It is an invitation to acknowledge the new realities in the heart of Europe, through the Balkans region, where a new State was born, with the help of an international community committed to the cause of freedom, human rights and self-determination. But that work needs to be finished, and I want to reiterate this goal and do so because reality has shown to us— to the Kosovars, to the Serbs, to all the people of the Balkans, to the Europeans, and to everyone anywhere who wants to see that an independent sovereign Kosovo, a reality that is already 13 years strong — has brought more peace and stability to the region than it knew before, contributed to moving on from the bitter past and is undeniably part of the shared future of the Western Balkans.

Albania supports a dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia that would lead to mutual recognition between two States — two neighbours — as the only alternative. Every day without such an agreement is a day lost, a day stolen from the youth of both countries, a day taken out of their shared future. I say it in a friendly way but with absolute conviction: only wisdom, courage and vision will finally liberate Serbia from the burden of its past.

Before concluding, let me say a few words about Afghanistan. It is our duty to do whatever we can not to abandon the Afghan people, who find themselves once more at a crossroads. We must do whatever we can to preserve the undeniable achievements of the last two decades and resist, indeed prevent, any return to the age of the darkness that the world had seen before.

As dramatic events were unfolding in front of our eyes, we could not stand idle. Despite limited capacities for receiving immigrants, but with unconditional humanitarianism, we opened our doors to Afghan refugees. We did just as we had done in other critical moments of our history, when we saved thousands of Jews during the Holocaust, thereby becoming the only country in Europe to have more Jews after the war than it had before the war, or when we welcomed half a million of our Kosovo brothers and sisters escaping the hell of ethnic cleansing in 1999.

We welcomed Afghan refugees because we have a moral duty to be in solidarity with those in danger. We owe it to our own history as the refugees we were until

30 years ago. We also owe it to our children, who we believe should learn not just by words but also by deeds that in this life there is a time to get and there is a time to give.

As the Nobel Prize laureate, the Albanian saint, Mother Teresa, said, even when we cannot do great things, we can still do small things with great love. We are humbly doing our part.

The Acting President (*spoke in Chinese*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Ms. Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security and Intelligence, Child Poverty Reduction, and Ministerial Services of New Zealand.

The Acting President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand to introduce an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for National Security and Intelligence, Child Poverty Reduction, and Ministerial Services of New Zealand.

Mr. Hawke (New Zealand): I have the honour and the pleasure to introduce a pre-recorded statement by Her Excellency Ms. Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security and Intelligence, Child Poverty Reduction, and Ministerial Services of New Zealand.

The Acting President (*spoke in Chinese*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for National Security and Intelligence, Child Poverty Reduction, and Ministerial Services of New Zealand.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex III and see A/76/332/Add.8).

The President took the Chair.

Address by Mr. James Marape, Prime Minister and Minister for Bougainville Affairs of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for

Bougainville Affairs of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea.

Mr. James Marape, Prime Minister and Minister for Bougainville Affairs of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. James Marape, Prime Minister and Minister for Bougainville Affairs of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Marape (Papua New Guinea): It is my distinguished honour and pleasure on my own behalf and that of my 8 million plus people and Government, to join other global leaders in

addressing the General Assembly today I also take this time to extend our condolences to families in the countries represented here, my own included, that have lost someone owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), and our get-well wishes to those who are sick. I also pay tribute to the global frontline workers and service personnel who have toiled over and beyond the call of duty to care for those who are sick and vulnerable, expressly our medical workers.

As this is my first attendance at this global forum, I am greatly humbled and warmly congratulate you, Mr. President, and the Government and the people of Maldives on your mandate, particularly as a small island developing State, to lead our collective work this session.

The current situation is compounded by the intensifying and worrisome global climate crisis, accelerated biodiversity losses and other humanitarian, peace, security and trade-related issues, which pose great challenges to the way we now manage our regional and global socioeconomic affairs.

Despite all those challenges, Mr. President, we are heartened by your foresight, commitment and leadership under your “Presidency of hope” vision and theme. We unequivocally pledge to support and partner you during your tenure as President of this forum.

I also thank your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkır, and the delegation of Turkey for his excellent leadership and outstanding work this past year under, of course, very challenging circumstances. We wish him and his family all the very best.

I want to place on record Papua New Guinea’s deep appreciation of and support for our friend the Secretary-General, His Excellency António Guterres, for his continuing bold and decisive leadership of our work insofar as the United Nations mandate and Charter is concerned. His unanimous reappointment for another term starting next year is indeed a clear demonstration of the confidence and trust that the States Members of the United Nations, including my own country, have in his work ethic and strong leadership, which the Organization needs during this very challenging period. I thank him for his frank and sobering assessment of the challenges before us and his proposals on how we can confront those challenges practically and at the multilateral level.

I bring to you all greetings from Papua New Guinea, in the peaceful blue Pacific Ocean. The Pacific Ocean, or the Blue Pacific continent, is home to marine and terrestrial biodiversity and is where the most vulnerable small island States are being exposed to the global threats of a rising sea level due to climate change and the health and associated economic woes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. I speak for Papua New Guinea, of course, but the issues will no doubt resonate with the small island States, including those of my Pacific brothers and sisters.

I believe, Mr. President, that you, too, will have some appreciation of what those issues are, because you yourself come from a small island State.

Our oceanic homes and our way of life are intertwined with the coastal ecosystem in its natural equilibrium. That equilibrium is now affected by human influence, not of the making of our small island States. But we are the first victims and the most affected because of our inherent vulnerabilities.

As we convene and continue to speak on climate change in our twenty-first century forums such as the General Assembly Hall, I wish to remind us all that little children and their families are living amid the seas of the earth in fear and uncertainty of what their future will be like, because in their lifetime they have seen their safe, arable land lost due to sea-level rise and are watching as the structures that their lives are built upon slip away.

It is time for the big carbon emitters of planet Earth to own up and apologize to the small island States and all other victims of climate change, and I make no apologies for that statement.

Today I make a call on all of us, especially to the big carbon-emitting nations, which are now enjoying their national economic transformations through industrialization, to pause, think and take responsibility in order to save our planet. I am comforted by the recent commitments made by President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Boris Johnson on their respective nations' intention to respond better to tackling climate-change issues.

I have also heard China's positive response and note that it is good that we are now uniting to save our planet.

We have a collective responsibility to take action to save Earth. When astronaut Neil Armstrong walked on the moon on 20 July 1969, he would have looked back in the direction from whence he came, and I assume that he would not have seen his beloved home State, the United States of America; he would have seen his home planet — Planet Earth.

It is to ensure the survival of Earth that we must now take action. I want to make this statement: enough talk. We have to take action that is commensurate with the volume of emissions from our industries. The leaders of the big carbon-emitting nations must now lead the global effort in rebalancing the environmental equilibrium. That is a hard ask but is really a necessary call for leadership and champions.

I point to all nations on earth to embrace the unity of humankind in order to save our planet, because what happens in Africa will and does affect Europe; whatever happens in Asia will affect America; and whatever happens in the Middle East will affect those of us in the Pacific, and vice versa.

We live on one planet, one atmospheric envelope, one interlinked environmental ecosystem — hence as one humankind we must rise up and unite to preserve our one planet, our home. Not to do so would be foolishness and would be at the expense of our children and their children, that is, of course, if Jesus Christ does not come back soon.

Papua New Guinea recognizes the need to save Earth, and we, too, are contributing and will contribute to preserving our Earth. God has blessed Papua New Guinea with about 13 per cent of the world's tropical rainforests and 6 per cent of its biodiversity. Those are global assets we want to preserve.

One lesson that I have learned from the COVID-19 experience is that oxygen is the number-one human need; with less oxygen, and COVID-19 has shown us that, an individual suffocates and dies. Well, who produces the oxygen for Mother Earth? The trees, of course. If the world's rainforest reservoir were the global lung, we in Papua New Guinea have a significant proportion of that organ, which keeps the world breathing. We also function as a great carbon sink. We have this significant asset for our planet.

As Chair of the Coalition of Rainforest Nations, Papua New Guinea stands at an important crossroads. We are a net remover of carbon from the atmosphere. Indeed, the removal capacity of our forests is more than 100 million tonnes per year. Our energy emissions at present are approximately 10 million annually. Therefore, if the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation mechanism delivers as it should, Papua New Guinea can remain where every country needs to be by 2050 under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change — a net remover of carbon from the atmosphere.

Preservation and conservation plus the sustainable harvest and use of forest resources can be our commitment to all for the upkeep of Earth, heeding the “code red for humanity” call by our good Secretary-General, Mr. Guterres. The recent Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment Report is crystal clear in indicating that human actions are the cause of the worsening climate crisis. We must take action to change that trajectory.

We have long said that climate change poses a very serious existential threat to our national security and well-being. Therefore, the climate-security nexus reality must and cannot continue to be denied by the Security Council, as that would be dereliction of duty towards all peoples worldwide on the part of the Council. We welcome the increasing support in the Council on that important agenda.

Let me also welcome and commend the excellent leadership and efforts of the United Kingdom, as the President-designate of the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26), Italy as the co-host of COP26 and the Secretary-General in rallying the international community to take the bold decisions and practical measures necessary to deliver on the Paris Agreement commitments.

I cannot overstate the urgency and the ambitious actions needed under the Paris Agreement to undo the serious damage that humankind has caused to Planet Earth. I will also continue to advocate strongly that responsibilities must be assigned correctly, appropriately and proportionately to the scale of the damage done.

During COP26, I will be seeking to ensure progress on a number of issues on behalf of Papua New Guinea and the wider Pacific blue economy.

We all must commit to the energy targets, deal with land use and advocate for the preservation of biodiversity, and also be bolder in climate-financing commitments. Those issues are important to Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands Forum countries, and we will be seeking support and advocacy from developed and industrialized countries to back our domestic and regional efforts towards adaptation and mitigation through global funding assistance.

I will be seeking an understanding to build a special set of criteria that is simplified to enable us to qualify for financial support for our adaptation and mitigation strategies.

I join previous speakers in calling on the international community to collectively meet our Paris Agreement obligations and to submit individual nationally determined contributions without delay. Papua New Guinea was among the first countries to submit its NDC in 2020, outlining its goal to be carbon-neutral by 2050. The plan includes the drafting of our NDC implementation plan, regulations and the alignment of the NDC adaptation and the national adaptation plan thanks to the support we have received from the United Nations Development Programme.

We want to see major carbon emitters in the industrialized nations be genuine and committed in their actions to fund climate-change mitigation and adaptation. Failure in that regard would be a denial of that responsibility. We wish to advocate also that the \$100 billion annual commitment by developed countries to developing nations on climate financing be considered different from official development assistance. That will allow its guidelines to be sensitive to the climate-change mitigation and adaptation agenda and their specific requirements.

As a natural gas and oil exporter, we are working towards ensuring that our carbon footprint is minimized

by implementing Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 Roadmap 2020-2030 on Climate Change, launched last year.

However, despite multiple project submissions for climate financing, Papua New Guinea has had limited success in accessing those funds, except for technical assistance in developing the fiduciary framework. That is quite disappointing. We need to see a more practical demonstration of genuine commitments.

Other forms of assistance towards climate-change adaptation and mitigation must also be streamlined in order to lessen the increasing debt burden in small island States to free up the required fiscal space to support efforts to bring about an economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and achieve sustainable development.

I further call on Member States to finalize robust and fair carbon markets under the Paris rulebook to unlock new financing streams that better account for the sustainable development interests of countries such as my own. That will allow us to assign our development agenda under different but appropriate financing opportunities so long as the guidelines are appropriate but friendly to us.

Papua New Guinea wants to achieve both conservation and development. In forestry, we have ceased issuance of new timber permits and the renewal of existing ones and will achieve a complete round-log export ban by 2025. We want to move into value-adding and downstream processing.

We have adopted and designated a large conservation area in one of our provinces, Northern Province to be exact, as a pilot programme in partnership with a regional environmental programme, which will give us the learning experience we need for the further designation of conservation areas. We are also in the process of establishing a NDC road map for agriculture, forestry and other land use and the energy sector.

COVID-19 will remain our biggest challenge. Our numbers are low in terms of both confirmed cases and fatalities at the moment, but one of the most concerning things for us in Papua New Guinea is the rate of vaccination, which is quite low. Our Government took the necessary upfront ownership through the enactment of appropriate legislation in our national Parliament — the National Pandemic Act 2020. This, together with a very close working partnership with

our valued development partners, including our Pacific family of nations through the Pacific Humanitarian Pathway on COVID-19 programme, has brought us much success. We cannot speak highly enough of such partnerships, including those through the Coronavirus Disease Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility, and with the United Nations system, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Japan, China, the European Union (EU), the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates, which has enabled us to have immediate access to essential medical equipment and supplies, including the AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson and Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccines.

We continue to welcome and encourage the further strengthening of cooperative global efforts to allow access to COVID-19 vaccines in those countries where they are most needed. We advocate for global efforts in curbing misinformation, which has resulted in low rates of vaccination in our country, especially the Facebook misinformation that continues to exist in the public space. It will truly support our efforts in building national advocacy and awareness as to the efficacy and safety of COVID-19 vaccines, a programme ably supported by our development partners, including, most notably, the churches and the United Nations country office.

We must do all that while keeping a very close eye on the general health sector of country, because we cannot afford to lose sight of the other aspects of health in our country. A national health plan is ready to be launched, except for the settlement of the financing plan that matches our health plan. It will encompass facilities development, capacity-building, pharmaceutical procurement, the development of primary, secondary and tertiary health care, and building up provincial capacities and the requisite capacity-building and education insofar as the health sector is concerned.

Economic management for us involves taking stock of where we are, building the right structures for re-engagement with our international partners, and ensuring that the right enablers are put in place to build and sustain a robust economy. That involves taking stock of our debt portfolios, reprioritizing our expenditures and focusing on important reforms in the utilities sector, infrastructure, education, health care and, of course, our natural resources. That also involves taking a closer look at specific projects in the extractive industry and working with their proponents to see them come onstream.

For the past two years, the bulk of our efforts has been aimed at ensuring that we achieve a fine balance between adherence to all COVID-19 protocols and requirements while at the same time ensuring that the economy is open and functioning.

Our work in the transparent stock take of our debt portfolio has attracted strong support from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and has provided an important platform of support from bilateral partners such as Australia and Japan. For that we are truly very, very grateful. We acknowledge their support for us at this time when COVID has hit us and our economy is struggling.

We continue to advocate for the use of our natural resources. But the foundational tenet is that the development of those resources is to be done on the premise that all stakeholders have a shared interest in such development, and that interest is to be fully satisfied within the principles of equity and equality, with no one left behind, especially in a country such as mine, in which people of many different ethnicities own parcels of land.

A key area of focus is the substantive investment and development of quality economic infrastructure to link the provinces throughout the country and deliver important services to our citizens countrywide and enhance their socioeconomic opportunities.

We have embarked on a very important connectivity programme that is aimed at connecting rural Papua New Guinea, which is building and expanding key infrastructure assets such as national roads, wharves, jetties, airports and airstrips; punching new road corridors; and providing information and telecommunication networks and electricity access to the majority of our population.

That is the stimulus for economic transformation for our people. It is being done as required by our national Constitution; for those who might not know, Papua New Guinea became independent only in 1975. That is totally in alignment with our national eight-point plan, PNG Vision 2050, our development strategic plan 2010-2030, our medium-term plan III 2018-2022 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to better deliver socioeconomic prosperity for the country. We hope that in this way we will become a middle-income country by 2050.

Growth for Papua New Guinea continues to be off the back of the petroleum, energy and mining sectors, which contribute around 60 per cent of our gross domestic product. We continue to advocate for such development to take place and do as much as we can, working as hard as we can, to advocate for important policies in those sectors.

Our policies on development in the extractive sector have begun to take account of the diminishing financing envelope from external sources such as loans and grants. At the same time, we have had to move towards better management of our national public debt. We strongly recognize the importance of generating sufficient revenue from our own domestic sources to complement external budget support for our national development priorities. As you well know, Mr. President, the General Assembly's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa financing for development framework call for that.

It is in that spirit that my Government has embarked on the process of reviewing and reforming our legislation and policies in the resources sector to ensure appropriate levels of national content in projects and to facilitate fair and equitable returns for all stakeholders with shared interests. At the same time, we continue to value, respect and uphold our partnership obligations with the private sector in our natural resources sector. We remain open for business and therefore welcome bona fide international investors to join us in exploring the opportunities that are still available in my country.

My country continues to enjoy a partnership with important multilateral financial institutions. Let me take a moment to thank the World Bank, the IMF, the Asian Development Bank and, of course, our valued bilateral partners, including Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China, India, the European Union and the United States, for supporting my Government's development priorities.

It would be remiss of me not to also acknowledge the excellent work undertaken under the leadership of the Prime Ministers of Canada and Jamaica and the Secretary-General of the United Nations for financing for development, needed particularly in developing countries to recover and build back from the COVID-19 pandemic — a call that Papua New Guinea strongly supports.

My Government has prioritized investment in the agriculture sector as an engine of economic growth and

prosperity for our country. The strategic interventions are a combination of the credit scheme that we engaged upon, freight and price subsidies for our rural farmers, which has helped broaden the scope and reach of agricultural production sites in our country. That will not only help broaden the tax base and generate additional revenue the country needs for development but also, more importantly, improve our rural communities' lives and livelihoods and enable them to be proactive insofar as nation-building is concerned.

Our largely rural-based economy is dependent on subsistence agriculture. It is my Government's desire to transform the agriculture sector into a reliable, commercial, sustainable food system that will address food security and climate resilience as well as the conservation and management of our vast biodiversity.

To support that, we have set targets to increase cash crop production by 30 per cent and increase livestock production by 30 per cent by 2025, as well as develop taxation incentives for our local farmers.

Additionally, these include the formulation of an agriculture and livestock diversification plan by 2025 and our efforts to increase downstream processing by 30 per cent in 2025 and ensure that local landowners and provincial governments participate in equity-sharing and downstream business and the associated spinoffs.

Our efforts in the agricultural sector tie in well with the important global efforts under the United Nations Food Systems Summit, convened virtually yesterday by the Secretary-General. Papua New Guinea has identified five key priority actions that form our national pathway to transform our food systems in ways that will build a sustainable, equitable, resilient and healthier food system in our country. Those details were shared in our national statement at the Food Systems Summit yesterday evening.

I would underline, however, that my country, with its abundant arable land, has the potential to serve as a food basket for the Asia-Pacific region and beyond, particularly at a time when food security around the world is now being threatened by the ravages of climate change, sea-level rise and other crises. We therefore welcome multi-stakeholder partnerships and investment to transform our organic food systems to support addressing the global challenges relating to hunger, poverty and malnutrition, as well as food security, which fosters better health outcomes for our peoples and communities, and to deliver on the SDGs.

In the energy sector, we recognize the importance of an energy transition to renewable sources so as to move significantly away from fossil fuels and to options including hydro, solar, wind and geothermal energy. We also have options with clean gas energy.

Our government has since 2018, under the auspices of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, been working with our development partners — Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the United States — on the Papua New Guinea electrification programme, which is intended to provide reliable and affordable renewable energy to more than 70 per cent of the unreached households in the country by 2030. Tremendous development outcomes for our people ride on that programme.

We have struck a partnership with the International Solar Alliance and the International Renewable Energy Agency; in addition, the private sector has come on board in the form of the Fortescue Metals Group and its subsidiary Fortescue Future Industries, with a view to strengthening our renewable energy transformation and options in geothermal and hydropower energy.

Our energy transformation will come about once the National Energy Authority has been fully established. It is a particularly strategic act, which we adopted earlier this year to separate the regulatory responsibilities from the generation of power. We hope that in the not too distant future that authority will regulate the energy space to facilitate more investment into, and development of, the different energy options, especially the clean energy sources that we advocate. We want to recapitalize on the energy space and to ensure that clean energy becomes Papua New Guinea's main driving force.

The virtual first-ever High-level Dialogue on Energy, convened today by you, Mr. president, and the Secretary-General to accelerate efforts in implementing Goal 7, on energy-related goals and targets for sustainable development, is the most timely and needed, insofar as Papua New Guinea is concerned. It resonates very well with my Government's development priorities, and we look forward to harnessing the 10-year action plan under the global road map to attain Goal 7 by 2030 and to further exploring joining an energy compact to support the achievement of Goal 7 by 2030 and reach net-zero emissions by 2050.

As a maritime nation with a maritime zone spanning over 2.4 million square kilometres, the oceans agenda is of immense importance to my country, not only for

the living and non-living resources, but also for the added value that they bring to our national assets and, more importantly, for our own identity and way of life as a people and nation of the seas.

My Government is also prioritizing and strengthening the management, governance and security of our maritime zones under our National Oceans Policy 2020-2030, which was adopted in July 2020.

To further complement that, last year my Government also officially launched our 10-year National Fisheries Strategic Plan 2021-2030, which provides the road map and vision for a broad-based fisheries sector and industry that is inclusive, environmentally sustainable and globally competitive and promotes food security.

Furthermore, it addresses issues that include the prevention of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in our country and neighbouring Pacific waters. It also talks about domestic downstream processing, which enables our people, as resource owners, to be meaningfully involved in the economic opportunities that our sea resources bring. We call on countries within our region to be responsible in that regard.

I am pleased to say that my Government adopted and launched the country's Marine Protected Areas Policy and the *National Plan of Action on Sharks and Rays* in June 2021. That policy will strengthen our efforts to better protect our marine resources, as we are an epicentre of global marine resources and biodiversity. We are grateful for the support of the Global Environment Facility and the United Nations Development Programme as valued development partners.

In doing that, it will assist us to reach the Aichi Biodiversity Target 11, that is, to have 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas protected, to which we remain committed. It is in that context as well as with the devastating wildfires and catastrophic climate change events around the world impacting adversely on biodiversity that we look forward to a successful outcome of the fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which will take place in China next month.

We therefore join the growing global call for an ambitious and transformational post-2020 global biodiversity framework that can help us to fully

implement our national commitments to protect biodiversity and sustainably use them for our sustainable development, as well as to meet the SDGs.

Regionally, I am pleased to join my fellow leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum in heralding our milestone regional Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-related Sea-Level Rise, which was adopted last month.

As large States within the Blue Pacific continent and with the advent of the devastating consequences of runaway climate change and rising sea-levels that continue to threaten our countries and people's security, lives, livelihoods and sovereignty, the Declaration preserves our maritime zones in the face of climate change-related sea-level rise.

It also upholds the integrity of and our long-standing commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea as the global legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. We therefore welcome the support of all States Members of the United Nations and the international community for our landmark Declaration. My earlier remark on climate change gives us the basis to call for such support and actions.

In terms of peacebuilding, my Government recognizes the fundamental role that the United Nations plays in supporting sustainable development and peacebuilding. It is therefore incumbent on the United Nations to ensure that we continue to adapt the existing multilateral arrangements, including the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, the Security Council, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Secretary-General's Action for Peace initiative and the Peacebuilding Fund, to make them relevant under the evolving global circumstances to better foster and sustain global, regional and national peace and security.

For us, our continuing engagement with the Peacebuilding Commission and the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund in recent years, from which we have been a beneficiary, further strengthens the hand of national peace and security through peace by peaceful means.

That is especially true of our Bougainville Peace Agreement process for our Bougainville region and within the new initiative on peacebuilding and sustaining peace in two other provinces in my country.

I am pleased to announce that the Bougainville peace process continues to remain a top priority of my Government. In that context, I would like to inform this Hall that, following the referendum in 2019, my Government and the Autonomous Bougainville Government held the second post-referendum consultation and the Joint Supervisory Board just three months ago, where several very important decisions to move the peace process forward were agreed upon. Those included the reaffirmation of both parties' commitment to the Bougainville Peace Agreement and the importance of a peaceful dialogue on the way forward, guided by the country's constitutional and parliamentary processes, including with respect to the outcome of the 2019 referendum, which includes the agreement to transfer all agreed powers and a joint road map to guide the post-referendum processes.

There is clear recognition by both parties that much more work remains to be done in this critical phase and that constructive dialogue, mutual understanding and partnership are crucial to a lasting political settlement of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. Let me place on record my appreciation for the United Nations in its help and leadership assistance on the Bougainville issues that faces Papua New Guinea.

My Government is also realistic about the capacity challenges and successful peacebuilding in our efforts in sustaining peace. The continued supportive partnership of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund, the wider United Nations system and other development partners will be vital to ensure that the dividends of peace are shared and become long-lasting.

I acknowledge the strong support of the United Nations in chairing the consultation process and supporting the initial engagement of a moderator for those talks to take place. I would also like to put on record our sincere appreciation for our valued bilateral and multilateral development partners, again including Australia, the European Union, Japan, China, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, the United States, the United Kingdom and the entire United Nations system, for their continuing commitment and support to the Bougainville peace process and the recent initiative in two provinces in the Highlands part of our country and look forward to further work with all development partners on that important priority that my Government is undertaking.

While commending the United Nations for the peace efforts in Papua New Guinea, I would also like to recall the 2019 decision of the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders and the outstanding visit by the United Nations human rights mechanism to address the alleged human rights concerns in our regional neighbourhood. That visit is very important to ensure that the greater peoples of the region have peace within their respective sovereignties and that their rights and cultural dignities are fully preserved and maintained.

We have also long recognized that our sustainable development efforts will be in vain if we do not safeguard the human rights of our women and girls and the preservation of their dignity and provide them opportunities to be equal development partners for nation-building. That is why my Government has prioritized gender equality and empowerment opportunities, with policies, laws and strategies. Among other things, we have set in place the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence 2016-2025* and the Family Protection Act and provided that demographic segment of our economy specific economic opportunities to be engaged in entrepreneurial activities to empower our women and girls.

Those initiatives take into account our international commitments and obligations under the relevant international frameworks, notably the Beijing Platform for Action. We recognize that much work remains to be done but we are determined and committed to do what is right for our women and girls, as our country's future prosperity and security also depend on how we treat them today and into the future.

That has recently been clearly demonstrated by the groundswell of support to combat and end the scourge of gender-based violence in the country. I am pleased to note that this year my Government, with the support of the Coalition of Parliamentarians to End Gender-based Violence, established the bipartisan Special Parliamentary Committee on Gender-based Violence to inquire into gender-based violence in the country and propose recommendations and measures to combat and end the scourge of that violence. A report of that important work has been put forward in Parliament, and we are working towards implementing it. That will complement the work done under the European Union-led and United Nations-supported Spotlight Initiative for ending violence against women and children, which was jointly launched when the Deputy

Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, visited Port Moresby in March 2020. I really want to thank Her Excellency for that visit. It was a visit not only to the capital city; she also stepped out into rural Papua New Guinea.

We are also embarking on the administrative measures for quotas for women's representation in our national Parliament. The inadequate representation of women parliamentarians is a continuing concern for us in Papua New Guinea. We are optimistic about setting that initiative in motion at our next general election, scheduled for July 2022.

These are but some of the key issues on which my Government is now working in our third-cycle Universal Periodic Review report, to be presented to the Human Rights Council in November 2021.

Before I conclude, I would like to reiterate our call on the General Assembly to do better in delivering on the reforms of the Security Council. That important organ, entrusted with the international community's peace and security, with its archaic representation and working methods, is in dire need of an overhaul to ensure that it meets with today's reality. We are concerned that it has been nearly 12 long years now since the first round of the intergovernmental negotiations for the reforms of the Security Council, and the costs keep escalating for countries such as ours. Despite all the extensive efforts on the five agreed elements of the intergovernmental negotiations package, it still does not have any formal status to date. For my delegation, a single consolidated document now, and not in the indeterminate future, is needed for real negotiations to pave the way for the reforms of the Security Council. The importance of that cannot be overstated, and we reiterate our call on this fundamental point.

I also recognize, as I end my statement, the important reality check by Secretary-General Guterres in his call for action on *Our Common Agenda*. The Secretary-General's proposals and recommendations call for a robust United Nations system, and they have our full support. However, we cannot make progress on that agenda without dealing with the system that will carry it.

I thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to speak. Under your presidency, we hope that our planet can be a better place for all. We have the hope that no one will be left behind. God bless all Member States. God bless our planet Earth.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Bougainville Affairs of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea for the statement he has just made.

Mr. James Marape, Prime Minister and Minister for Bougainville Affairs of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by the Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communications and Media and Minister for Religious Affairs of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communications and Media and Minister for Religious Affairs of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Mr. Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communications and Media and Minister for Religious Affairs of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communications and Media and Minister for Religious Affairs of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Bettel (Luxembourg) (spoke in French): I must say that it is with emotion that I am speaking to the General Assembly today. I still recall that last year we talked to each other through a screen, without being able to interact, react or support. In my message, I expressed the hope and wish that we would be able to meet again (see A/75/PV.11). We are again meeting in a hybrid and reduced mode, but we are seeing each other more.

If today we are able to speak from this rostrum and return to more normality in our daily life, we owe it to the dedication and perseverance, as well as, it must be said, the genius of all those who spared no effort for more than a year and a half to enable us to gradually contain the coronavirus disease pandemic, whether it be the scientists, researchers, doctors, health-care workers or all those who allowed us to live and survive in such a situation and now to be able to find a vaccine. Twelve months, a year ago, who would have said that we would find a vaccine in such a short time and be able to meet other again?

Let us not forget that this city, which was hit hard by the pandemic, has nevertheless once again become the capital of international diplomacy and multilateral engagement. However, we see that many speeches are still being made by video-teleconference and in virtual format. We are therefore still not back to the normal life that we knew before, but we are very slowly getting there.

As we all know, we also see that the pandemic has had an impact, whether it be economic, social, mental or psychological. We see that it has also had an impact on our populations. Let us not forget that more than 4.5 million people died after contracting the virus and 124 million people have been pushed into extreme poverty. The pandemic has cost schoolchildren more than 1,800 billion hours of classroom time, which are opportunities and speak of hope. Allow me later on to return to hope. Education is precisely part of hope for many people.

The pandemic forces us to recognize the need and urgency to change the way in which we do business. We can no longer speak of business as usual and we must strengthen our collective action within the multilateral system, with the United Nations at its centre.

Luxembourg congratulates you, Mr. President, on your election. You can count on the support of our delegation as you carry out your important mandate. I also thank you for the time that you found this morning for that exchange with you and to be able to speak of such hope, which I will develop a little later in my address, as it is the theme that you chose under such auspices to place before the Assembly. I think that it is a very wise choice, as today we hear more news that makes despair and lose hope nowadays.

There is the pandemic. With us, every day the news begins with the 6.30 a.m. push news of how many people are in hospital, how many died and how many are ill. There are crises and conflicts, which continue to multiply. I will cite just two examples: the crisis in Afghanistan, where the Taliban's grip on the country undermines even the progress made over the past 20 years in terms of democratic governance, development and human rights, especially for Afghan women and girls.

And what about the climate crisis? Its devastating effects strike every country; not one is spared. I have spoken to you, Mr. President, and other colleagues for whom the climate crisis is even a crisis of survival. As

for us, we have crises that hit us. We have had floods, storms and tornadoes, but for other countries even their existence and physical presence will depend also on the choices that we all will make together.

Today it would therefore be irresponsible to lose hope and just be fatalistic, for there is room for hope. There are reasons for hope and that hope should inspire us to act. The time for talk is over and the time for action has come. We say that hope is lost. That is a saying, for hope can also disappoint. Despair can lead to some people no longer believing in anything. I think that hope endures and also can be realistic if there are “concrete achievements, which create de facto dependence”, to quote Robert Schuman’s Declaration on European construction.

As responsible politicians, we must act together to overcome global challenges. We should stop thinking that closing borders, as has been the reflex, for example, during the pandemic, building walls, selfishness and withdrawal into oneself are the answer. We should be aware that we do not hold all the keys, not even as Governments. We need to monitor the success of civil society. We need the private sector. We need our citizens, in particular young people, who themselves are worried about the decisions that we take today or, rightly perhaps, about the lack of decisions that we are taking today.

Our Secretary-General, António Guterres, calls on us to do that. I thank him for his work, and I again congratulate him and reiterate my most sincere wishes for success in his second term at the head of our Organization. In the report that he has just presented, *Our Common Agenda*, the Secretary-General confronts us with our responsibilities. I agree with him when he says that we are at a turning point in history.

My country is a founding member of the United Nations. We have long been committed to multilateralism and an international order that is rightly based on the rule of law. Today my country is ready to respond to the Secretary-General’s call to build a more robust, effective, inclusive and networked multilateral system. That is the only way in which we can ensure peace, security and sustainable development in all its aspects, including health, respect for the rule of law and human rights.

The pandemic has forced us to make difficult choices and act with urgency without being sure that we always had the right answers to deal with the

unprecedented situation, which is true. We all learned things yesterday when we already had to take a decision the day before. We learn information today when we had to take decisions today. It was a very unusual situation, in which we were dependent but happy to see that the scientific community made progress and adapted. We also relied on information from others. Imagine, when I just talked about that selfishness, those walls and that pride, if each country remained guarded about the situation and even the information itself, rather than there being the richness of exchanges to learn the experiences of each other.

Today it is true that the decisions were not always easy to understand, particularly as one’s neighbour was doing the opposite to what one was doing. It was always very difficult. Therefore, for example, I, together with France, Belgium and Germany, had exchanges. We telephoned each other, saying that I am going to do this or that, also in order to learn from each other, as well as to share.

Nevertheless, we managed to convince an increasing number of people to be vaccinated because today the vaccine is the only way out of this crisis. Almost 75 per cent of those over the age of 12 years have been vaccinated to date. More than 6 billion doses of vaccine have been administered to date. That is an impressive number. That is good, but it is not enough. Eleven billion doses are needed to reach the threshold of 70 per cent of the world’s population vaccinated, thereby allowing for an end to talking about the acute phase, for we are not protected from mutations and variants that exist. The mutations scare me, I must say. However, access to vaccines is unequal and, while that is the case, as the Secretary-General reminded us, it will be a problem and we will not manage to escape it.

Our country is aware of the importance of vaccine solidarity. Last year and this year, as a country, we have contributed approximately €2 million to the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility for global access to COVID-19 vaccines. In July, my Government decided that Luxembourg would also share 350,000 doses of vaccine with its partner developing countries in Africa and Asia. On 13 September, a first delivery was successfully made. Luxembourg shared 56,000 doses of vaccine, and the medical equipment to administer them, with Cabo Verde through the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism.

However, what an ugly picture we all still have in our minds of when the ventilators were in such demand or when even among countries, one against another, we were bidding for ventilators on the airport tarmac and masks, competing with each other and in a race to see who could afford to pay the most to receive the supplies. What a sorry picture of international solidarity but we must remember it. For us, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, who had the opportunity to buy without denying others, it is important to also be able to share where we can. We provided respirators for India, Nepal and Tunisia. We are providing vaccine refrigerators to Laos, the Sudan, Burkina Faso and Senegal. We are ready to continue our international solidarity efforts to fight the pandemic. I had the opportunity to underline that at the summit convened by President Biden the day before yesterday.

I am confident that we will be able to overcome the pandemic if we count on solidarity and science and if we also manage to stem the tide of fake news that exists and is fuelled by social networks by those who think that information is slow to receive through their Facebook accounts and social networks. We should not say that all those who have not yet been vaccinated are part of the anti-vaccine group. There is a high proportion of our population who still have questions and doubts. We should reassure them. We should not stigmatize them. It is pointless to think that we are going to manage to vaccinate 100 per cent of people. There will always be a certain percentage that will not want to be vaccinated. Let us accept that and reassure those who still have doubts rather than shunning them. It is important to understand that we should carry them with us.

To stem that flow of fake news and misinformation, we need to react. The media and politicians also have a role to play in not letting fake news supplant impartial information. We should strengthen the World Health Organization (WHO), but we should also increase cooperation among Member States. The independent group set up by the WHO Director-General has made useful recommendations in that regard.

Allow me also to mention the historic Paris Agreement on Climate Change, achieved six years ago. As I said earlier, however, climate developments show us that we should go further in our contributions, as well as in implementing our commitments. We cannot continue to make commitments, while the reality is something else. If we stay on the current trajectory, the temperature will rise by 2.7°C by the end of the century.

We must limit global warming to 1.5°C as compared to the preindustrial levels.

This morning, we had an exchange about the consequences that such global warming may have on some nations. Certain countries may no longer exist tomorrow if we see a melting of the existing ice. Realize it. I am part of a country that if I no longer exist, first I have Germany, Belgium, France and other countries around me. I am an enclave. I do not have access to the sea. But imagine if you were an island and that perhaps tomorrow, if we do not all act together, you could disappear. What a scenario. It is therefore important that we act together. I am lucky to be part of the European Union, which has made strong commitments. I also thank the countries that have stayed within or returned to the Paris Agreement. We owe that to future generations. Several years ago, I was afraid that when certain countries said that they no longer wanted to be part of the Paris Agreement, it could have a domino effect and that that would be counterproductive. Therefore, a big thank-you goes to all those that stayed or that returned.

For us, it is important to reduce net greenhouse-gas emissions by at least 55 per cent. Luxembourg has enacted a law to that end and we have doubled our production of renewable energies in recent years. We must also fulfil our commitments to developing countries and help them to strengthen their capacity to cope with the effects of climate change. My country, for example, has decided to double its international climate financing to €200 million for the period from 2021 to 2025. I would like to point out that Luxembourg's climate financing is in addition to our official development assistance, to which we continue to devote at least 1 per cent of our gross domestic product. I have been Prime Minister since 2013. In the past eight years, I have been asked on many occasions whether I think that 1 per cent for development aid is still necessary. And I say yes. While we all have problems in our own countries and there are many issues that need resolving at home, cutting aid to the countries that need it most would be selfish. We should defend cooperation policies in our countries without falling for the siren song of populism and making cuts when it comes to helping others.

The twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will open soon in Glasgow. I think it will be a moment of truth. I hope that we will all be there and that we will make the right decisions to guarantee a

healthy environment for future generations. Speaking of future generations, UNICEF estimates that more than 1 billion children are exposed to climate shocks. The climate crisis is therefore also a children's rights crisis. In that context, my country is particularly proud to be a member of the School Meals Coalition, as I had the opportunity to highlight the day before yesterday at the United Nations Food Systems Summit. Effective school-meal programmes are a smart investment in future generations because they help to create opportunities, especially for girls and women.

Human rights are tested every day by the climate crisis and the pandemic but also by wars and conflicts, which are theatres for crimes that shock the human conscience, from Afghanistan to the Sahel via the Middle East, Syria and Yemen, as well as Ethiopia. The promotion of human rights at the national and international levels is a priority area for us and we want to continue to assume our responsibilities in that area, too. For that reason, Luxembourg has submitted its candidacy to the Human Rights Council for the 2022-2024 term, which would be our first as a member of the Council. If we have the honour of being elected by the General Assembly to the Council in next month's elections, I can pledge that my country will strive to promote the rights of every human being in a spirit of dialogue and cooperation, working closely with the United Nations human rights mechanisms. We will also work to ensure that the voice of civil society is heard, as it is essential to the Council's proper functioning. We have four priorities that are reflected in our voluntary commitments.

Our first priority concerns support for the rule of law, civic space and human rights defenders and the fight against impunity. I would like to reaffirm our support for the International Criminal Court and the monitoring and investigation mechanisms set up within the framework of the United Nations.

Our second relates to sustainable development and climate action based on human rights. We recognize the importance of the right to development and of ensuring that our ambitious climate action and cooperation policies take into account the strong links between the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the fight against climate change and respect for human rights worldwide.

The third concerns gender equality and the fight against all forms of discrimination. My country has

a feminist foreign policy, and in that regard I would like to point to the exchanges I had with you only this morning, Mr. President, regarding the importance of establishing such policies and committing to the rights and empowerment of women and girls. I think it is terrible that even now in some countries men think they know what is best for women. That is still a reality today. It is appalling that men should consider themselves better able than women themselves to decide what women need and what women should or should not do, whether in the area of education, health or sexual and reproductive rights. In 2021, the importance of such choices being made by the person concerned should no longer be called into question. We are also working for the protection of the rights of LGBTQI people.

Fourthly, we will continue to systematically invest in children's rights. Young people's voices must also be heard. But when we talk about human rights, we must also think about refugees and migrants. Let us consider the people who are fleeing Afghanistan. Let us not forget the journalists, the human rights defenders, the lawyers and the judges, all the people on whom we have relied over the past 20 years, whom we asked to be our partners. We cannot tell them that we no longer want anything to do with them and leave them in their current situation. Let us not forget them. Let us not disappoint them. They were our partners yesterday, and we are not going to turn our backs on them today. I am pleased to announce that in a few months' time, the European Commission will hold a conference in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg on the resettlement of vulnerable Afghans.

We are also seeing tensions between States and within societies that are currently experiencing a crisis of confidence. I must say that the discussions I have had in the past few days with some of my colleagues have not been very reassuring. I can sense that those tensions are still there and very much alive, and it is therefore up to us to try to create a dialogue. I do not want to talk about trust when such fundamental mistrust exists, but for the benefit of present and future generations we must create some small hope for dialogue between the countries where we have contacts in order to avoid conflicts. We consider the Secretary-General's proposal to develop a new social contract anchored in human rights and to shape a new agenda for peace very relevant. We stand ready to contribute to efforts to restore trust and international law. Of course, lasting peace is also essential.

My country is also ready to assist in adapting the United Nations so that it can better play its role as the linchpin of multilateral cooperation. Such adaptations will not be easy to achieve, but just because something is not easy does not mean we should sit back and do nothing. We must move forward. We support the calls to strengthen the General Assembly and to reform the Security Council in order to make it more representative, more effective and more accountable to all Member States. There are reasons to hope and to persevere. Above all, we must not throw up our hands. We must take action. Let us cooperate to overcome the trials that humankind faces.

Like the vast majority of my generation in my country, I have never known war or conflict. I am part of that generation. Elsewhere on our continent, however, others have not been so lucky. We owe so much to the people who have died for us. In Luxembourg, we have an American cemetery full of the graves of young American soldiers who, for the most part, did not even know where Luxembourg was. Yet they died so that I could live today in a democracy. We must never forget them. That is why now more than ever, we have to find solutions together. We must not repeat what they went through. We owe others the right to live in peace today.

When we talk about hope today, in 2021, it does not mean the same thing to everyone. In some countries, young people hope simply to survive, while others hope to have an education or the right to health. On the subject of vaccines, while in my country we are wondering whether to roll out a third vaccination programme, other countries are still waiting for their first dose to protect themselves.

Today, the fact of being white, Black, mixed race or Asian can have an impact on one's social success. Is it normal to have to hope that I could be born a certain way and have the same opportunities as someone else? I myself am married to a man, but in some countries, I would be sentenced to death. Is it right that a bisexual, transgender, lesbian or homosexual should be forced to live a life dictated by others, forced to fit into the moulds that others impose on them? Is it normal that today, whether I am Jewish, Muslim, Catholic, Protestant or Hindu, I have to ask myself if I can exercise my religion freely without being in danger when visiting my synagogue, my mosque or my church? Hope today is something that depends on where I live, where I was born, the colour of my skin, my sexuality. My only hope

is that the hopes of yesterday, the hopes of humankind, can become a reality tomorrow for future generations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communications and Media and Minister for Religious Affairs of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communications and Media and Minister for Religious Affairs of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Imran Khan, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan to introduce an address by the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Mr. Qureshi (Pakistan): I have the great honour to introduce a pre-recorded statement by His Excellency Mr. Imran Khan, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex IV and see A/76/332/Add.8).

Address by Mr. Irakli Garibashvili, Prime Minister of Georgia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Georgia.

Mr. Irakli Garibashvili, Prime Minister of Georgia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Irakli Garibashvili, Prime Minister of Georgia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Garibashvili (Georgia): On behalf of the Georgian people, it is an honour to speak here at the General Assembly. The United Nations provides each Member State with a platform to voice concerns and share its views about the most pressing challenges and opportunities of our time. Today I bring the same Georgian spirit of cooperation and global engagement that motivated our country to join the United Nations

after the restoration of its independence, 30 years ago. While our democratic nation may be young, our values and traditions are deeply rooted. We have survived and thrived through many cycles of history over thousands of years. Our history has helped forge a tough, proud and resilient people, open to the world and to finding our own way forward. Georgia is a diamond in the rough, still seeking to polish its edges to reveal its full potential as a nation. Situated at the crossroads of civilizations — where East meets West and North meets South — Georgia has always adjusted to meet new challenges at every turn in its past.

I applaud the United Nations for going ahead with the general debate of the General Assembly during a global pandemic. Rather than not meeting, we are acknowledging that a safe and responsible gathering is now more important than ever. The importance of this meeting cannot be understated. The world is still in a brutal war against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which has ravaged the globe and affected economies and livelihoods. As we continue our effort to build back better from the pandemic with a sense of unity, we have to come together to meet the needs of the world.

Georgia is grateful to the United States, the European Union (EU) and China, as well as the vaccine producers that have provided vaccines to safeguard the health of the Georgian people. Working with a common purpose, we will put an end to the pandemic and get back to forging a better, brighter future for the entire world.

I stand before the Assembly as the representative of a country that is full of determination and faith, a country that is optimistic but that always looks at its future through a pragmatic lens. I am proud of our membership in the United Nations and of the work the Organization does for humankind. I am also very proud of my country and the work of the governing Georgian Dream Party to deliver a better democracy, a stronger economy and a brighter future for our people. In bringing about the changes needed to keep pushing ahead, my Government has a development plan, a clear vision for 2030 that aligns perfectly with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations. We stand for a more sustainable environment, the protection of the rights of all people, greater economic fairness and resilience and a revitalized United Nations, among many other aspirations shared between Georgia and the United Nations. That cooperative sentiment echoes the

Secretary-General's report on *Our Common Agenda*, which outlines an ambitious plan for reinvigorated international cooperation and multilateralism. I believe the General Assembly should work on those recommendations in a determined and substantive way.

Closer to home, Georgian dreams are becoming a reality. We have more than mere aspirations for the future — we aim to get the results that our people are demanding today. Even with the deep setbacks from COVID-19, our economy is on the mend, growth is surging, jobs are being created and we are once again one of the leading tourist destinations in the world. The world continues to recognize our economic, financial and legal reforms. Some notable rankings demonstrate the spectacular strides that Georgia has made to become one of the leading countries of the region in promoting robust economic development. According to the World Bank, Georgia ranks seventh of 190 countries in ease of doing business. The Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom ranks us twelfth of 184. And in the Fraser Institute's Economic Freedom of the World ranking, Georgia ranks fifth out of 165 countries, three steps higher than the previous year.

It is also important to note that great strides have also been made to advance anti-corruption measures, freedom of the press and human rights. Earlier this week, we heard United States President Joseph Biden call for greater global cooperation in order to meet our largest challenges (see A/76/PV.3). In Georgia we not only share that sentiment, we will always step up to answer the call. We may be a small nation, but we have made outsize contributions to international security, fighting alongside our allies against terrorism and organized crime around the globe. We did so in Afghanistan, where 32 brave soldiers gave their lives and numerous others were injured in the cause of freedom and peace. We recently provided a transportation and logistics hub for thousands of evacuees from Afghanistan and facilitated more than 60 flights, while also accepting workers from many global non-governmental organizations and international financial institutions to temporarily work out of Georgia. Those actions underscore our response to the call for cooperation with our partners and the results that can be achieved when we work together. This summer, alongside its United States partners, Georgia laid the groundwork for the release of 15 Armenian detainees by Azerbaijan. At the same time, Armenia provided maps of mined territories to Azerbaijan.

Our goal has always been to do what we can to support shared action to advance the common good. All our efforts have one simple goal in mind, which is European and Euro-Atlantic integration. We will not rest until we achieve EU and NATO membership. That means we will continue to reform and modernize every aspect of our democracy and economy to align with the highest global standards. Our path to European and Euro-Atlantic structures is a homecoming, a civilizational choice. An absolute majority of our population strongly supports this destiny for our country.

Our historic decision to join the European and Euro-Atlantic family is the core principle guiding our foreign policy. Georgia has made great strides in advancing democracy, human rights and the rule of law, particularly since 2012. All of these are fundamental values that we share with European institutions. We have prepared a comprehensive action plan, packed with initiatives and reforms that will lead to our application for EU membership in 2024. For that I would like to thank our European and international partners, which have shown Georgia strong and steadfast support for all these years. Since 2012 we have held six democratic elections, all of which have been declared free and fair by international election observers. In fact, in a few days we will once again be holding a free, fair and democratic nationwide municipal election.

Since the last time world leaders met in person here at the United Nations two years ago, democracies around the world have been under pressure, if not assault. Irrational and, I would say, dark forces have been at work, often aided and abetted by outside saboteurs. Regardless of the source, we must hold to the democratic path. Elections are often passionate and hard fought, and feelings run high. Yet when elections are free and fair, the winners must be gracious and those who lose must abide by the will of the people. If we cannot trust in elections, then democracy itself is in peril. I therefore call on all here today who care about democracy, progress and free and fair elections to participate with passion in their political systems. And when the dust has settled and a winner is declared, I ask that they respect the will of the people, close ranks and work to move their countries forward.

The challenge to democracy is not the only challenge we are facing. In Georgia, we have achieved much, but more remains to be done. First and foremost, we must create more jobs. At the same time, we must remain dedicated to investing in education and infrastructure,

eradicating poverty, strengthening our health system and diversifying our industrial, service and agricultural sectors. As I have outlined, Georgia is on the move. We are on the right track. We are overcoming COVID-19 and have a long-term plan in place to strengthen our democracy, economy and society.

Yet I am reaching out to the General Assembly today to put an end to Russia's illegal occupation of sovereign Georgian lands. Not only is Russia occupying 20 per cent of Georgian territory, it is also actively seeking to undermine our aspirations to join the European and Euro-Atlantic family. While our commitment to becoming a true global citizen is unstoppable and cannot be hindered by outside forces, the very freedom we have fought so hard for is being challenged every single day. On our very own soil, in the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, we are seeing a humanitarian crisis, and the responsibility, of course, resides only with the occupying Power. This year, the European Court of Human Rights issued a verdict finding the Russian Federation guilty of occupying and exercising effective control over two Georgian regions and responsible for human rights violations in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali. Today I call on the international community to act in concert in order to address the violations of fundamental principles of international law in the occupied territories and, through joint efforts, to facilitate the implementation of the EU-mediated 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement.

Every day, Georgian land continues to be subject to creeping annexation and so-called borderization. That includes kidnappings, illegal detentions, unlawful restrictions on people's freedom of movement and deprivation of the right to education in our native tongue, particularly in the Gali region. During COVID-19, this made medical evacuations virtually impossible. Such actions all carry an unbearable burden for those living on both sides of the razor-wire fences. This must be seen for what it is — pre-planned ethnic cleansing to drive ethnic Georgians out. It must be stopped. In the occupied territories we have a real humanitarian crisis, while on the other side land is being cultivated and the young generation have access to a world-class education, top-level infrastructure and thriving businesses. We want to see the same opportunities and prospects for development and prosperity for young people in the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions.

That is why we developed A Step to a Better Future, a peace initiative to improve the livelihoods of

people living in the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions. We believe that only through sustainable peace and security will our fellow citizens have a better future. It is through peace and stability that economies can start to thrive and our peoples prosper together. That is why I want to address our Abkhaz and Ossetian brothers and sisters to say that our true strength is in cooperation and unity, which is exactly why our foes want us divided and apart. We have a common history and are part of a common homeland, Sakartvelo. We should jointly define our common future as well. We should build our country together and peacefully turn it into a truly democratic, prosperous and future-oriented European society.

From a geopolitical perspective, the Black Sea region is growing ever more important. The Black Sea is on the front lines of a dynamic regional chess match. It is a microcosm of conflict management. If we can maintain peace and stability there, we can do so elsewhere. Our goal is therefore to ensure peace and stability in the entire region. In the South Caucasus, I propose what I am calling the Peaceful Neighbourhood Initiative to promote stability in our region. This format will facilitate dialogue and confidence-building and lead to the implementation of practical solutions to regional issues of common interest with our United States and EU partners. Georgia stands ready to host an international gathering in Tbilisi to discuss the prospects of our Peaceful Neighbourhood Initiative, involving our South Caucasian neighbours, our brothers, and international partners. Let us begin with small steps to build trust, and then we can move towards resolving other regional and global issues together. A sustainable peace and a common strategic outlook for the South Caucasus will benefit the wider Black Sea region and enhance broader European and global security.

Let me conclude where I began. We are here today as a testament to the power of collective action. Whether it is the fight against the pandemic, financing development to advance our quality of life or the need for collective action to maintain peace, we must act together to live together. There is no alternative. I remain confident that working together we will succeed.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Georgia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Irakli Garibashvili, Prime Minister of Georgia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Scott Morrison, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Australia to introduce an address by the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Mr. Fifield (Australia): I have the high honour and distinct privilege to introduce a pre-recorded statement by Mr. Scott Morrison, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex V and see A/76/332/Add.8).

Address by Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait.

Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have great pleasure in welcoming His Highness Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Sheikh Al Sabah (Kuwait) (spoke in Arabic): It is my pleasure at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, and the friendly Republic of Maldives on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. I assure you of our total support in all tasks that would facilitate your work.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude for the much-appreciated efforts made by your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkır, during his presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session.

I should like also to congratulate His Excellency Mr. António Guterres on his reappointment as Secretary-General, which is a recognition of his remarkable efforts in leading the Organization during his first term, the last year of which witnessed a grave,

multifaceted challenge that has claimed countless lives and caused much material and moral damage.

Our world is still in deep mourning owing to the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its destructive impact. It has claimed human lives without distinction, sending out successive shockwaves that have upended our modern lifestyles in their humanitarian, political, economic and environmental aspects.

A quick glance at the figures and statistics recorded worldwide reveals the magnitude of the scars that will long remain on the world's conscience. It shows casualties that have surpassed 4.7 million people and confirmed recorded cases exceeding 231 million, as well as the crippling burden placed on health sectors and professionals, who deserve our deepest appreciation for their dedication and work on the front lines despite the horrors that threatened many health systems worldwide with collapse. That is in addition to the exacerbation of the food-insecurity crisis owing to the disruption in supply lines, which came as an expected outcome of the severe worldwide economic downturn and stagnation, unprecedented in more than 90 years. We also saw a decline in services in the educational sector, particularly in developing and least developed countries, in a way that increasingly threatens now more than ever to reverse the gains made and undermine the achievements registered in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Any study of history will show that pandemics, despite the gravity of their effects, have played pivotal roles as major catalysts for change and rebuilding for the better at the political, economic and social levels. From that standpoint, the COVID-19 pandemic served as a mirror that reflected the world's weaknesses and revealed its chronic flaws, among which are an increase in hunger and poverty rates, prolonged conflicts, unchecked advances in modern technology with ramifications for cybersecurity and the spread of the scourge of terrorism, as well as the mounting structural disparities and gaps among countries. All those challenges have put multilateralism to an existential test of survival or of stagnation and decline.

Perhaps one of the most positive changes brought about by the pandemic was the emergence of modern patterns of creativity, innovation and adaptation, which have contributed to creating rapid responses and advanced forms of cooperation within societies

and among countries. That is in addition to the breakthrough in scientific research that was manifested in the race to defeat the virus through the production of multiple vaccines that have proved their effectiveness in providing the required immunization practically with encouraging percentages.

Yet much hinges on the ability of the international community to make optimal use of the crisis to transform our world for the better in a serious endeavour to bring about an equitable and sustainable recovery in which no one is left behind.

Recovery requires starting with several steps, the most important of which is giving utmost priority to investing in data and information infrastructure, as the availability of digital evidence will contribute to enhancing decision-making processes in the programmes and policies aimed at mobilizing resources and post-crisis rebuilding in order to shield societies from similar future crises. However, the most important and urgent step is finding fair and secure distribution patterns of vaccines to all countries towards achieving universal immunization.

In that regard, the State of Kuwait has achieved one of the highest global vaccination rates — 72 per cent for our nationals and expatriates alike. We were also able to prevent our health-care system from collapsing. My country continues to support international efforts to fight the COVID-19 pandemic with total contributions of \$327.4 million, the latest of which consisted of \$40 million to the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization Alliance and the Coronavirus Disease Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility initiative towards enhancing and improving global health security.

The Palestinian question remains central to our Arab and Muslim worlds. Tension and instability will continue in our region if the Palestinian people do not obtain all their legitimate political rights and if Israel, the occupying Power, continues its practices and violations of international humanitarian law. Those violations include the building of settlements, the confiscation of land, the closure of territories, the blockade of Gaza and the desecration of the sanctity of holy places. We stress the importance of continuing to exert efforts to restart the negotiations within a set time frame in order to achieve a just and comprehensive peace according to the terms of reference of the peace process, resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative, with a view to ending the

Israeli occupation and ensuring the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, along the borders as they were prior to 4 June 1967, and the return of the refugees.

At the same time, we commend the historic role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in providing basic assistance to millions of Palestinian refugees, and we stress the importance of continued support for its work.

The ongoing Syrian crisis, which has entered its eleventh year, with all the concomitant humanitarian suffering for Syrians inside and outside the country, has proved that the absence of international consensus and will, as well as external intervention, have prolonged that brutal conflict. We therefore reiterate our firm conviction that there is no military solution to the crisis. We emphasize the importance of reaching a political settlement in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions, especially resolution 2254 (2015), in a way that meets the aspirations and hopes of the brotherly Syrian people.

The continuing crisis in brotherly Yemen and the growing and dangerous threats it poses to regional security and stability are a testament to how relevant Security Council resolutions and outcomes are addressed in practice. We therefore stress our firm position that the only way out of this crisis is a political solution based on the three agreed terms of reference, namely, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outputs of the comprehensive National Dialogue Conference, and resolutions of the Security Council, especially resolution 2216 (2015). We also renew our support for the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Yemen.

At the same time, we welcome the constructive role played by the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia towards the implementation of the Riyadh Agreement, as well as its initiative to bring peace to Yemen. We express once again our condemnation of all acts of aggression and attacks against Saudi territories and reaffirm our support for all measures taken by the Kingdom to maintain its security and stability.

The Libyan Political Dialogue Forum's election early this year of the Head of the Presidency Council, his deputies and a prime minister is an encouraging sign that the international community, through the United Nations, is able to make headway towards a peace that has been elusive owing to more than seven

years of severe institutional divisions that have had serious repercussions for the security and stability of Libya and countries in the region. We call once again upon our Libyan brothers to give priority to the best interests of the country, as well as to peaceful solutions that reject violence. They must commit to the outcomes of international conferences and relevant Security Council resolutions to ensure concluding all necessary arrangements for holding general elections scheduled for 24 December 2021. We expect that these efforts and arrangements will ensure the security, stability and unity of Libya and meet the aspirations of the brotherly Libyan people.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had political, social, and economic repercussions that caused global backsliding, leading to a situation that has been exploited by extremist and terrorist groups in conflict-affected, fragile or insecure areas. The Middle East in particular has suffered from destruction and sabotage operations by terrorist organizations, mainly the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, which has led basically to an intensification of efforts to combat this real danger in all its forms and manifestations as we work to dry up its funding and implement international and regional counter-terrorism conventions. Many countries in our region — Yemen, Libya, Syria, Somalia and Iraq — are facing this growing phenomenon.

The international community has followed with great interest the critical recent developments in Afghanistan. We call upon the Taliban and all parties to exercise utmost restraint to safeguard lives and fully protect civilians. We also call upon the Taliban to strictly adhere to their obligations and international law, maintain the security and stability of the country and uphold the rights and gains of the friendly people of Afghanistan.

At the regional level, based on our principled position of good-neighbourliness set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, we reiterate our call to the Islamic Republic of Iran to take serious measures towards confidence-building and the initiation of a dialogue built on respect of the sovereignty of States and non-interference in their domestic affairs, work towards defusing tensions in the Gulf, and preserve the safety, security and freedom of maritime navigation from any threats. This would contribute to laying the foundations for relations based on cooperation and mutual respect, paving the way for the realization of the

aspirations of all the peoples of the region to security, stability, prosperity and development.

I turn now to a thorny regional issue. The erosion of the nuclear disarmament regime is an existential threat to the security and stability of the region. We look forward to concerted international and regional efforts aimed at successfully holding, in New York, the second session of the Conference on establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, over which the State of Kuwait will be presiding in November.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continues to deprive countries of the gains made towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The crisis has shown that different aspects of sustainability are interlinked worldwide, including the issue of climate change and ecosystems. In this regard, we expect the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Glasgow in November, to undertake a constructive review to track the progress made and identify shortcomings based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and burdens towards ending environmental degradation characterized by marked increases in temperatures, severe storms and flooding, as well as deforestation owing to fires in a number of countries, which could have severe environmental repercussions.

In conclusion, I reiterate our adherence to the international multilateral system and to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter, to ensure developing and strengthening international governance, guarantee the realization of the Organization's noble mission in maintaining international peace and security, and serve all of humankind.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait for the statement he has just made.

Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Ana Brnabić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia.

Ms. Ana Brnabić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Ana Brnabić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, and inviting her to address the Assembly.

Ms. Brnabić (Serbia): I have the great honour to address the General Assembly today on behalf of the citizens of the Republic of Serbia. I would like to thank their Excellencies Mr. Abdulla Shahid, Mr. Volkan Bozkır and Mr. António Guterres for the active engagement, dedication and leadership they have shown for the United Nations and all of humankind during these difficult times. Serbia shares their conviction, and we remain fully committed to supporting their efforts.

This year, we come together at a decisive moment in our history. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has shaken our foundations to the core. At the same time, we are increasingly witnessing and experiencing the effects of climate change. And, finally, we are seeing significant shifts in global partnerships and alliances, trade wars between traditional partners and allies, protectionism instead of openness and free market policies, and overall uncertainty at an unprecedented scale. Some of the pressing and extremely emotional issues that we have locally in the Balkans remain unresolved. While we are trying — and Serbia is especially dedicated to this — to change the future by working together and creating alliances through such initiatives as the Berlin process or the Open Balkan initiative, others are trying to disrupt these processes. Instead of focusing on the future, they want to recreate the past, whatever the cost of that may be.

But let me start with COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed critical weaknesses in the architecture of global governance. It has threatened to erase the progress many nations have made in recent years. It has placed nations at the juncture between isolation and collaboration, between panic and hope, between chaos and order. The pandemic has brought into question some of the basic tenets of the open and cooperative international order. Global exchanges, international communication and cross-border trade have all seen a vast decrease. Curfews, restrictions on freedom and lockdowns of entire societies have created uncertainty in many aspects of the individual lives of our citizens, and, for that matter, in our own

individual perception of what freedom in today's world even means.

For Serbia, the pandemic threatened to undermine everything we have been doing for the past seven years and crush all of the results and accomplishments stemming from the difficult reforms we initiated in 2014, propelling us back to times of high unemployment, rising public debt, an uncontrollable deficit and overall desperation. Much as it has done in any other country, COVID-19 has tested our nation's resilience, and, this time, unlike during the global financial crisis — which was much more limited in scope and incomparable in terms of consequences than the COVID-19 pandemic — Serbia stood strong. The reforms we undertook in pre-COVID times made us more resilient than ever. Our fiscal consolidation, our budget surplus and the efficient and predictable investment environment we created became a lifeline that saved us from a recession during the pandemic and ensured that we could support our citizens and our economy during the most difficult of times.

Notwithstanding the effects of the crisis, Serbia has managed to preserve financial and economic stability. In 2020, we recorded a decline in gross domestic product of only 0.9 per cent — one of the best results in Europe. Our public debt remained below 60 per cent of our gross domestic product, the average salary continued to grow by almost 10 per cent, and, despite the pandemic, the number of people employed increased by over 3 per cent.

The recovery this year has been stronger than we expected. Our gross domestic product will grow approximately 7 per cent, and perhaps by even more. Prior to the pandemic, we opened our borders to investment, technology and ideas, and we managed to create a peaceful and stable environment that allowed us to pursue rapid domestic transformation, with innovation and knowledge-based economy as the foundation. The innovative advances we had made allowed us to diversify our capabilities when the virus hit — through e-government, online education, digital textbooks and a central software system that drove a successful vaccination rollout. We invested heavily in health infrastructure and strengthened the health system in order to respond to the current crisis, and we are eternally grateful to our health-care workers for their dedicated struggle.

Our decision to put geopolitics aside, and people at the centre of our policies, is the reason we were able to acquire vaccines more quickly than most other nations. We did not discriminate between manufacturers. We did not care whether vaccines were from the East or the West but chose to negotiate with all vaccine manufacturers deemed safe by regulators. This openness gave us the ability to purchase vaccines from around the world, giving our citizens the unique freedom to choose which vaccine they prefer. Serbia believes in solidarity among nations, multilateralism and helping others when in need.

Since the beginning of this year, we have made it our mission to support our neighbours and all those in need with COVID-19 vaccines. We have also allowed foreign nationals to come to Serbia to receive the vaccine that will protect their lives. In total, Serbia has donated or allocated over a million doses of vaccines — 230,000 doses for the region, 300,000 doses for foreign nationals who have come to Serbia to get vaccinated, and an additional 570,000 doses for countries in Africa and Asia. And we will keep doing so, to the greatest extent possible, until COVID-19 is behind all of us. This is why we have also taken steps to acquire the technology to produce at least two types of vaccines; by helping to improve global access, we can all be safe and triumph over this virus.

Nevertheless, as stated by dignitaries of some of the largest nations during this General Assembly, there are other pressing issues that all of us need to keep addressing without any delay and in a bold manner, the most urgent of which is climate change. Serbia has redoubled its efforts to make our country safer and cleaner for its citizens, and by doing so, it is contributing to the fight against climate change and for environmental protection.

We are strongly committed to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on climate change. We are committed to global efforts and will continue to work actively to meet our obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

We are about to submit our revised nationally determined contributions to contribute to this critical global effort. We have already announced our intention to reduce greenhouse gases by at least 33.3 per cent compared to 1990, and 13.2 per cent compared to 2010, which we are currently incorporating into our energy

and climate strategic documents. We are working strategically on planning and investments in this sector. These investments are extremely expensive, requiring years and decades of commitment and a systemic approach, but we are firmly set on the path of this transformation.

Of all the challenges we face, the most worrisome for Serbia is the maintenance of peace and stability in the southern Serbian province of Kosovo and Metohija. For more than two decades, we have been constantly drawing international attention to the problems that the non-Albanian population is facing in Kosovo and Metohija. Physical safety and respect for and protection of human rights, especially of minority communities, are far from satisfactory. We are now witnessing a constant increase in the number of attacks targeting Serbs, their property and religious heritage in Kosovo and Metohija. To illustrate, there were 55 such incidents in 2014, 62 in 2016, 71 in 2020 and 100 since the beginning of this year. The total number of attacks in 2020 was already surpassed by June of this year.

According to the United Nations, Kosovo and Metohija is still the territory with the least number of returnees — internally displaced Serbs — of all post-conflict areas in the entire world. I will provide just a few examples to depict what the lives of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija look like today. On 11 May, the house of Radoje Pumpalović, an 81-year-old returnee to Kosovo, in the village of Dubrava, in the Istok municipality, was attacked. That was the fifth attack on him in the same year. I again emphasize that he is 81 years old.

Since June, multiple attacks have been carried out against Dragica Gašić, a 59-year-old woman, the first Serb returnee to Đakovica 22 years after the end of the conflict. Attacks include the stoning of her apartment, banning her from shopping for food at the local store and petitions by civil society organizations demanding her eviction from the city.

On 2 July, in the village of Gobulji, near Vučitrn, a group of Albanians attacked 13-year-old Nikola Perić. The attack occurred when he was returning home from the school playground with three friends.

Attacks on Serbian medieval churches, monasteries and monuments in Kosovo and Metohija make them some of the most endangered cultural heritage sites in Europe. The Visoki Dečani Monastery was recently listed by Europa Nostra as one of the seven most endangered heritage sites in Europe in 2021. The

Advisory Panel of Europa Nostra noted that Dečani was the only monument in Europe under robust military protection for a continuous period of 20 years, although it constitutes a monument of ultimate historical and cultural importance for Europe and the world.

That spiral of violence occurring in Kosovo and Metohija culminated at the beginning of this week. On the pretext of enforcing new licence-plate rules, Pristina dispatched heavily armed special units to the north of the province. That is yet another brutal violation of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations, and that irrational show of force ignited a major crisis. It has disrupted the supply of food and medication to Serb communities in the north of the province. Local Serbs who peacefully gathered to protest that measure were met with tear gas and police brutality, thereby seriously threatening local and regional stability.

Despite all the challenges and daily provocations, Serbia remains strongly committed to finding a compromise-based solution that will ensure lasting peace and stability. Dialogue and the implementation of the agreements reached are the only proper way to resolve all open issues.

However, almost nine years after reaching the Brussels Agreement, the first agreement on normalization between Belgrade and Pristina, the establishment of the Association of Serb Majority Municipalities — the very backbone of that agreement — has not yet even begun.

I would like to once again appeal to the international community, and especially the European Union (EU) as the guarantor of the Brussels Agreement, to firmly insist that the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Pristina start to implement all the agreements reached.

Mr. Philippe Kridelka (Belgium), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Republic of Serbia, by defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity, at the same time defends international law, the Charter of the United Nations, the legally binding Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and the supreme authority of the Security Council when it comes to the preservation of international peace and security. We attach special importance to the activity of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission and expect it to continue to implement its mandate in the province in accordance with that resolution.

Our generation shares the common destiny of the modern world, which is becoming increasingly complex in terms of geopolitics, technology, health and climate. In the face of those challenges, Serbia will continue to nurture international partnerships on a predictable and transparent basis. We will continue to pursue rule-of-law reforms on our EU path, which is our strategic foreign policy goal. We see that as inseparable from achieving sustainable peace, stability and prosperity.

We will host, together with the Republic of Azerbaijan as the current Chair of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, a commemorative high-level event marking the sixtieth anniversary of the first Non-Aligned Movement conference, which was held in Belgrade in 1961. We very much look forward to hosting our friends from all parts of the world in Belgrade in October this year.

We will further enhance cooperation across the Balkans, through the Open Balkan initiative and the Berlin process, by opening borders, harmonizing differences and further integrating our region.

In conclusion, over the past seven years, Serbia has been transformed. We have sparked an economic revival, created opportunities for young people, cultivated a technology boom and improved Serbia's position abroad. The progress that we have made has allowed Serbia to better face, and survive, the pandemic.

The world now faces a turning point. The recovery from COVID-19 and sustainable reconstruction will not proceed if issues, new and old, are not handled by joint forces and collaborative international actions. The pandemic taught us one important lesson: unless all of us are safe, no one is safe. We can either win together, all of us, regardless of how rich or poor, large or small, from Europe, Asia, Africa, America or Australia, or fail together. If anything, the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the issue of climate change, should have taught us to stand together.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Ana Brnabić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Ms. Mette Frederiksen, Prime Minister of Denmark

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Denmark to introduce an address by the Prime Minister of Denmark.

Mr. Hermann (Denmark): I have the honour and privilege of introducing a pre-recorded statement by Her Excellency Ms. Mette Frederiksen, Prime Minister of Denmark.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Denmark.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex VI and see A/76/332/Add.8).

Address by Mr. Andrew Holness, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Economic Growth and Job Creation of Jamaica

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Jamaica to introduce an address by the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Economic Growth and Job Creation of Jamaica.

Ms. Smith (Jamaica): It is my great pleasure and distinct honour to introduce the Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Most Honourable Andrew Holness, who will deliver a pre-recorded statement.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Economic Growth and Job Creation of Jamaica.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex VII and see A/76/332/Add.8).

Address by Mr. John Briceño, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Investment of Belize

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Investment of Belize.

Mr. John Briceño, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Investment of Belize, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming Mr. John Briceño, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Investment of Belize, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Briceño (Belize): I congratulate Mr. Abdulla Shahid on his election as President of the General Assembly. It is a great pleasure to see a representative of a fellow small island developing State (SIDS) presiding over the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session.

For a small island and low-lying coastal State like Belize, which three days ago celebrated 40 years of political independence, the world today is hostile and precarious. No one can deny that the planet is getting hotter. The facts are that July 2021 was the hottest month ever. Every one of the past four decades has been successively warmer than any preceding them since 1850. Global temperatures are now 1.2°C degrees warmer. Sea levels are rising. The global average sea level has risen faster since 1900 than during any other century in the past 3,000 years. Since 1900 we have seen an unprecedented number of droughts, which have also become more frequent and longer-lasting. Severe weather events are more common and devastating. In the past 20 years the number of major floods has more than doubled, while the incidence of storms grew from 1,457 to 2,034. Mother Nature is rebelling. She is reacting to our destructive tendencies and our refusal to take urgent corrective action. We can do better.

Our capacity to survive is currently being tested by the unrelenting coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. COVID-19 brought the Belizean economy to its knees. Unemployment reached 30 per cent as thousands of Belizeans lost their jobs. Gross domestic product (GDP) declined by 14 per cent. Our debt ballooned to 130 per cent of GDP. Many small businesses were shuttered. The poverty rate increased to 60 per cent. The impact of the pandemic has been swift, dramatic and devastating. The human toll has been deadly. Already 399 Belizeans have lost their lives to COVID-19. We have a fatality rate of 2.05 per cent. Thousands have been hospitalized so far. Our health facilities are overwhelmed, because they were unprepared for the surge in the admission of critical patients.

That is not unique to Belize. In order to confront the urgency of the pandemic, Governments across the globe reallocated funds to meet desperate needs. Loans

originally committed for development and climate change were diverted to cover emergency health needs and mitigate the impact on the unemployed. Massive additional borrowings became the new normal as lockdowns were extended. The Common Framework for Debt Treatments beyond the Debt Service Suspension Initiative failed to offer forbearance to most middle-income SIDS, including Belize, which are ineligible despite their unsustainable debts. At the same time, most of our countries had no recourse to concessionary financing to fund the immediate health response.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

Belize's commitment to conservation is ambitious. We recognize that our debt is unsustainable, and we will link it directly to conservation. We will exchange millions of dollars in debt for major commitments to marine conservation. It is our hope that 30 per cent of our exclusive economic zone will be designated a protected area by 2026, well before the year 2030. Furthermore, we will establish a marine conservation fund in perpetuity. We will proudly be at the forefront in this area, owing to our love for nature and respect for the environment.

(*spoke in English*)

With the advent of the vaccine, the Government has self-financed its acquisition from the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility and has also reached out to bilateral partners to solicit vaccine donations. It is vaccines from our South-South partners that have enabled the Government to roll out its national vaccination programme. The immediate global response has been slow and inadequate to the scale and depth of the health crisis. The disruption of supply chains has made access to much-needed COVID-19 therapeutics, diagnostics and personal protection equipment beyond the reach of many developing countries. Vaccine hoarding has reduced access to vaccines for developing countries, undermining COVAX and leading to deep and threatening inequalities, with 80 per cent of vaccines administered worldwide in high- and upper-middle-income countries and only 0.4 per cent in low-income countries. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the region worst hit by the pandemic, only about one-fifth of the population has received vaccines.

(spoke in Spanish)

Despite those immoral inequities, countries with higher vaccination rates are about to administer booster shots to their already-vaccinated populations. That is not just unfair, it is simply disgraceful. It is undeniable that the world urgently needs to recommit to multilateralism.

(spoke in English)

Belize exists today because of the multilateral system. The support of Member States for our territorial integrity and right to self-determination was critical to the achievement of Belize's independence. For us the multilateral system is indispensable. For that reason, Belize supports the Secretary-General's thoughtful and forward-looking report, *Our Common Agenda*, which sets out a concise plan of action to accelerate the implementation of our agreed goals, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Despite the inclination to retreat towards nationalist tendencies, the truth is that whether we are talking about the health crisis or the climate crisis, the scale of the challenge, the magnitude of the impact and the urgency of the action required cannot be met by any one country alone. Inequality and vulnerabilities are also threats to the rich and strong. Our common future therefore depends squarely on our solidarity and on international cooperation and a strong and effective multilateral system. We must commit to finding solutions together to the common problems that we confront. Unbridled unilateralism must yield to a settled determination to respond to the major problems of our times with social justice.

Along with Guatemala, my country is pursuing a final and peaceful resolution of Guatemala's claim to Belizean territory at the International Court of Justice. In the meantime, the 2005 agreement on confidence-building measures remains in effect and our bilateral relations continue to be based on mutual goodwill. We count on Guatemala to remain a constructive partner and rely on the international community to support us in addressing the daily challenges along the border that are inevitable between neighbours. If the multilateral system is to be our collective lifeline, it must be repurposed. I would like to propose four areas for reforming and strengthening it.

We call for a genuine commitment to addressing the systemic issues that undermine the achievement

of our agreed development goals. SIDS' continued ineligibility for access to concessional finance leaves us in a vicious cycle of disaster- or crisis-recovery borrowing, leading to unsustainable levels of debt. That must be disrupted. A multidimensional vulnerability index is the indispensable tool for restoring rationality to access to affordable financing. We therefore welcome the work of the United Nations and other development partners such as the Commonwealth and the Caribbean Development Bank in developing a multidimensional vulnerability index that considers not only economic development but also the inherent vulnerabilities of SIDS — scale, geography and limited natural resources. We need to adopt a multidimensional vulnerability index now. We call on all international financial institutions and our development partners to use it. There is no alternative if our countries are to embark on a sustainable and resilient economic development path.

If our multilateral system is to remain credible, it must have the capacity to induce action. For far too long, too many global problems have been allowed to fester and become crises. The entire world is now experiencing the consequences of our inaction in the form of catastrophic droughts, fires, floods and more frequent and intense hurricanes that continue to affect and set back our small, open and dependent economies. The latest scientific assessment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change lays the blame firmly on human activity.

Belize, like other SIDS, is on the front lines of a climate crisis for which it is not responsible. Belize incurs annual losses of close to 4 per cent of GDP due to natural disasters. We therefore felt an obligation to put forward an ambitious revised nationally determined contribution. Belize's nationally determined contribution covers new targets in both adaptation and mitigation. It is naturally aligned both to our national development plans and the Sustainable Development Goals. We have set some ambitious targets, including forest restoration and the expansion of mangroves, as well as achieving 75 per cent of our electricity from renewable sources by 2030. The nationally determined contribution also pledges that we will transition to a hybrid and electric public transportation system, increase the resilience of coastal communities and strengthen the adaptive capacity of agriculture, health and tourism.

Belize is committed to developing a long-term strategy aligned with achieving net-zero global

emissions by 2050. We are doing our part, and we expect the developed countries and major emitters to do theirs. Indeed, ambitious commitments from the Group of 20 alone could keep us on a path to limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C. The twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is our last best hope to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. We call for a ramping-up of collective ambition so that global emissions are reduced by 50 per cent by 2030. Developed countries and those in a position to do so must provide the financial, technical and capacity-building support to enable us to fulfil those pledges. That includes meeting and exceeding the \$100 billion pledge made in Copenhagen 12 years ago. Additional support must also be provided for the loss and damage being incurred through the extreme and slow-onset climatic events that we are already experiencing.

Flexibility and responsiveness are critical if our multilateral system is to have relevance at moments of crisis, as well as to ensure equity and fairness in global responses. COVAX, the multilateral mechanism for vaccine distribution, has been unable to truly respond to the needs of its subscribers. The undermining of COVAX through export bans, vaccine hoarding and predatory purchasing has resulted in extreme inequality in access to vaccines. Of the more than 5.7 billion vaccine doses administered globally, 73 per cent has been given in just 10 countries. COVAX has had to cut its forecast by 25 per cent for the distribution of vaccines for 2021. Belize has no delivery date for its next COVAX shipment. As the Director-General of the World Health Organization has said, the longer vaccine inequity persists, the more the virus will keep circulating and changing, the longer the social and economic disruption will continue and the higher the chances are that more variants will emerge that render vaccines less effective. The health and recovery of all of us depend on the ability of our system to rapidly respond to the needs of all countries. The multilateral system must be more effective in protecting the rights of all people. Too many remain marginalized and excluded, weakening the social contract and eroding trust in the ability of our multilateral system to deliver.

The persistent call of the General Assembly over three decades for an end to the illegal embargo against the Cuban people has been ignored. Cubans have been forced to carve out their sustainable development under the burden of the illegal and unilateral economic,

commercial and financial embargo. The new measures imposed by the previous United States Administration, now continued and widened by the present one during a pandemic, are unbelievably cruel and inhumane. They bring suffering to millions of innocent people and do not reflect the goodwill of the people of the United States of America. Nevertheless, Cuba has made significant sacrifices to help others around the world, including Belizeans.

Our Palestinian brothers and sisters continue to suffer under Israel's oppressive apartheid and illegal occupation. Belize fully supports the aspirations of the Palestinians to an independent State, within its 1967 borders and with all attendant rights, including the recognition of East Jerusalem as its capital and the right of return.

The Sahrawi people are similarly being prevented from exercising their right to self-determination. We urge the relevant parties and the international community to support them in their efforts.

Belize is also deeply concerned about the situation in Haiti and about the regional and global inaction on offering a genuine and substantive programme of support. We are alarmed at the inhumane treatment of Haitian refugees who are risking their lives by traversing two continents for a better future. We therefore call on the United Nations to galvanize action among its Member States and its development system in order to support the development of a Haitian-led solution, restoring its stability and security.

Our multilateral system must also be inclusive, harnessing the capacity of all States to scale up international cooperation where it is most needed. Belize has benefited greatly from its diplomatic partnership with Taiwan, which is based on our shared values of democracy, freedom, human rights and the rule of law. Taiwan has provided tremendous assistance to Belize in the form of medical supplies and financial support, ensuring that Belize is better equipped to combat COVID-19 and conduct a post-pandemic recovery. Belize calls for Taiwan's inclusion in the United Nations and its specialized agencies, which will not only further enhance global cooperation and partnership but also manifest the enshrined principle of the United Nations that is universality.

It is crystal clear that the confluence of crises facing the world can be addressed only through solidarity, international cooperation and multilateral approaches.

Let us not return to this great Hall in September 2022 to lament further inaction. Let us not return next year to once again decry unilateralism, nationalism and failed collective action. No, we must move forward together. We can defeat COVID-19, but we can only do so together. We must save the planet from the irreversible effects of climate change, but only if we act collectively and urgently. Together, we can reform the world's financial architecture to guarantee debt relief, make available affordable financing and adopt a multidimensional vulnerability index. Together we must lift billions out of poverty and provide affordable housing, education and health care. Failure is not an option. We believe in the power of humanity and in the noble spirit of humankind. We have confidence that we can and will make the world a better place. The people of Belize and the citizens of the world expect nothing less.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Investment of Belize for the statement he has just made.

Mr. John Briceño, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Investment of Belize, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Alexander de Croo, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium.

Mr. Alexander de Croo, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Alexander de Croo, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. De Croo (Belgium): How encouraging it is to see the General Assembly meet in person again. When I stepped into this solemn Hall, I felt a sense of relief. But while we all yearn to get back to normal, is that sense of relief justified? What is the "normal" that we can actually hope for? Can we feel relieved when the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is still all around us and too many people are not vaccinated? Can we be relieved when climate change is becoming a matter of life and death for a growing number of people? Is there room for relief when human rights are being challenged

in so many places? All over the world, people who are perceived as different are confronted with hate speech, hate crimes, discrimination and abuse. Can we really feel relief when the new normal for women and girls in Afghanistan is to go home, keep silent and stay inside? No, we cannot.

Let me quote the late former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, who was murdered exactly 60 years ago last week. "The weakness of one is the weakness of all, and the strength of one...is indirectly the strength of all." That is why Belgium remains strongly committed to multilateralism and to an international order based on the rule of law — the founding principle of our United Nations. Only through common action will we build common strength. Only through multilateralism will we provide long-term answers to today's complex crises. Which vulnerabilities, then, require our common action? I see three.

The first is COVID-19. We need to bring the pandemic to an end. It is now almost two years since our lives were turned upside down by an unprecedented health crisis. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the health-care workers in Belgium and elsewhere who continue to battle that deadly virus. Belgium is among the top vaccinated countries in the world, with 85 per cent of our adult population fully vaccinated. But we are also a leading exporter of vaccines, accounting for two thirds of all European exports. We are one of the world's vaccine powerhouses, and we acted like one by keeping trade lanes open and exporting more than 530 million vaccines to the rest of the world without ever imposing an export ban.

If we are to overcome the pandemic, vaccine solidarity is a crucial condition since no one will be safe until everyone is safe. It is therefore unacceptable that today less than 4 per cent of Africa's population is fully vaccinated. As Hammarskjöld said, "The weakness of one is the weakness of all." As long as the virus continues to circulate, the risk of new variants is there and no one will be safe. The COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility is the best mechanism for strengthening vaccination solidarity and closing the global vaccination gap. Belgium has already donated 1.5 million doses, and by the end of the year we will have donated a total of 4 million vaccines. With close to €3 billion pledged to COVAX, the European Union is one of its major donors, but we must do more. We must also boost local vaccine production through technology transfers and the sharing of knowledge. That is one of

Team Europe's objectives. At least €1 billion will be invested to that end. As we speak, a private Belgian company is working with partners in Senegal to start local vaccine production there. We must also prepare for the next pandemic, even if the present one is far from over. A new pandemic treaty will enable us to be better prepared, build resilient health systems and increase access to decent health care and quality medicines. In addition, we need a transformed World Health Organization that is fit for purpose to lead those efforts.

The coronavirus has taken the lives of nearly 5 million people, and it has also had a devastating impact on our 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It has halted and even reversed many of the recent positive developments. Extreme poverty is on the rise again for the first time this century. Economies have been pushed into recession, and fragile countries have been struck harder than others. Yet giving up is not an option. As the Secretary-General said in his report on *Our Common Agenda*, we must usher in a new era of universal social protection. No one country can cope with these unprecedented challenges on its own. That is why Team Europe is pooling efforts and resources to assist the most vulnerable countries. Belgium is proud to be part of that collective European effort. So let us not lose courage. We must build back. But we are faced with an important choice, even an opportunity. Do we continue with business as usual or do we do things differently?

(spoke in French)

That brings me to a second vulnerability that requires our attention, the climate crisis and the urgent need to put sustainability at the heart of all our efforts. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's sixth assessment report, published last month, says unequivocally that the increase in carbon-dioxide concentration and global temperature is unprecedented. Every region of the world is now witnessing the adverse effects of climate change sooner than expected. This summer, Europe and my country were hit hard by extreme weather conditions. Forty-one of our citizens lost their lives in the worst floods our country has ever seen. We were in shock. In the face of the brutality of the forces of nature, many of us felt very small. We will rebuild, but it will not be enough. We cannot sit back and wait for the next flood, heat wave or extreme drought to kill again. We must act, and we must act now.

(spoke in English)

This makes the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Glasgow, the most important meeting of recent years. With the European Green Deal, the European Union intends to be climate neutral by 2050 and to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions by at least 55 per cent by 2030. We hope that more countries will follow Europe's lead. This transition to sustainability is costly, but it is also a major economic opportunity. It triggers innovation and drives new growth. It is the future our young people demand. That is why Belgium will double its wind-energy capacities in the North Sea and will remain one of the global leaders in offshore wind-energy production. We will increase investments in renewable energy, and we have a clear goal of becoming one of the most significant hubs for clean hydrogen supplies.

Our common mission in Glasgow is crystal clear. We need to do whatever it takes to limit global warming to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change target of 1.5°C. Building the resilience of the most fragile countries will be an important part of that effort. That is why we must deliver on our financing commitment of \$100 billion and why Belgium plans to increase its contribution to international climate finance. It is quite literally a matter of life and death. If we fail to act on the climate crisis, not only will we lose more lives, but global tensions, instability and insecurity will increase.

That brings me to the third vulnerability, our international security. Twenty years ago, the attacks of 11 September not only changed this city, they changed the world. Five years ago, my country was also attacked by terrorists. Like France, we are bringing terrorists to justice, but we have not yet defeated terrorism. Terrorists continue to claim innocent lives, as they did recently at Kabul airport.

Belgium is one of the founding members of the Global Coalition against Da'esh. We participate actively in the fight against terrorism with military deployment as well as stabilization and reconstruction efforts through the United Nations Development Programme. Throughout the Sahel, our bilateral cooperation encompasses both defence and development. But the fact is that security is not sufficient to ensure stability, and we cannot close our eyes to the humanitarian situations that worsen these problems. Failure to prevent conflict often results in a failure to protect

human dignity, with people losing everything. My country is a major humanitarian donor. Belgium's budget for humanitarian aid last year was €200 million. During our Security Council tenure, we attached great importance to issues such as humanitarian access to Syria. Similarly, we will continue to help the Afghan people with humanitarian aid. Belgium will do its part, in line with its commitment announced last week in Geneva. The world cannot turn its back on the Afghan people. Yes, humanitarian assistance is necessary and needed to save lives, but tents and food alone will not be enough. I see a key role for the United Nations in remaining close to the people of Afghanistan in order to provide humanitarian assistance, but even more important, to prevent the country from imploding. If we turn our backs on the Afghan people it will come at a high cost. A population plunged into extreme poverty will fall victim to extreme ideologies or will do anything it can to leave the country.

Those three vulnerabilities — health, climate and security — are a threat to human rights and their universality. For Belgium, peace, security and development are not possible without a profound respect for human rights. In every crisis and in every war, women and girls suffer first and suffer most. We are concerned about the appointment of a Taliban Government that does not reflect the political, religious and ethnic diversity of Afghanistan. Afghan women and girls are already bearing the brunt of that attitude. They are being tear-gassed, beaten, dismissed and locked up at home. We will continue to monitor their rights. They must be able to go to school, to work and to live their lives in freedom. Societies where women are respected and equally represented, where they thrive and can become teachers, society leaders or chief executive officers, are stronger and more stable societies.

Twenty years ago, Belgium played a crucial part in the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. The fight against racism is of paramount importance to my Government. Racism, anti-Semitism and all other forms of discrimination and intolerance are unacceptable. We need to challenge and end racial injustice. In doing so, we will shape a society that lives up to the promise of the fundamental equality of all human beings.

The universality of human rights is the cornerstone of the modern international order. It is an essential obligation for all States. That universality is questioned all too often. More than ever, we have to reaffirm that

human rights are not a favour. They are an obligation everywhere, for everyone. Too many women and girls still fall victim to human rights violations. Same-sex relationships are still considered a criminal offence in too many countries. Belgium will continue to be a voice for LGBTIQ people. We will not let our guard down. For all those reasons, Belgium aspires to become a member of the Human Rights Council for the term from 2023 to 2025.

These global vulnerabilities threaten the very fabric of our societies, our ways of life. They can be addressed only by a collective answer based on a dynamic multilateralism. No one is safe until everyone is safe. That has become our guiding principle in fighting the pandemic. It is the present-day translation of Dag Hammarskjöld's reminder that the weakness of one is the weakness of all. No one is safe until everyone is safe. Let that also be our common objective when it comes to climate, security and human rights. Let that guideline inspire our actions every day.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alexander de Croo, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Timothy Harris, Prime Minister and Minister for Sustainable Development, National Security, People Empowerment and Constituency Empowerment of Saint Kitts and Nevis

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Aviation of Saint Kitts and Nevis to introduce an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Sustainable Development, National Security, People Empowerment and Constituency Empowerment of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Brantley (Saint Kitts and Nevis): I have the distinct honour and privilege to introduce a pre-recorded statement by Mr. Timothy Harris, Prime Minister of the Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Sustainable Development,

National Security, People Empowerment and Constituency Empowerment of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex VIII and see A/76/332/Add.8).

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

Before giving the floor to speakers in exercise of the right of reply, I would like to remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Dubey (India): We are exercising our right of reply to yet another attempt by the leader of Pakistan to tarnish the image of this forum by bringing in matters internal to my country and going so far as to spew falsehoods on the world stage. While such statements deserve our collective contempt and sympathy for the mindset of the person who repeatedly utters those falsehoods, I am taking the floor to set the record straight. Regrettably, this is not the first time that the leader of Pakistan has misused platforms provided by the United Nations to propagate false and malicious propaganda against my country and seek in vain to divert the world's attention from the sad state of his country, where terrorists enjoy a free pass while the lives of ordinary people, especially those belonging to minority communities, are turned upside down.

Member States are aware that Pakistan has an established history and policy of harbouring, aiding and actively supporting terrorists. Pakistan has been recognized globally as a country that openly supports, trains, finances and arms terrorists as a matter of State policy. It holds the ignoble record of hosting the largest number of terrorists who are proscribed by the Security Council. We marked the solemn occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the 11 September 2001 terror attacks just a few days ago. The world has not forgotten that the mastermind behind that dastardly event, Osama Bin Laden, received shelter in Pakistan. The Pakistan leadership glorifies him as a martyr.

Regrettably, even today, we heard the leader of Pakistan trying to justify acts of terror. Such defence of terrorism is unacceptable in the modern world. We keep hearing that Pakistan is a victim of terrorism. This

is a country that is an arsonist disguising itself as a firefighter. Pakistan nurtures terrorists in its backyard in the hope that they will harm only its neighbours. Our region — in fact, the entire world — has suffered because of its policies. On the other hand, it is trying to cover up sectarian violence in its country as acts of terror.

This is also the country that still holds the despicable record in our region of having carried out a religious and cultural genocide of the people of what is now Bangladesh. As we mark the fiftieth anniversary this year of that terrible event in history, there is not even an acknowledgement of it in Pakistan, much less accountability. Today, the minorities in Pakistan — the Sikhs, Hindus and Christians — live in constant fear and see the continuing State-sponsored suppression of their rights. This is a regime where anti-Semitism is normalized, even justified, by its leadership. Dissenting voices are muzzled daily, and enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings are well documented.

Unlike Pakistan, India is a pluralistic democracy with a substantial population of minorities, members of which have gone on to hold the highest offices in the country, including as President, Prime Minister, Chief Justices and Army Chiefs of Staff. India is also a country with a free media and an independent judiciary that watches over and protects our Constitution. Pluralism is a concept that is very difficult to understand for Pakistan, which constitutionally prohibits its minorities from aspiring to high State office. The least it could do is to introspect before exposing itself to ridicule on the world stage.

Lastly, let me reiterate here that the entire Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh were, are and will always be an integral and inalienable part of India. That includes the areas that are under Pakistan's illegal occupation. We call on Pakistan to immediately vacate all those areas.

To be categorical about India's position, we desire normal relations with all our neighbours, including Pakistan. However, it is up to Pakistan to work sincerely to create a conducive atmosphere, including by taking credible, verifiable and irreversible action to prevent any territory under its control from being used for cross-border terrorism against India in any manner.

Ms. Saleem (Pakistan): My delegation is exercising its right of reply in response to the statement made by the Indian representative.

Jammu and Kashmir is neither a so-called integral part of India nor an internal matter for India. India remains in occupation of a territory that is internationally recognized as disputed and whose final disposition has to be decided in accordance with the democratic principle of a free and impartial plebiscite under United Nations auspices, as provided for in numerous Security Council resolutions.

In order to divert attention from the ever-increasing international condemnation of India's widespread and escalating human rights abuses in Jammu and Kashmir, which it illegally occupies, India continues to make baseless allegations and rely on outright lies and obfuscation. India's compulsive obsession with Pakistan is neither new nor surprising. It has permeated its ruling elite and governance structures. But there is a method to this obsession, as it underpins India's electoral and foreign policy under the ruling Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)-Bharatiya Janata Party Hindutva-inspired Government. The EU DisinfoLab has graphically revealed how India has deployed such tools of deflection, deception and disinformation against my country, including at the United Nations.

India's violations of human rights in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir have been well documented in the two most recent reports of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Since 5 August 2019, the High Commissioner has urged India to end the current situation and fully restore the rights that are currently being denied to the people of the occupied territory. Several other Special Rapporteurs and mandate holders have also termed the human rights situation in illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir as being in "free fall". Major human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, have expressed similar serious concerns about India's human rights violations, including in the occupied territory. Not surprisingly, the Indian authorities have failed to respond to any of those communications. In fact, a witch hunt has been launched against those who dare to report those crimes. Only last year, Amnesty International ceased its work in India, citing constant harassment at the hands of the Government.

The Government of Pakistan recently released a comprehensive and well-researched dossier covering the entire range of gross, systematic and widespread violations of human rights being perpetrated by Indian security forces in the occupied territory. We call on

the international community to take cognizance of the compelling evidence and hold India accountable for its heinous crimes. If India has nothing to hide, it should accept a United Nations commission of inquiry and agree to implement the Security Council resolutions stipulating a plebiscite to enable the people of Jammu and Kashmir to exercise their right to self-determination.

As for India's use of the canard of terrorism, regurgitating the stale arguments that are typical of all occupiers, let me emphasize that India itself is the principal perpetrator, sponsor, financier and abettor of terrorism in the region. Today India is involved in at least four different types of terrorism.

First, India is resorting to State terrorism to suppress the people of illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Since 1989, Indian occupation forces have killed more than 96,000 Kashmiris, widowed approximately 23,000 women, used rape as weapon of war and orphaned more than 108,000 children.

Secondly, it is funding and supporting terrorist organizations such as the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan, whose members are involved in numerous cross-border terrorist attacks against Pakistani military and civilian targets. Over the past decade, thousands of Pakistanis have lost their lives or been injured as a result of those Indian-sponsored terrorist attacks. Pakistan has shared irrefutable evidence with the international community of India's involvement in supporting and sponsoring terrorism.

Thirdly, India is financing and organizing mercenary terrorist organizations against Pakistan to impede the economic growth and prosperity of the region. India's National Security Adviser, Mr. Ajit Doval, has publicly admitted supporting and financing such mercenaries. The captured Indian spy Kulbhushan Jadhav has also confessed to organizing such terrorism in Pakistan.

Fourthly, India is being guided by a supremacist ideology that has mainstreamed Islamophobia and bigotry against minorities, particularly Muslims, in its political discourse. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), one of the oldest fascist movements in the world, enjoys State protection, patronage and support by the Bharatiya Janata Party, the ruling party in India. It was the RSS that was responsible for the pogrom in Gujarat in 2002 that killed more than 2,000 innocent Muslim children, women and men. Those anti-Muslim pogroms

were later repeated in Mumbai and Delhi. One cannot expect anything new from the purveyor of Hindutva.

In today's incredibly intolerant India, the 200-million-strong Muslim minority faces frequent lynchings by cow vigilantes, pogroms by RSS thugs with official complicity, discriminatory citizenship laws aimed at disenfranchising Muslims, and a concerted campaign to destroy mosques and the rich Muslim heritage of India.

For the edifice of fascism is at an advanced stage of construction in India today. The Hindutva order

of the ruling party has created an atmosphere of fear among all minorities, including Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and Dalits. The Indian delegation would do well to reflect on the deeply troubling trajectory that their State has embarked upon rather than indulging in patent falsehoods about Pakistan.

India must realize that it has continuously and miserably failed to suppress Kashmiris living under its occupation from demanding their inalienable right to self-determination.

The meeting rose at 9.15 p.m.

Annex I

Address by Mr. Suga Yoshihide, Prime Minister of Japan

Mr. President,

Let me start by expressing my deepest sympathies to those who have passed away due to COVID-19. I would also like to convey my deepest respect for healthcare workers and all who are at the forefront of the fight against the pandemic.

The Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games were held with the aim of building a peaceful and better world through sport, under the Olympic Truce Resolution adopted in this very venue of the General Assembly. While there were various views about holding the Games this summer, we, as the host country of the Games, fulfilled our responsibilities and achieved what we set out to do.

Many people were deeply moved by the outstanding performances of the athletes which gave hopes and dreams to everyone across the globe. The Games also demonstrated the “barrier-free mindset” to the world, with aspirations for an inclusive society where all people with or without disabilities support each other to live in harmony.

Above all, while humanity has been faced with immeasurable hardships, the Tokyo 2020 Games proved to be a symbol of global unity among people around the world.

I would like to commend all the athletes who inspired us with their performances and express my gratitude to all who made this event possible.

Mr. President,

Many challenges confronting us, such as climate change, economic recovery and competition with authoritarianism, require our collective efforts. In particular, COVID19 has inflicted unprecedented health crises, causing profound changes to people’s lives and global systems.

We now face questions on how to overcome these crises and build a better future. Today, I would like to share with you Japan’s vision of how to address these urgent challenges which could shape the course of the world.

Mr. President,

Let me first talk about how we will overcome this pandemic.

“Save as many lives as possible, and leave no one’s health behind.” This has been the conviction that Japan, as a country upholding human security and universal health coverage, and I myself, have adhered to throughout this battle against the pandemic. Japan is determined to lead the global efforts to this end.

It is particularly important to ensure equitable access to vaccines in every corner of the world, which is the decisive factor in the fight against the pandemic. We must create an environment where all countries and regions can secure vaccines equitably with no political or economic conditions.

With this in mind, I co-hosted the COVAX AMC Summit together with Gavi in June this year. We were able to secure funds, including \$1 billion from Japan, that go well beyond the funding target of securing 1.8 billion vaccine doses for 30 per cent of the population of developing economies.

Additionally, Japan has provided countries and regions with approximately 23 million doses of vaccines manufactured in Japan through the COVAX facility and other initiatives so far. Today, I am pleased to announce that, with additional contributions, Japan will provide up to 60 million vaccine doses in total.

At the same time, we will steadily implement Japan's "Last One Mile Support" programme to ensure the delivery of vaccines to vaccination centres in each country and region.

Through these initiatives, Japan has provided assistance of the order of \$3.9 billion worldwide and will continue to make the utmost effort in overcoming COVID-19.

Mr. President,

I would like to share with you four points that Japan considers particularly important in guiding our world towards a better future.

First, we need to build resilient global health systems.

We must learn from this pandemic and prepare ourselves for the future. Our experiences this time have taught us that there should be no geographical vacuum in addressing global health issues, and it is important that relevant information and knowledge on all countries and regions is shared promptly and extensively in a free and transparent manner.

From this perspective, Japan attaches importance to the role of WHO and will continue actively contributing to discussions on its review and reform.

The pandemic has also led to renewed recognition of the importance of universal health coverage. In order to ensure equitable access to health care services and protection for socially vulnerable people, Japan intends to formulate its "Global Health Strategy," thereby contributing to building a new architecture for global health security in collaboration with the international community.

I should also speak to the discussions in the United Nations on human security of the new generation, which I proposed at this very venue last year. Japan will render its full support to these discussions with high expectations that they will provide valuable guidance for the future, not only in global health, but in addressing various challenges across the world.

To build more resilient global health systems based on the principles of human security, it is necessary to tackle not only infectious diseases, but a broad range of relevant areas such as nutrition, water and sanitation. Japan will host the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit 2021 in December this year to improve nutrition for people around the world.

Second, we need to create a green and sustainable society.

Climate change is an imminent challenge that calls for the collective efforts of humanity as a whole to resolve. At the same time, addressing climate change will be the driving force of dynamic growth and a necessity for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Japan aims to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 46 per cent in fiscal year 2030 from its fiscal year 2013 levels, setting an ambitious target which is aligned with the long-term goal of achieving net-zero by 2050. Furthermore, Japan will continue

strenuous efforts in its challenge to meet the lofty goal of cutting its emission by 50 per cent. I would like to encourage other countries including major emitters to make further efforts as well.

In achieving global decarbonization, any developing country which genuinely needs assistance should not be left behind. Japan will provide climate finance, both public and private, to developing countries including small island states, totalling approximately \$60 billion over the next five years from 2021 to 2025.

With these efforts, Japan is resolved to take the lead in achieving global decarbonization and creating a green and sustainable society.

Third, I would like to emphasize the importance of a free and open international order based on the rule of law.

We must uphold universal values such as freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law that our predecessors have established to maintain peace and prosperity in each region and in the world. I am convinced that the foundation of this undertaking is not force, but a free and open international order.

Our vision for achieving this task is the Free and Open Indo-Pacific. Japan will closely collaborate with like-minded countries and regions and work strategically to fulfil this vision.

At the same time, Japan continues to play a leading role in the establishment of a free and fair economic order. In the area of digital technology, Japan will exercise its leadership in making rules to advance the Data Free Flow with Trust in order to counter protectionism and inward-looking tendencies.

As we maximize the use of the potential of digital space, new technologies must not be used to undermine our universal values.

Japan will contribute constructively to the discussions at the UN and other multilateral forums and also provide capacity-building support to ASEAN and other countries in order to work towards the realization of a free, fair, and secure cyberspace.

Moreover, infrastructure building and development finance under appropriate rules are also essential to build back better and achieve growth. Japan will further promote and implement its “Quality Infrastructure Investment” programme and take the lead in establishing an environment where all countries abide by the international rules on development finance with transparency and fairness.

Fourth, we must realize a more peaceful and secure international community.

Japan is determined to play a proactive role in the maintenance of international peace and security and in establishing a rules-based international order, with the support from Member States at the election of non-permanent members of the Security Council in 2022.

Japan will also remain committed to peacebuilding. At the same time, Japan calls for the launch of concrete negotiations for the reform of the Security Council in order to make it a more effective body that reflects the realities of the 21st century.

To realize a more peaceful and secure world, it is crucial for all countries to make sincere efforts in a transparent manner in international arrangements on arms control and disarmament.

As the only country that has experienced the devastation of atomic bombings, Japan will endeavour to bridge the gaps among countries with different positions and contribute to international efforts towards the realization of a world free from nuclear weapons. Regarding the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, we aim to achieve a meaningful outcome at the Review Conference to be held next year.

We will also continue to work on the control and disarmament of conventional weapons, or “Disarmament that Saves Lives”.

Japan also continues to actively engage in promoting the peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific region.

We must prevent Afghanistan, which is still under a tense situation, from becoming a safe haven for terrorists once again. It is imperative to ensure that humanitarian aid organizations can safely deliver assistance and that human rights, especially those of women, are protected.

We will carefully monitor the actions, not words, of the Taliban, to see whether or not they will honour the commitments they have publicly announced. We will also work closely with relevant countries and organizations to that end.

The recent launch of ballistic missiles by North Korea is a clear violation of Security Council resolutions and we condemn this action. The recent nuclear and missile activities by North Korea pose a threat to the peace and security of Japan, the region and the international community. I strongly hope that North Korea will engage in diplomatic efforts and the dialogues between the United States and North Korea on denuclearization will progress.

The issue of abductions by North Korea is a matter of serious concern for the international community and also a top priority for Japan. As the families of the victims continue to age, there is no time to lose before we resolve the abductions issue.

Japan will continue to seek to normalize its relationship with North Korea, in accordance with the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, through comprehensively resolving the outstanding issues of concern such as the abductions, nuclear and missile issues, as well as settling the unfortunate past.

Establishing a constructive relationship between Japan and North Korea will not only serve the interests of both sides but also contribute to regional peace and stability.

Turning to Myanmar, Japan spares no efforts in supporting the will of the people of Myanmar to achieve democratization and the protection of human rights. We strongly support ASEAN’s initiatives towards a breakthrough in the current situation and will work closely with the international community.

Today, I discussed how to overcome the pandemic and the role Japan will play in realizing a better world. What I have consistently emphasized across these points are international collaboration and multilateralism.

Mr. President,

Ten years ago, Japan suffered an unprecedented scale of devastation due to the Great East Japan Earthquake. The international community kindly extended countless assistance to Japan, which allowed our country to take steps towards recovery.

These experiences remind us of the importance of international collaboration. Japan continues to further promote multilateralism, so that we can resolve the challenges facing the world and advance “Our Common Agenda” as upheld by the UN.

In this regard, we attach importance to dialogues with partners in various regions. In July, we hosted the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting, and next year, we aim to elevate the cooperative relationship between Japan and Africa to new heights at TICAD 8, which will be held in Tunisia.

Japan will also host the Sixth World Assembly for Women (WAW!) next year to realize gender equality and promote the empowerment of women in the world, in cooperation with the international community, particularly UN Women and other partners.

Japan is determined to do its utmost in collaboration with the members of the United Nations to overcome the crisis and build back better for a world full of hope.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

Annex II

Address by Mr. Robert Abela, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta

Mr President

Mr Secretary General

Distinguished Delegates,

Before COVID-19 nearly two years ago, we were planning to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the United Nations by reinvigorating multilateralism. As the pandemic struck and disrupted all States, large and small, it showed us that only when working together can we tackle common challenges. If anything, COVID only reaffirmed the priority of multilateralism, and that it is the key to a strong and sustainable future.

As the international community present here today, we would all agree that this pandemic was not just a health crisis: but a multifaceted one, due to its domino effect upon our humanitarian, security, human rights and socioeconomic stability. We mourn the tragic loss of life it has caused, despite all our efforts. These are immensely challenging times, and as country leaders we have to also deal with increasing isolation and the fear that COVID-19 caused among our citizens. The height of the pandemic necessitated unprecedented sacrifice and restrictions that affected our freedom of movement, severely disrupted the education of children and young people, left millions jobless, and isolated the most vulnerable around the world. Yet this experience also taught us that we could defeat hopelessness by supporting each other, by pooling our knowledge base, our scientific research and by offering humanitarian support. It is this spirit of multilateralism that supported our determination to tackle the pandemic, and it is this same spirit that will enable us to build a strong and sustainable future together.

As we slowly emerge from the pandemic, we must come together to forge ahead with plans that demonstrate our determination and commitment to a strong recovery that leads to a more equal, inclusive, resilient and sustainable world.

Here, I want to take a moment to acknowledge and refer to the fact that for the first time in 20 years, the World Bank announced a significant rise in poverty numbers, with the 2021 figures showing an estimated increase in COVID-19 induced poor of between 143 and 163 million. This means that the goal of bringing the global absolute poverty rate to less than 3 per cent by 2030, is now beyond reach unless we embark on swift, significant, and targeted policy actions.

We cannot afford to respond to the devastating effects of COVID-19 merely by limiting ourselves to rhetoric. The principles of “leaving no one behind” and “building back better,” must be implemented by providing and mobilizing sufficient aid and resources; ensuring that, for example, vaccines are fairly distributed to those who urgently require them and ensuring a level playing field by assisting regions of the world that continue to have difficulties in importing vaccines.

This is why Malta is a proud co-sponsor of UN Security Council Resolution that seeks to ensure equitable and affordable access to COVID-19 vaccines in armed conflict and post-conflict situations, and during complex humanitarian emergencies. And as a nation we welcome the work being undertaken to address vaccine inequality. Whilst I am proud to say that as of today, Malta has vaccinated around 91 per cent of

its population, we stand fully committed to vaccine sharing with countries in need. It is in this spirit that this summer, Malta donated 40,000 vaccine doses to Libya and we will donate even further with the aim of helping our neighbouring country get a million doses by the end of this year.

Despite all the ongoing efforts, however, the crisis is far from over.

Echoing the words of the United Nations Secretary-General, a significant push at the highest political level is needed to reverse some of the effects of the pandemic, avoid a global recession, and get back on track to fulfil the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development within this Decade of Action and Delivery.

Malta has formulated a post COVID-19 strategy that places the community at the centre stage. The strategy was formulated using a bottom-up approach that looks at our strengths, vulnerabilities and potential in a bid to make Malta a smarter and more resilient economy.

Mr. President

The pandemic has significantly slowed global economic activity and the effects represent one of the largest international economic shocks the world has experienced in recent decades.

As the global trade environment continues to be in a state of flux, ensuring an economic, environmental and social recovery that is fair and inclusive is of the utmost importance. Debt guarantees, financial aid, and loans from international financial institutions are required in order to provide the impetus for economic recovery and revitalisation. The EU Digital COVID Certificate, for example, was a successful step forward to recovery via tourism.

I also believe that upon assessing the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to rethink our basic economic model and adapt it to similar events which are likely to take place in the future.

With this in mind, I firmly support the idea of an inclusive and resilient post-pandemic recovery that is based on an open and rules-based approach to international trade and foreign direct investment. Action should be focused on ensuring the proper implementation of existing rules, as well as the negotiation and implementation of new rules on issues that have emerged over the years. Fair competition should be at the heart of any approach for a post-pandemic economic recovery.

While we refocus our efforts on recovering together, we have to work and collaborate with the UN and other organizations to usher in a more networked and inclusive multilateral approach, to echo what the Secretary-General stressed in his International Day of Diplomacy Message earlier this year. It is also the best form of preparedness against the global challenges that are impacting us all, particularly Climate Change.

Only through collective efforts that transform our present economic model into one that truly fosters social and environmental cohesion, can we truly and effectively respond to the needs of our planet responsibly, by building networks at all levels to foster a change in mind set across all strata of society. As political leaders the major responsibility falls upon us but we must engage with the private sector, academia, and entities from all walks of life to stop human induced climate change

and seek solutions to adapt to its negative repercussions after we have done all we can to mitigate it.

In this regard, a successful COP26 is critical to meet our long-term climate neutrality objective. I am proud to state that achieving carbon neutrality is one of the five major pillars of my country's economic vision for 2030. My government has adopted a Low Carbon Development Strategy that integrates mitigation with adaptation, which includes significant investments in the sectors of waste management, road transport, renewable energy and the energy efficiency of buildings. Despite the severe economic impact COVID-19 has had upon national finances, our programme for an ambitious decarbonisation programme has not waived.

As one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change within the EU, Malta is a keen advocate in favour of a focus on adaptation. Small Island States are amongst the lowest emitters but the most vulnerable to climate change. We also have limited options to reduce emissions, leading us to incur higher marginal and disproportionate abatement costs. As leaders, we have a significant role to play and the responsibility to act without delay. In this regard, I welcome the adoption, earlier this year, of an EU strategy on adaptation and the renewed focus on this topic by the UN.

Climate change by itself, and as a threat multiplier, poses significant challenges that may exacerbate long-existing vulnerabilities and emerging conflicts as well as threaten the very existence of some countries and regions. In view of this, the relationship between climate and security will be high on Malta's agenda if elected to the UN Security Council for the term 2023-2024. As part of this agenda, we will place particular emphasis on bridging the gap between science and global security concerns, especially the ocean, as the single largest habitat on our planet.

Malta is committed to ensuring that the voices of those States mostly affected by the impacts of Climate Change are heard. As we are continuously witnessing, climate change is triggering severe and frequent weather phenomena that bring entire regions and States to their knees. We need to act before it is too late.

To this effect, as a country we have been actively and continuously working within the relevant UN Structures and with other Member States to raise awareness on the needs and capabilities of such countries. Our belief is that genuine and durable partnerships can assist in the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals, the fight against climate change and the opportunities for decarbonisation, as well as in addressing the threats to our ocean and the potential we share to develop the Blue Economy.

As a founding member of the Alliance of Small Island Developing States, Malta's goal is to become a leader in Small Island State Governance, standing ready to share our plans on decarbonisation and also digitalisation. Small Island States face challenges regarding their critical infrastructure, but in parallel, can also demonstrate how effective the community-based approach is.

As our society will go through a digital transition in parallel with the climate one, as a country we also advocate the need to close the digital gap across nations to ensure a level playing field. Although Malta enjoys a positive and professional relationship as a 'Digital Island', we aim to further enhance our potential in the field and fast track our digital transformation. Our aim is to implement modernised and secure digital services that are accessible to all. These efforts will circumvent any

of the disruptions caused by COVID-19 notably in the economy, education, health and public administration. Digitalization will benefit and empower humanity if it is accessible to all our peoples, even those in the most remote parts of the world.

Mr President,

Another common goal and shared priority is that of ensuring human rights remain at the core of what we do. The full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms is a priority for Malta, and we are especially concerned with reports of increased violence against women around the world. Our systems must be strengthened to prevent the proliferation of this scourge. We must ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice, victims are supported, and an enabling environment is created for women to be able to fully, equally, and effectively participate in public life.

Malta on the Security Council will continue to stress the need to include women and youths in peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts. Their voices must be heard if we are to build fair and inclusive societies. Just as peace agreements have been seen to last longer when women and youths are present at the peace table, so can women and youth contribute to various spheres of society, and ensure that all voices are heard and the needs of the most vulnerable are met.

It is our responsibility to ensure that women are given the space to become enablers for change.

It is similarly our responsibility to provide a safe and secure environment where our society can flourish, a commitment that cannot easily be achieved when peace and security continues to be threatened across the continents. As prospective elected members of the Security Council, Malta believes that refocusing and revitalizing our efforts at addressing and mitigating tensions is paramount. More must be done to assist the main actors on the ground and to address the root causes of conflict.

Such goals can be achieved by providing basic needs, which instability and conflict has taken away, whether it is basic education, literacy or food security.

On this occasion I have to say a few words on Libya.

The future of Libya must remain at the forefront of our common agenda for international peace and stability. The international community needs to provide support to the Libyan authorities, under the auspices of the United Nations, to make sure that the political transition is a successful one — for the Libyan people, the region, the African Continent and the world.

The will of the Libyan people must be respected, and the October 2020 ceasefire agreement fully implemented, while the work of the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya set up last year should continue to be supported and reinforced. Mercenaries, foreign fighters and forces must withdraw from Libya, and the arms embargo must be respected.

In the run-up to Libya's upcoming national elections, this process should continue to be strengthened with the adoption of the necessary social and economic reforms combined with an underlying national reconciliation process. All of this should translate to, amongst others, the unification of state institutions, the commencing of security sector reform, as well as disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration. We hope that the strengthening of these elements would bring

Libyans together as they determine their collective effort towards a common future and a peaceful, prosperous Libya. Malta is actively supporting Libya in its economic development and just days ago, we marked our first commercial flight between our two countries. This is an important step forward for Libyan stability and prosperity.

At the same time, however, we cannot ignore the impact that political developments in the wider region have on the situation in Libya.

The situation in the Sahel remains tenuous, necessitating an integrated approach driven by a strong political commitment. This instability in the region will have implications and spill-over effects in other areas, including migration and terrorism.

More specifically on the latter, terrorism is a transregional phenomenon, which knows no border, and continues to pose a major threat to peace and security in various regions across Africa, particularly in Western and Central Africa, as well as the Sahel. It remains imperative for the international community to continue to work together and address the root causes of violent extremism and radicalisation, with the aim of countering terrorism, as well as its financing. Terrorists are adept at exploiting countries with weak counter-terrorism capabilities; hence the need to address such challenges is even more important.

Action against terrorism must be firm and decisive at all times and the UN is central to the fight.

Literacy has, in my view, a critical role to play in empowering individuals to counter radicalisation efforts. This also links with the importance of strengthening the capacities of national criminal justice systems to administer fair and effective justice for perpetrators of terrorist crimes, while undertaking effective preventive measures in accordance with rule of law.

From a local perspective, the International Institute on Justice and the Rule of Law in Malta founded in June 2014, has been very active in convening practitioners from across the world, to provide rule of law-based training to lawmakers, police, prosecutors, judges, corrections officials and other justice sector stakeholders on how to address terrorism and related transnational criminal activities within a rule of law framework.

Furthermore, in the past 20 months, Malta implemented further reforms to bolster the anti-money laundering and counter terrorism financing framework. We have enacted wide ranging legislation, including constitutional changes, substantially increased capacity and resources in several key institutions, and further implementation is already underway.

Mr President,

I also want to touch upon the situation in the Middle East, Afghanistan and Syria. Malta reaffirms its commitment to a just and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict centred on a two-state solution based on United Nations Security Council resolutions and the international parameters with Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both States. Malta welcomes the normalisation of diplomatic relations between the State of Israel and Morocco, United Arab Emirates, the Sudan and Bahrain. Actions that promote peace and stability in the region should continue to be supported, including preparations to hold elections in Palestine.

The conclusion of a ceasefire earlier this year was a step in the right direction. We urge both sides to take concrete steps to consolidate the fragile peace, and to refrain from taking any action which may jeopardise any positive trends.

As regards Afghanistan, the unfolding developments there have shocked us all and I want to join others in urging all parties to exercise utmost restraint. The situation on the ground remains highly volatile and bleak. I also want to echo calls for all involved to put an end to the violence, to respect international law and uphold human rights, especially the rights of women and girls whilst ensuring safe and orderly departure of foreign nationals and Afghans who wish to leave the country. In this regard, roads, airports and border crossings must remain open, and calm maintained. Afghan nationals must not be abandoned to their fate. Humanitarian access is crucial, and all humanitarian actors must have unimpeded access to deliver timely and life-saving services and assistance.

Similarly, I want to show my support for the words of the UN Secretary-General, that the international community must unite and ensure that Afghanistan is never again used as a platform or haven for terrorist organisations.

Regarding Syria, the situation on the ground remains unstable. Not only have ten years passed since the conflict began, but the struggles that families and children are facing have become even more precarious. The persisting violence in Syria, particularly in view of ongoing reports of sexual and gender-based violence, attacks on children, hospitals, schools, and other vital civilian infrastructure including potable water production plants is of grave concern. We welcome the unanimous adoption of UNSCR 2585 (2021), extending the use of the humanitarian aid corridor at Bab al-Hawa. We urge all parties to refrain from further violence and take any and all appropriate actions leading to a resolution of this humanitarian and political crisis. The International Community must redouble its efforts to bring peace to Syria. We cannot remain idle.

Peace and security are fundamental if we have any ambition to protect international humanitarian principles and minimise the impact of conflict on innocent civilians, including those who are the most vulnerable. Too many people live in countries where their access to water, food, education, and other essential needs is not met or is denied. As potential members of the Security Council, we will commit to addressing the root causes of conflict and to promote recognition of the crucial role of humanitarian space.

Conflicts affect the lives of many people, and on a yearly basis we fail tens of thousands of children. We fail to protect them from violence, from cruelty, from harm, and from realising their full potential. We fail to protect their right of being children. Every year, children are forced into armed movements, abducted, abused, and forced to take part into conflicts that they have not created. The new worrying trends together with the multifaceted impacts on children exacerbated by the pandemic, are calling us to redouble our efforts to tackle this “plague” together.

The protection of children must be central in our policy and decision-making processes. This goal is attainable, but we must act with urgency. UN peacekeeping operations have a key role to play in protecting children in armed conflict, as well as others within the UN system, including UNICEF.

We strongly encourage the Council and Member States to support the full implementation of strong child protection mandates, including through the speedy

deployment of senior child protection advisors and teams, and by prioritising the protection of children in peacekeeping transitions. Should Malta be entrusted to serve on the Security Council in 2023-2024, Children and Armed Conflict will be a priority during our tenure. We firmly believe that this issue, which greatly impacts our societies, should be mainstreamed across the work of the Security Council.

Mr President,

We live in an interconnected world in which actions and policies taken by any State can leave a severe impact on third countries.

Consequently, I firmly believe that a response which is multilateral in its approach, for a strong multilateral framework with a revitalised United Nations at its core, is the need of the hour. We need to strengthen our work on the affirmation of universal rules and principles, and we need to join forces and make rapid progress on the common goal of rehabilitating multilateralism. Only by working together and in solidarity can we end the pandemic and effectively tackle its consequences. Only together can we build resilience against future pandemics and other global challenges. Multilateralism is not an option but a necessity as we build back better for a world which is more equal, resilient, and sustainable. Only through collective action can we truly recover together.

Without an adequate global response, the cumulative effects of the pandemic and its economic fallout, armed conflict, and climate change will exact high human and economic costs well into the future. This is a risk that we cannot take especially in these unprecedented times where cooperation and solidarity among states is needed more than ever before.

Malta is ready to support the global effort and be an effective international change agent by assisting the alignment of economic strategies, promoting a collaborative international conversation, and drive technological innovation whilst remaining sensitive to societal and cultural implications.

If elected to the UN Security Council for the term 2023-2024, Malta will commit to support the UN as a neutral member state actively pursuing peace, security and social progress among all nations across the world.

Malta stands united with the international community to build a better world, where understanding and cooperation are at the heart of our policies and the work we do on the ground. Where we work together in a unified and multilateral manner.

Our citizens, and our children who will inherit the world after us, truly deserve it.

Thank You.

Annex III

Address by Ms. Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security and Intelligence, Child Poverty Reduction, and Ministerial Services of New Zealand

E ngā Mana, e ngā Reo, Rau Rangatira mā o tēnei Whare Nui o te Ao

Prestigious people, Speakers of note, Chiefs one and all of this General Assembly

Ngā mihi mahana ki o koutou katoa, mai i toku Whenua o Aotearoa

Warm greetings to you all from my home country of New Zealand

Nō reira, tēnā koutou katoa.

Greetings to you all.

Mr President,

Mr Secretary-General,

Friends,

I greet you in *te reo Māori*, the language of the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand.

As I deliver this address to the General Assembly from here in New Zealand, it strikes me that even when global events threaten to disconnect and divide us, a shared instinct to connect with one another, still prevails.

I have often described New Zealand as being remote, but connected. The COVID-19 pandemic has made both parts of this statement truer than ever. In some ways, we now feel that remoteness more keenly. The vast ocean surrounding our islands have taken on an even greater significance in a time when our border controls are our first line of defence against a highly contagious, global virus.

Despite this physical distancing, the pandemic has demonstrated more starkly than ever just how closely connected we all are. We live in a world where domestic decisions made half a world away, are as significant to us as those made by our nearest neighbours.

In many ways, COVID-19 is an illustration of global transboundary problems at a local level. Here is an invisible threat, which no one is safe from, and the very thing keeping us safe — is each other. We have placed our trust in the actions of neighbours and strangers — to wear masks, to distance, to get vaccinated and support others to do so, and we live collectively with the consequences.

It has been a privilege for me as a leader, to witness the practical application of New Zealanders' values to these challenges.

Values like *manaakitanga* and *whanaungatanga*, which in the Māori language mean kindness, and a shared sense of humanity and connectedness. Values like *kotahitanga*, or a shared aspiration and unity towards a common goal.

These values have seen New Zealanders take care of one another, and work together to limit the transmission of COVID-19 in our communities.

Now these values are not unique to New Zealand. They are universal. They underpin the Charter of the United Nations. One need only read the preamble to see them reflected back at us.

No community, nation, or region acting alone can address COVID-19. It is a complex, global problem that requires a global solution. Equitable access to safe and effective vaccines for everyone is essential to our response and recovery.

New Zealand is working with others, especially Australia, to support full vaccine coverage for Pacific island countries. And the COVAX Facility is doing essential work distributing vaccines worldwide. But more must be done to support this effort. New Zealand is proud to have been amongst the first countries to donate doses to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment in addition to our financial support.

New Zealand continues to work in WTO and APEC to support a waiver of intellectual property protections for vaccines and other measures to increase availability.

Without equitable access for all, we risk further variants developing which could undermine or undo our progress.

At the same time that the direct impacts of COVID-19 have brought immeasurable pain to many across the world, it has also exacerbated and further complicated other existing global challenges. We know what these challenges are. We articulated them as areas of action in the UN Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Declaration.

The pandemic has been the ultimate disrupter. It has changed our realities, and given us cause to pause and reflect. In the disruption is an opportunity for us to reset. To adjust some of our fundamental settings to put us in a better position to respond to our shared challenges.

We have heard so much about ‘building back better’. We must do better. Like the drafters of the Charter, we owe future generations our commitment to hand down a better world forged through cooperation.

Fortunately for us, we already have a blueprint for such a world in the Sustainable Development Goals, and the 2030 Agenda. The 2030 Agenda recognises that as our shared challenges are interconnected, so too must be our responses. As we face a series of interlinked global crises that demand action, now is the time for us to recommit to the SDGs.

COVID-19 cannot be an excuse for not achieving the SDGs. In fact, it’s a further reason why we must.

There is perhaps no better example of a global crisis that demands action than climate change.

Climate change is one of the most pervasive crises of our time. From rising sea levels to shifting weather patterns, the impacts are global in scope, unprecedented in scale, and happening right now.

Climate change touches all of our lives, but countries in the Pacific are some of the most affected, despite having contributed least to the problem. Pacific leaders view climate change as the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the region.

Any global response that fails to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels is unacceptable. This is our goal, and our collective efforts must achieve it. The latest science from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is stark.

The climate crisis cannot be beaten through incrementalism. The science demands that we do so much more.

New Zealand has made the 1.5°C limit the heart of our domestic climate change legislation. We have committed to a 2050 target and we are revising our Nationally Determined Contribution.

As we mitigate, we must also adapt. This year New Zealand conducted its first national climate change risk assessment to tell us where to focus our effort, and within two years we will have a national adaptation plan. But we have already begun our journey. New Zealand has a programme to plant for instance, one billion trees by 2028. This will store carbon, but it will also support forest resilience, prevent erosion, improve biodiversity, and support our rural and indigenous communities.

Lifting the ambition of our nationally determined contributions is vital, but there are also collective actions we need to take.

This includes bringing an end to fossil fuel and other environmentally harmful subsidies. It includes pooling our resources and knowledge through the Global Research Alliance so that we can grow more food without growing emissions. It includes negotiating an agreement on climate change, trade and sustainability. New Zealand is actively pursuing all of these outcomes.

We must collectively address the unjust and potentially destabilising consequences of climate change.

For Small Island Developing States, one of the gravest consequences is sea-level rise. The ocean is central to the culture and livelihoods of the peoples of the Pacific. Pacific countries have also planned their economies and long-term development in reliance on the maritime zones and resources guaranteed to them under the Law of the Sea Convention.

It is only right that as an international community, we work to ensure the maintenance of those zones and rights in the face of climate change-related sea-level rise.

As a contribution to this objective, I was pleased to join my fellow Pacific Islands Forum Leaders in issuing the 'Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-related Sea-Level Rise', in August this year.

Climate change is closely interlinked with another crisis of a planetary scale — that of global biodiversity loss.

As much as we are all interconnected as nations, so too are we connected with nature and the services it provides. We depend on it for the air we breathe, and the economies we have built. Biodiversity loss threatens our well-being, our prosperity, and our health. It will both accelerate climate change, and make its impacts worse.

This is a challenge that requires us to work across barriers and silos. For New Zealand's part, we have adopted the Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy

2020 — *Te Mana o te Taiao* — which will guide our actions domestically for the protection, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity.

We simply cannot achieve the 2030 Agenda unless we unite with collective ambition to reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. We have an opportunity to do this by adopting and implementing an ambitious and transformational post-2020 global biodiversity framework at the upcoming Conference of Parties. New Zealand is committed to this, and I urge you to join us.

As with biodiversity on land, ocean biodiversity is equally important. New Zealand looks forward to concluding the negotiations on an UN treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of high seas biodiversity.

But as we turn our mind to the challenges we face globally, we must turn to the most important thing of all — *he tangata, he tangata, he tangata* — it is people, people, people.

More than 120 million people have been pushed into extreme poverty as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Inequality within and between countries has deepened.

These consequences were never inevitable, and there are steps we can take to reverse these trends and improve the lives of those impacted.

Too many people go hungry every day. New Zealand invests heavily in sustainable food production, and what we produce feeds many times our own population. But we have seen that at the global level, food systems are neither sustainable nor resilient. They suffer from, and contribute to, the overlapping impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss. Transformational change is needed to ensure that everyone has access to the nutrition they need.

This week's Food Systems Summit is an important step, and it must be the beginning of an ongoing effort. We will do our part in supporting these efforts, including on initiatives that acknowledge the leadership of indigenous peoples in food systems and increase global ambition to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture.

For our part — this is an area where we are working hard, with a unique agreement between our food sector, government and Māori to reduce agricultural emissions through a pricing mechanism. We are determined to show the world what is possible.

At the same time we must include making trade more open and inclusive. COVID-19 disrupted global supply chains, while at the same time it illustrated the importance of open trade to protecting the health of people and lifting them out of poverty and hunger. We must commit to ensuring the flow of essential goods and services, and reject any temptation to turn inwards and focus on protectionism.

We know that poverty and inequality drive conflict and instability, and we are also seeing this, in heightened civil unrest and conflict. Humanitarian crises have worsened. We are seeing this in Afghanistan and there are many more.

As an international community we must rise to the challenge of meeting the growing humanitarian need. But we also have to intensify our efforts to prevent conflict and build peace. New Zealand looks forward to playing a part in this effort as we join the Peacebuilding Commission in 2022.

As leaders, we have a responsibility to foster and sustain peace in our societies. We know what the necessary conditions are. Yes, this includes the absence of poverty, hunger, and material deprivation. But it is also something more. Peaceful societies are inclusive societies, where diversity is embraced and everyone has both the means and the opportunities to contribute to the fullness of their potential. Where women and girls are lifted up and encouraged to exercise their voice and their agency.

Whatever our political or constitutional systems, no nation will ever be truly peaceful in the absence of these basic conditions, founded on the fundamental and equal rights of every person.

And where peace fails, we must all do our part to strengthen and improve respect for the laws of armed conflict, and to enhance the protection of civilians. Preventing both the use of illegal weapons, and the illegal use of legal weapons, is essential, as is ensuring there is no impunity for any such use. This work is a shared responsibility, and one which we pursue alongside our tireless efforts to rid the world of nuclear weapons and the spectre of a conflict that no one can recover from.

All of these challenges we share might cause us to re-examine our response to being so interconnected. We have a choice. To approach our shared challenges from a place of fear, hoping to protect narrowly defined interests by turning inwards. Or we can reaffirm our trust in cooperation, understanding that our greatest fears can only be tackled by concerted collective action.

Our forebears were once at this fork in the road. They chose the path of trust. They founded the United Nations.

It is times like these when we have the most to gain by reminding ourselves of what the Charter's preamble says. It speaks to a concern for future generations. It speaks about universal observance of human rights, respect for international law, and living together in peace as good neighbours. It speaks about uniting our strength, and combining our efforts to accomplish our aims.

These words of determination were in response to the devastation of war. They apply equally to the collective challenges we face today, and if we are to resolve these in an enduring way, we must look beyond government.

Inclusive multilateralism is one in which our common understandings are enriched by diverse perspectives. As governments, we owe it to ourselves to be open to the expertise and partnerships offered by stakeholders, whether they are from civil society, industry, or indigenous groups.

I have seen in the progress we have made through the Christchurch Call to Action, what can be achieved when governments, industry, and civil society work together in a multistakeholder capacity to eliminate terrorist and violent extremist content online, and I am utterly committed to further efforts on this important work.

New Zealand is committed to advancing Our Common Agenda, and sadly, as we have seen in recent times, an essential element of this is preparedness.

No one can argue for instance that the global community as a whole was adequately prepared for a global pandemic. It is clear that we will face further global health risks, and we have no excuses for remaining unprepared.

New Zealand strongly supports the ambitious and practical approach of the Independent

Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response. We will not just passively support the Independent Panel's recommendations. We will actively engage on work streams to develop a pandemic treaty, convention or other international instrument; to improve global surveillance, validation and early response; and importantly, to strengthen the World Health Organization.

If there is any lesson we can draw from the events of the past 18 months, it is the need for more, and better, cooperation. And with the need for better cooperation, comes the need for responsive and adaptive global institutions, including the United Nations.

I commend and thank the Secretary-General on his report and recommendations to advance Our Common Agenda. These provide us with a roadmap for a more inclusive and effective multilateralism. One that includes a voice for the needs of future generations and leaves no one behind.

As leaders, we have the power to shape our shared institutions and to make them fit for purpose. We must not shy away from this task.

I can think of no better way to reaffirm our kindness towards one another, our shared humanity, and our unity.

I hope you will join us.

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.

Annex IV

Address by Mr. Imran Khan, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Mr. President,

I congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the 76th session of the General Assembly.

I also wish to express appreciation for the significant achievements of your predecessor, Volkan Bozkır, who guided the Assembly skilfully under the difficult circumstances imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. President,

The world is facing triple challenge of the COVID-19, the accompanying economic crisis, and the threats posed by climate change.

The virus does not discriminate between nations and people. Nor do the catastrophes imposed by uncertain weather patterns.

The common threats faced by us today not only expose the fragility of the international system; they also underscore the oneness of humanity.

By the grace of Almighty Allah, Pakistan has been successful so far in containing the COVID pandemic. Our calibrated strategy of 'smart lockdowns' helped save lives and livelihoods and kept the economy afloat. Over 15 million families survived through our social protection programme of Ehsaas.

Mr. President,

Climate change is one of the primary existential threats that our planet faces today.

Pakistan's contribution to global emissions is negligible. Yet we are among the 10 most vulnerable countries to the effects of climate change in the world.

Being fully aware of our global responsibilities, we have embarked upon game-changing environmental programmes: reforestation Pakistan through our 10 billion tree tsunami; preserving natural habitats; switching to renewable energy; removing pollution from our cities; and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

To address the triple crisis of COVID pandemic, economic downturn, and climate emergency, we need a comprehensive strategy that should include:

One, vaccine equity: everyone, everywhere, must be vaccinated against COVID, and as soon as possible;

Two, adequate financing must be made available to developing countries. This can be ensured through comprehensive debt restructuring; expanded ODA; redistribution of unutilized SDRs, and allotment of a greater proportion of SDRs to developing countries; and finally, provision of climate finance; and

Three, we must adopt clear investment strategies which help alleviate poverty, promote job creation, build sustainable infrastructure, and of course bridge the digital divide.

I propose that the Secretary-General convene an SDG summit in 2025 to review and accelerate implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Mr. President,

Because of the plunder of the developing world by their corrupt ruling elites, the gap between the rich and the poor countries is increasing at an alarming speed.

Through this platform, I have been drawing the world's attention towards the scourge of illicit financial flows from developing countries.

The Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Financial Accountability, Transparency and Integrity (FACTI) has calculated that a staggering \$7 trillion in stolen assets are parked in the financial "haven" destinations.

This organized theft and illegal transfer of assets has profound consequences for the developing nations. It depletes their already meagre resources, accentuates the levels of poverty especially when laundered money puts pressure on the currency and leads to its devaluation. At the current rate, when the FACTI Panel estimates that a trillion dollars every year are taken out of the developing world, there will be mass exodus of economic migrants towards the richer nations.

What the East India Company did to India, the crooked ruling elites are doing to developing world — plundering the wealth and transferring to western capitals and offshore tax havens.

And Mr. President, retrieving the stolen assets from the developed countries is impossible for poor nations. The rich countries have no incentives, or compulsion, to return this ill-gotten wealth, and this ill-gotten wealth belongs to the masses of the developing world. I foresee, in the not-too-distant future a time will come when the rich countries will be forced to build walls to keep out economic migrants from these poor countries.

I fear a few "wealthy islands" in the sea of poverty will also turn into a global calamity, like climate change.

The General Assembly must take steps meaningfully to address this deeply disturbing, and morally repugnant, situation. Naming and shaming the 'haven' destinations and developing a comprehensive legal framework to halt and reverse the illicit financial flows are most critical actions to stop this grave economic injustice.

And at a minimum, the recommendations of Secretary-General's FACTI panel should be fully implemented.

Mr. President,

Islamophobia is another pernicious phenomenon that we all need to collectively combat.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, terrorism has been associated with Islam by some quarters. This has increased the tendency of right-wing, xenophobic and violent nationalists, extremists and terrorist groups to target Muslims.

The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy has recognized these emerging threats. We hope the Secretary-General's report will focus on these new threats of terrorism posed by Islamophobes and right-wing extremists.

I call on the Secretary-General to convene a global dialogue on countering the rise of Islamophobia. Our parallel efforts, at the same time, should be to promote interfaith harmony, and they should continue.

Mr. President,

The worst and most pervasive form of Islamophobia now rules India. The hate-filled *Hindutva* ideology, propagated by the fascist RSS-BJP regime, has unleashed a reign of fear and violence against India's 200 million strong Muslim community. Mob lynching by cow vigilantes; frequent pogroms, such as the one in New Delhi last year; discriminatory citizenship laws to purge India of Muslims; and a campaign to destroy mosques across India and obliterate its Muslim heritage and history, are all part of this criminal enterprise.

New Delhi has also embarked on what it ominously calls the "final solution" for the Jammu and Kashmir dispute. It has undertaken:

- a series of illegal and unilateral measures in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir since 5th August 2019;
- it has unleashed a reign of terror by an occupation force of 900,000;
- it has jailed senior Kashmiri leadership;
- imposed a clampdown on media and internet;
- violently suppressed peaceful protests;
- abducted 13,000 young Kashmiris and tortured hundreds of them;
- it has extrajudicially killed hundreds of innocent Kashmiris in fake "encounters"; and
- imposed collective punishments by destroying entire neighbourhoods and villages.

We have unveiled a detailed dossier on gross and systematic violations of human rights by the Indian Security Forces in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

This repression is accompanied by illegal efforts to change the demographic structure of the occupied territory, and transform it from a Muslim majority into a Muslim minority.

Indian actions violate the resolutions of the UN Security Council on Jammu and Kashmir. The resolutions clearly prescribe that the "final disposition" of the disputed territory should be decided by its people, through a free and impartial plebiscite held under the UN auspices.

India's actions in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir also violate International Human Rights and Humanitarian Laws, including the 4th Geneva Convention, and amount to "war crimes" and "crimes against humanity."

It is unfortunate, very unfortunate, that the world's approach to violations of human rights lacks even-handedness, and even is selective. Geopolitical considerations, or corporate interests, commercial interests often compel major powers to overlook the transgressions of their "affiliated" countries.

Such double standards are the most glaring in case of India, where this RSS-BJP regime is being allowed to get away with human rights abuses with complete impunity.

The most recent example of Indian barbarity was the forcible snatching of the mortal remains of the great Kashmiri leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, from his family, denying him a proper Islamic funeral and burial, in accordance with his wishes and Muslim traditions.

Devoid of any legal or moral sanction, this action was even against the basic norms of human decency. I call on this General Assembly to demand that Syed Geelani's mortal remains be allowed to be buried in the "cemetery of martyrs" with the appropriate Islamic rites.

Mr. President,

Pakistan desires peace with India, as with all its neighbours. But sustainable peace in South Asia is contingent upon resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, in accordance with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions, and the wishes of the Kashmiri people.

Last February, we reaffirmed the 2003 ceasefire understanding along the Line of Control. The hope was that it would lead to a rethink of the strategy in New Delhi. Sadly, the BJP government has intensified repression in Kashmir and continues to vitiate the environment by these barbaric acts.

The onus remains on India to create a conducive environment for meaningful and result-oriented engagement with Pakistan. And for that, it must:

One, reverse its unilateral and illegal measures instituted since 5th August 2019;

Two, stop its oppression and human rights violations against the people of Kashmir; and

Three, halt and reverse the demographic changes in the occupied territory.

It is also essential to prevent another conflict between Pakistan and India. India's military build-up, development of advanced nuclear weapons, and acquisition of destabilising conventional capabilities, can erode mutual deterrence between the two countries.

And now Mr. President, I want to talk about Afghanistan. For the current situation in Afghanistan, for some reason, Pakistan has been blamed for the turn of events, by politicians in the United States and some politicians in Europe.

From this platform, I want them all to know, the country that suffered the most, apart from Afghanistan, was Pakistan, when we joined the US War on Terror after 9/11.

Some 80,000 Pakistanis died. \$150 billion dollars were lost to our economy. There were 3.5 million internally displaced Pakistanis. And why did this happen? In the 1980s, Pakistan was a front-line state in fighting against the occupation of Afghanistan. Pakistan and the United States trained Mujahideen groups to fight for the liberation of Afghanistan. Amongst those Mujahideen groups was Al-Qaeda, various groups from all over the world. There were Mujahideen, Afghan Mujahideen. These were considered heroes.

President Ronald Reagan invited them to the White House in 1983. And according to a news item, he compared them to the founding fathers of the United States. They were heroes.

Come 1989, the Soviets leave, and so do the Americans — abandoning Afghanistan. Pakistan was left with 5 million Afghan refugees. We were left with sectarian militant groups which were never existed before. But the worse cut of it was, that a year later Pakistan was sanctioned by the US. We felt used.

Fast forward 9/11, Pakistan is needed again by the US, because now the US-led coalition was invading Afghanistan, and it could not happen without Pakistan providing all the logistical support.

What happened after that?

The same Mujahideen that we had trained, that fighting foreign occupation was a sacred duty, a holy war or jihad, turned against us.

We were called collaborators.

They declared jihad on us. Then all along the tribal belt bordering Afghanistan — Pakistan's semi-autonomous tribal belt — where no Pakistan army had been there since our independence, people had strong sympathies with the Afghan Taliban, not because of their religious ideology but because of Pashtun nationalism, which is very strong. Then there are three million Afghan refugees still in Pakistan all Pashtuns, living in the camps. 500,000 in the biggest camp, 100,000 camps. They all had affinity and sympathy with the Afghan Taliban.

So, what happened? They too turned against Pakistan. For the first time we had militant Taliban in Pakistan. And they too attacked the Government of Pakistan. When our Army went into the tribal areas first time in our history — whenever an army goes into the civilian areas, there is collateral damage — so, there was collateral damage, which multiplied the militants to seek revenge. But not just that. The world must know that in Pakistan there were 480 drone attacks conducted by the US. And we all know that the drone attacks are not that precise. They cause more collateral damage than the militants they are targeting.

So, people whose relatives had been killed sought revenge against Pakistan. Between 2004 and 2014, there were 50 different militant groups attacking the State of Pakistan.

At one point, people, people like us were worried, that will we survive this? There were bombs going all over Pakistan. Our capital was like a fortress.

Had it not been for one of the most disciplined army in the world and one of the best intelligence agencies in the world, I think Pakistan would have gone down.

So, when we hear this at the end. There is a lot of worry in the US about taking care of the interpreters and everyone who helped the US.

What about us?

The only reason we suffered so much was because we became an ally of the US — of the Coalition — in the war in Afghanistan. There were attacks being conducted from the Afghan soil into Pakistan. At least there should have been a word of appreciation. But rather than appreciation, imagine how we feel when we are blamed for the turn of events in Afghanistan.

After 2006, it became clear to everyone who understood Afghanistan and its history that there would be no military solution in Afghanistan. I went to the US, I spoke to thinktanks, I met the then Senator Biden, Senator John Kerry, Senator Harry

Reid — I tried to explain to them that there would not be any military solution, and political settlement was the way forward. No one understood then.

And unfortunately, in trying to force a military solution is where the US went wrong. And if today, the world needs to know why the Taliban are back in power, all it has to do is to do a deep analysis of why a 300,000 strong well equipped Afghan army — and remember Afghans are one of the bravest nations on Earth — gave up without a fight.

The moment a deep analysis of this is done, the world would know why the Taliban came back to power and it is not because of Pakistan.

Mr. President,

Now the whole international community should think what is the way ahead. There are two paths that we can take. If we neglect Afghanistan right now, according to the UN half the people of Afghanistan are already vulnerable, and by next year almost 90 per cent of the people in Afghanistan will go below the poverty line. There is a huge humanitarian crisis looming ahead. And this will have serious repercussions not just for the neighbours of Afghanistan but everywhere. A destabilized, chaotic Afghanistan will again become a safe haven for international terrorists — the reason why the US came to Afghanistan in the first place.

Therefore, there is only one way to go. We must strengthen and stabilize the current government, for the sake of the people of Afghanistan.

What have the Taliban promised?

They will respect human rights.

They will have an inclusive government.

They will not allow their soil to be used by terrorist. And they have given amnesty.

If the world community incentivizes them, and encourages them to walk this talk, it will be a win-win situation for everyone. Because these are the four conditions that the US-Taliban dialogue in Doha was all about.

If the world can incentivise them to go this direction, then this twenty-year presence of the coalition forces in Afghanistan would not be wasted after all. Because the Afghan soil would not be used by the international terrorists.

I end Mr. President, by urging everyone that this is a critical time for Afghanistan.

You cannot waste time. Help is needed there. Humanitarian assistance has to be given there immediately. The Secretary General of the United Nations has taken bold steps. I urge you to mobilize the international community, and move in this direction.

Thank you.

Annex V**Address by Mr. Scott Morrison, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia****INTRODUCTION**

Mr President,

It is a pleasure to give Australia's National Statement to the General Assembly.

Here in Canberra, I'm on the ancient land of the Ngunnawal people — one of Australia's many Indigenous peoples who have cared for this continent for 60,000 years.

Our First Peoples remind us that caring for country — and for each other — is the essence of our shared humanity.

The past year has been one of extraordinary adversity, as the world has struggled and dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic — and it continues to rage.

Yet it has also borne witness to humanity's remarkable resilience and creative ability to overcome problems; to deliver solutions.

Each generation navigates its own destiny amidst anxiety and hope.

Ours is no different.

Today, I would like to speak about three of the most pressing global challenges that together we face.

Challenges that shape our times.

The global COVID-19 pandemic and economic recovery

Mr President,

COVID-19 has tested the world like nothing in our lifetime.

We mourn the millions lost.

And millions more who have suffered such terrible illness.

After so much heartache and so much sorrow, there is hope now and a way forward.

The development of a safe and effective vaccine — vaccines, so many of them — has been one of the greatest achievements of modern times.

Our collective task though now is to roll that out — a global vaccine rollout, the largest in world history.

Here in Australia, more than 70 per cent of our adult population has had the first dose of the vaccine, and more than half will have had two doses.

We know vaccinations work.

They lower the risk of transmission.

They significantly lower the risk of hospitalisation, severe illness and death.

And high vaccination rates are the pathway to taking back so much of what we have lost, and to living with this virus — confidently, safely, securely and prosperously.

Vaccinations are the key to keeping our neighbours safe also.

Australia has been helping countries across our region battle this pandemic — with personal protective equipment, testing equipment, medical personnel.

And now we're doing everything we can to help them with access to safe and effective vaccines.

None of us are safe unless all of us are safe.

So this is the most urgent priority for Indo-Pacific nations.

Already, we've delivered more than three million doses to countries across our region — and millions more doses are on their way.

We've also contributed \$130 million to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment, which has delivered over 51 million doses to South-East Asia and 1.7 million doses to our Pacific family and Timor-Leste.

And we're investing more than \$620 million to procure millions of vaccine doses, and providing technical advice, training of health workers, and cold chain support to our friends and our neighbours.

Now this includes a \$100 million contribution to the Quad Vaccine Partnership with our good friends the United States, India and Japan.

This will support a boost in production by at least one billion doses by the end of 2022, and provide access to vaccines and delivery support to countries across the Indo-Pacific.

This is the right thing to do.

It will help slow the spread of the virus — and, we hope, prevent variants emerging.

As well, we must prevent future pandemics and Australia supports the calls for a stronger, more independent World Health Organization, with enhanced surveillance and pandemic response powers.

This should be the duty of every single member of the World Health Organization to share that ambition for a World Health Organization that can seek to protect us all in these circumstances.

And we also need to accelerate efforts to identify how COVID-19 first emerged.

Australia called for an independent review, and sees understanding the cause of this pandemic, not as a political issue, but as being essential, simply, to prevent the next one.

We need to know so we can prevent this death and this calamity being visited upon the world again.

That can be our only motivation.

Strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific region

Mr President,

COVID-19 has underscored the vital importance of international cooperation and coordination.

The patterns of cooperation that have sustained our prosperity and security for decades — they're under increasing strain.

And so are the institutions that have helped maintain that rules-based international order for over seven decades now.

The global strategic environment has rapidly changed, indeed deteriorated in many respects, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region where we live here in Australia.

The changes we face are many ...

... whether it's tensions over territorial claims ...

... rapid military modernization ...

... foreign interference ...

... cyber threats ...

... disinformation ...

... and indeed, economic coercion.

Meeting these challenges requires cooperation and a common purpose among likeminded nations, and all who share that purpose of peace, stability and security — to enhance these as the outcomes that benefit all peoples from wherever they come and whatever their perspectives.

Australia's interests are inextricably linked to an open, inclusive and resilient Indo-Pacific.

A region where the rights of all States — no matter how large or how small — are protected.

This is what we believe.

Australia continues to work constructively on this goal — with agency and purpose and commitment, passionately building a network of partnerships and relationships that support these goals, contributing to.

With our Pacific family — through the Pacific Islands Forum.

With our ASEAN friends — very much at the heart of our own Indo-Pacific vision.

Through the Quad, with a practical agenda for peace, contribution and security in our region.

With our many bilateral strategic partners — comprehensive strategic partners.

And with our longstanding friends and allies — the United States and the United Kingdom.

Strengthened of course further last week with the announcement of our new Enhanced Trilateral Security partnership — AUKUS.

Designed to further the cause of peace, stability and security in the Indo-Pacific region for the benefit of all who live within that region.

It is essential that countries pursue these interests in ways that are mutually respectful and support stability and security.

Because we want to maintain an open, rules-based international system that supports peace, prosperity, human dignity and the aspirations of all sovereign nations.

A global order where sovereign nations can flourish, free from coercion, because of collaborative and purposeful action.

Enables them to correspond and engage in a fellowship, that is supported by a rules-based order.

Rules that have underpinned regional peace and prosperity, such as through the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which we affirm as Australians and which we will always honour.

We must reinforce a sustainable rules-based order ...

... while ensuring it is also adaptable to the great power realities of our time.

The United Nations must continue to reinforce the international rules-based order, and preserve the institutions that uphold that order and ensure they're effective, as the mechanisms, the dialogue and adjudication that buttress and hold together this all-important order.

Australia also values the rules and institutions that foster international trade ...

... which creates wealth and brings nations together ...

... and is vital to our recovery from the economic costs of this pandemic.

The challenge of climate change & transitioning to a net-zero global energy economy

Finally Mr President,

Australia is determined to play our part in meeting the global challenge of climate change, as the world makes the transition to a net-zero global energy economy — a new energy economy.

Australia has a proven track record when it comes to setting, achieving and exceeding our commitments to responsibly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

We exceeded our Kyoto commitments.

Our emissions in the year to March 2021 were 21 per cent below 2005 levels.

That is a strong record of achievement.

And it's been achieved by Australians right across our community — our businesses, individual households, small businesses, our institutions, our governments.

In Australia, we already have the world's highest uptake of rooftop solar. And we're deploying renewable energy at nearly eight times the global per capita average.

We are well on the way to exceed our 2030 Paris commitment of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 26 to 28 per cent below 2005 levels.

We will meet it and we will beat it — and we'll beat it strongly.

And we are committed to achieving net zero emissions.

My Government, the Australian Government, will release our Long Term Emissions Reduction Strategy ahead of the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow at COP26.

We know the world is transitioning to a new energy economy.

It's no longer about if — or even when for that matter.

It's about how.

How we achieve the reduction in global emissions — in our own emissions, in individual nations' emissions — while still lifting living standards across all nations.

And the answer, as history has shown us time and time again, it's technology — practical, scalable and commercially viable technologies.

That's why we're investing around \$20 billion to commercialize promising new technologies like clean hydrogen, green steel, long duration energy storage and carbon capture — vital to meeting the global task to achieve net zero emissions.

And we want to work with everyone, other countries, to commercialise these technologies, and ensure they're scalable and accessible, as soon as possible.

This is critical for the good of developing countries, who we all know face the steepest challenge in reducing their emissions.

Developing countries need job-creating investment in the same productive, commercial technologies, energy technologies, available to advanced economies, like Australia.

Australia is a reliable partner during this time of transition.

We know that if we can support developing economies to embrace and use the technologies that achieve net zero emissions, and see their economies grow and increase their jobs, that is not only wonderful for those economies and their peoples, but it also is good for Australia.

We know that their success will also be our success.

And so we are blessed here in this country with natural resources, including transition fuels, and the resources needed for the new energy economy.

And we will apply them.

We will apply them in our region as we continue to work with our Southeast Asian partners and to assist them make their energy transitions successfully through finance, through trade and capability building.

We have one global atmosphere — and it's in our shared interests to work with each other in this way.

That's why we're helping other countries reduce their emissions and build resilience to climate change, too.

It's why we've set aside \$1.5 billion in practical climate finance globally — and it will have a particular focus on our Pacific family, dealing directly.

We're up for this global challenge.

We're up for achieving net zero emissions — a challenge that we know will be met in partnership.

And that unless we all get there — well, we will not achieve our goal.

Australia's liberal democratic values

Mr. President,

Australia has always sought to make a positive contribution to meeting global challenges.

Our voice is clear, it's direct, it's respectful, it's constructive.

It reflects our confidence in who we are and what we stand for.

We are a proud, liberal democracy.

We believe in a world order that favours freedom — an order that was established through the fine institution of the United Nations that we gather around through these contributions and that supports the dignity and free expression of all people.

We believe in human rights, in gender equality and the rule of law — and we back that up with how we pursue these things in our own country, in our own society, and how we raise our own children.

Australia was one of eight countries only involved in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

And we continue to strengthen the international human rights system.

And we will continue to raise our voice on important issues like the rights of women and girls, the rights of indigenous peoples, the global abolition of the death penalty.

Because respecting the rights and freedoms of the individual is intrinsically important — it is fundamental to our values as a people and as a nation.

It lifts all societies and nations, too — delivering better outcomes through economic inclusion, women's empowerment, environmental sustainability, rising living standards, and so much more.

Australia's actions are guided by our belief in the inherent dignity of all people.

Everywhere, no matter the circumstances.

Mr. President,

We learned through the pandemic that every moment of challenge requires us to think anew, to engage with each other, to learn as you go.

It is an experience understood by many others.

And so we will continue to meet this moment, with dialogue, with partnership.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Annex VI

Address by Ms. Mette Frederiksen, Prime Minister of Denmark

Mr. President, dear delegates,

No one can be in doubt. We live in a connected world.

We face global challenges. They can only be solved if we work together.

COVID-19. Human rights violations. Climate change.

Poverty on the rise. Conflicts.

As a founding Member of the UN, Denmark is a strong voice for common solutions.

And today, we need global cooperation more than ever.

Throughout history, international solidarity has moved us forward.

It has the power to do so again.

Out of the pandemic.

We must ensure global access to vaccines.

None of us can leave COVID behind until all of us can.

Denmark is committed to vaccine solidarity and COVAX.

In the spring, we announced the donation of 3 million vaccine doses.

This week, we announce a redoubling of our efforts.

We now aim to donate more than 6 million doses.

That is more than one donated vaccine for each Dane.

It comes in addition to our commitment to COVAX with more than \$15 million.

If we are to battle this pandemic. We have to strengthen our ability to prevent and respond to future pandemics.

International solidarity also has the power to prevent a climate disaster.

The latest IPCC report makes it clear that we are standing at a global crossroad.

We must continue our path towards a green future. And we must do it faster.

We need to keep the Paris Agreement goal alive. Limiting the global temperature rise to 1.5°C.

Climate change hits the world's poorest and weakest communities hardest.

Denmark will respond to the call of the Secretary-General. And massively scale up Danish grant-based climate finance to at least \$500 million a year by 2023.

And we are dedicating 60 per cent to adaptation in poor and vulnerable countries.

In addition, we are strengthening our efforts to mobilize public and private finance from other sources.

In total, Denmark aims to contribute at least 1 per cent of the collective target of \$100 billion.

At the same time, we are fully focused on reducing our own emissions.

Denmark will be climate-neutral no later than 2050.

And by 2030, we have committed to cut our greenhouse gas emissions by 70 per cent. We have decided to end production of oil and gas. And build the world's first energy islands. In time, they will create clean energy for millions of European households.

We call on you all to follow. And to do so urgently.

Every one of us need to act and adapt individually. But we also have to act for the common good.

* * *

That is the case in Afghanistan as well.

The current situation is disturbing. For the long-suffering people of Afghanistan. For the women and children. And for the international community.

We need a strong and coordinated response. The contribution at the international donor conference last week was an important step.

I would like to express my appreciation for the commitment of our international humanitarian partners. They are providing life-saving assistance. In Afghanistan. And in the many other places.

Peace missions are keeping peace, preventing conflicts and paving the way for progress every day around the world.

No people in conflict zones should be forgotten.

We must include those that have been excluded. And empower those that have been powerless.

Women and young people have a vital role to play. In peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

Denmark remains committed to the agenda for Women, Peace and Security.

* * *

International solidarity has the power to give us hope.

Hope for a better future in the places we call home. Hope for protection when we need it.

But for many around the world, this hope comes at a high price.

We are leaving the destiny of too many people to human smugglers.

The current asylum and migration system does not address the challenges we face today.

We need to do better. To save lives. To prevent rape and abuse.

It calls for new common solutions.

My government is devoted to addressing the root causes.

We have dedicated a large amount of funding to regions of conflict. To help create conditions for a better future where people live. To help more people.

We need to work together to ensure safe and orderly migration. And to protect those in need.

* * *

Denmark is committed to a strong and efficient UN. That protects the rule-based international order, promotes a more progressive world, and fights injustice.

Last year, we asked the Secretary-General to report back to us — the Member States — with recommendations to advance *Our Common Agenda*.

He has done so. Now we have to act on these recommendations. All of us.

The Social Contract between governments and people should be renewed. In our own societies. And at the global level.

As host of the Social Summit in 1995, Denmark feels a special responsibility. So that we may gather again in 2025 and continue the work towards the SDGs. Thirty years on from Copenhagen and on the road to 2030.

Thank you.

Annex VII

Address by Mr. Andrew Holness, Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Economic Growth and Job Creation of Jamaica

Your Excellency, Mr. Abdulla Shahid, I extend warm congratulations on your election to the Presidency of this 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

I also commend your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkır, for his work, during the historic 75th anniversary, a particularly difficult year for the United Nations and its membership, as we grappled with the insidious COVID19 pandemic.

Your Excellency, you can be confident of Jamaica's continued commitment to collaborate with the membership to seek viable solutions for persistent global challenges, notably the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We must take a fresh look at how we rebuild sustainably, attain the Sustainable Development Goals, and renew our focus on social justice and climate action.

Mr. President,

The theme for this year's debate with its emphasis on building resilience, is welcomed as the world searches for ways to manage the COVID-19 pandemic, with its dreadful impacts on all aspects of human existence. We must inspire hope to drive our emergence from the scourge of this pandemic better and stronger than we were before.

Mr. President,

At the core of building resilience is restoring the health and well-being of our people. The pandemic has exacerbated challenges in this area, especially for Small Island Developing States, like Jamaica, which already face limited resources in the health sector.

Most regrettably, many lives have been lost and we extend condolences. There are increasing uncertainties as the pandemic continues and new variants emerge. While mitigation efforts to help to reduce transmission and mortality remain crucial, the long-term solution must be vaccines that are accessible to all. We know that vaccines only work if a critical threshold is attained. Sharing vaccines in a strategic manner, serves the global common good, as no country will be safe until all are safe. Jamaica supports a globally coordinated approach to the scaling up of production and equitable distribution of vaccines, with the United Nations at the core.

We welcome the support received from bilateral and international partners and through the COVAX Facility. COVAX was conceived as an expression of multilateralism, bringing widespread aspirations of hope in the collective approach. To date, however, it has not met expectations, as its noble ideals have been displaced by nationalistic endeavours, ironically, at a time when a pandemic requires global coordinated action. Notwithstanding, we believe in the essential merits of the Facility and call for urgent, increased international collaboration to avoid the widening gap in recovery across countries and regions.

Mr. President,

Today, we see some countries receiving a 'digital dividend' while others suffer the consequences of a 'digital divide.' There is need to address urgently the

latter in support of COVID-19 adaptation measures, response and recovery efforts. Accelerated digitalization, remote work and education, e-commerce and the virtual delivery of essential services, have allowed the digitally connected to thrive while severely exacerbating the inequalities faced by the digitally disconnected. This is particularly evident in our rural areas, along gender lines and generally among the poorest and most vulnerable.

Addressing the negative consequences will require greater engagement of the public and private sectors in building foundations for long term development. Leaving no one behind today means leaving no one offline. That is why Jamaica has been working to ensure that the tools needed to adapt and thrive, are provided to our citizens.

Mr. President

The COVID-19 pandemic has also spurred innovation and new forms of collaboration across sectors. We are committed to the development of a sustainable framework to ensure the availability of human capital to meet the growing and changing needs of the economy. Jamaica is taking an inclusive approach to improve digital literacy, through increased access to, and use of ICT, by 50 per cent in public institutions, schools and key public areas in the country, over the next four years. We are engaging our private sector to improve the application of science, technology and innovation in educational institutions, towards national development.

We believe that countries should be supported in their efforts to build robust and resilient digital infrastructure. Public investments of this sort can serve as a force multiplier in narrowing the gaps that result in inequitable developmental outcomes. Universal, secure and affordable digital connectivity is needed to ensure inclusive and sustainable development. We, therefore advocate for an increased digital alliance within the global community and support the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on the Digital Cooperation Roadmap.

Mr. President,

The multiple challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, have placed severe pressure on our fiscal accounts, threatening our hard-won macroeconomic stability. The pandemic has demonstrated how quickly our development gains can be eroded and that much more needs to be done by the international community to secure a resilient future for the most vulnerable. We must retain hope in our ability to meet the targets for the SDGs, even with adjusted timelines.

Mr. President,

Last year, along with the Prime Minister of Canada and the UN Secretary-General, Heads of State and Government and key international partners, I convened the Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond, Initiative. The outcome was ambitious, yet practical, with policy options to support COVID-19 response and recovery for consideration by the international community. It now remains for us to take action.

Mr. President,

For Jamaica, we anticipate real GDP recovery within four years, given the relative strength of our economy and the stimulus packages implemented both locally and internationally. However, we will require adequate fiscal space and funding to

achieve the SDGs and to be able to respond and recover from the health, social and economic implications of the pandemic, in light of high debt-servicing requirements.

The continued use of measures of development which do not take into account the full spectrum of vulnerabilities of small island developing States is a major impediment to our efforts to attain the SDGs. We who live in one of the most disaster-prone regions of the world are more vulnerable than our income data suggests.

We reiterate today, that consideration of our developmental level must be linked to our socioeconomic and environmental vulnerabilities. This rationale underpins the basis for a multi-dimensional vulnerability index for SIDS and for the ongoing work by the UN on this matter, as endorsed by the General Assembly last year.

Mr. President,

The Caribbean Development Bank has reported that SIDS debts have risen to unsustainable levels since the pandemic. The number of Caribbean countries with a debt to GDP ratio above 60 per cent has increased from 9 to 13 with the average debt to GDP ratio increasing to 85 per cent.

Jamaica maintains its call for a revision of the graduation criteria, as the classification system utilized by international financial institutions is simply not appropriate. We concur with the UN Secretary-General in his assessment, that graduation must be a reward, not a punishment. As we strive to build forward stronger in this decade of action, we call for the commitment of the international community to a post COVID-19 reality that guarantees greater investment and financing to support development and economic growth in SIDS. We also seek the reorientation of the international financial system to align financing with sustainable development to accelerate our push to achieve our SDG Goals.

Mr. President,

Climate change remains one of the defining global challenges of our era and of even greater concern for future generations. Our ability to achieve sustainable development will be compromised if we do not find real solutions to the ongoing climate emergency.

The demand for climate adaptation is increasing, but so is the fear that it will be unmet. A more worrisome truth is the IPCC's finding that human influence on the Earth's climate has already led to unprecedented and irreversible changes. In their efforts to combat these changes, SIDS have been unable to access climate finance at the pace and scale necessary.

We have instead, been forced to spend significant funds on loss and damage, with limited financial support from large emitters. Jamaica joins with all SIDS in calling for delivery of the \$100 billion per annum, committed in 2015, by the international donor community.

COP26 must deliver significant progress on the priority issues of climate financing, loss and damage, adaptation and mitigation, as well as the development of effective climate change plans.

Mr. President,

The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea recognises the ocean as the common heritage of mankind. As the science and the research have shown, we must also see

the oceans as playing a vital role as a climate mitigator. We support the development of a legally binding international instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. We look forward to the successful conclusion of negotiations of an international Treaty under the Convention, in 2022.

Mr. President,

We reaffirm the importance of multilateral approaches to the issues of peace and development, and the central role of the United Nations in their treatment. We support the resolution of disputes, whether in the Middle East, in the Caribbean or elsewhere, through dialogue and negotiated settlements.

We call for the end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

Mr. President,

The illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons remains a daily challenge to citizen security and a grave concern to Jamaica. The widespread availability of these arms and their ammunition is a key enabler of conflict and endemic crime, and represent a significant danger to our internal security, fostering criminal activities which destabilize the social order. We will work with all our partners to enhance the capacity of member states to address issues related to arms control and disarmament, by preventing the diversion of conventional arms to the illicit market. This matter remains a priority for Jamaica, as we seek the assistance of our bilateral, regional and international partners in addressing the issue.

Mr. President,

The celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, recognized the pivotal role of the Organization, to which we continue to assign new mandates and challenges. Let us, with equal fervour, resolve to equip the Organization with the necessary tools and financial resources, to enable it to effectively undertake its leadership role in safeguarding international peace and security, and in ensuring the economic and social well-being of mankind.

Our common vision must be one in which the UN can act, and will act, as the catalyst for hope, for change, for peace and as an instrument of progress on behalf of all peoples of the world.

Thank you.

Annex VIII

Address by Mr. Timothy Harris, Prime Minister, Minister for Sustainable Development, National Security, People Empowerment and Constituency Empowerment of Saint Kitts and Nevis

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, Distinguished delegates,

It is my privilege and honour to address the United Nations General Assembly today.

On behalf of the people of St. Kitts and Nevis, I extend my congratulations to His Excellency Abdulla Shahid of the Maldives, the Foreign Minister of a similar Small Island Developing State, on his election to the Presidency of the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly.

I thank his predecessor for his valuable work during the seventy-fifth session and also take this opportunity to congratulate Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on securing a second term.

I pay tribute to the diligence, commitment, and perseverance he has shown in steering the UN family as best as possible through the pandemic.

The theme of this General Assembly debate is fitting. It reminds us that we must keep faith in multilateralism and international cooperation to achieve our goals and rebuild sustainably.

The past 18 months have challenged everyone, everywhere, yet here we are — convening once more as a General Assembly — to find global solutions to global problems.

Health and the COVID-19 pandemic

The battle against COVID-19 is not yet won, and its devastating impact on our societies and economies continues.

We believe strongly that no one is safe until everyone is safe, that requires equitable access to vaccines and other medical products and technologies.

I commend the international community for its response to calls for vaccine equity and am pleased to say that St. Kitts and Nevis is just one of the many countries to have benefitted from the COVAX facility established by the World Health Organization at the start of the pandemic. I also wish to thank our bilateral partners for their generosity in providing us with vaccines.

St. Kitts and Nevis has 66 percent of its adult population fully vaccinated and over 75 per cent of the target population has received the first dose. We are endeavouring to improve these statistics in the near future.

Our citizens responded selflessly to our calls for social distancing and adhered to other COVID-19 protocols, playing an active role in curbing the COVID-19 pandemic and helping to overcome community spread.

Healthy lifestyles remain a central element in our fight against COVID-19, particularly as we continue to prioritise the delivery of health care to people living with non-communicable diseases who, given their higher risk are most vulnerable to the disease.

The need to continue investing in a resilient health system and comprehensive public health services is paramount. Mental health and well-being are also vital, which is why we delivered a comprehensive mental health plan to provide psychosocial support through the National Counselling Center.

Sadly, the economic impact of the pandemic will be felt for years to come. When it began, tourism our biggest economic driver ground to a halt, causing significant unemployment and underemployment. Businesses suffered as a result of lockdowns.

We took action, providing social protection programmes for those in need. We implemented an EC \$120 million COVID-19 stimulus package, reduced corporate income tax for employers who retained 75 per cent of their workforce, and introduced VAT and import duty waivers for pandemic related products.

Climate Change

The impact of COVID-19 on development more widely, in particular the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, has also been significant but instead of walking away from them we need to work, collectively, even harder to achieve them.

Climate change and climate-related events continue to threaten the existence of small island developing States such as ours. As the climate crisis intensifies, we witness the erosion of coasts owing to rising sea levels; fisherfolk struggling to maintain their livelihoods from waning oceanic diversity; families forced to relocate away from coastal areas due to the strength, intensity and relentlessness of each passing hurricane season.

Sustainable Development Goals 13, 14 and 15 are of particular significance as they require us, among other things, to improve education and awareness of — as well as human and institutional capacity on — climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

ICT and Bridging the Digital Divide

A less negative outcome of the pandemic has been its effect in turbocharging the digitization of our workplaces and societies. But not all countries — particularly small island developing States — have the infrastructure, capacity and workforce skills to fully benefit from this revolution.

Rebuilding sustainably requires us to re-evaluate digital accessibility, affordability, and technical assistance so that every country regardless of income level or geographic location can exploit the digital economy in one properly networked world.

GDP per capita as the benchmark for development

Another barrier to development that we face is the criteria employed to determine aid and financial support. The singular benchmark for measuring development — GDP per capita — is critical but sadly, due to bias and the omission of factors, is simplistic and flawed.

For St. Kitts and Nevis it ignores vulnerabilities and prevents us from accessing critical development assistance. A set of more adequate and relevant measures — encompassing social, environmental/climate-related and economic factors — should be used to regulate entitlements. The use of a multidimensional vulnerability index, for example, would be a far better judge of development than simply GDP per capita.

Small Arms and Light Weapons

The protection of life from violent crime is also of fundamental importance and discussions surrounding small arms and light weapons remain critical to our democracy. Our position remains that the uncontrolled proliferation of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has significant impacts on the health and well-being, socioeconomic development, human rights and human development of every citizen in the world.

The new challenges faced as a result of technological developments must also be taken into consideration and confronted. We will also continue to lend our voice and support to the work of the United Nations with a view to bringing about an end to the misery caused by these weapons.

Partnerships

St. Kitts and Nevis prides itself on continuing to build strong alliances and increasingly expand our international footprint. Our diplomatic ties are founded on mutual respect for and adherence to the United Nations Charter, the rule of international law and on the appreciation of the value of human life and dignity.

For this reason, I call for the lifting of the economic, commercial, and financial embargo against Cuba, and I note the incalculable damage it causes. During the last four years, the blockade against Cuba has been reinforced with more than 240 coercive economic actions and measures, reaching unprecedented levels of hostility. The Government and people of Cuba have contributed much to my country, the Caribbean, and the world, especially during these unprecedented times. One can only imagine the potential of their contribution to the international community were the embargo lifted.

Furthermore, I cannot address this august body and not recognize our dear friend the Republic of China (Taiwan). St. Kitts and Nevis again renews its call for Taiwan's inclusion in the international community. We strongly believe Taiwan has an important and continuing role to play in international development strategies given their great success in many areas. Taiwan has demonstrated that it can be a true partner in health, and we have seen its exemplary response to the pandemic first-hand in St. Kitts and Nevis and other parts of the world.

My country looks forward to Taiwan being included in the UN system and its meetings, mechanisms, and activities.

Reparations

St. Kitts and Nevis is pleased that a few days ago, we met to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. It is important for the world to be united against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Untold suffering and evil were inflicted on millions of men, women and children of African descent, as a result of the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism, apartheid and many of the other ills of our history and other crimes against humanity.

We welcome the establishment of the Permanent Forum for People of African Descent, which will serve as a consultation mechanism for people of African descent and other interested stakeholders, and as a platform for improving the quality of life and livelihoods of people of African descent.

We make, as other CARICOM Heads of Governments did in 2013, a clarion call for reparations and reparatory justice. We subsequently formed the CARICOM Reparations Committee and the establishment of the 10-point plan that outlines the path to reconciliation and justice for victims of crimes against humanity and their descendants.

We hope that this meeting has invoked a renewed momentum to pursue action to right the wrongs that are still manifested today.

In conclusion,

We are all in this together; my hope is that we will emerge from COVID-19 stronger and more united than before.

There is no better place than the General Assembly to forge a positive consensus in order to build a better future for our children, our grandchildren, and their children.

We are living in unprecedented times, and we have responded admirably so far. But we must continue to be proactive, relentless, resilient, and willing to share our ideas and resources as members of the same brotherhood of nations.

We look therefore to the future with hope and with great expectation.

Thank you.
