



General Assembly

Seventy-sixth session

15th plenary meeting
Saturday, 25 September 2021, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Shahid (Maldives)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Rodrigue (Haiti), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

Address by Ms. Fiame Naomi Mataafo, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Samoa to introduce an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa.

Mr. Luteru (Samoa): I have the honour to introduce the Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa, the Honourable Fiame Naomi Mataafo, to present her pre-recorded maiden statement to the General Assembly.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex I and A/76/332/Add.10).

Address by Mr. Kausea Natano, Prime Minister of Tuvalu

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

Mr. Laloni (Tuvalu): I have the distinct honour and privilege to introduce the pre-recorded statement by the Honourable Kausea Natano, Prime Minister of Tuvalu.

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

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex II and see A/75/332/Add.10).

Address by Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Antigua and Barbuda to introduce an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr. Webson (Antigua and Barbuda): It is my honour and a distinct privilege to introduce a pre-recorded version of the national statement of Antigua and Barbuda, to be presented by the Right Honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate

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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Governance of Antigua and Barbuda, His Excellency Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex III and see A/75/332/Add.10).

Address by Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands

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

Mr. Matea (Solomon Islands): It is my utmost honour and privilege to introduce the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, His Excellency Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, to address the United Nations General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session via a pre-recorded statement.

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

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex IV and see A/76/332/Add.10).

Address by Mr. Choguel Kokalla Maïga, Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Republic of Mali

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Republic of Mali.

Mr. Choguel Kokalla Maïga, Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Republic of Mali, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Choguel Kokalla Maïga, Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Republic of Mali, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Maïga (Mali) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by extending to the General Assembly

the fraternal greetings of the African people of Mali and its Transitional President and Head of State, His Excellency Colonel Assimi Goïta. On their behalf and on my own behalf, the Malian delegation would like to warmly congratulate the President on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. I also congratulate his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkır, of the Republic of Turkey, for the outstanding manner in which he conducted the work of the Assembly at its seventy-fifth session. May I also reiterate to the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, our deep appreciation for his commendable ongoing efforts to achieve the noble objectives of our common Organization.

The seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly opens with the timely theme of hope — hope for building our resilience to recover from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in a spirit of responsibility, cooperation and solidarity; hope for a safer world, a world of human security; hope that the Sahel will regain stability and become a bastion of peace and a centre of growth and development; and hope to revitalize the United Nations. Mali fully subscribes to the letter and spirit of this theme, which perfectly summarizes the ideals of our common Organization.

It is a truism to say that Mali and the countries of the Sahel are today confronted with the hydra of terrorism, violent extremism and instability. This has been going on for more than a decade, with the risk of stagnation, trivialization or weariness, which may divert these problems from the international agenda. Our daily life of anguish and tragedy has been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, with its negative impact on the economy and on the living conditions of our populations, which are already precarious due to the economic, political and humanitarian challenges. Rarely has a country or a region been more sorely tested by the accumulation of crises than Mali and the countries of the Sahel.

It is in this difficult context that the Malian people, after several months of popular uprisings, chose a different direction for our country and placed all their hopes in the political transition process under way, of which they are the main architects. The transitional Government I have been leading since 11 June 2021 includes representatives of the various stakeholders in Mali. It is noteworthy that, in the interests of inclusiveness, it also includes members of the signatory movements to the Agreement on Peace

and Reconciliation on Mali, resulting from the Algiers process, as well as representatives of our country's political and social sectors.

As soon as we were installed, we worked together to draw up the action plan of the transitional Government, which sets out a set of measures whose implementation will ensure that the major concerns of the population affected by the security, political, health and economic crises are addressed. The Government's action plan, adopted on 2 August 2021 by the National Transition Council, the transitional legislative body, is based on four priorities. It includes a timetable for implementation and a provisional budget.

The first priority of the Government's action plan is to make security a top priority. It responds to our people's deep-seated desire for peace, tranquillity, coexistence, peaceful cohabitation and social cohesion.

Despite the undeniable successes of the Malian armed forces and their allies, to whom I pay tribute, the threats posed by terrorism and other forms of banditry and transnational crime continue, unfortunately, to plunge our people into mourning on a daily basis and to threaten the foundations of the State.

From March 2012 to 25 September 2021, as I address the Assembly from this rostrum, the situation in my country has hardly improved, despite international support and the presence on our territory of a United Nations peace operation, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), as well as international forces — the French Operation Barkhane, the European Takuba Task Force and the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel.

The situation continues to deteriorate progressively to the point that entire sections of the national territory are beyond the Government's control. My fellow citizens are living under the sway of armed terrorist groups and are being denied their most basic rights. Their access to basic services remains theoretical due to the weak presence of State services as a result of the growing insecurity.

MINUSMA, which I commend for its courage and its contribution to the stabilization of Mali, is operating in this vulnerable environment with all the threats it entails. Confronted with this worrisome situation, the Government is regularly and strongly challenged by the Malian people, who are increasing their demands

of the public authorities and international partners. It is well known that one of the fundamental rights of the population is the right to security and the sure guarantee of that is the legitimacy of the State in the eyes of the citizens.

I am recalling this situation to convey the full ordeal endured by the Malian people. I am also doing so to invite us all to truly reflect on how to change the paradigm of security in the Sahel.

Mali hosts a United Nations peacekeeping operation on its territory. I would like once again to pay heartfelt tribute to all the women and men who are working under the banner of MINUSMA in difficult, often perilous conditions in order to maintain peace and protect our civilian populations.

I recall that our common Organization, the United Nations, was well advised in April 2013, when it decided on the very timely deployment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. Resolution 2100 (2013), of 25 April 2013, which established MINUSMA, determined, in its twenty-third preambular paragraph, that "the situation in Mali constitutes a threat to international peace and security," and therefore decided to take action, in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

In paragraph 16 (a) (i) of resolution 2100 (2013), it was established that the initial mandate of MINUSMA is, *inter alia*,

"In support of the transitional authorities of Mali, to stabilize the key population centres, especially in the north of Mali and, in this context, to deter threats and take active steps to prevent the return of armed elements to those areas".

In the twelfth preambular paragraph of resolution 2164 (2014), of 25 June 2014, which renewed the mandate of MINUSMA for a one-year period for the first time, it is stressed that

"terrorism can only be defeated by a sustained and comprehensive approach involving the active participation and collaboration of all States, and regional and international organizations to impede, impair, and isolate the terrorist threat".

Accordingly, in paragraph 12 of the same resolution, MINUSMA is authorized

“to take all necessary means to carry out its mandate, within its capabilities and its areas of deployment”,

and in paragraph 13 (a) (iv), the Mission is directed in particular

“[t]o expand its presence, including through long-range patrols and within its capacities, in the North of Mali beyond key population centres, notably in areas where civilians are at risk”.

Eight years after the deployment of MINUSMA, the paragraphs I just cited from resolutions 2100 (2013) and 2164 (2014) are clearly and critically relevant. The Malian people are today fed up with mass killings, villages being wiped off the map and innocent civilians being mowed down, including women and infants, who are often burned alive. Malians have the distinct feeling that the mission conferred upon MINUSMA has changed along the way, especially since 2015, following the signing of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, emanating from the Algiers process, although the challenges that motivated the Mission’s deployment persist.

Indeed, to the disappointment of the Malian people, the prevailing terrorist environment in which MINUSMA was deployed in 2013 has continued to deteriorate. Over time, it has even metastasized, since the armed terrorist groups that invaded nearly two thirds of our national territory in 2012 have been dispersed but not completely eliminated. They have regrouped and become stronger. In the context of that worrisome threat, French forces, first through Operation Serval and subsequently through Operation Barkhane, were authorized to support MINUSMA and our States in combating terrorism in Mali.

In that same context, the French Operation Barkhane suddenly initiated its withdrawal, reportedly with a view to transitioning into an international coalition, the complete details of which are as yet unknown — at least they are not known to our country and people. The unilateral announcement of Barkhane’s withdrawal and its transition did not take into account the tripartite agreement that binds us, that is, the United Nations, Mali and France, as its partner on the front line in combating the destabilizing forces. Mali regrets that the principle of consultation and conferral, which must prevail as the rule among the primary partners concerned, was not upheld prior to the decision by the French Government.

The new situation created by the end of Operation Barkhane has presented Mali with a *fait accompli* and effectively abandoned it in mid-stream, prompting us to explore ways to ensure better security independently, together with other partners, so as to fill the void that will inevitably result from the closure of a number of Barkhane sites in the northern part of Mali. The situation should also encourage the United Nations to adopt a more offensive posture on the ground from now on.

There is no anti-MINUSMA sentiment in Mali, just as there is no anti-French sentiment in our country — no, I say that unequivocally. Our people have never been an ungrateful people. At the highest level of the State and within the Malian population, the desire for peace and the thirst for security echo the demand for the effectiveness of the established political and military instruments and mechanisms, which make Mali an over-militarized country that is at the same time extremely vulnerable to terrorism — a paradox that has become a factor in the disintegration of States and societies and the destabilization of their foundations.

What should we do in the face of such a paradox? What should be done to respond to the anguish, exasperation and anger of the Malian people? What should be done to respond to the frustration of both Malians and Mali’s partners?

I humbly believe that, in addressing such questions, we must have the courage and vision to scrutinize the instruments and mechanisms that I just mentioned. Above all, we should also reconsider the request for a more robust mandate and a change in the posture of MINUSMA, which the Government has regularly made to the Security Council. That will make it possible to adapt MINUSMA’s mandate and provide it with the means to carry out its mandate properly and respond to the aspirations of the Malian people, without which neither the Mission nor the other international and regional military partnerships on our soil will have any credibility in the eyes of my fellow citizens.

Clearly, the United Nations must help Mali effectively fight transnational organized crime in order to create the necessary conditions for its stabilization, which is key to the success of activities involving political and humanitarian support, development and the protection of human rights. If the situation in Mali in fact poses a threat to international peace and security, it is therefore incumbent upon us to find the

appropriate means to continue confronting that threat in a comprehensive, united and resolved manner until it is eradicated.

In the unrelenting war it wages against terrorism, the Government of Mali will spare no effort to fulfil its international obligations in terms of respect for human rights. It attaches the utmost importance to coordinating our partners' actions on the ground and to ensuring regional cooperation in order to take account of the regional dimension of the security crisis in the Sahel. That is the basis of our commitment within the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). It is also the purpose of our joint request within the G-5 Sahel for a robust and appropriate mandate under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations and for the provision of predictable and sustainable funding to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force.

In the interest of coherence and effectiveness, the Government of Mali is working under my authority to establish a structure for monitoring and coordinating the activities of MINUSMA and to develop an integrated management strategy for the crisis in central Mali. We do not absolve ourselves of our own responsibilities in the stabilization process in Mali. The transitional Government is clearly aware that such stabilization also requires the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, emanating from the Algiers process.

In addition, the Government and the signatory movements, as well as the inclusivity movements, are pursuing the implementation of the Agreement in a spirit of trust and responsibility within a new framework, known as the inter-Malian framework for the implementation of the Agreement.

In that spirit, we are pursuing the intelligent implementation and consensual review of the Agreement with a view to its finalization. The goal is to promote national ownership and strengthen the inclusiveness of the Agreement, while ensuring the necessary political and social conditions for the consensus that is required to review a number of its provisions, under the mechanism provided for in the Agreement.

With regard to defence and security issues, a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme involving 3,000 former combatants from the signatory and inclusivity movements has been put in place, through which 1,840 former combatants have already been integrated. The Government

has also expressed its willingness to integrate the remaining 1,160 former combatants by 21 August, at the latest, despite the slowness of the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad in providing the list of names of its members.

The Government of Mali is also prepared to integrate ex-combatants into the security forces, the State civil service and other paramilitary forces in the near future, as soon as the quotas linked to national budget capacities are fixed. The Government is determined to overcome the technical obstacles posed by the other parties to the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, in particular the signatory movements, which are required to adhere strictly to the DDR process. With regard to the socioeconomic reintegration component, activities will commence by the end of September, with the support of MINUSMA and the World Bank.

I cannot neglect to mention the situation of the Malian refugees hosted in neighbouring countries and of the internally displaced persons, which remains a major concern for our Government. We will endeavour to create, with the support of bilateral and multilateral partners, the appropriate conditions for the safe and dignified return of our people and to ensure their participation in the forthcoming elections.

The transition under way in Mali is intended to be a turning point that brings hope for healing Mali of the troubles that have afflicted it, including political and institutional instability and the collapse of State institutions, which are the direct consequences of corruption and impunity. In order to succeed in overcoming that challenge, our country has decided to embark on the path of reform, which is the second pillar of the Government's action plan. Those reforms go beyond political and institutional issues and are ultimately aimed at rebuilding the State, the progressive disintegration of which has been at the root of Mali's extreme vulnerability to the political, economic and social challenges it faces.

My country wishes to be a solution to the crises that threaten the Sahel. Mali aspires to live in peace with its neighbours, to strengthen its unity and stability and to restore full sovereignty over its entire territory. Mali wants to guarantee human security within its borders by consolidating its constitutional institutions. To that end, Mali is committed to its transformation, through reforms, into a stable and prosperous State

that is oriented towards ensuring the well-being of its inhabitants.

Those reforms have been postponed for too long and for various reasons by the political regimes that have assumed power over the past two decades. The current transition, under the leadership of His Excellency Colonel Assimi Goita, has seen Mali decide to make a firm commitment to them. The Head of State has instructed us to convene, in the coming days, a national refoundation conference, the recommendations of which will be binding both for the current transition period and the pursuit of future public policies.

The third priority action of the Government is devoted to the organization of transparent, credible and inclusive general elections, which should mark a return to constitutional order in Mali. Those elections are particularly important since they will serve as a barometer of the transition's success. We know that their quality and credibility will determine the future of our democracy and the legitimacy and stability of our institutions.

Drawing lessons from our recent democratic practice, the Government will institute a single independent election management body. That single independent election management body will lay the political, legal and institutional foundations for restoring the confidence of political actors and citizens in electoral processes. It is a major innovation that will strengthen the democracy and legitimacy of our institutions. We are aware of the deadlines set for the transition and of our international commitments, which we are working tirelessly to respect.

In that connection, the single independent electoral management body will follow an accelerated implementation process through a review of electoral law and the installation of a national directorate, with branches at the regional and local levels as well as in Malian embassies and consulates. To that end, the round table to review the proposed terms of reference of the national refoundation conference began its work yesterday in Bamako. Beyond the issue of the single independent electoral management body, the Government will work to reform the electoral system by revising the fundamental texts governing elections.

Finally, the fourth axis of Government action will consist of establishing good governance and adopting a pact on stability. In that regard, the Government is committed to ensuring exemplary and transformative

governance. A determined effort is already under way to combat corruption and impunity, which are at the root of the decay of the State. The measures being taken in that regard will be continued and intensified.

Our transformative governance is already reflected in a drastic reduction in State spending habits in order to free up budgetary funds to improve the living conditions of the population and ensure an equitable distribution of national wealth. The President of the Transition and the Government have already set good examples in that regard, and the resources thereby freed up will be reallocated to basic social services. In order to achieve greater justice and equality among workers, after harmonizing salary scales within the civil service, the Government will initiate a social dialogue as soon as possible, in consultation with social partners and actors in the world of labour.

As a Sahelian country focused predominantly on agriculture, livestock and fishing, Mali remains deeply concerned about climate change, which presents one of the major challenges for the survival and development of humankind. Indeed, my country suffers the full force of the effects of climate change, characterized by the advance of desertification and its impact on flora and fauna, the drying up of our rivers and streams, higher temperatures and more floods, and so on. That is why I would like to reaffirm Mali's commitment to the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

I would like to conclude by recalling that the actions of the transitional Government in Mali are based on three pillars that correspond to Mali's three vital needs — the need for security, the need for justice to fight against corruption and impunity and the need for reform, or rather for refoundation. It is imperative to continue to work to improve the security environment in Mali, with the help of our friends, in support of the efforts of the defence and security forces.

It is equally imperative to carry out the reforms necessary to rebuild the State and adapt the regulations governing elections in order to meet the needs of Malian society and reflect the changing times. There is no alternative to those reforms, which are essential in the light of the devastation of Mali, if we want to ensure that our great country can stand on its own and become stable once again.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has fully grasped that notion and as early

as October 2018, based on its fact-finding mission on the post-electoral crisis, recommended carrying out reforms as follows:

“Taking note of the extension of the current legislature according to the opinion of the Constitutional Court and in view of the dysfunctions widely recognized and evoked by all interlocutors during past presidential elections, it is imperative that the Government and all sociopolitical actors agree, in a consensual manner, to undertake bold reforms of the legal frameworks, including the Constitution of February 1992, and of the electoral system before embarking on the next electoral events that the country intends to conduct.”

However, that important ECOWAS recommendation has not been followed up to date. The transitional Government, I have the honour to lead, is working towards its diligent implementation.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the gratitude of the President of the Transition, the Government and the people of Mali to the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government for their leadership and their constant presence at Mali’s side in these difficult and complex times. We urge them to continue to pay close attention to the situation in Mali, a vast country with seven borders that constitutes a buffer for the entire West African region.

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

Mr. Choguel Kokalla Maïga, Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Republic of Mali, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to introduce an address by His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin.

Archbishop Caccia (Holy See): On this day, which coincidentally marks the sixth anniversary of Pope Francis’s historic visit and address to the General Assembly (see A/70/PV.3), I have the honour to introduce the pre-recorded video message of His

Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Secretary of State of the Holy See.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex V and see A/76/332/Add.10).

Ms. Fatima (Bangladesh), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Demeke Mekonnen, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Mr. Mekonnen (Ethiopia) (*spoke in Amharic; English text provided by the delegation*): Allow me to start by congratulating President Shahid and the sisterly country of Maldives on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. My appreciation also goes to Mr. Volkan Bozkir for his able guidance of the Assembly at its seventy-fifth session.

Congratulations are also in order for Secretary-General António Guterres for once again winning the vote of confidence to serve the United Nations.

I also thank the host country for the facilities made available to us in the midst of a global pandemic.

(*spoke in English*)

This year’s session of the General Assembly is taking place even as we continue to grapple with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The pandemic has upended all aspects of public and private life. It has also revealed the power of innovation and the enormous potential of scientific research to serve humankind.

I would like to take a moment to applaud the scientists, engineers and everyone who has played a part in the discovery and rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine. Evidently, science can serve humankind only if good faith and rationality guides politics. Unfortunately, Africa, with a negligible vaccination rate, is left waiting for the leftovers from the surplus of others owing to vaccine nationalism.

In addition, the economic devastation in developing countries from the pandemic is yet to be addressed by meaningful economic and financial measures.

We hope that countries with the means to do so will engage in cooperation that is cognizant of the global nature of the problem. With this pandemic, there is no safety in isolation. No one is safe until everyone is safe.

The true dignity and freedom of peoples lies in their ability to sustain themselves. Poverty and dependence on foreign aid cause political, governance, security and human development challenges. Global warming is the most alarming driver of poverty. Agrarian and pastoralist communities and economies such as ours with these livelihoods face an existential challenge.

The impacts of climate change are destroying arable land and biodiversity, thereby disrupting our food system. The production of cash crops suffers from problems in terms of both quality and quantity. Perennial floods and drought are straining the emergency readiness systems that we have in place.

The targets under the environmental and sustainable development agendas are overdue and can no longer be allowed to be overtaken by events. Hopefully, the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will pave the way for climate financing and support for programmes such as the Green Belt and Green Legacy afforestation initiatives, which are restoring a long-lost ecosystem.

In the past few years, we have heard from this rostrum voices expressing justified concern and calls for a rules-based world order and viable multilateralism. Ethiopia has always been steadfast in its support for multilateral institutions. Our position emanates not from rhetoric but from our tragic ordeal during the days when a rules-based order was left in shambles.

We commend the declaration of return and renewal of commitment to multilateralism. At the same time, we see a glaring need to reiterate the fundamental values of sovereign equality, non-interference and cooperation based on mutual benefit and respect.

Multilateralism rests on the shoulders of States that ably guard their sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence. Multilateralism will meet its objectives only if States are able and free to manage their domestic and external affairs.

Indeed, our human aspirations are inherently similar. However, our viewpoints, which are underpinned by our diversity of cultures, history and socioeconomic realities, will not always be fully

aligned. That diversity should be viewed as an asset, and no one among us should wish to prevail over the other, especially when it comes to values and policies relating to our internal and external affairs.

Three years ago, my country, Ethiopia, embarked on a promising journey of reform. The changes we introduced ushered in democracy, human rights, human development and regional stability. It also opened avenues for dialogue and unity among divergent political and interest groups. Tapping into Ethiopia's rich history and enormous potential, the reform charted our inevitable and bright future, establishing Ethiopia as a new horizon of hope. It overturned a complex network of corruption, illegitimate political power and illicit financial flows, which had been installed at the cost of the national interest and to the detriment of regional peace.

However, the reform was not without challenges. As with any other democracy, our democratic process is an attempt to strike a balance between stability and disruption. In Ethiopia, groups that consider equality as subjugation are making their best efforts to create and prolong anarchy. At the hands of these lords of instability, we went through unimaginably inhumane attacks against citizens, the instigation of violence and the destruction of property, all of which culminated in an attack against the Ethiopian army.

On the night of 4 November 2020, in a scheme orchestrated by a criminal group, the Ethiopian National Defence Forces were attacked from within. Unsuspecting men and women in uniform were slain. The Government of Ethiopia took the necessary measures to avert the grave danger imposed on us. While the Government was addressing humanitarian needs, the disruptors applied their cruel designs with a view to aggravating human suffering. We were also caught by surprise by — and, to be honest, unprepared for — the twisted propaganda campaign that followed. Little did we know the power of privatized politics and foreign policy that clouds truth in policy decisions.

The criminal enterprise and its enablers created and advertised horrific imagery of faked incidents. As if the real misery of our people was not enough, storylines were created to match not the facts but preconceived stereotypical attitudes. The efforts of the Government of Ethiopia to meet its obligation to fulfil humanitarian needs, the declaration of a humanitarian ceasefire, the commissioning of investigations and the

accountability measures taken have not mitigated the propaganda campaigns. At this stage, we are nearly convinced that humanitarian assistance is a pretext for advancing political goals.

Accused by agenda- and revenue-driven media — and targeted by misguided politics — we are now facing unilateral coercion. Ethiopia opposed coercive measures when they were applied against others; we now opposed them being applied against ourselves. Prescriptions and punitive measures have never helped to improve situations or relations. The prudent measures we will continue to take are commensurate with the existential challenge we face. Despite the undue pressure, we shall live up to our solemn obligation to preserve the sovereignty, territorial integrity and the political independence of Ethiopia.

While cooperation and concern from our friends is welcome, we underline the need to employ a constructive approach, cultivate trust and create understanding. Attempts to extend support or even to opine on an internal issue of a State require full understanding of the complexities of the problem. It shall be noted that the challenge we are facing is not limited to the boundaries of Ethiopia. The entire region is facing a destructive path paved for it by this criminal group. Supporting Ethiopia in overcoming this group will help to sustain peace in the region.

Dialogue has always been our preferred course of action. Accordingly, Ethiopia is open to candid initiatives for peace. In this regard, we will work with the African Union and its High Representative for the Horn of Africa towards an Ethiopia-led national dialogue. We only hope that the African Union will be given the space to apply its own wisdom.

I also underscore my Government's unreserved commitment to providing humanitarian assistance and facilitating the operations of those of our humanitarian partners that adhere to the principles of neutrality, independence and humanity and the laws of our country. Apart from this, no excuse will justify any attempt to intervene in our internal affairs. Had the plans of the internal and external destabilizers succeeded, Ethiopia would have turned into a wasteland where the greedy and the archaic feast and thrive. Furthermore, the political map of the Horn of Africa would have been altered, and its current volatility would have worsened.

Thanks to the resilience of its people and the foundational, cultural and religious diversity of

its society, Ethiopia will continue to overcome its adversaries. Ethiopia will always be a beacon of freedom and a symbol of peace. As a nation that had never posed a threat to the security of other States, we will maintain our support for regional and global stability. At this historic juncture, Ethiopia demands — and deserves — the same cooperation it extended to others in the aftermath of attacks targeting their institutions.

The political and security landscape in Africa is on a path towards times of adversity. The forcible overthrow of Governments, joint military exercises, aggression, renewed appetite for intervention in sovereign countries, subversion and mercenarism, normalized and renewed scrambles for natural resources, secret military pacts and geopolitical competition, inter alia, are becoming pervasive. Unless we swiftly change course, there will be yet another round of efforts to destabilize Africa and disenfranchise Africans in the determination of their destiny. We hope there will be more countries to lift the banner of multilateralism rather than to pursue the vagaries of unilateralism.

Accordingly, Ethiopia stands ready to avail itself of bilateral mechanisms and diplomatic solutions to resolve the border dispute with the Sudan. It is incumbent upon our two Governments to work for peace for the sake of our peoples, who share the strongest bond of fraternity.

The past year has also seen a milestone for the people of Ethiopia. Our experiment with democracy was raised an incremental level by the holding of a free, fair, peaceful and credible election, with an unprecedented level of voter turnout.

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), a hydroelectric-dam project we fully financed, underwent a second-year filling. Hopefully, we have inspired others to develop local capabilities to plan, finance and complete renewable energy projects.

However, our humble attempt to light the houses of millions of Ethiopians and create hope for our young people is politicized before global bodies. That people's project also received unending threats. Ironically, we are accused and threatened for drinking from our water. On the matter of the Nile and the GERD, our confidence is in the might of the truth, wisdom and justice that has always defined our path for cooperation. The generational desire to use our natural resources will not be stopped by colonial legacy and a monopolistic cause. We hope that our negotiating partners are prepared for a win-win outcome under the African Union-led process.

I would like to conclude my statement with a very important note on the role of my country in peacekeeping. Our troops successfully completed missions in Darfur and Abyei. They paid the ultimate sacrifice in the most isolated mission areas, facing active intercommunal clashes, unconventional warfare methods, border disputes and unabated administrative obstructions. Our troops have done justice to the most cherished name of their country through their service and sacrifice. I pay them my respects and express our pride. With the impending transition of the peacekeeping mission in Abyei, I would like to convey our best wishes for our two neighbours to amicably resolve their territorial dispute. We hope the sacrifices that we made will not be in vain.

I thank the President and assure him of Ethiopia's full support for the successful completion of his presidency of hope.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Dominique Hasler, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Education and Sport of the Principality of Liechtenstein.

Ms. Hasler (Liechtenstein): I congratulate the President on his election to the helm of the General Assembly, the most important policymaking body in the world. The future must be shaped by the best ideas, not the loudest voices, and by those who are committed to the purposes and principles of the Organization. Small States have always had an intrinsic understanding of that, and I am deeply convinced of the added value that States such as ours bring to the United Nations and to the work of the General Assembly in particular.

I wish to address the plight of the people of Afghanistan given the immense humanitarian tragedy that has been unfolding in the country in the past few weeks. We pay tribute to all those who have worked bravely and with conviction towards a peaceful and safe future for the country, in particular the women and girls who have been fighting for their full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. We call upon those who effectively exercise control to fully respect their rights and freedoms, especially the rights to quality education and work, as well as freedom of movement. The people of Afghanistan now live in a very precarious position. They look to us and the United Nations as an organization to support them. We will continue to stand with them, call for full respect of their human rights and fundamental freedoms and ask that

the United Nations live up to its historic responsibility in that terrible and dangerous crisis of human security.

As we gather in the General Assembly Hall — the symbol of multilateralism and the sovereign equality of States — the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continues to loom large. We are meeting under restricted and difficult circumstances here in New York. Our way of living together across the globe is heavily affected, as are our lives as individuals. The pandemic knows no geographic boundaries. We all know that we can be successful only if we work together. Solidarity is simply also a matter of self-interest. Yet the pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities, both within and among societies. Women, children and those in economically weak positions have been hit the hardest. Time and again, we have been saying that ensuring access to vaccination for all is the only way to protect ourselves from the pandemic. Yet we continue to fall short of reaching that goal.

Liechtenstein will continue to invest in the United Nations system to play a key role in addressing the ongoing pandemic, helping us to better prepare for future ones and, ideally, preventing them altogether. Eighteen months into the COVID-19 pandemic, we are still uncertain as to where we stand, and we must be prepared for setbacks, despite the fact that the scientific community has responded at an impressive speed and developed an effective vaccine in record time. Globally, the support for the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility, to which Liechtenstein has also made its contribution, has so far been insufficient to bring about access to the vaccine for all. That is not only an obligation vis-à-vis those who are in economically disadvantaged positions, but also the investment that we all need to make.

The pandemic has forcefully brought home the need for us to take decisive action, and to do so with the highest sense of urgency. First among the challenges facing us is the ever-more dramatic climate crisis. Both the climate change-related catastrophes of the past months and the most recent report of the International Panel on Climate Change make it brutally clear that we have very little time left to reverse the downward spiral and to meet our obligations to future generations and to humankind as a whole. We are heartened by the return to a comprehensive multilateralist approach, evidenced by the enhanced support for the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. That, of course, is just the bare minimum required for us to make progress together,

and to do so quickly. We are looking at those whose engagement is indispensable for us to turn the tide. But the Liechtenstein Government is also strongly committed to doing its part to help preserve a liveable and healthy planet for future generations, knowing that our people, in particular our youth, expect us to be ambitious and decisive. We are proud to lead the world on solar power per capita and take that as encouragement to increase sustainability in other areas too. The upcoming twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Glasgow, is the ultimate test for our collective resolve. I sincerely hope that we will be able to pass it together. For the Glasgow meeting to be a success, it must bring about a true breakthrough and a paradigm shift in the prevailing dynamic, which is playing for time that we all know we do not have.

Climate action stands out among the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the biggest standard-setting agreement of the United Nations in its recent history. But it is rightly part of the comprehensive agenda we have set for ourselves. Environmental, social and corporate governance have taken a key place in the discussion on policymaking, as well as in the private sector. The Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking initiative, one of Liechtenstein's key SDG projects, places strong emphasis on the social and corporate governance dimension. This initiative is a public-private partnership embedded in the United Nations system. It places financial institutions at the heart of the fight against modern slavery and human trafficking in the areas of compliance, responsible investment and financial innovation. Having achieved much more than we had hoped, the project is expanding its reach in the effort to work for dissemination and implementation. Enhancing partnerships for the initiative will remain a key objective of Liechtenstein's engagement for the 2030 Agenda.

Since its very inception, the United Nations has stood for the rule of law, the belief in the necessity for international law to govern the relations between States, but also between States and individuals. State institutions must be accountable and inclusive. We all agreed to that in the SDGs. At the same time, people have a fundamental right to participate in decision-making processes, either directly or through free and fair election of their representatives. This is the principal tenet of democracy that Liechtenstein will

defend against authoritarian tendencies and promote as a safeguard against the abuse of power as we celebrate the centennial anniversary of our Constitution.

A look at many of the crisis situations around the world illustrates clearly the need for accountability, of which international criminal justice is an indispensable part. Be it in the armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, which has lasted more than a decade, or in the universally condemned coup by an unaccountable military regime in Myanmar, the prevalence of impunity not only leads to new atrocity crimes but also makes sustainable peace and development impossible.

In the area of international criminal justice, the International Criminal Court (ICC) continues to be a key institution. The ICC deserves our full support, and I am proud that Liechtenstein has been a consistent advocate for the Court since the very beginning. We will continue that important work for victims and survivors, for the rule of law and democracy, for the atrocities that the ICC's very existence has deterred and will deter in future. I am encouraged by the developments in the Sudan, which illustrate, in the clearest possible way, two things.

First, justice may be a long time coming, especially for those in the most powerful positions. And secondly, justice is a key ingredient for any society to turn the page on a dark past and move forward with hope, legitimacy and the full support of its own people and of the international community. Both those aspects have also driven our initiative to create the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, which has boosted the principle of universal jurisdiction and, to this day, represents the most concrete pathway to justice for the Syrian people.

When we talk about enhancing institutions and the rule of law, we have to start at our own doorstep. The drafters of the Charter of the United Nations showed great vision and leadership in setting principles for a peaceful and prosperous world, where the rule of law and individual freedom prevails, peoples determine their own faith and disputes are solved amicably. They are as valid and pertinent today as they were 76 years ago. Unfortunately, the practices and processes of the United Nations do not always lend themselves to the implementation of those principles. We often

find ourselves in a situation where our actions, or lack thereof, are in clear conflict with those principles. Such situations include massive violations of international law, especially the law of war and human rights — the very fabric of our rules-based international order — while the political entities of the United Nations remain silent.

The General Assembly must take responsibility and step forward in such situations, as it has done on several occasions. The Assembly should also convene as a matter of course in each and every case where Security Council action has been blocked by a veto. Liechtenstein will pursue this idea with interested States as one concrete contribution to enhance accountability in the institutions of the United Nations. There are of course many more areas in urgent need of reform, in particular the Security Council, and Liechtenstein will continue to make its independent voice heard where needed. We also look forward to an energized second term in office of Secretary-General Guterres in the service of an inclusive, powerful and effective multilateralism and of *Our Common Agenda*. We should aspire to deliver on this basis by building the six bridges the Secretary-General has identified for all of us and for the peoples of the world.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore.

Mr. Balakrishnan (Singapore): Let me start by congratulating His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. I also thank His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkır for his leadership of the seventy-fifth session during an unprecedented and difficult year.

The most important lesson from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is that multilateral cooperation is absolutely essential to overcome the challenges of our global commons and that only coordinated international action can lead us to a sustainable, inclusive and resilient recovery.

That is precisely why the role of the United Nations is so crucial, especially for small and developing countries. The United Nations must empower countries to deal with the challenges of managing our global commons in order to build a more resilient future. I want to welcome and commend the leadership of Secretary-General António Guterres — not only for his achievements over the past term but in putting

forth a bold and visionary *Our Common Agenda* to reposition and adapt the United Nations for the future. In particular, I welcome his proposal for a summit of the future in order to forge a global consensus.

Today I wish to highlight four key areas that require our urgent attention: public health, climate change, the oceans and the digital revolution.

First, the fight against COVID-19 is far from over. Access to vaccines remains the biggest problem faced by many countries. Our immediate priority must be to redouble efforts to expand access to vaccines by scaling up production and distribution. Singapore is a strong supporter of vaccine multilateralism. We will continue to support the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility and will donate our vaccines, under the COVAX initiative, to other countries with greater needs. We have continued to help our friends and neighbours when possible, through other contributions of medical supplies, oxygen and equipment. As a trans-shipment hub, Singapore has always played its part to keep essential supplies moving to where they are needed most. In the longer term, we need to take forward the recommendations of the Group of Twenty High Level Independent Panel to address the major gaps in preparedness for future pandemics. We must also strengthen multilateral support for the World Health Organization and the United Nations and to mobilize resources for our collective security, because no one is safe until everyone is safe.

Secondly, we need a sustained and ambitious global response to address climate change. The effects of climate change are deeply felt at a local level, but the solution will depend on a collective response at the global level. For a small island city-State like Singapore, climate change remains a clear and present danger. Recent extreme weather events are stark reminders that we do not have time to lose. The landmark Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded that global temperatures are likely to rise above 1.5°C within the next two decades, and we are likely to see more intense rainfall, flooding and droughts, loss of sea ice and rising sea levels. The fight against climate change will be a stark litmus test of our ability to manage the global commons through multilateral action. No country acting alone can move the needle. But if we work together, we can make a substantial impact. If we fail, the consequences will be calamitous for every country and for all humankind.

Singapore has always been a strong advocate of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, from the very beginning. Last year, even while battling the pandemic, we submitted our enhanced 2030 nationally determined contributions to the Paris Agreement and our long-term low-emissions development strategy for 2050 and beyond. This year we unveiled the Singapore Green Plan 2030, which outlines a whole-of-nation approach to sustainable development and charts ambitious, concrete targets over the next 10 years. Among other things, we will plant 1 million more trees on our tiny island, quadruple solar energy deployments and reduce waste sent to landfills. We are also committed to working with our partners in new areas, including green finance and clean energy solutions, and we look forward to substantive outcomes at the upcoming twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Glasgow.

Thirdly, our oceans are in urgent need of multilateral action. The oceans sustain our global ecosystem; they are a repository of biodiversity and a buffer for climate change. They are also a critical artery for trade and a source of jobs and livelihoods for billions of people. As a tiny island-State at the confluence of key global shipping routes that is heavily dependent on maritime trade, Singapore is an ardent advocate for the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) — the foundation for rules-based governance of the oceans in all aspects. It sets the rules for maritime entitlements and provides the overarching framework for the peaceful resolution of maritime disputes. It is fundamental for maintaining open trade routes and sea lines of communication. The fortieth anniversary of the adoption of UNCLOS next year will be an opportunity for us to reaffirm our commitment to UNCLOS as the primary legal instrument for oceans governance and to do more to ensure its effective implementation. Singapore also firmly believes in the importance of conserving and ensuring the sustainability of our marine environment. We therefore look forward to the fourth session next year of the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction and to the second United Nations Ocean Conference, to be co-hosted by Kenya and Portugal next year.

Fourthly, we need urgent multilateral action with regard to the digital revolution and its impact on sustainable development. The digital revolution was well under way before COVID-19 erupted, but the pandemic has accelerated the pace and scale of this ongoing revolution. Digital technologies have empowered millions of people, but the gulf of opportunities between digital haves and digital have-nots has actually widened. Today 3.8 billion people remain digitally disconnected. The digital divide has prevented access to education, health care and many other essential services to millions of people around the world. Digital transformation is not just about new technologies or new hardware. Fundamentally, it must be about improving lives and empowering people, especially the poorest and most vulnerable. It is about strengthening the resilience of our societies and economies. In a nutshell, digital transformation should be about sustainable development. To put it differently, if we do not close the digital divide, we will not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. That is why digitalization poses a global challenge that requires a concerted global response.

There are many questions related to this transformation. How can we provide fair and secure access to digital data so that the data is not monopolized by the few, leaving the vast majority digitally disenfranchised? How can we encourage a freer flow of data across the world in order to promote innovation and inclusive sustainable development? Can we find ways to address the pandemic of misinformation, which sometimes, arguably, has been worse than the pandemic itself? There are no easy, ready answers, but we clearly need to have a conversation about a global framework to maximize those opportunities and deal with the challenges posed by the digital revolution.

The goal is both simple and singular. How can we enhance multilateral cooperation to leverage digital technologies for sustainable development? There are many paths we can take, whether the Secretary-General's proposal for a global digital compact or perhaps a new United Nations convention on digital transformation for sustainable development, or indeed a framework of norms and principles. I shall leave those options on the table to be part of a conversation that we all need to have at the global level.

As a tiny country and a vital node in the international digital network, Singapore has always advocated a global architecture that is open, inclusive, inter-operable and

multi-stakeholder. Such a global digital architecture must be shaped by a few guiding principles.

First, the voices of small States must be heard and our concerns taken into account.

Secondly, digital transformation needs to be people-focused, and it must improve people's daily lives.

Thirdly, we need to involve all relevant stakeholders, including Government, the private sector and civil society, because it is no longer possible, in today's digital world, to neatly draw lines between Government, industry and citizens.

Fourthly, we need to think digital, which means thinking in an integrated, multidisciplinary, multisectoral way. The complex problems of today and tomorrow require innovative solutions.

Fifthly, we need concrete action through the identification of a common set of digital development goals and a framework for multilateral cooperation.

At the national level, Singapore is already building partnerships with many countries. We have concluded digital economy agreements with several of our partners. We co-lead the World Trade Organization joint statement initiative on electronic commerce with Japan and Australia, which now includes more than 80 member economies and comprises 90 per cent of global trade. Those can serve as building blocks in a larger global architecture.

At the broader level, we need determined action to close the digital divide, not only within nations but also between nations. There is already much work being done, but we need to give those efforts a stronger push through education, training and improving the digital skills and literacy of our people across the board; investing in infrastructure for universal and affordable internet connectivity; and expanding access to data and digital public goods, including open-source software and digital utilities. We can do a lot more to improve international data governance and to promote inter-operability, trust, and security when we transact in the digital environment.

I have only touched on some of the issues that I believe we need to look at. There are other important issues outlined in the Secretary-General's road map for digital cooperation (A/74/821). His *Our Common Agenda* also lays out a way forward on a global digital technology track. The next step is to take action on

those proposals. Singapore will support efforts by the United Nations to advance our global conversation so that, together, we can make tangible progress on digital transformation for sustainable development.

As we seek to build a more inclusive, sustainable future, we need to give each other a hand. That is especially so for small and developing countries. In 1992, Singapore established the Forum of Small States — an informal platform for small States to discuss issues of mutual concern. We started with a group of 16 that has now grown to 108 member States. We will celebrate our thirtieth anniversary next year. To mark that milestone, Singapore will launch a new programme entitled "Forum of Small States for Good", which will commence in 2022 and focus on priority areas such as digital transformation and COVID-19 recovery, customized for the unique challenges faced by small countries.

We believe that it is only by working in partnership and helping each other that we can reach a more resilient, more inclusive and more sustainable tomorrow. It is always darkest before the dawn, but the dawn will arrive. There is hope and much work ahead of all of us.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

Before giving the floor to the speaker in the exercise of the right of reply, may I 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.

I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Ms. Fitri (Indonesia): I take the floor to exercise Indonesia's right of reply in response to the statement made by the Prime Minister of Vanuatu (see A/76/PV.14).

I am appalled that Vanuatu keeps using this forum to infringe upon the sovereignty and territorial integrity of another Member State, persisting in its ill intentions and politically motivated aggression against Indonesia. We strongly reject the false, baseless allegations and misrepresentation that continue to be nurtured by Vanuatu. They create false and empty hopes and fuel conflicts, sadly at the expense of innocent lives.

Vanuatu tries to impress the world with its so-called concern for human rights issues. In reality, their version of human rights is twisted and fails to mention the inhumane and heinous acts of terror committed by armed separatist criminal groups. Vanuatu deliberately closed its eyes when those armed separatist criminal groups murdered nurses, health-care workers, teachers, construction workers and law enforcement agents. Those are people who actually dedicate their lives to the Papuans.

When innocent construction workers were brutally murdered, why did Vanuatu choose to be silent? When teachers were mercilessly slain, why did Vanuatu choose to be silent? When public facilities built for the people of Papua were destroyed, why did Vanuatu, once again, choose to remain silent?

In fact, Vanuatu is advocating separatism under the guise of artificial concern for human rights. Is that Vanuatu's understanding of human rights?

Vanuatu has repeatedly tried to question the unquestionable status of Papua as an integral part of Indonesia. That violates the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and contravenes the Declaration on Principles of Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States. We cannot let that repeated offence against the Charter of the United Nations continue in this forum.

Indonesia is a pluralistic country with a vibrant democracy and respect for the rule of law, good governance and social justice. We live up to our commitment to promoting and protecting human rights. Democracy, the rule of law, good governance and social justice are all final components in the quest for human rights. All our citizens are treated as equals, regardless of their sociocultural, religious or economic backgrounds.

The delegation of Vanuatu should open its eyes, see the whole picture, see everything or it will be lost.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.

Annex I

Address by Ms. Fiame Naomi Mataafo, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa

Mr. President,

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Samoa extends its congratulations and best wishes to His Excellency Abdulla Shahid on your assumption of the Presidency of the 76th Session of the General Assembly. We are indeed delighted to see Maldives, a sister small island developing state, taking the reins of our organization at this critical and pivotal moment in our history. Please be assured of Samoa's full support in the successful execution of your mandate over the next 12 months. We also welcome the reappointment of Secretary-General António Guterres for a second term and have confidence in his continued leadership at this critical time for the United Nations.

It is an honour to address this Assembly for the first time as Samoa's Prime Minister, although it is regrettable that this must take place virtually, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In these times of uncertainty, the leaders of the world must remain connected in our fight for a just, more sustainable and peaceful future for our people and planet. There have been many challenges over the recent past, and we need to take urgent action now on a host of them. COVID-19 and its constant mutations threatening lives; the looming existential threat from the climate crisis; the accelerated loss of biodiversity; the erosion of human rights; worsening conflicts; rising discrimination and hatred; the abuse of information and new technologies are but a few of the mammoth tasks that lie ahead of us.

As the UN Secretary-General highlighted in his "Our Common Agenda" report, we are at an inflection point in history. We either breakdown or breakthrough. I believe, we should not surrender to a future of perpetual crises but choose hope through urgent, decisive and united action. The theme for this year's UNGA captures the essence of Samoa's immediate priorities in alignment with our United Nations family. We need to rebuild sustainably for recovery from the pandemic, and to enhance resilience. We must revitalize the United Nations. The experience of the last 18 months has clearly demonstrated that now, more than ever, we need an effective United Nations to mobilize our collective efforts, to propel urgent actions, in order to effectively address these problems.

Excellencies,

There is no greater challenge confronting the global community now than that of climate change. For Pacific communities, the real challenge is not about securing more scientific evidence, setting new global targets, and more talk shops. It is about action for survival and we all need to shoulder our responsibilities and play our part. The big polluters and emitters need to demonstrate more commitment and leadership.

The increase and frequency of natural disasters continue to devastate countless lives. I extend Samoa's deep condolences to a sister SIDS, Haiti, for the lives lost and the immeasurable devastation wrought by the Earthquake. We fully support the Resolution on assistance to Haiti in the aftermath of the recent disasters.

These environmental threats can only worsen. The latest report on climate change from the IPCC shows that global greenhouse gas emissions must be halved in

the next decade, and reach net zero emissions by mid-century, if the promise of 1.5°C is to remain within reach.

Efforts to drive down global emissions such as investing in clean and affordable energy; moving towards green resilient economies; tackling deforestation; ending coal power and focusing all efforts to protect nature must take precedence. Such solutions must be complemented by ensuring climate finance for frontline countries, and utilizing the advance scientific knowledge and superior technology available.

Samoa has submitted its Second Nationally Determined Contribution with increased ambition nuanced in specific emissions reduction targets. We reiterate the call on all parties to commit to updated and more ambitious NDCs in order to meet the Paris Agreement promise.

The upcoming COP in Glasgow is our point of no return. Our commitments from there onwards, will determine the future trajectory for our planet. Can we avoid a climate catastrophe in our children's lifetime?

Excellencies,

The ocean surrounds, protects and provides for us ocean states'. It is core to our Pacific way of life. Tied explicitly to our need for climate action is our custodianship of the world's oceans. As the Blue Pacific continent, our collective priority is to maintain the health of the ocean as well as the sustainable management of our vast and biodiverse ocean.

A new 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific continent will reinforce the prioritization of ocean and climate change considerations in all policies and plans. A shared ocean, means shared responsibility and benefits, for our environment, economies and communities. Our marine protection goals in our first Ocean Strategy, are aligned to the Blue Leaders 30 x 30-campaign calling for protecting 30 per cent of our global oceans by 2030. We welcome the complementarity of such initiatives.

The Pacific Ocean hosts a remarkable array of biodiversity. With our Blue Pacific family, Samoa continues to prioritize both marine and terrestrial ecosystems' restoration. Despite the challenges, we remain engaged in the Convention on the Biological Diversity COP15 process. Together with the UNFCCC COP26, 2021 is a critical year for aligning action to tackle the climate emergency, and addressing the threat posed by biodiversity loss.

Securing our maritime zones against the threat of climate change-related sea-level rise, and preserving our existing rights and entitlements stemming from maritime zones, is of fundamental importance to our Pacific region. Therefore, the Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum at their 51st meeting this year, endorsed the Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the face of Climate-Change Related Sea-Level Rise.

All countries must unite to prevent and reduce marine pollution including plastics, oil spills, waste discharge and nuclear contaminants. UN reports claim that every year more than 8 million tonnes of plastics end up in the ocean. If this trend continues, by 2050 our ocean will have more plastics than fish. Pacific SIDS contribute less than 1.3 per cent of the mismanaged plastics in the world's oceans, yet are one of the main recipients of plastics pollution and its impacts. Samoa fully supports the Ministerial Conference on Marine and Plastic Pollution aimed at agreeing on a common global approach to confront the scourge of marine plastic.

Samoa fully supports finalizing the work on the legally binding Instrument on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ instrument) in a timely, robust and effective manner.

Excellencies,

The Global food system is at a critical stage made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic and onslaught of climate change. The Food Systems Summit held this week was instrumental in mobilizing global citizens to find transformative solutions. Samoa was pleased to be part of this important event which encouraged shared exploration of potential for collective action.

Through organized dialogues, Samoa benefited from a comprehensive assessment of the issues involved in building the sustainability of our food systems. Extreme hunger is not a concern in Samoa as food availability is not the issue. Access to a balanced and nutritional diet is the main concern and this requires a return to locally produced quality fresh foods and less of processed imported foods.

This will be key to addressing the rising burden of Non-Communicable Diseases which represent the single largest cause of premature mortality in the Pacific. Unhealthy diets, tobacco and alcohol use, and lack of physical exercise are the main risk factors.

Excellencies,

Samoa has for decades championed the importance of the rule of law and protection of the rights of its peoples. Many labelled the events that unfolded following our 2021 elections a constitutional crisis. While these were difficult times for Samoa, it was also a key part of our journey moving forward as a mature democracy. It divided our country and tested all key pillars of our society — our faith, our culture and the rule of law. However, my delivering this statement as the first female Prime Minister of Samoa and bringing about a change in government after decades, are testament to the fact that the rule of law has prevailed. Samoa today still remains peaceful and COVID free, despite all the challenges we face. The new government will continue to ensure safeguarding the rule of law and upholding of the human rights of its people. Special attention to vulnerable groups and strengthened social protection measures remain a priority.

Samoa will be presenting its third Universal Periodic Review in November 2021. We maintain that our Christian values, unique culture and traditions complement the human rights and fundamental freedoms we commit to promote, respect, protect and fulfil.

Excellencies,

We want a future of peaceful societies, free from conflict, and the threat of terrorism. We condemn all acts of international terrorism and violent extremism which must be dealt with through international cooperation and in accordance with the UN Charter.

The elimination of all forms of weapons is a step closer to a world of peace. The recent events in Afghanistan highlight the plight of thousands of people fleeing their homes in search of refuge and safety. We urge the global community to lend all possible humanitarian assistance to those in desperate need. Samoa continues to contribute to the peace and security agenda through its police peacekeepers.

We are embracing the many advantages cyberspace offers, and our economy and quality of life are the better for it. However, we also recognize that they also pose as threats in some ways. The increasing use of Information Communications Technology (ICT) has raised issues of security and privacy. The exploitation of computers and telecommunications technology for criminal activities has increased. Incidents of hacking, virus attacks, access and dissemination and misuse of information and network security can no longer be ignored. We look forward to actively engaging in discussions of the Ad Hoc Committee to Elaborate a Comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for Criminal Purposes.

For a small developing island nation like Samoa, we rely on the collective responsibility as a global community to prevent and combat high-tech cyber and electronic crimes, including social media abuse and online child sexual exploitation. The reality for us is that the criminals are more advanced than our nations in these technologies. Thus we need to work together to combat and eliminate these destabilizing activities.

Excellencies,

Accelerated action to meet the promise of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs is an imperative. COVID19 and climate change have reversed hard fought development gains. However, we must persist in our efforts to meet the SDGs as they provide the best hope in our fight against the pandemic and the threat of the climate crisis.

We need to remind ourselves of the commitments and undertakings we made towards the full implementation of the SAMOA Pathway. I thank all SIDS partners, the Secretary-General and Secretariat for their continuous support and commitment to this task. The proposed monitoring framework for the SAMOA pathway is a necessary tool for follow-up action and review. It will allow domestic and international resources to be better targeted towards greater accountability and transparency. We urge that outstanding issues relating to the framework be concluded with urgency considering the fast approaching timeline set out in the Secretary-General's report on this matter.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) face a unique set of vulnerabilities which impede their ability to achieve sustainable development. Structural factors, including their size, remoteness, and exposure to climate risks and natural disasters impact socioeconomic outcomes and their ability to achieve the SDGs. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated those vulnerabilities with many SIDS countries being particularly affected by the drop in international tourism and remittances. Consequently, the call for and endorsement of a multidimensional vulnerability index will allow for the inclusion of more than just income-based criteria to assess eligibility for concessional finance.

Samoa thanks the Resident Coordinators in the SIDS that worked diligently towards the development of the MVI under the joint leadership of the UN and the Government of Samoa, and in partnership with Professor Jeffrey Sachs and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network. We are appreciative of the fact that the MVI is a tool that provides for a richer lens on vulnerability. We look forward to the joint review of the report of the Secretary-General on the way forward of the MVI and its use.

Excellencies,

Allow me to touch briefly on the system reform of our organization. Samoa unreservedly believes that the UN is uniquely suited to coordinate and advance the cause of our global initiatives. With the structural aspects of the reforms now well consolidated, we should build on the momentum to continue effective implementation.

Samoa looks forward to continuing an active role in the reform process to ensure that we have a UN that is fit for purpose, and highly tuned to meet the challenges of the future. The continued strengthening of the Resident Coordinator system must include ending the fragmented approach at national level. We caution against a heavy regional approach that does not respond to national needs and priorities. We also further call for more clarity around the definition of roles against the inevitable constraints imposed by post-COVID-19, on resource availability in the immediate future. We continue to call for starting text based negotiations for the reform of the Security Council.

Excellencies,

The fact that we continue to meet virtually is testament to the many challenges COVID-19 has placed on us. The pandemic has also directed our attention to the many “code red” alarms for humanity. Business as usual is not an option. We must take this opportunity for breakthrough as the UN Secretary-General puts it.

For Samoa, our borders with the outside world have been closed since the advent of the COVID pandemic in early 2020. We have prioritized the safety and health of our people over economic considerations. Like other countries, it was not an easy decision to take, considering the imminent economic challenges that will follow. Key to our response to COVID-19 is the full vaccination of our population. We express our deep appreciation to the COVAX Facility, the UN family, regional organizations and our development partners especially Australia Japan and New Zealand, who were instrumental in Samoa accessing sufficient vaccines to cover the eligible population. Discussions continue with New Zealand to secure relevant vaccines for our population under 17 years. Our vaccination roll out continues. To ensure full population coverage and achieve herd immunity, Government introduced a whole of country lockdown this week, for two days, to carry out mass vaccination.

Excellencies,

Let me end, by reaffirming Samoa’s commitment to the United Nations and our conviction that it remains the foremost forum to address all issues that transcend national boundaries. The United Nations must understand our unique cultures, respect our diversity and embrace our differences to help build the future we want through partnerships

Multilateralism and united international cooperation is our best response to the many threats we face. Building resilience at the national level can only take us so far. Samoa is confident that despite all the challenges, even existential threats for some of us; there is still hope if there is Unity amongst our UN family. This can change our world for the better, and leave hope for our future generations. *Soifua!*

Annex II

Address by Mr. Kausea Natano, Prime Minister of Tuvalu

Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the General Assembly, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Introduction

On behalf of the Government of Tuvalu, I congratulate you on your election as President of the 76th United Nations General Assembly. Tuvalu has full confidence in your presidency. Let me also take this opportunity to thank the president of our 75th session, H.E. Volkan Bozkır, for a successful session under his leadership, despite the challenges to the work of the General Assembly due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I also want to express Tuvalu's solidarity with Secretary General António Guterres for his steadfast leadership in guiding this august body in unprecedented and difficult times given the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing conflicts in many parts of the world.

Mr. President,

Theme of UNGA76.

I applaud your theme for the 76th Session of the General Assembly. We are yet again reminded that, since the Millennium Development Goals, and now the Sustainable Development Goals, we are not on track on the sustainable development targets we set for ourselves. Two things are clear from the theme. That is, we cannot build resilient and sustainable economies in isolation of, first, the needs of the planet, and, second, the protection of human rights.

Tuvalu, with an average land elevation of no more than two meters above sea level, is extremely vulnerable to climate change, sea level rise, and natural disasters. How strong will the next tropical cyclone be? How much longer can our islands support our livelihoods? Is there even a future for us on our islands?

With forced displacement due to climate change and sea level rise, what shall we do and where should we go? What about our traditional culture and heritage? What will happen to us? What happens to our human rights? Will Tuvalu remain a member state of the UN if it is finally submerged? Who can help us, and will they help us?

Mr. President,

These are the valid but difficult moral and political questions we, and millions of people in low lying countries and coastal areas, continue to grapple with. Consequently, these same difficult questions will be asked by those of us who remain ignorant of climate change. Until we have answers to these difficult questions, sustainable development, for us, will only be wishful thinking and a short-term goal running on borrowed time. Not a reality we can accomplish.

But hope is not all lost. For Tuvalu, we will cope and adapt. Statelessness is not an option for Tuvalu, and I am sure it is also not an option for any of us here today. The international community must now consider solutions to protect the rights of people affected by the impacts of climate change and to avoid chaotic responses to uncontrolled mass climate displacement.

In this regard, Tuvalu is spearheading a new initiative that will be advanced by likeminded countries to advance efforts towards protecting the statehood of small atoll island nations facing existential threats from sea level rise and, preserving the sovereignty, rights and heritage of affected nations and their populations.

On the domestic front, we have streamlined building resilience to climate change, natural disasters, and external shocks into our 10 year national sustainable development strategy, namely, Te Kete 2021-2030. We have continued to enhance adaptation to climate change and sea level rise through the construction of raised reclamation and coastal protection systems and adopting new agricultural systems to respond to climate change and sea level rise.

We are grateful for the assistance provided through the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Global Environment Facility (GEF), World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and other development partners to enhance our resilience to climate change. However, we must scale up this support to meet our growing adaptation needs, particularly our major development programmes such as land reclamation and land elevation, to strengthen our resilience to the slow onset of sea level rise which could potentially erase our God-given land from the face of the Earth.

Mr. President,

The cost of continuous rebuilding after every tropical cyclone and adapting to increasing sea levels leaves little fiscal space for investment in the SDGs. Our global climate actions must focus on the root causes of climate change to break this cycle of costly and continuous rebuilding. The one obvious sustainable solution is to stop and reverse increasing global temperatures.

To this end, the Kainaki II Declaration on Climate Change endorsed by Pacific Leaders in Tuvalu in 2019 calls for updated NDCs to keep the 1.5°C target, a global climate finance target of \$100 billion and the replenishment of the Green Climate Fund to support urgent adaptation needs and an end to inefficient and harmful fossil fuel subsidies including the phase out of coal.

Mr. President,

As we move closer to COP26, we make the same call on developed countries and major economies to demonstrate leadership. We need your commitment to fulfil the financial promises made in the Paris Agreement, including aligning global financial flows to be consistent with the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

The recent IPCC report on the Climate warns that we are inching closer to the point of no return. COP26 will be a make-or-break COP. To our developed countries, major economies, and emerging economies, we urge you to use your leadership roles to make COP26 a success. Climate change is already restricting our capacity to achieve sustainable development goals.

Mr. President,

Building resilience with hope our United Nations has in place systems and processes to guide our efforts to build resilience and build back better. We have the various international frameworks stemming from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Istanbul Plan of Action for LDCs, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement. It is evident that we also have

the resources and the technology that we need. We must strive for strong political commitment.

Mr. President, I therefore urge you to work to build political commitment and development cooperation with developed countries and major economies, including emerging economies.

Mr. President,

Revitalizing the United Nations is critical to responding to our increasingly complicated global challenge. In terms of climate change, we applaud the appointment of the UNSG Special Adviser on Climate Change. And we look forward to the streamlining of climate change and security in the work of various UN bodies to build a UN system that is responsive to the needs of those most vulnerable to climate change.

COVID-19 has exposed the vulnerability of our food security systems. For Tuvalu, our food security and agricultural capacity is our bloodline. It is therefore paramount to keep our oceans clean and sustainable for our people and generations to come.

We look forward to the implementation of the outcomes of the UN Food Systems Summit to complement and scale up our existing food security systems and programs to adapt better to climate change and support progress on the SDGs.

Mr. President,

I thank you for the recognition that to build resilience, we must respect the rights of people and that the UN must be revitalized to uphold the rights of all people of the world — people it was established to serve and protect.

On this very note, Tuvalu calls for the recognition of the rights of the people of Taiwan to the UN premises. The UN system was established to serve the public interest of all peoples. Having unhindered access to the family of nations should be a right for all, not a privilege for some.

It is most regrettable to see the ongoing injustice of Taiwanese people being barred from accessing UN premises for visits and meetings simply because the UN fails to recognize Republic of China (Taiwan) passports, which are, in fact accepted by almost every country in the world. Likewise, Taiwanese media outlets and journalists cannot obtain accreditation to cover UN meetings and events.

It is alarming that civic space in the UN and freedom of the press are being restricted. It is also unjustifiable that a person's access to UN premises now depends on nationality rather than on safety and security grounds. Granting Taiwanese passport holders' access to UN premises is an essential step for the meaningful participation of Taiwan and the Taiwanese people in the UN system.

It is also regrettable that the people of Cuba continue to face the economic burden of a long, unilateral economic embargo. Keeping these measures in place has robbed Cuba of the international collaboration and assistance it has required to recover from the COVID19 pandemic and build back better. The embargo has ignored the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and neglected the human rights and the spirit of cooperation espoused in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Mr. President,

As you may realize, I have been talking mainly about climate change. This is not to diminish the importance of other global challenges which Tuvalu also continues to face. Rather, it is because for us, climate change is the single greatest threat to the lives, prosperity, and human security of our people. It is an existential threat. Tuvalu is unable to build resilience with hope, as noted in the theme of this 76th Session of the General Assembly, if climate change is allowed to continue on its current trajectory.

Finally, Mr. President, Tuvalu reiterates its commitment to multilateralism through unity. The Tuvalu 2021 Independence Day theme, “Unity in Word and Deed,” is a message I bring as a call to all members of the United Nations, to embrace our shared differences and unite in action to address climate change and its rampage on humankind. Working together as the global family of the United Nations, with the full respect for human rights and the needs of the planet, together we can build a sustainable future for planet Earth.

I thank you Mr. President.

Tuvalu Mo te Atua

Annex III

Address by Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda

Your Excellency Abdulla Shahid

Secretary-General,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates

Mr President

I congratulate you on your election to the presidency of this Seventy-Sixth Session of the General Assembly.

Antigua and Barbuda assures you of our fullest cooperation as you steer our collective work in what will be a challenging year.

Mr. President

I agree wholeheartedly with Secretary-General António Guterres that the international community is failing to deliver policies to support peace, global health, the viability of our planet and other pressing needs.

I also agree with him that the lack of a global response and vaccination programme to end the COVID-19 pandemic is a clear and tragic example of such failure.

If developed countries had acted in a manner that allowed for the proper access to vaccines and medical supplies at the onset of the pandemic, globally we would be in a better place.

Developing countries were not seeking handouts.

Many of our countries paid into a global system that promised early access to vaccines.

But it could not deliver because, the majority of the vaccines from the major pharmaceutical companies had been bought or contracted and hoarded by a few wealthy nations, leaving the rest of the world bereft of the means to save their people.

This selfish nationalism forced most nations to rely on vaccine charity which, in itself, has not solved the problem of large numbers of people remaining unvaccinated throughout the world.

No country wanted charity; no country wanted to beg for vaccines that should be a global good accessible to all.

We were ready to pay.

But the vaccines were hoarded, and the pharmaceutical companies demanded prices beyond the capacity of countries whose economies were already decimated by the economic effects of the pandemic.

Mr President, the world should not witness such a spectacle again.

What is significant about the COVID-19 pandemic is that years of warnings of an inevitable pandemic threat were not addressed and there was inadequate funding and stress testing of preparedness.

The nations that must bear the burden of responsibility for this lack of preparedness must be those who control the world's health systems and who did nothing to put in place the resources necessary to, at least, alleviate the effects of the pandemic when it came.

What was also troubling was the absence of coordinated, global leadership.

Instead of cooperation, the world witnessed finger-pointing and conspiracy theories about where the novel coronavirus originated and who was responsible.

The resulting global tension undermined multilateral institutions and cooperative action.

The World Health Organization became the scapegoat even though it was not the management of the Organization that caused it to be underfunded and under resourced.

Blame was cast at the WHO as if it is not the representatives of powerful governments who set its priorities and determine how and where its money should be spent and on what.

Developing countries, and especially small states, Mr President, have to be absolved from responsibility for the lack of response, because they neither control the decision-making bodies, nor do they have the power to allocate funding.

Often the cries of small countries are either ignored or discarded, even on the few occasions when we actually get a seat at the table.

There was no dedicated fund of the size necessary to supply medical equipment and to ensure vaccines would be available to all.

International financing, when it came, was too little and too late.

Nothing has changed since then.

International financing to stop COVID, and to deal with its impact both on health and economies, is still too little.

COVID-19 is still infecting people all over the world, every minute of every day.

People are still dying every minute of every day.

Economies are still being ruined every minute of every day.

And the prospect of recovery recedes every minute of every day.

Mr. President,

US President Biden is to be congratulated for convening this week a Global Summit on COVID-19.

He has shown great leadership, and we are grateful that the United States has committed an additional \$250 million in the first instance to establish a pandemic fund at the World Bank to proactively address future biological threats and pandemics.

But more is needed, and a more organized global machinery is needed, under the auspices of this UN Organization.

In my own participation in President Biden's Summit on COVID, I made it clear that the pandemic has wrecked economies in small island states including CARICOM countries.

In some states, more than 20 per cent of Gross Domestic Product has been lost; unemployment has risen; poverty has expanded and demands on the State has multiplied even as revenues have declined steeply.

I told the Biden summit that, for our small countries, recovering from the economic effects of COVID-19 will be protracted because hard won economic progress has been greatly reversed.

Therefore, building back will be longer and harder for small island states than it will be in larger economies with greater resources.

Thousands of our people have been infected and thousands have died — many who had not yet begun to enjoy life, and others who had much to contribute.

I emphatically stated that the disease must be stopped.

Mr President, we must stop behaving as if the pandemic has ended; it has not.

I quote Secretary-General Guterres again, because he is perfectly right when he says:

“The longer the virus circulates among billions of unvaccinated people, the higher the risk that it will develop into more dangerous variants that could rip through vaccinated and unvaccinated populations alike, with a far higher fatality rate”.

A high rate of inoculations by rich countries with both the vaccines and the money must not be regarded as a great success, not even for those countries, because, today, there is no greater truth than the mantra that no country is safe until all countries are safe.

Antigua and Barbuda is committed to a global drive to inoculate 70 per cent of the world's population by September 2022,

My government has taken the action to make inoculations against COVID-19 mandatory for all public sector workers to protect the lives of all, including tourists who visit our shores.

We are determined to overcome the baselessly flawed arguments of those who promote resistance to vaccines despite the fact that, sadly, the number of COVID victims rise daily.

We will educate and inform our people at home.

But, Mr. President, we will continue to raise our voice internationally for the equitable distribution of vaccines at affordable prices and for the reduction in the pricing for COVID testing.

Vaccines are a global good; they should not be a commodity for profit at the expense of human life.

We are also committed to work for better global planning and preparation for any future pandemic.

But while we will play our part utilizing our scarce resources we will continue to argue for the provision of resources to poor and vulnerable countries.

We didn't start the pandemic.

And no virus has ever originated in Caribbean countries or being spread from it.

We have been — and are — victims of others who must recognize their responsibilities and act on them.

In this connection, my government is extremely disturbed about incidents in which some countries have not recognized vaccines administered in Caribbean countries, and have forced fully vaccinated travellers into quarantine.

Governments cannot urge people to get inoculated on the basis that the best vaccine is the available vaccine, and yet discriminate against vaccines that were not manufactured directly in North America and Europe.

This would not only be a form of vaccine apartheid, it would defeat the objective of inoculating 70 per cent of the world's people by this time next year.

This discrimination must cease now before it becomes a norm by some developed countries.

It is wrong; unjust, and patently unfair.

Mr President, my government will cooperate with all governments to protect our world, giving our young people the chance to live a safe, secure, and enjoyable life, but stopping the COVID-19 pandemic still is a global responsibility and the burden of sharing its cost must be borne equitably.

Antigua and Barbuda warns now that the international system has to prepare for future pandemics which are surely coming, particularly as action on Climate Change has also been a failure.

The impact of Climate Change will undoubtedly bring new vector borne diseases and viruses that jump from animal to man.

The World Health Organization, the IMF, the World Bank and this very United Nations Organization must start gearing up now to prepare for the pandemics of the future.

The UN Security Council should be treating pandemics as major security risks to the world, and it should act accordingly to use the full powers of the Council to meet these global threats.

Never again, Mr President, should the world be caught unprepared to manage and end a pandemic swiftly.

Never again should millions of people be killed by a disease that could have been stopped earlier.

And never again should there be such a selfish display of nationalism as we witnessed in the response to a Global threat.

The same argument applies to Climate Change.

Mr. President, Antigua and Barbuda hopes that COP26 in Glasgow, at the end of October, will be an inflection point at which all nations will commit themselves to saving the planet.

There is no planet B.

The consequences of Climate Change will be catastrophic.

For some small island states, it already is.

Recent research, published by the Royal Institute of International Affairs, reveals a dire situation for the world unless action is taken now by the world's greatest polluters to significantly reduce their CO2 emissions.

I highlight some of the findings in the report.

By 2040, almost 700 million people each year will likely be exposed to prolonged severe droughts of at least six months' duration. Many millions will die.

Experts are concerned that climate change is likely to increase the prevalence of emerging infectious diseases and vector-borne diseases.

They argue that Climate Change disrupts ecosystems and increases the risk of diseases jumping to new hosts.

Scientists have been warning for many years of the probability of pandemics increasing as a result of climate change.

In 2008, a study published in the journal *Nature*, found that over the previous decade nearly one-third of emerging infectious diseases were vector-borne, with the jumps to humans corresponding to changes in the climate.

For instance, insects such as infection-bearing mosquitoes follow changing geographic temperature patterns.

According to the research, interconnections between shifting weather patterns, resulting in changes to ecosystems, and the rise of pests and diseases, combined with heatwaves and droughts, will likely drive unprecedented crop failure, food insecurity and migration of people.

All this, the report argues, could result in the potential breakdown of governance and political systems as societies become increasingly unstable due to lack of income, as well as competition, over limited food supplies.

The report says that Experts are concerned that such situations could lead to a rise of extremist groups, paramilitary intervention, organized violence, and conflict between people and states.

That should be a scenario that worries us all, for, as we have seen in recent times, no nation is immune from violent strife.

Mr President, it is evident that global solidarity and firm commitments are required; commitments that will result in emission cuts to reduce global temperatures below 1.5 degrees Celsius of preindustrial levels.

Equally vital is access to quality financing and climate technologies in order to save our planet.

And, contracting debt to pay for recovery from the effects of Climate Change and to build resilience is not the answer to the problems of small states that are already burdened by debt and are the worst affected.

Funding packages for Small Island Developing States should include a significant amount of official development assistance — in other words, grants not loans.

Most states have significant debt overhang.

They are simply not in a position to assume more debt, especially after the economic devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic.

And, Mr President, the ODA component in funding for SIDS should not be seen as a gift or charity.

Let me here thank the Government of Denmark that has announced its proposal to significantly increase its contribution to climate aid.

The Danish government wrote to me, a few days ago, to say that it has earmarked 60 percent of its annual grant for adaptation and resilience initiatives, especially in the most vulnerable countries.

Note that Denmark is giving a grant, not a loan.

Mr President, the news that Denmark will contribute more than 1 per cent of the global collective target for climate financing is welcome with deep appreciation.

It is my hope that Denmark's action will help to galvanize others to contribute their fair share to the collective efforts required to address climate change at COP26.

Mr President, industrialized countries have an obligation to assist the states most affected by Climate Change because they created a problem in the first instance.

Climate ODA should be seen as a form of climate reparations to compensate for past climate damage.

In addition to official development assistance, debt swaps, and debt cancellation; climate related debts would help small states to build financial capacity to accelerate the transition into renewable technologies.

No new or significant sums of monies would be needed to achieve these debt cancellations; they would be mere book entries that will bring significant relief and sustainability to SIDS, while at the same time not creating any significant financial pressures for the industrialized countries.

This is a non-confrontational form of climate justice.

The alternative is, that affected states may be forced to take legal action in the international courts to seek compensation for provable damage.

Such a course is not one that small states would take with alacrity, but some of us may have to do so from necessity.

If nothing is done by the major polluting country both to cease their destructive actions and to help to repair the damage that they are causing, we may be left no choice.

That is not our preference.

We want global solidarity in the face of global adversity.

Mr President, there is an obvious need for a realignment of the international financial architecture to accelerate the global transition into renewables, in order to achieve a carbon neutral world within the next two decades.

Let me point out one serious anomaly.

While developed countries in North America and Europe are urging small and vulnerable states to transition to alternative energy, they are providing \$1.6 trillion annually to subsidize fossil fuel businesses.

By contrast, the sum being made available to developing countries is a mere \$2 billion a year.

If developed countries simply shifted their spending from providing subsidies to fossil fuel businesses to helping developing countries to cope with the impact of Climate Change, not only would they not have to spend one additional cent, they would also create greater opportunities for renewable energy in their own countries.

The world would also be less polluted, and Climate Change would retreat.

Mr President, I want to remind everyone that investments in nuclear armaments and other weapons cannot sustain the planet, but investment to combat climate change will certainly save our Earth, our single homeland and our human civilisation.

That is why we should all work diligently at COP26 in Glasgow to strengthen everyone's commitment to 1.5°C for us all to stay alive.

Mr President, I have concentrated my statement at this year's assembly on the COVID-19 pandemic and Climate Change because they are the two overarching issues that confront mankind.

Dealing with them successfully is what will give future generations a chance to live in peace, prosperity and safety.

Those generations are our children and grandchildren.

So what future do we want for them?

Should we not act to give them the glorious future we want for them, and that they deserve?

We certainly should.

I Thank you

Annex IV**Address by Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands**

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the Government and people of Solomon Islands, let me take this opportunity to congratulate your Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid and the government and people of Maldives on your election as President of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I am confident that through your able leadership, you will proficiently lead us through our agenda and serve this organization well. I assure you as a fellow Small Islands Developing State, of Solomon Islands' support and cooperation during your tenure in office.

On this note, I must also commend your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkır, for his sterling leadership of the General Assembly over the past session. I highly commend his efforts in ensuring the work of the assembly progressed despite the challenges faced by the United Nations Secretariat and member states' missions. I wish him every success in his future endeavours.

Let me also use this occasion to extend my congratulations on behalf of the government and people of Solomon Islands to His Excellency Mr. António Guterres on his re-appointment as the United Nations Secretary-General. The United Nations is confronted with many challenges including the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and sea level rise and peace and security to name a few.

Tackling these global challenges effectively calls for a strong multilateral system of genuine and durable partnerships and cooperation between countries.

Allow me to assure you, Secretary-General Guterres, of Solomon Islands support and cooperation as you endeavour to lead this august body to address the important issues and challenges that confront our nations and which we must all work together to address.

Mr. President,

The theme for the 76th Session of the UNGA — “Building resilience through hope — to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainability, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people, and revitalize the United Nations” — aptly summarizes the challenges facing our world today and the collective hope that we all share to overcome these challenges.

At the outset, I offer my sincerest condolences on behalf of the government and people of Solomon Islands to all who have lost loved ones to the coronavirus. We stand in solidarity with you all in the face of adversity during these unprecedented times.

Eighteen months after the global COVID-19 pandemic was declared, the battle against this contagious disease has never been more important, complex, and challenging. More than 216 million people worldwide have been infected by this virus. More than 4.7 million people sadly died from the virus.

While science has given us a breathing space through vaccines, several contagious and more lethal variants of the disease including the delta variant are causing new waves of infection in many countries around the world.

Concerted collective action by all UN Members using all forms of partnerships bilaterally and multilaterally is needed now, more than ever, to help us to collectively address the challenges all our countries are facing today.

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands has so far successfully controlled the spread of the virus. To date, we have recorded 20 imported COVID-19 cases on our shores. We have managed to eliminate the infections in our border quarantine facilities. I am pleased to announce we have not had an active case of COVID-19 for the last five months.

My government is delivering on its two overarching policy objectives during these trying times which are, (i), to protect all Solomon Islanders and other nationals living in the country against the COVID-19 virus, and, (ii), to drive and keep the country's economy afloat. We are achieving these two objectives.

Mr. President,

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted gaps in our health system and overall response capacities. My government is addressing this and has put in place measures to secure our borders. We have expanded our COVID-19 testing capability. The pandemic has enabled us to improve our health system and healthcare facilities throughout the country.

On this note, I express my government's sincere gratitude to our development partners that have assisted us in our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I thank all donors and partners to the COVAX Facility. I thank the governments of Australia, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, and the People's Republic of China. I also thank the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, the United Nations agencies and in particular, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund and the World Health Organization, and our regional institutions for their kind assistance and support. Your support ranging from direct financial contribution to the provision of vaccines, equipment, medical and other operational equipment, and supplies has enabled my government to protect our people thus far from COVID-19. Your unwavering support is deeply appreciated and will continue to be needed as we go forward.

Vaccination is our best defence against the virus. We associate with the voice of reason that 'no one is safe until everyone is safe'. Cooperation in combating COVID-19 must be based on the unity and solidarity. The world must act together to combat COVID-19. We cannot afford to be divided in our approaches. We look forward to working with all our partners going forward.

Our vaccination rollout program is moving in the right direction although not as fast as we want it to be. We have set ourselves a target of at least 90 per cent fully vaccinated coverage of our eligible population before we consider re-opening our borders.

Mr. President,

Providing accurate information regularly about the disease and the progress in combating it has enabled our public to be better prepared and participate in our fight

against COVID-19. We keep our public informed through talk back shows and my regular public address to the nation which is broadcasted live on air and televised.

In the long term, the Government is in the process of finalizing its Public Health Bill that will provide a legislative framework to effectively respond to any Health crisis that may face the country in future. On that note, I commend and thank our very hardworking healthcare workers and all our frontline agencies who had worked tirelessly to protect our nation against this deadly disease. Your sacrifice and dedication are greatly appreciated.

Mr. President,

The negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our economy had been significant. By mid-2021 our balance of trade deficit was around \$96 million; \$24 million higher than the previous month. This is a substantial amount for our small economy. This negative outcome stemmed from a larger fall in exports by 13 per cent against a marginal decline in imports by 1 per cent. Restrictions on international travel into the country has also impacted heavily on the tourism industry forcing tourism operators to drastically scale down their operations.

To keep the economy afloat my government introduced immediate recovery measures. We implemented 'economic stimulus packages' to drive the productive sectors. We launched our 'Umi Tugeda tourism' initiative. We drove several transformational and 'game-changing' national projects to boost the economy and provide employment opportunities for our people as we try to stabilize our economy.

The Pacific Labour Scheme Solomon Islands has with Australia, New Zealand and Canada has provided needed employment for many of our youths. We have reached new heights in our partnership with Australia in labour mobility for which we are thankful. These partnerships put human faces to our relationships with Australia, New Zealand, Canada in the labour mobility front. They contribute to our economic recovery efforts.

Mr. President,

As a Small Island Developing State, Solomon Islands continues to battle with the incremental effects of climate change and its negative impacts that threaten the livelihoods, security, and well-being of our people. The Pacific Island countries and territories have identified Climate Change as the 'single greatest threat' to our people and to the planet. It is a global issue that needs a global solution.

We remain deeply concerned that we are falling behind in our commitments under the Paris Agreement. Already global the temperature has increased above pre-industrial level to 1.1°C. The most recent Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change delivered the starkest warning yet about the deepening climate emergency.

The IPCC Report further stated that limiting global warming to close to 1.5°C or even 2°C above pre-industrial levels "will be beyond reach" in the next two decades, without immediate, rapid, and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

We strongly call on all major greenhouse gas emitting countries to cut emissions and take more ambitious action place the world on a 'below 1.5°C pathway'.

Sadly, the current trend is driving humanity towards a '3°C world', which we can all agree is not world we wish to bequeath to our future generations.

COP26 in Glasgow to be held in November this year, presents an opportunity for the world to operationalize the Paris Agreement, and conclude negotiations on the Paris Rulebook.

The establishment of a common time frame for Nationally Determined Contributions is needed. Markets and non-market negotiations need to be concluded and Loss and Damage solutions to be operationalized.

Further support is needed for the Warsaw Mechanism and an Adaptation Fund should serve and support the Paris Agreement. The time for action is now.

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands is a large ocean state. Its' total Exclusive Economic Zone covers an area of just over 1.5 million square kilometers. Together with 21 other countries and territories our total EEZ is almost 40 million square kilometers of Ocean.

The Solomon Islands tuna industry generates around \$60 million in revenue on an annual basis and provides employment for 2,000 Solomon Islanders. Our people have a multidimensional relationship with the ocean. We recognize the climate-ocean nexus and call on the global community take stronger climate action to protect our oceans.

The devastating impact of plastic pollution on our fragile marine ecosystems demands a global binding agreement to reduce plastic pollution in our oceans. We support the establishment of such an Agreement.

As an ocean locked state, Solomon Islands remains committed to negotiating a legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

My government looks forward to an Agreement that is fair, comprehensive and one that provides capacity building for small island developing states such as Solomon Islands to fully implement. We must strive to complete these negotiations as soon as possible.

Protecting the sovereignty of Solomon Islands' maritime zones remains important priority of my government. We continue to work towards the completion of the delimitation of all our maritime zones in accordance with the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

In this regard, my government supports the ongoing work that is being undertaken by the International Law Commission on the question of sea level rise and sovereignty. It is my government's unwavering position that once national maritime zones are deposited with the United Nations, they should never be challenged. Rights must be respected irrespective of sea level rise. This proposal preserves the principles of equity, fairness and justice of the Convention and recognizes UNCLOS principles of legal stability, security, certainty, and predictability.

Twelve years ago, Solomon Islands submitted four continental shelf claims with the UN Commission on the Limits on Continental Shelf. Once considered these claims will further expand Solomon Islands sovereignty. We look forward to working with the Commission to finalize consideration on the stated claims.

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands is a party to the 1985 the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, we therefore would like to keep our region nuclear free and put the region's nuclear legacy behind us. The ocean remains the life blood for our survival and would like to work with everyone in keeping it blue and healthy.

The United Nations was established out of the ashes of World War II. As a peace-loving state, Solomon Islands will do its part to build bridges of cooperation and highways of friendship and partnership in our region and beyond. Solomon Islands is committed ensuring the Pacific region remains a peaceful region where its people can live free and worthwhile lives. We do not support any form of militarization in our region that could threaten regional and international peace and stability.

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands is in its transition phase of graduating from the Least Developing Countries category and is scheduled to graduate by 2024. In preparing for our graduation, we have so far concluded several regional and bilateral trade agreements within the Pacific, with the European and the United Kingdom of Great Britain. We have a non-reciprocal trade arrangement with China.

However, with the impact of COVID-19, an in-depth analysis on the health of the Solomon Islands economy will need to be done. We hope to complete this before the next the triennial review. It is the view of my government that the date of graduation should be delayed due to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic the least developing countries.

I take this opportunity to call on our development partners to also align their support and priority programs with the Solomon Islands National Development Strategy to assist Solomon Islands achieve our development objectives.

Mr. President,

On UN reform, Solomon Islands aligns with call from countries for a reform in one of the principal organs of the UN that is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security — the UN Security Council.

The UN Security Council will need to adapt to today's realities and support an expanded Council with a SIDS-dedicated seat. It has been sixteen years since world leaders called for early reform of the Council, we hope negotiations could shift into text-based negotiations at this session.

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands recognizes the importance of Human Rights and subscribe to the principles of UN Charter and believes genuine partnership can further promote and protect the rights of all.

Solomon Islands supports the role of the Human Rights Council and the Universal Periodic Review mechanisms as a platform through which countries can engage in mutual dialogue on human rights concerns.

Furthermore, I am pleased to inform this Assembly that Solomon Islands has presented its National Report for the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review. Through this report Solomon Islands reiterated its commitment to strengthening its human rights mechanisms including through the establishment of national human rights reporting mechanism that would allow for the timely submission of human rights reports.

Solomon Islands is also committed to ratifying UNCRC Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution, child pornography, and several other Human Rights Conventions.

On the domestic front, Solomon Islands continues to review our national frameworks that will further promote and protect the human rights of all Solomon Islanders, in particular, the most vulnerable such as our women, children, and people with disabilities.

Mr. President,

I also wish to offer my deep thanks to Cuba for the training of our medical students. More than ninety Solomon Islands medical doctors have graduated from Cuban medical schools. We note with concern the 60-year-old economic embargo imposed on Cuba remains in place and we reiterate the call for the lifting of the embargo within the spirit and purposes of the United Nations Charter.

Mr. President,

Decolonisation remains an ongoing issue Solomon Islands follows at the UN. In this regard we note the ongoing UN referendum process taking place in New Caledonia. The first referendum occurred in 2018 and then again in 2020. The third referendum is scheduled for 2022 and we once again urge that the process conforms to universally accepted principles and practices of self-determination defined by resolution 1514 (XV) and other relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

Finally, Mr. President,

Allow me to conclude by commending you again on the theme for this year's General Assembly session. It could not have come at a more critical time when we find ourselves facing the deadliest pandemic that has affected our world under our watch.

The COVID-19 pandemic will shape our legacy as leaders of our countries and our world. Our responses to the pandemic will be remembered for ever by those who had lost loved ones, by those that believed we could have done more but didn't, by those that felt betrayed by their leaders, and by those that were appreciative of the collective efforts all countries of this world had undertaken to fight an invisible enemy that is only visible in the suffering and agony of those affected and those left behind.

More than 4.7 million lives have been tragically lost, and millions continue to be affected by its ongoing onslaught. Let us take time to pause and to reflect, on how this virus has changed our lives and the way we do business as we look at ways, we can collaborate better to alleviate its impacts.

As we continue to confront the problems and challenges that our world faces ranging from climate change to the deteriorating health of our planet and the COVID-19 pandemic; we must remember, there is more that binds us together as a human race than divides us. We must dig deep and reach out to each other with a hand of friendship, and we must embrace multilateralism as an important tool to confront global challenges.

Mr President, Fellow leaders of our world, I thank you for your attention.

Annex V

Address by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See

Mr. President,

I am pleased to extend to you and all of the representatives of nations the warm greetings of Pope Francis.

In his Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* on fraternity and social friendship, Pope Francis surveyed the many challenges facing the international community, such as war and conflict, mistreatment and violence, hunger and poverty, inequality and marginalization, individualism and mistrust, extremism and polarization, attacks on human dignity, the COVID-19 pandemic and threats to the environment, among other “dark clouds.” To confront such difficulties effectively, we must approach them with “renewed hope” based on the “abundant seeds of goodness in our human family,” like those heroically sown in response to the medical, social, economic and spiritual dimensions of the pandemic. Such actions reveal, he indicated, that the medicine the world needs is not “isolation and withdrawal into one’s own interests,” but rather fraternal closeness and hope grounded in the “reserves of goodness present in human hearts.”¹

The theme of this General Debate, “Building Resilience Through Hope,” focuses our attention on the crucial importance of hope in human affairs. Hope is different than optimism, which is an expectation that things will turn out well, or the idea that somehow history will inevitably develop on an upward trajectory. Instead, we know that our achievements are not unassailable: the maintenance of peace, the protection and promotion of human rights, the advance of integral human development, and the care for our common home, should never be taken for granted, but must be sought and secured by every generation.

As new crises arise and others persist, we need hope to persevere in addressing them. Hope keeps us motivated when problems and disagreements seem unsolvable. It facilitates forgiveness. It keeps us conscious that through reconciliation there can be a better future. It fosters resilience and inspires us to put in hard work even when we may not be able to see results achieved in our lifetime.

For Christians, hope is the most divine gift that can exist in the heart of mankind.² It sees and loves what will be, in time and in eternity.³ Hope “is expectation, fervent expectation, impassioned by the ultimate and definitive fulfilment of a mystery, the mystery of God’s love.”⁴

Recovering from COVID-19

Mr. President,

1 Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti*, 3__0, 54, 55, 196.

2 See Pope Francis, General Audience, 27 September 2017

3 Charles Peguy, *The Portal of the Mystery of Hope*

4 Pope Francis, General Audience, 15 October 2014

Pope Francis declared last year in his address to the General Assembly that “we never emerge from a crisis just as we were. We come out either better or worse.”⁵ To emerge better from the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to build on a renewed sense of fraternal solidarity. The pandemic has taught us how interconnected our world is, how every State has its own vulnerabilities and that no State is capable of resolving the crisis on its own.

Resilience demands that the international community put into action the commitments expressed during the Special Session of the General Assembly on COVID-19 last December. We must work together to remedy the situation of those who are on the “pharmaceutical margins,”⁶ and to alleviate the needless suffering and death that they and so many others have and continue to endure. This is particularly the case with regard to vaccines, which must be available to everyone, especially in conflict areas and humanitarian settings.⁷

Resilience requires a renewed examination of how health care systems have largely been overwhelmed by the pandemic and left so many without sufficient care or any care at all. Even today many have no access to testing, basic care, or vaccines or even to the energy infrastructure that would make such care possible. Resilience calls for an examination of the fragility and shortfalls of our economic systems, which have left many behind as a result of the severe economic downturn and made the poor even more vulnerable.

Finally, resilience involves perseverance in the fight against corruption, since the harm of corruption has become particularly exposed among the political and distribution failures of the pandemic.

Rebuilding sustainably

Mr. President,

The pandemic has negatively impacted development programs and activities, as well the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Five years of progress on the 17 sustainable development goals was halted, and in some cases reversed, by the virus and its consequences. Making sustainable development a reality by 2030, which two years ago appeared to be an uphill struggle with no certainty of success, has now become such a daunting challenge that tremendous efforts will be needed.

To rebuild sustainably, we must rethink the relationship between individuals and the economy and ensure that both economic models and development programs remain at the service of men and women, particularly those on the margins of society, rather than exploit both people and natural resources.⁸ Sustainable development, if truly at the service of the human person, must also incorporate the poor, their gifts and creativity as agents of their own integral development. We must unleash the promise and hope they embody, for their good and the good of the entire human community.⁹

⁵ Pope Francis, Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations, 25 September 2020

⁶ Pope Francis, Address to the Members of the “Banco Farmaceutico” Foundation, 19 September 2020

⁷ Security Council Resolution 2565 (2021)

⁸ Pope Francis, Address to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See, 8 February 2021

⁹ Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 228

Responding to the Needs of the Planet

Mr. President,

The upcoming COP 26¹⁰ in Glasgow is an important opportunity for resilience, as the international community has the chance to commit anew to the protection of our common home. We are compelled to strengthen our ambition, since we are presently experiencing the effects of decades of inaction in terms of the extreme flooding, drought, wildfires, melting glaciers, receding shorelines, malnutrition and respiratory diseases that rising temperatures are precipitating. It is far past time to act. The tragic natural disasters that have struck our brothers and sisters in Haiti, a people already suffering from political and humanitarian challenges, is a clear call to the international community to work together in solidarity for a durable and sustainable development of which the people of Haiti may be the principal protagonists.

Recent attention toward the environment has spawned great advances in technology, allowing us to provide for our needs sustainably. Human creativity and innovation in improving efficiency and decreasing the costs of clean energy are making environmentally conscious choices by governments and individuals easier. Such innovations, while spurring similar entrepreneurial creativity, also inspire hope.

Respecting the rights of people

Mr. President,

Hope all too frequently is denied and remains elusive to so many women and men, boys and girls because of another man-made threat to our common existence, namely war, conflict and the possession and use of weapons of mass destruction. The scourge of war brings death and destruction, harms the environment, devastates communities and so often entraps regions and countries in a downward spiral. Sadly, we continue to witness the terrible impact of crises and conflicts across the globe. The recent aggravated humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and the ongoing political tensions in Syria and Lebanon, as well as in other places, are a stark reminder of the impact that conflicts press upon peoples and nations. The Holy See calls upon States to heed the call of the Secretary-General and Pope Francis for a global ceasefire and a shared humanitarian responsibility.

The damage to our fellow human beings and our planet is a special cause of concern with regard to nuclear arms and biological and chemical weapons. The threat of nuclear weapons, possessed under the guise of nuclear deterrence, creates an ethos of fear based on mutual annihilation, and poisons relationships between peoples, obstructs dialogue, and undermines hope. Humanitarian and security issues require us to end the nuclear arms race and to undertake effective measures toward nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and prohibition. The entry into force last January of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) is a major step forward. It is the firm hope of the Holy See that this will also spur progress in the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), scheduled to hold its Review Conference next January.

Mr. President,

¹⁰ 26th Session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Pope Francis considers one of the most serious causes for concern in today's world to be the "crisis of human relationships" flowing from a way of life dominated by selfishness and by the culture of waste, where human values and the related transcendent dignity of the person are often trampled.¹¹ This "anthropological crisis" is not a philosophical or academic dispute, but a crisis with enormous practical consequences for human rights.

Our societies today are the theatre of many injustices where human beings are maltreated, exploited, ignored, killed, or left to languish in humanitarian emergencies. Women and girls, persons from different indigenous, racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds experience violence and oppression or are reduced to second-class citizens. Far too often humanitarian law is taken as a recommendation rather than an obligation by both State and non-State actors alike. Refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons are increasingly left in limbo or even left to drown, unwelcome and unable to find a new home to raise their family in dignity, peace and security. Religious believers endure harassment, persecution, death and even genocide on account of their faith. The elderly and persons with disabilities are cast aside, especially when they are frail or considered burdensome. Innocent children are deemed problematic, discarded by society even before they are born or have the chance to bring their own, unique contribution into the world. The family, which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes as the "natural and fundamental group unit of society,"¹² is misrepresented.

This is evident also in novel interpretations of existing human rights, separated from their underlying universal values. In many cases, "new rights" not only contradict the values they are supposed to support but are imposed despite the absence of any objective foundation or international consensus.¹³ The Holy See believes that while depriving human rights of their original universal dimension, these new partial interpretations sadly become the ideological benchmark of spurious "progress" and another ground for polarization and division. Sadly, we are facing this in the constant pursuit of introducing controversial new agendas that drive UN processes contrary to the bodies' given mandates.

In an age in which many universal human rights continue to be violated with impunity, these attempts in fact confuse, divert from implementing the human rights conventions, and impede the attention and energy that the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights and dignity deserve. We need to build resilience through hope and consensus in this noble institution, while defending human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to life, to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and to freedom of opinion and expression, and not to undermine them.¹⁴

Revitalizing the United Nations

Mr. President,

To foster the resilience necessary to help the world emerge better from the various crises we face, the United Nations must constantly be renewed through

¹¹ Pope Francis, Address to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See, 8 February 2021

¹² Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 16.3.

¹³ Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Statement at the 46th Session of the Human Rights Council, 23 February 2021.

¹⁴ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Articles 3, 18 and 19

returning with greater fidelity and resolve to the core principles and purposes enshrined in its Charter. True revitalization means not just making structures and mechanisms more efficient but ensuring that this institution lives up to its true and commonly agreed upon aims, rather than becoming a tool of the powerful. The structural deficiencies that exist cannot be remedied either by sluggish solutions or fast fixes but require a commitment to what Pope Francis terms a “healthy politics.”¹⁵

The need for a healthy politics, based on the pursuit of the common good and universal truth, is particularly important at the Security Council, whose members are called to become the foremost artisans of peace throughout the world, constantly recommitting themselves to place international peace and rule of law above national interests or partisan ideologies.¹⁶ Far too often, the latter inevitably leads to gridlock, while the poorest and most vulnerable, who look to the Council for signs of hope, continue to suffer, pushed into greater despair. Revitalizing the United Nations must include examining whether the structure conceived in 1945 remains adequate for 2021 and beyond, as well as recognizing that from those States to which more is given, more is to be expected, especially with regard to responsibility for the common good.

In addition to the structural aspects of revitalization, greater attention must be given to promote and safeguard the mandates of UN entities and fora. The Holy See views with concern the push of some to break down the helpful division of labour among Committees, commissions, meetings and processes, turning all into bodies that focus on a limited number of disputed issues. Furthermore, the principle of consensus must be safeguarded. One common step in the right direction is preferable to many steps in different directions.

To help the world build resilience through hope, the United Nations must lead by example, and the States, entities, and personnel that comprise the Organization all have a key role to play in helping set that example. The Holy See is vigorously committed to playing its part.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Mr. President, to recover, rebuild, respond, respect and revitalize involves a rediscovery of resilience through firmly grounded hope.

Many are the signs of hope, even in our weary societies. To be builders of peace in our societies means to find these seeds and shoots of fraternity. “The God of the covenant asks us not to yield to separatism or partisan interests. He does not want us to ally ourselves with some at the expense of others. Rather, he wants individuals and communities to be bridges of fellowship with all.”¹⁷ Let us see in the eyes of migrants and refugees that they are full of suffering and hope. Let us work together to give them a future to blossom in peace.

In March, while the effects of the pandemic were still being very much felt, Pope Francis went to Iraq to encourage the Iraqi people in striving to give the world an example of resilience through hope.

¹⁵ Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 177, 179

¹⁶ Cf. Pope Francis, Address to the Diplomatic Community Accredited to the Holy See, 7 January 2019

¹⁷ Pope Francis, Meeting with the Representatives of the Ecumenical Council of Churches and some Jewish communities in Hungary, 12 September 2021

Visiting the birthplace of Abraham, to whom Jews, Christians and Muslims all look as their father in faith, the Pope recalled the image of a storm-tossed sea to describe what is involved in building a culture of peace.

“It demands,” he said, “especially amid the tempest, that we row together,” and that no one “be concerned simply for his own affairs.” He continued, “There will be no peace as long as we see others as them and not us. There will be no peace as long as our alliances are against others, for alliances of some against others only increase divisions. Peace does not demand winners or losers, but rather brothers and sisters who, for all the misunderstandings and hurts of the past, are journeying from conflict to unity.”¹⁸

That is the way of hope, which all of us should walk in this Organization.

Thank you, Mr. President.

18. Pope Francis, Address at the Interreligious Meeting on the Plain of Ur, 6 March 2021