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Seventy-sixth session

56th plenary meeting
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Official Records

President: Mr. Shahid (Maldives)

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

Agenda item 112 (continued)

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/76/1)

The President: In a year dominated by health and climate crises, 2021 witnessed the invincibility of the human spirit, incredible acts of kindness and inspiring collaborative action on many fronts. We now look ahead to 2022. I had the honour to brief the General Assembly on Wednesday on my priorities and the many mandated meetings ahead of us for the resumed part of the seventy-sixth session.

Today we will hear from the Secretary-General about his priorities for the year. Members will note that the Secretary-General's report (A/76/1) clearly outlines concrete results delivered by our Organization across all eight priority areas: sustainable development, peace and security, development in Africa, human rights, humanitarian assistance, justice and international law, disarmament, and drugs, crime and terrorism.

In today's debate, which for the third time is being held at the start of the resumed session, I look forward to hearing members' thoughts and reflections on the report. Before we engage in the debate, however, please allow me to make some remarks on the report and how it aligns with the five rays of hope of my presidency.

On recovering from coronavirus disease (COVID-19), we the States Members of the United Nations helped to create the COVID-19 Vaccines

Global Access Facility, the vaccine arm of the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator, which has delivered \$989 million to 144 participating countries as of 12 January 2022.

On rebuilding sustainably, the United Nations helped 5 million people obtain a job or better their livelihoods in 28 crisis-affected countries, and it engaged with 30 Governments to build multidimensional poverty indices to improve social inclusion.

On responding to the needs of the planet, the United Nations provided access to clean, affordable and sustainable energy for 800,000 households headed by women in 16 countries and protected or restored 344 million hectares of landscapes and marine habitats.

On respecting the rights of all, the United Nations supported over 8,000 victims of contemporary forms of slavery in 23 countries and maintained 12 peacekeeping operations with 90,000 personnel, including over 4,000 women peacekeepers.

On revitalizing the United Nations, the new United Nations reform structures in development, peace and security and management facilitated a coherent and agile response to the pandemic, saving time and money. The first Statement on Internal Control was also signed, providing assurance to Member States that Secretariat-wide mandated activities are being implemented effectively and efficiently.

As these results demonstrate, even in spite of the pandemic, hope perseveres, communities thrive, and societies continue to aspire to a better world. Progress

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and results are possible thanks to the political will of Member States — and the leadership of our Secretary-General, a bridge builder who is constantly focused on ensuring that

“human dignity [remains at] the core of [our] work and [at] the core of our common work” (A/71/PV.27, p. 9).

Rest assured that cooperation between my Office and the Secretariat is of utmost importance, especially as we continue discussions on the Secretary-General’s report entitled *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982). In that regard, I look forward to the first of our five informal thematic debates scheduled for 10 and 11 February.

Under my presidency of hope, I am committed now more than ever to delivering for people, for planet and for prosperity. Together we can and will overcome the many complex challenges we face and further strengthen the United Nations as the pinnacle of multilateralism.

Before proceeding further, as stated in my letter dated 11 January, the Secretary-General will make a statement to brief the Assembly on his priorities for 2022, after which the formal meeting will be suspended for an informal meeting for comments and questions.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: We begin another year in the grips of a global pandemic. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) continues to upend lives, plans and hopes. The only certainty is more uncertainty. Meanwhile, inequalities are growing, inflation is rising, climate-crisis pollution and biodiversity loss rage on, we face a cauldron of political unrest and ferocious conflicts, mistrust among world Powers is reaching a fever pitch, and the information superhighway is clogged with hatred and lies, giving oxygen to the worst impulses of humankind.

We all know this. Now is not the time to simply list and lament challenges. Now is the time to act.

All these challenges are, at heart, failures of global governance. From global health to digital technology, many of today’s multilateral frameworks are outdated and no longer fit for purpose. They do not protect critical global public goods that are intended to support humankind’s well-being, from the global economy and finance systems to the health of our planet. Nor are multilateral frameworks delivering on our common aspirations for peace, sustainable development, human

rights and dignity for all. My report entitled *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982) is a starting point to addressing these challenges and threats based on unity and solidarity, and developing countries need these more than ever.

I want to begin the year by raising five alarms on COVID-19, global finance, climate action, lawlessness in cyberspace, and peace and security. We face a five-alarm global fire that requires the full mobilization of all countries.

First, we must go into emergency mode in the COVID-19 battle. Omicron is yet another warning, and the next variant may be worse. Stopping the spread anywhere must be at the top of the agenda everywhere. At the same time, the virus cannot be used as cover to undermine human rights, shrink civic space or stifle press freedom. And Governments have imposed disproportionate restrictions that penalize developing countries, for example, what I described some time ago as “travel apartheid”.

Our actions must be grounded in science and common sense, and the science is clear: vaccines work, vaccines save lives. Last October, the World Health Organization unveiled a strategy to vaccinate 40 per cent of people in all countries by the end of last year and 70 per cent by the middle of this year. We are nowhere near reaching these targets. Vaccination rates in high-income countries are seven times higher than in the countries of Africa. At this rate, Africa will not meet the 70 per cent threshold until August 2024.

Manufacturers worldwide are now producing 1.5 billion doses per month, but distribution is scandalously unequal, and we need to convert vaccines into vaccinations everywhere. Instead of the virus spreading like wildfire, we need vaccines to spread like wildfire. We need all countries and all manufacturers to prioritize vaccine supply to the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access Facility and to create the conditions for the local production of tests, vaccines and treatments in the many countries able to do it around the world. This includes pharmaceutical companies sharing licences, know-how and technology more rapidly. We must also fight the plague of vaccine misinformation and do much more to ready our world for the next outbreak, in line with the recommendations of the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, including by strengthening the authority of the World Health Organization.

Secondly, we must go into emergency mode to reform global finance. Let us tell it like it is. The global financial system is morally bankrupt. It favours the rich and punishes the poor. One of the main functions of the global financial system is to ensure stability by supporting economies through financial shocks. Yet, faced with precisely such a shock — a global pandemic — it has failed the Global South. Lopsided investment is leading to a lopsided recovery.

Low-income countries are experiencing their slowest growth in a generation. Sub-Saharan Africa could see cumulative economic growth per capita over the next five years that is 75 per cent less than that of the rest of the world. Many middle-income countries are ineligible for debt relief despite surging poverty and the growing impact of the climate crisis. Women and girls who represent the majority of the poor in most regions are paying a high price in lost health care, education and jobs.

Unless we take action now, record inflation, soaring energy prices and extortionate interest rates could lead to frequent debt defaults in 2022, with dire consequences for the poor and the most vulnerable. The divergences between developed and developing countries are becoming systemic, a recipe for instability, crises and forced migration.

These imbalances are not a bug, but the future of the global financial system. They are in-built and structural. They are the product of a system that routinely ascribes poor credit ratings to developing economies, starving them with private finance. Credit-rating agencies are de facto decision makers in the global financial system. They should be accountable and transparent.

Developing countries also suffer from the lack of transparency in several circumstances around them — official development assistance, climate, finance and more — and this enables relabelling and double-counting. These imbalances are the result of a disconnect between the real and the financial economies, between working people and money markets.

We requested and applauded the decision by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to issue special drawing rights (SDRs) last year. But according to the rules, the vast majority of those SDRs went to the biggest and richest economies that need them least. That is why redistribution is so important, as are such efforts as the creation of the IMF-administered Resilience and Sustainability Trust, which we fully support, to

address injustices by providing more long-term low-cost funding to poor and vulnerable countries.

Since the start of the pandemic, I have called for the reform of the global financial system to support the needs of developing countries through an inclusive and transparent process. To build a strong recovery, Governments need the resources to invest in people and resilience through national budgets and plans anchored in the Sustainable Development Goals. All countries must be able to invest in strong health and education systems, job creation, universal social protection, gender equality, the care economy and the just transition to renewable energy. That requires a serious review of global financial-governance mechanisms, which are dominated by the richest economies in the world.

Financial metrics must go beyond gross domestic product (GDP) to assess vulnerability and climate investment risks. Credit ratings should be based on comparable fundamentals and evidence, rather than on harmful preconceptions. Reforming the global financial architecture requires an operational debt relief and restructuring framework. It means redirecting special drawing rights to countries that need help now. It requires a fair and global technology system, in which some of the trillions amassed by billionaires during the pandemic are shared more broadly. It means addressing illicit financial flows, which drain more than \$88 billion annually from Africa alone. It requires boosting the resources of multilateral development banks so they can better support developing economies most directly and by leveraging private investments.

In 2022, I will continue pushing for those fundamental reforms and use the convening power of the United Nations to boost investments in the Sustainable Development Goals. We must rescue the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and I count on the support of members.

(spoke in French)

Thirdly, we must go into emergency mode to address the climate crisis. The battle to maintain the target of 1.5°C will be won or lost in the present decade, and we are far off course. Our planet has already warmed by approximately 1.2°C, with devastating consequences.

In 2020, climate shocks forced 30 million people to flee their homes. That is three times the number displaced by war and violence. Small island nations, least developed countries and poor and vulnerable people

everywhere are just one shock away from doomsday. The numbers do not lie. We must achieve a 45 per cent reduction in global emissions by 2030 to reach carbon neutrality by the middle of the century. Yet, according to present commitments, global emissions are set to increase by almost 14 per cent over the current decade. That spells disaster.

This year we need an avalanche of action. All developed and developing economies that emit the largest quantities of greenhouse gases must do much more much faster to change the situation and reduce suffering, while, of course, taking into account common but differentiated responsibilities. Countries must commit to a considerable reduction in their emissions by 2030. Other countries, including some prolific greenhouse gas emitters, have an economic structure, namely a high dependence on coal, that stands in the way. They need resources and technology to accelerate their transition from coal to renewable energy. That is why I called for the creation of coalitions to provide financial and technical support for each of those countries.

Developed countries, multilateral development banks, private financial institutions and companies with the necessary technological know-how all need to join forces within those coalitions to deliver vital, swift and at-scale support to the countries that need it. At the same time, all countries must strengthen their nationally determined contributions until they collectively reach the 45 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030. That means no new coal plants and no further expansion in oil and gas exploration. Now is the time for an unprecedented investment surge in renewable energy infrastructure, tripling to \$5 trillion annually by 2030. That is particularly urgent in emerging and developing economies.

Considerable investment in renewable energy could prevent fluctuations in fossil fuel prices. All sectors and industries, including shipping and aviation, must be on the path that leads to net-zero emissions by 2050. Wealthy countries must finally deliver on the \$100 billion per year climate finance commitment to developing countries, starting in 2022. Developing countries cannot wait any longer.

We need a radical boost in the area of adaptation. The Glasgow Climate Pact to double adaptation financing from its starting sum of \$20 billion is an urgent priority and an important first step. However, we will still be far behind. Access and eligibility systems

must be reviewed to allow developing countries to source the funding they need in a timely manner. The twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Egypt, and the upcoming conferences on biodiversity and oceans will also be key opportunities to protect our planet and all its species. The effort required is extraordinary, but so, too, are the possibilities for bold future action when people work together.

We can draw inspiration from those with the greatest stake in the future — young people. As with so many other issues, young people are on the front lines in moving ahead on issues. Let us answer their calls with action.

(spoke in English)

The first three crises I outlined — COVID-19, a morally bankrupt financial system and the climate crisis — represent a triple emergency for developing countries and a triple multiplier of global inequalities. They undermine human rights and are a powder keg for social unrest and instability. In each, better global governance is sorely needed to restore fairness, rescue the Sustainable Development Goals and live up to our commitments to uphold the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family.

The fourth area is one in which global governance barely exists at all. We must go into emergency mode to put humankind at the centre of technology. Technology should not use us; we should use technology. If governed properly, the opportunities are extraordinary, especially if safe and secure Internet connectivity can be ensured everywhere. However, the growing digital chaos benefits the most destructive forces and denies opportunities to ordinary people. In countries with low broadband connectivity, simply connecting schools to the Internet can grow GDP by 20 per cent.

Realizing such benefits require safely connecting the 2.9 billion people who remain offline, mainly in developing countries, and women still lag far behind men in terms of Internet access. This year's Transforming Education Summit will be an important opportunity to help close the digital divide and ensure affordable, safe and secure Internet services for all.

As we seize the opportunities of the digital world, risks, such as data misuse, misinformation and

cybercrime, are already outpacing any meaningful efforts to address them. Our personal information is being exploited to control or manipulate us to change our behaviour, violate our human rights and undermine democratic institutions. Our choices are taken away from us without us even knowing it. The business models of social media companies profit from algorithms that prioritize addiction, outrage and anxiety, at the cost of public safety. We need strong regulatory frameworks to change those business models.

To address those issues, I proposed the global digital compact as part of the Summit of the Future in 2023. The compact should bring together Governments, the private sector and civil society to agree on the key principles underpinning global digital cooperation. Those principles will reinforce the ongoing coordinated approach on cybersecurity to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure. I proposed the global code of conduct to end the infodemic and the war on science and promote integrity in public information, including online. We look forward to developing them with Governments, media outlets and regulators.

Many technological advances are under way in this domain. I continue to urge Member States to speed up work on banning lethal autonomous weapons and to begin considering new governance frameworks for biotechnology and neurotechnology, as outlined in *Our Common Agenda*.

Fifthly, we need to go into emergency mode to bring peace to a world that sees too little of it. We face the highest number of violent conflicts since 1945. Military coups d'état are back. Impunity is taking hold. Nuclear weapons stockpiles now exceed 13,000 — the highest level in decades. Human rights and the rule of law are under assault. Populism, nativism, white supremacy and other forms of racism and extremism are poisoning social cohesion and institutions everywhere. The push-back on human rights, especially the rights of women and girls, continues, and my Call to Action for Human Rights is a push-back against that push-back. We will always push back and push forward to defend human rights.

Meanwhile, the climate crisis fuels conflict and escalates humanitarian crises. Terrorism remains a constant threat, further destabilizing some of the most fragile countries in the world. Through our peacekeeping and peacebuilding capacities, the United Nations will always stand with and protect those who

are caught up in the fighting and work to build stronger, more resilient and peaceful communities. Conflict prevention is at the heart of the proposed new agenda for peace. I pledge to spare no efforts to mobilize the international community and step up our push for peace. Allow me to mention a few of those efforts.

In Afghanistan, efforts are under way to provide a lifeline of help for the Afghan people, inject cash to avoid an economic meltdown, ensure full respect for international humanitarian law and human rights, particularly for women and girls, and effectively fight terrorism. In Colombia, we are working to sustain and deepen peace implementation, while reinforcing United Nations support.

In Ethiopia, we are working to guarantee the end of all hostilities and provide humanitarian assistance everywhere, while ensuring a lasting ceasefire and the withdrawal of foreign forces, promoting an inclusive dialogue involving all Ethiopians. In Haiti, we encourage and support Haitian-led solutions to the deepening political and institutional crisis, the crafting of a new Constitution and the planning of elections in a secure and peaceful environment.

In Iran, we support talks to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, as well as engagement between Iran and its neighbours.

In Israel and Palestine, we encourage the parties to refrain from unilateral steps, including settlement expansion and violence, and help revive the peace process and pave the way for ending the occupation and achieving a viable two-State solution.

In Libya, efforts are under way to promote dialogue, support presidential and parliamentary elections, as soon as possible, and push for the coordinated withdrawal of foreign fighters.

In Mali, we will continue working with all national and regional stakeholders towards the restoration of constitutional order to schedule elections with an acceptable timetable and strengthen the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement in Mali.

In Myanmar, we are working to restore democracy, deliver humanitarian aid and mobilize international support, grounded in regional unity.

In the Sahel, we are working to address the root causes of poverty, underdevelopment and governance challenges and ensure robust support for the Joint Force

of the Group of Five for the Sahel, through predictable and sustained funding.

In the Sudan, we are working to help to realize the people's democratic aspirations and support an inclusive intra-Sudanese political process.

In Syria, efforts are under way to advance the full implementation of resolution 2254 (2015), reconvene a credible Syrian-led and Syrian-owned United Nations-facilitated Constitutional Committee, release detainees and continue efforts to reach all in need with humanitarian aid.

In Ukraine, we are working to reduce tensions and ensure that all issues are addressed exclusively through diplomacy.

In Yemen, efforts are under way to reach a lasting ceasefire, open access to the country and restart an inclusive political process to end the calamitous seven-year conflict.

With regard to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, we are working to make the most of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, reduce nuclear risks and take steps towards nuclear disarmament.

We will persevere in our efforts to prevent conflict, protect civilians and consolidate peace from the Western Balkans to the Caucasus, from the Central African Republic to Cyprus to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, from Iraq to the Korean peninsula to Lebanon, from Mozambique to Somalia, from South Sudan to Venezuela to the Western Sahara and beyond.

The world is too small for so many hotspots. We need a united Security Council, fully engaged and addressing them. Geopolitical divides must be managed to avoid chaos around the globe. We need to maximize areas for cooperation, while establishing robust mechanisms to avoid escalation. In all we do to secure peace, I am committed to ensuring that women are at the centre of our conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts. We know that peace efforts are more successful and sustainable when women are a full part of decision-making and mediation and peace processes.

We are increasing the number of women peacekeepers. We now have more women leading our field missions than ever before, with parity among our heads and deputy heads of missions. Some 40 per cent of the Peacebuilding Fund focuses on gender equality and women's rights. We will continue building on that important work in the coming years.

The sheer number of conflicts I have touched upon is more evidence that we spend much more money and resources managing conflicts than on preventing and building peace. We need to seriously review our priorities and resources across the peace continuum, while stressing investment in prevention and peacebuilding. Across all those challenges, the world needs a strong and effective United Nations to deliver results. Our reforms have been crucial, and we have made significant progress over the past few years. As we build on those gains, the continued support of member States is pivotal, particularly with respect to the annual programme budget.

Our responses to the five emergencies I have laid out today will determine the course of the planet and of its people for decades to come. We must go into emergency mode and put out the five-alarm fire by fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, reforming the global financial system to ensure a just recovery, while tackling the climate crisis, putting humankind at the centre of the digital world and frontier technologies and delivering sustaining peace. My report on *Our Common Agenda*, which transcends the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, offers a road map to gather the people of the world together in solidarity to address those governance challenges and reinvigorate multilateralism for the twenty-first century. Together let us make 2022 the year in which we forge a new, more hopeful and equal path.

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

As mentioned earlier, I will now suspend the meeting for an informal meeting. The formal meeting will then resume for delegations to deliver statements under agenda item 112.

The meeting was suspended at 10.40 a.m.