



# General Assembly

Seventy-eighth session

**6**th plenary meeting  
 Wednesday, 20 September 2023, 9 a.m.  
 New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Francis . . . . . (Trinidad and Tobago)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Sitaldin (Suriname), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.*

## Address by Mr. Wavel Ramkalawan, President of the Republic of Seychelles

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Seychelles.

*Mr. Wavel Ramkalawan, President of the Republic of Seychelles, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Wavel Ramkalawan, President of the Republic of Seychelles, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Ramkalawan:** First of all, I wish to congratulate Ambassador Dennis Francis on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session and to extend our best wishes for success in his tenure of office. We also thank his predecessor, Ambassador Csaba Kőrösi, for his steadfast leadership over the preceding session.

Trust and solidarity form the bedrock of a functional multilateral order. Seventy-eight years ago, the United Nations was founded with the aim of preventing future global conflicts, promoting international cooperation and maintaining peace and security among nations.

The lessons of history are clear: an unwavering commitment to meaningful cooperation and dedication to global peace and security are essential to enhance human existence and prevent the recurrence of past tragedies. As the challenge to global peace, security and prosperity takes on new dimensions, the lessons of the past become even more relevant. The world stands at the brink, facing conflicts, wars and human-induced disasters, while countless people continue to struggle for a decent existence. Disunity and distrust threaten to paint a bleak future, devoid of hope and possibilities. Overcoming that predicament demands that we find common ground amid division.

As we gather here today at the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, we are confronted with the urgent need to rebuild trust and reignite global solidarity in order to accelerate action on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Only through collective action can we achieve the vision of a better world for all. At the heart of our discussion lies the 2030 Agenda, a transformative blueprint for sustainable development. It serves as a road map for eradicating poverty, promoting human rights, protecting our planet and ensuring that no one is left behind.

However, as we review our progress, it is evident that we are falling short of our targets, and the global pandemic has further exacerbated the challenges before us. Now more than ever, we must renew our commitment to the SDGs and take decisive action to fulfil our promises. We are lagging behind. At the midway point for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

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Development, it is crucial that we accelerate our joint efforts to make transformative advancements on achieving the SDGs. The *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023* paints a sombre picture of lost progress or regression on more than 30 per cent of the targets, with vulnerable countries facing inequality, poverty, hunger and environmental degradation. Addressing those imbalances and advancing the SDGs can be achieved only through collective action.

To accelerate action on the SDGs, we must prioritize implementation at all levels. That necessitates the alignment of national policies, plans and strategies with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It requires robust institutions, capable of driving progress and delivering results. It demands innovative financing mechanisms, as well as increased investment in sustainable infrastructure, technology transfer and capacity-building. We must foster an enabling environment for entrepreneurship, innovation and inclusive economic growth, while also addressing the root causes of inequality, poverty and environmental degradation.

Furthermore, we must harness the power of partnerships. The achievement of the SDGs requires collaboration among Governments, civil society, the private sector and international organizations. By forging strategic alliances, we can leverage resources, expertise and influence to catalyse change. South-South cooperation, in particular, holds great potential for knowledge exchange and mutually beneficial development. We must also reaffirm our commitment to multilateralism, as the United Nations serves as the cornerstone of our collective efforts towards peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability.

Seychelles, through processes like the African Peer Review Mechanism and the voluntary national review, seeks to consolidate gains from prevailing political and socioeconomic successes. We stand ready to share our experiences and strengthen cooperation with other countries. However, rebuilding confidence in the SDGs requires transforming words into concrete actions.

First, development partners must deliver on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda by scaling up financing and the means of implementing the SDGs.

Secondly, international institutions should embrace reform to ensure that the unique needs of vulnerable countries are considered in access to development financing. Seychelles firmly believes in

the critical importance of adopting a multidimensional vulnerability index that fully responds to the needs of small island developing States (SIDS).

Thirdly, we need to leverage effective financing mechanisms, such as impact investments, public-private partnerships and debt relief, to yield greater results for development agendas such as Agenda 2063 and the forthcoming outcome of the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States in 2024.

The Secretary-General's SDG stimulus, aimed at transforming the global financial system, is commendable, and international financial institutions must collaborate to support our collective ambition for a sustainable future. Redressing those imbalances and advancing the SDGs will be achieved only if we work together.

If we are to make progress on our development agenda, we can no longer call what we are facing climate change. The point at which lives and livelihoods are lost with frightening frequency owing to environmental disasters means that we are living through a climate crisis.

Addressing the climate crisis is no longer optional. It is an immediate necessity. As the Secretary-General said, the era of global warming has transitioned into an era of global boiling, and leaders must lead to limit the rise in global temperatures to 1.5°C.

Seychelles is committed to renewable energy and energy efficiency, but as a small island developing State, it lacks the capacity and infrastructure to develop those solutions fully.

The countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the Group of 20, as major emitters, must take decisive action to lead in combating climate change. The establishment of the loss and damage fund is a positive step, but its operationalization is crucial to compensate those most at risk.

Nature-based solutions, exemplified by Seychelles' pioneering of blue bonds and the blue economy, showcase the potential for sustainable development. Transparent ocean governance offers opportunities for development and environmental protection. In that context, I pay tribute to the bold actions of SIDS such as Bermuda and Tonga, which have purposefully moved to harnessing wave energy as feasible solutions to independent and clean energy futures. Seychelles will continue the same

ambitious approach as we assume the presidency of the SIDS dock from Tonga.

Furthermore, the SIDS Coalition for Nature, launched by Seychelles, Belize, Cabo Verde and Samoa, is mobilizing support for ambitious biodiversity targets. That is clear evidence that SIDS continue to lead by example — doing more than their fair share to alleviate the pressure being exerted on our planet. It is through such trust-building cooperation that we will obtain impactful outcomes, as demonstrated by the recent adoption of the High Seas Treaty.

To achieve the SDGs and ensure peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all, we must embrace the interconnectedness of our world. Climate change knows no boundaries, poverty respects no borders and the quest for peace requires a collective effort. Seychelles, as a nation uniquely positioned amid the vast Indian Ocean, knows first-hand the significance of global cooperation in addressing climate change, ocean conservation, sustainable development and maritime security. Seychelles remains committed to its pioneering role in marine conservation, protecting vast areas of our ocean and marine ecosystems, but we cannot succeed alone. We call upon the global community to prioritize sustainability, transition to clean energy and preserve our ecosystems for the prosperity of all.

Last but not least, as we rebuild from the pandemic, we must do so with an unwavering commitment to inclusivity. No one should be left behind. We must invest in health-care systems, education and social safety nets that guarantee the well-being of every citizen. We must promote gender equality, empower youth and create opportunities for marginalized communities. Inclusivity is not just a goal; it is the cornerstone of a just and equitable world.

In conclusion, rebuilding trust is paramount. Trust is the foundation on which nations cooperate, and it is through trust that we foster meaningful partnerships and collaborations. We must rekindle trust among nations, between Governments and citizens, and across various sectors of society. That requires transparent and accountable governance, bolstered by an unwavering dedication to the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. By doing so, we can restore the faith of our people and mobilize their active participation in the pursuit of sustainable development.

Our success hinges on global solidarity. The challenges we face are interconnected and transcend

national boundaries. No nation can solve them in isolation. Therefore, we must strengthen our bonds of solidarity, cooperation and mutual support. That includes sharing experiences, knowledge and best practices, as well as providing assistance to those most in need. The principle of leaving no one behind should guide our actions, ensuring that the most vulnerable among us receive the support they require.

Let us rise above our differences and work together for a better world. Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity is not just an option; it is the only way forward. Together, we can accelerate action on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, creating a world that embraces diversity, respects nature and ensures a future of peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all.

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Seychelles for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Wavel Ramkalawan, President of the Republic of Seychelles, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Address by Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda**

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Rwanda.

*Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Kagame:** This year the World Health Organization declared that the coronavirus disease pandemic is no longer a global health emergency. Recovery is well under way.

Unfortunately, the starting line was not the same for all of us across different regions. This year's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit once again raised the alarm about the slow pace of SDG implementation, and I commend the Secretary-General for the sharp focus he is bringing to that issue. Developing countries are constrained by a debt crisis, including higher costs

of borrowing. That is causing economic disparities to widen and slowing down our collective progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

The primary cause of this crisis is high interest rates in developed economies in order to correct for years of quantitative easing. At the same time, developing countries face exaggerated currency and political risk premiums that are simply unjustified. We need serious cooperation to address this issue.

In developing countries, we also have a responsibility to be accountable for the quality of our financial governance and the management of our natural resources. Increasing access to finance also requires reform of our global financial institutions. In that regard, we welcome the proposals of the Bridgetown Initiative, as well as the Paris Summit for a New Global Financing Pact.

Rwanda also supports the second replenishment of the Green Climate Fund to create the fiscal space for vulnerable nations to tackle climate change. Africa and small island developing States, many of which are represented in the Commonwealth, want to work with partners and be part of the solution. That is an important outcome of the recent Africa Climate Summit, held in Nairobi under the leadership of President William Ruto.

However, we must not only cool down our climate, but we must also cool down our conflicts. Today there is no sign of ongoing conflicts ending anytime soon. We do not even see hope, from those with the most influence, that an end is in sight. Innocent lives are left alone to carry the burden of this instability. That is a profound injustice.

The migration crisis is a case in point. Every year, migrants and refugees undertake dangerous journeys in search of a better future. Rwanda remains committed to working with partners, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to contribute to a durable solution. That decision is informed by our experience, knowing first-hand the pain of losing everything and not having a place to call home. That is part of our promise to leave no one behind. We continue to need a more effective forum to manage global crises. That is why the United Nations was created in the first place.

However, that does not absolve any country or region of the responsibility to address the governance shortfalls that are the root causes of instability. In that

regard, I welcome the Secretary-General's report on a New Agenda for Peace.

Bilateral interventions, to which Rwanda contributes actively in various places, can provide a rapid response to a crisis situation. But to have lasting effect, they need to pave the way for multilateral engagement and internal political progress. No matter the number of troops deployed, the mindset should be to get results that serve the interests of the people on the ground. Paying lip service to peace and getting lost in the process and formalities serve only to confirm the selective attention of some in the international community.

We still have a long way to go. Africa urgently needs to be fully represented in entities where decisions concerning our future are made. Just as urgently, Africa must be fully prepared to speak with one voice. Ultimately, a more effective development cooperation framework must give equal weight to everyone's needs and priorities. That is what builds fair and equal partnerships and a more just and peaceful world. That is what we all claim to want, even as we too frequently fall short.

In that spirit, allow me to commend the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), led by Achim Steiner, for the Timbuktoo initiative to strengthen the African start-up innovation ecosystem. This week, the International Telecommunication Union, led by Doreen Bogdan-Martin, together with UNDP, unveiled a major new initiative on inclusive digital public infrastructure. Rwanda is very happy to be associated with those efforts, which reflect the United Nations at its best.

For Rwanda, the source of our solidarity comes from our commitment to never allowing a repetition of the tragedy that was inflicted on us nearly 30 years ago. We continue to remain grateful to all those who have accompanied us on our journey as we plan to commemorate the genocide against the Tutsi for the thirtieth time in April 2024.

In conclusion, I look forward to welcoming leaders to the third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, which Rwanda will host in June 2024.

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Rwanda for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. Nikos Christodoulides, President of the Republic of Cyprus**

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cyprus.

*Mr. Nikos Christodoulides, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nikos Christodoulides, President of the Republic of Cyprus, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Christodoulides:** On 26 July 1946, in San Francisco, our predecessors pledged to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind; to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security; and to settle Members' international disputes by peaceful means and refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State. Those pledges were the promise of our predecessors, bestowed upon us for the future.

The Charter of the United Nations is a promise, not a reality. If we are complacent in our actions, the words are not worth the paper on which they are written. The horrors of the Second World War, which began in Europe and consumed the world, brought nations together. We assembled here today must live up to the obligations prescribed in the United Nations Charter to proclaim "never again". Make no mistake — we bear the responsibility to ensure that the world does not drift into the horror of war. That is our mandate. Do we have the courage to fulfil it? Do we have the resolve to make peace our top priority and to honour the foundations of the United Nations and ensure its continued relevance?

Our predecessors harboured an admirable sense of their own personal accountability for the future. I believe it is that sense of personal responsibility, at the individual level, that underpins the idea and reality of the United Nations throughout the world. Our predecessors also knew that the path to peace would be challenging. They had the resolve, the deep belief

and the knowledge that it would require the ability of all peoples to come together to make peace a reality so that their children and the generations to come — our children today — would not be scarred by another world war. But they also had the greatest of all impetuses. The world and the leaders that came before us inherited ashes, not institutions. They had no choice but to look to multilateralism, international law and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States.

Today, as we stand on the shoulders of our predecessors, we remain accountable to deliver on the vision of peace that sparked the creation of this resilient Organization. Will we be worthy and equal to the challenge? Can we act with a sense of urgency, without which we too will fail?

As a historian by training, I believe adamantly that history serves as an invaluable compass and the most valuable source of lessons. More than seven decades after the establishment of the United Nations, the war in Ukraine has shaken the world. It reminds us that "never again" is both a rallying cry and a sacred, fragile promise that we need to protect with all our resolve. Cyprus condemns in the strongest terms any breach of international peace and security effected through military action by any State against the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of another State. We stand — in that instance of the violation of international law and in every such instance — on the right side of history.

Since the very first day of the aggression against Ukraine, the people of Cyprus — one third of them still displaced as a result of foreign aggression against their own country — have displayed solidarity, in deeds and not just in words, with the people of Ukraine. We do that because we remember. We do that because it is the right thing to do. We call for the immediate cessation of hostilities and encourage the parties to engage in constructive dialogue and negotiation. The world must support that effort, not only because history demands it but also to ensure that the world steps back from the edge of a war that could reduce this institution to rubble.

The invasion of Ukraine is not the first instance since the Second World War in which the use of force has been used against a sovereign nation in Europe. Just as in Ukraine, in Cyprus the United Nations Charter and international law continue to be violated. In 1974, Türkiye invaded Cyprus, and since then, 49 years on, it has occupied European territory, and the

people of Cyprus — Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots — continue to suffer the consequences of invasion, occupation and division. They are deprived of their fundamental freedoms and human rights. Europe, which decades ago witnessed the worst horrors humankind has ever committed against itself, remains fractured as long as Cyprus is divided.

Having been born in 1973, only a few months before Türkiye invaded Cyprus, I have witnessed my people mourn, persevere and rebuild, forever with a burning desire for peace and reunification. The invasion violently displaced hundreds of thousands of Cypriots, and Türkiye continues to occupy approximately 37 per cent of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus. The families of missing persons desperately await information on the fate of their loved ones. The enclaved stoically await the end of the division.

One of the lessons we are reminded of by the recent invasion of Ukraine is that, in the absence of a lasting, viable peace, the resulting fragility can lead to destabilization, with far-reaching consequences not just for the country concerned but for the region to which it belongs and the world at large. Ukraine has exemplified, in the darkest manner, that a threat to peace somewhere is a threat to peace everywhere. In the absence of a peace path and process in Cyprus, there is a serious risk — one that we have seen materialize in the recent past — of further violations of international law, which creates instability, with ramifications well beyond Cyprus.

We have witnessed the Turkish military forces perpetrate further violations in Varosha, the fenced area of Famagusta. Since 1974, Varosha has been held hostage and rendered a ghost town, contrary to the Security Council resolutions that call for its return to its lawful inhabitants, who left their livelihoods, dreams and hopes between those fences. We have witnessed — in our maritime zones and most recently in the buffer zone — attacks on United Nations peacekeepers by Turkish forces that have horrified and alerted us once again to the urgency of peace in Cyprus. That is why the resumption of negotiations, firmly anchored on the agreed framework, is my absolute priority. The current status quo cannot be the future of Cyprus. It cannot be the future for Cypriots.

As President of the Republic of Cyprus, I believe in peaceful coexistence because, despite growing up in a divided country, I also grew up in a country filled

with the hope of reunification and heard stories of all Cypriots living together in peace, united by the land they shared. The new generation of Cypriots is also eager for peace, and that gives me hope and courage. Ahead of my journey to New York, I received a plethora of messages from my Turkish Cypriot compatriots, particularly from the younger generation, calling on me to exert every effort to reunify Cyprus. My message from this rostrum to my Turkish Cypriot compatriots and to all Cypriots is that I hear their call for peace. I understand their concerns and assure them that I will spare no effort to make our common dream of reunification and peace on our island a reality. I want to be able to tell them that the world, the United Nations, the living words of the Charter of the United Nations, also hear their call for peace.

I stand at the General Assembly for the first time, fully aware of the responsibility that has been bestowed upon me to do my utmost to safeguard the future of the Cypriot people — Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots alike — who want to end the division of their country, to co-exist and co-create. Working towards peace in Cyprus is my absolute priority, and I want to take this opportunity to also send a personal message to President Erdoğan. There is not, and never will be, another basis for the settlement of the Cyprus question other than that dictated by Security Council resolutions. Illegality stemming from invasion, aggression and the use of force cannot be recognized.

Cyprus and Turkey are neighbours, bound by geography. Peace in Cyprus will send a resounding message of peace in a region and a world that desperately need it. It will also change the geopolitical map of our neighbourhood, with a ripple effect in Europe, the wider Eastern Mediterranean and throughout European Union-Turkey relations. Gunboat diplomacy and strong-arm tactics belong to the past. They are not the tools of visionary leaders. This is our time to bring the United Nations Charter to life — a Charter for peace between and among us. No one stands to gain from conflict and division. We and the generations that will come after us stand to gain from dialogue and from good-neighbourly relations. I say then to Mr. Erdoğan: let us work together guided by a vision of peace. Let us build a brighter future for our countries through dialogue and respect for international legality.

In this great Hall, we all feel the weight of history on our shoulders. The great women and men who gave us this Organization and its institutions expect

us to strengthen and grow them and take personal responsibility for their future. I am here today with clarity of purpose and determination. The sole effective medium for addressing the risk of instability generated by the absence of a peace path is to pave a path and foster dialogue through which the positions and concerns of all sides can be addressed and discussed in good faith.

I stand ready to negotiate boldly and courageously on the Cyprus question in good faith, always within the agreed United Nations framework that calls for a bizonal, bicomunal federation with political equality, as defined by the relevant Security Council resolutions. At a time when international legality is under attack, international law and Security Council resolutions must prevail. I am committed to negotiating a settlement that will safeguard fundamental freedoms and human rights and the interests of all my Cypriot compatriots — Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians and Latins — all equal; a comprehensive settlement that will allow them to prosper in coexistence and peace, free of any anachronistic dependencies and system of guarantees that have no place in a European country. That is why the resumption of peace negotiations based on the agreed framework, while preserving the acquis of the previous round of negotiations, is essential.

As the Security Council has resolved, it is high time for the United Nations to become a driving force of dialogue by, as a first step, appointing an envoy on the Cyprus problem to explore and prepare the ground for the resumption of negotiations. The United Nations and its Secretary-General have the responsibility, prescribed in the United Nations Charter, to act as a catalyst for peace in Cyprus. In doing so, the United Nations can be facilitated by the European Union, which also has the tools necessary and has expressed its commitment to delivering so as to reunify its last divided member State. Just like the United Nations, the European Union is also a project of peace. The European Union can — and must — act decisively, with all the means at its disposal, to drive the reunification of its last divided member State and, in doing so, contribute to peace in Europe, the wider Middle East and indeed the world.

The theme of this year's session of the General Assembly focuses on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a view to achieving peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all. The achievement of the SDGs requires universal efforts and transformative

solutions. The climate emergency and climate change know no borders.

Our own region, the Eastern Mediterranean, is especially vulnerable in that regard. The raging wildfires and floods during the summer were a sombre reminder of the fact that we are failing to act, at our own peril. We have regrettably all observed nature's wrath, from the storms in countries of our region to those in countries such as Libya, in which thousands so tragically lost their lives. To that end, Cyprus is actively participating in a new international climate change initiative to address the specific needs and challenges that countries in our neighbourhood are facing to advance mitigation actions. The Climate Ambition Summit, which is being held today, is a critical milestone in confirming our collective political will to achieve the transition to a climate-resilient global economy.

At the same time, recognizing that human rights are essential for lasting peace and sustainable development, we must ensure that they guide the solutions to our challenges. The international human rights agenda is a priority policy for Cyprus, and it is exactly for that reason that we announced our candidacy for the Human Rights Council for the period 2025–2027. As a European Union member State, we are committed to taking action against gender-based violence, and we have also joined the Secretary-General's circle of leadership on the prevention of, and response to, sexual exploitation and abuse at the United Nations.

In 1946, Winston Churchill declared that the dangers and difficulties of establishing the conditions of freedom and democracy and permanently preventing war will not be removed by closing our eyes to them or by a policy of appeasement towards aggressors. What is needed is real action. And the longer that is delayed, the more difficult it will be and the greater the dangers will become.

Cyprus is at the crossroads of Europe and the Middle East, in a part of the world that is no stranger to conflict and instability. However, we are convinced that the Eastern Mediterranean and the wider Middle East are changing the narrative of being a region in turmoil. We can become a hub of stability, peace and cooperation — an exemplar of the change capable in the twenty-first century. Cyprus seeks to act as a facilitator for that common vision and has come together with its immediate neighbours — Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Greece — to build a solid

network of cooperation that is underpinned by a vision to make the Mediterranean Sea a sea of peace, cooperation and prosperity. We shall continue on that path of multilateralism, anchored on respect for international legality, and we call on all countries of the region that share those values to join us. That, after all, is the essence of the guiding principles that founded the United Nations 78 years ago.

I come before the Assembly today to ask for us all to work together towards peace. It is nothing new or groundbreaking, but it is world-changing. And we need to remind ourselves every day that it is within our reach and responsibility.

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Cyprus for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Nikos Christodoulides, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Address by Mr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia**

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Namibia.

*Mr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Geingob:** Namibia congratulates the President on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session. Allow me to use this opportunity to pledge to him the commitment of Namibia to supporting the priorities he has set out, namely, peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability. Namibia would also like to thank his predecessor, Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, for steering with diligence the work of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly.

Let me state that Namibia agrees with Secretary-General António Guterres, who a few months ago said,

“Unless we act now, the 2030 Agenda will become an epitaph for a world that might have been”.

Therefore, the theme of the current session, “Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity: accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals towards peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all”, is fitting.

With the onset of the coronavirus disease, the number of people living in extreme poverty rose for the first time in a generation. That demonstrates the fact that, at the midpoint to the global Goals, we face the stark reality that we will miss our Goals and targets. The seventy-eighth session serves as a clarion call to reset and work in the true spirit of partnership for better results on the ground. Indeed, the world is in a state of flux, and progress is uneven. Taking cognizance of the interconnectedness between all the goals and targets, we should accelerate investment in health care, renewable energy, education, clean water and sanitation.

The terrifying gap between the wealthy and the marginalized is not just a moral concern but also a threat to political stability and harmony. We are therefore duty-bound to create an environment in which prosperity is shared and inclusive. In our collective pursuit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Namibia looks forward with hope and optimism to the Summit of the Future, to be held next year, as an opportunity to prioritize meaningful reforms that can reinvigorate the global goals in order to give impetus to the broader system-wide United Nations reform agenda. Namibia also welcomes UN 2.0 and the Quintet of Change, aimed at providing the United Nations family with cutting-edge capabilities in data, digital, innovation, foresight and expertise in order to deliver better and effective Member State support to accelerate development.

The health of a nation is the bedrock for all development activities. Today the General Assembly will adopt a political declaration on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. Pandemics have long been formidable adversaries that disproportionately wreak havoc on the socioeconomic fabric of developing countries. Those crises go beyond their immediate health implications, unravelling years of development progress, straining health-care systems and exacerbating existing socioeconomic disparities. We need to change the status quo. To do so, we must end vaccine apartheid. We need to ensure equitable access to health products. We need stronger commitments from wealthy nations on technology transfer, the removal of intellectual property barriers, and investments in



manufacturing in order to enable vaccine production in the global South.

I always say that inclusivity spells harmony and exclusivity spells conflict. The continued advocacy for gender equality is core in our collective journey towards a just and inclusive world. Therefore, advocating for gender equality is not only a matter of fairness but also an essential step towards unlocking innovation, diversity and social cohesion. We are indeed proud to be ranked eighth in the world by the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report 2023* for progress in closing the gender gap. In addition to having 44 per cent female representation in Parliament, we have women in the positions of Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister. The current Deputy Prime Minister has been selected by the ruling party to be a candidate for the presidency. Very soon after I leave the Office of President in one year's time, she may be the President to come and stand here. Two thirds of our key banking institutions are headed by women. In the same vein, we believe in promoting inclusive and effective governance that ensures that our young people are integrated into decision-making structures to play their part in the future they have helped to shape.

Rapid advances in technology, quantum computing and artificial intelligence are transforming the global landscape, offering unprecedented challenges and opportunities for growth and development. Therefore, developing countries should not be left behind in the digital revolution. Access to technology can bridge gaps in education, health care and economic development, propelling nations towards progress. We must navigate technological challenges and harness opportunities by fostering an environment that is conducive to technology transfer, technology adoption, skills development and collaboration.

As we march towards the twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change for the final global stocktake, we are acutely aware that the energy transition is not only a necessity in combating climate change but also an opportunity for economic development. Consistent with their pledges made at the United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Paris in 2015, developed nations must provide financial and technological support to enable developing countries to shift to cleaner energy sources without hampering development.

Three years ago, during the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, Namibia boldly announced its intention to change its economic structure by leveraging innovative financial tools to mobilize sustainable climate financing in order to combat climate change. One year later in Glasgow, Scotland, on the margins of COP 26, we announced the development of large-scale green hydrogen projects that would provide the world with the clean molecules needed to decarbonize hard-to-abate sectors. Today we have more than five such projects under development and are looking to deploy more than \$20 billion in order to develop our world-class renewable energy potential to give our future generations a fighting chance against a warming planet.

Developing a new synthetic fuels industry in Namibia is not just an opportunity to fight climate change; indeed, it also offers an unparalleled opportunity for green industrialization. Namibia has now attracted new industries that are looking to make use of the cheap clean electricity and molecules to be produced in Namibia. One such pioneering example is Project Oshivela by HyIron, which plans to use Namibian-produced green hydrogen to deliver the first industrial production of iron at net-zero emissions. During the first phase of the project in 2024, an annual output of 15,000 tons of direct reduced iron is planned. Project Oshivela will be one of the biggest primary production sites of green iron worldwide and is expected to sequester 27,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions per year — equivalent to 50 per cent of the carbon dioxide emissions of Namibia's entire power industry today.

In order to transport the clean molecules to their final destination, shipping — which is yet another hard-to-abate sector — will also need to deploy innovative solutions. That is why Namibia is now developing green shipping corridors with the Mærsk Mc-Kinney Møller Center for Zero-Carbon Shipping as we look to map and fund the development of carbon-neutral maritime value chains through the production, transportation, storage and consumption of clean fuels and carbon-free products made in Namibia and traded with the world. We are working with Compagnie Maritime Belge, a Belgian shipping company, on plans to build a clean ammonia-bunkering facility in Walvis Bay, at a cost of more than €2.2 billion, in partnership with Namibia's own Olthaver and List Group. On 28 September this year, that partnership — named Cleanergy — is

expected to reveal plans to construct its first Namibian green hydrogen multimodal service station.

I always say that we do not make peace with our friends; we make peace with our enemies. Punitive measures imposed for more than half a century on the Republic of Cuba have brought untold hardships that have disenfranchised the Cuban people. The embargo against the Cuban people remains unjust, and it must therefore be lifted. Namibia appeals to the United States of America to remove the Republic of Cuba from the list of State sponsors of terrorism, as there is no evidence to support such a classification. Selective punitive measures against Zimbabwe and Venezuela must also be lifted, as those measures constitute the greatest obstacle to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The United Nations Charter remains an important source of inspiration, reflecting the commonly agreed values of diplomacy and peaceful coexistence. We regard the Charter-enshrined right to self-determination for all peoples as essential. That rings true for the people of Western Sahara. While our right to self-determination has been upheld, the people of Western Sahara continue to remain under occupation. We recall how Morocco supported our right to self-determination, and we now call on it to do the same for the people of Western Sahara.

Similarly, the people of Palestine yearn to transition from the inhumane conditions of oppressive rule. Namibia is therefore pleased by the decision of the General Assembly to submit to the International Court of Justice a request for an advisory opinion on the legal consequences arising from the ongoing violation by Israel of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

The challenges we face today are not insurmountable. By holding hands and by renewing our commitment to multilateralism, we can reverse the worst effects of the unprecedented global challenges of global warming, global inequality, pandemics and conflicts. By holding hands, we have it within us to act now and build the world that we want. In that world, no one should feel left out.

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Namibia for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania**

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Romania.

*Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Iohannis:** The world as we know it is enduring profound and rapid transformations under the impact of the many challenges that humankind must face. At the same time, against that very difficult background, we continue to defend our core values, the Charter of the United Nations and effective multilateralism. Our decisions are critical for the future of humankind. We, the leaders, are called upon now to take decisive actions for the generations to come, in a spirit of solidarity and shared responsibility, and to stand up for the rules-based international order and full respect for international law.

Romania is a direct neighbour to the continued war of aggression of Russia against Ukraine. And we have acted, with all our energy, to make a solid contribution to regional and international security and stability. That war has demonstrated that the Black Sea needs more global attention, as it is of strategic importance for transatlantic security. Romania also stands for more efficient multilateralism, alongside like-minded partners across the globe, in the fight for freedom and democracy. From day one of the war, Romania has acted in full solidarity with the brave Ukrainian people. We will continue to provide safe haven and to protect refugees coming from our neighbour, as we have done for the more than 6 million Ukrainians who have already crossed our borders. We fully support the Ukrainian peace formula as the most suitable framework conducive to a fair, lasting and sustainable peace. We also support the pursuit of international law and accountability, so that all those responsible for atrocities are brought to justice.

Our region, the wider Black Sea area, must be protected against the effects of Russia's war against Ukraine and its hybrid war and malign interference. Romania has consistently argued that it is necessary to keep the so-called protracted or frozen conflicts in the region high on our agenda. Romania has also been at the forefront of supporting, in a multidimensional manner, the vulnerable partners in the region. We have therefore offered substantial support to our neighbour the Republic of Moldova, the country most affected by the war — after, of course, Ukraine itself.

While we work in the present to defend our values, we should also continue to project a sustainable future. We therefore continue to actively pursue the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Food insecurity and energy and economic instability affect the entire world, especially the most vulnerable in the global South. By terminating the Black Sea Grain Initiative and attacking Ukrainian ports, Russia is further exacerbating the global food crisis. We once again urge the Russian Federation to cease blocking the Initiative.

As a direct neighbour to Ukraine and a responsible and solidary international actor, Romania has played an active role in global food security efforts. Since the beginning of the war, we have facilitated the delivery of more than 25 million tons of Ukrainian grain. Romania will not let down our most vulnerable partners who need our support, especially those from the least developed countries, including from Africa. We are also investing in, and making a contribution to, African institutional resilience, peacekeeping and capacity-building.

Through our sustainable development strategy, we are advancing efficient, transparent and citizen-centred governance. Our second voluntary national review, which was issued this July, is proof that we are on the right track, as we have already achieved 62 per cent of our national targets for 2030. However, as we are keenly aware that we are lagging behind globally, we place our trust in the upcoming Sustainable Development Goals Summit and the Summit of the Future. We are also aware of the importance of financing for development. Romania is committed to increasing its official development assistance to 0.33 per cent of its gross national product by 2030. Moreover, we will contribute to the European Union's objective of allocating 0.20 per cent of its collective official development aid to least developed countries.

The devastating effects of climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, energy insecurity and disinformation are our global concerns. Romania's efforts to combat those challenges are visible. For instance, we are committed to the swift ratification and implementation of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction. We were also part of the core group promoting the General Assembly's request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the obligations of States in respect of climate change. We remain vocal in supporting climate education — a priority for Romania and for me personally. I also strongly believe that the climate-security nexus should be featured more prominently on the United Nations agenda, including at the Security Council. We hope that the Climate Ambition Summit and the twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will mobilize the political will to keep the 1.5°C target alive. We must accelerate a just energy transition and emissions reduction, while also ensuring energy security.

Countering natural disaster risks also requires joint efforts, and the Emergency Platform initiative is a step in the right direction. Romania actively participates in international assistance missions, shares best practices and offers training on response measures. In our endeavours, we should use the opportunities created by digitalization, innovation and new technologies, as well as strategic investments in renewables, as enablers of sustainable development. At the same time, Romania welcomes the Secretary-General's initiative to issue a code of conduct on information integrity on digital platforms.

In the current geopolitical context, the key to efficient multilateralism is ensuring its successful reform, which cannot be delayed any longer. An enlarged Security Council could include important additional voices from the Group of African States, from various small island developing States and even from the smallest regional group — the Group of Eastern European States.

As we celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Romania strongly advocates for the strengthening of the United Nations human rights system, including for its adequate funding. As a member of the Human Rights

Council, we remain an active supporter of democracy, the rule of law, non-discrimination, the freedom of expression and children's and women's rights. At the same time, full respect for, and the promotion of, international law remain at the very core of our foreign policy. As an example, Romania is advocating for an enlarged acceptance by States of the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice, and we count on members' support for our solid candidature for the world Court.

Next year's Summit of the Future represents an excellent opportunity to find joint global solutions. The pact for the future must provide the United Nations with the tools to deliver, for us and for future generations. We must stand for our people and for the future we want.

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Romania for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. Chandrikapersad Santokhi,  
President of the Republic of Suriname**

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Suriname.

*Mr. Chandrikapersad Santokhi, President of the Republic of Suriname, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Chandrikapersad Santokhi, President of the Republic of Suriname, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Santokhi:** I am proud to observe that this organ is under the dedicated leadership of our Caribbean sister nation Trinidad and Tobago and that a distinguished citizen and experienced diplomat of that country is at the helm of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session.

This is my fourth statement to this global organ, and I am afraid to conclude that not much has changed for the better in that time with regard to the essential elements of peace, prosperity and climate in our world. On the other hand, the challenges and crises have increased and deepened. I do not need to mention

those crises, because we know them all and refer to them every single time we speak to an international or regional audience. The more important and relevant matter at hand is to decide what to do about them. We make promises that are often not kept. We express noble goals, but their delivery is poor. That cannot go on. Business as usual cannot be our mantra. No country is spared the effects of those crises, especially developing countries, such as my own country, Suriname. And no country can solve those challenges alone.

It is worth mentioning that we humans are responsible for those crises, and we must take responsibility for them. We must also exercise collective leadership to solve those problems effectively. A new approach to conceptualizing our relationships is needed to adequately address those crises. We need a new kind of multilateralism that is more just and effective and that compels us to unite — one that will demonstrate respect for, and commitment to, international law and cooperation. It is therefore of the utmost importance to transcend national interests and look to our common goals. We must put aside ideological differences in order to constructively deliver for the prosperity of our people and the protection of our planet. We simply cannot expect durable solutions in a rapidly changing world if we do not reset the buttons.

As world leaders, we have stressed that upholding firm commitments to international principles and international law, the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and effective multilateralism are a sine qua non condition for addressing those global challenges and threats. The United Nations role in defending and upholding those principles through dialogue, constructive engagement and concrete action remains crucial. A strong, determined and united United Nations is therefore a must.

The multiple global and national crises, such as the debt burden, the domestic effects of climate change, the financial-economic downturn following the coronavirus disease pandemic and the impact of the war raging in Ukraine, have put tremendous pressure on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals on a major scale. Limited financial and technical resources had to be allocated for many emergencies just to make sure that no one was left behind. Let us remember that building resilience and leaving no one behind is not a choice. I want to reiterate that, for small developing countries with low-lying coastal areas, the fiscal pressure due to other crises beyond our doing

is a real and daily problem. However, I remain of the view that the earmarked transformation envisioned in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development remains both possible and essential.

As we know, food security is a major challenge. Just a few days ago in Cuba, I stressed the importance of science, technology and innovation for increasing food production and optimizing the inputs needed to make agriculture more productive. During my visit, I personally experienced the negative impact of the long-standing embargo — one that does not achieve what it was meant for. The Caribbean Community's food security programme is an example of efforts to reduce the region's food import bill by 25 per cent by 2025 and promote local production with modern technology.

The reach and impact of digital technologies will only continue to increase in the coming years, and it is crucial for the benefits of those innovations to be leveraged to ensure an accessible, transparent, safe and secure digitally transformative environment. To implement that comprehensive strategy in a coherent manner, my country recently designed and adopted a national digital strategy for the period 2023–2030.

The political, humanitarian and security environment in Haiti is deteriorating. While I appreciate the efforts made to date to assist in finding an immediate solution, many more political efforts need to be made to translate those intentions into real actions. The people of Haiti are looking to the regional and international community for assistance. At the same time, the Haitian stakeholders, who are divided into opposing groups, must demonstrate the will to engage in dialogue and reach a consensus for a way forward in the shortest time possible.

Another climate conference, the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, is on our doorstep as we experience the reality of the increased intensity of the devastating global impact of climate change. It is regrettable to admit that, despite some efforts, the world is still far from reaching the required decrease in emissions to prevent irreversible damage to our global environment and society. And we are bearing the brunt of that. Suriname is currently experiencing extraordinarily high temperatures, resulting in challenges with regard to the availability of drinking water. Our inland areas are increasingly flooded by heavy rainfall, and our coastal areas are

threatened by sea level rise. As a consequence, the people living in remote parts of our vast interior are deprived of work, education and basic utilities, and food security is under threat. As one of the only three carbon-negative countries in the world, Suriname remains committed and continues to play its part in protecting the planet through national actions but also by engaging in strategic international public and private partnerships that will help to ensure that we remain carbon-negative now and in the future.

We cannot go to Dubai in less than two months and hear the same analyses, stories, policies, speeches and promises with noble goals, only to have nothing happen after that. Yes, it takes too long to make the required decisions that will have a meaningful impact and improve our living conditions. We need easier access to climate financing to implement mitigation and adaptation policies. We must walk the talk where loss and damage are concerned. We must join the efforts that call for compensating highly forested countries for so-called removal credits, because so far those countries have been acting as carbon sinks for the whole world without any compensation. Many of us have raised the issue of urgent and comprehensive reform of the international financial architecture as the most critical action needed to address the economic, financial and environmental challenges facing developing countries. An integral part of that reform process must be the discussion of new ways to classify countries. I ask all of us to contribute to the proposed multidimensional vulnerability index.

My country, Suriname, is on the cusp of promising commercial development of newfound oil and gas resources. Those developments and capital generation will enable us to provide our population with a social, health and education system that will facilitate increased production in other sectors, creating a sustainable future for our current and succeeding generations. Over the past three years, Suriname has undergone a financial and economic reform process in which my country's citizens had to sacrifice in many ways. Coupled with the coronavirus disease pandemic, the impact of climate change, the effects of the war in Eastern Europe and a high debt burden, the impact on our people has been even worse.

I want to assure the international community that my Government is committed to remaining a carbon-negative country with an enormous biodiversity pool and a low deforestation level. During the Amazon

Summit held last August in Belém do Para, in Brazil, we and seven other countries committed to better management of the Amazon region. We even committed to stopping deforestation by the year 2030. We are committed to the application of high international environmental standards so that the impact on the environment can be minimized. We are doing that to finance our committed transition to an economy based primarily on renewable, non-carbon-based energy generation by 2060.

With a certain degree of pride, I would like to announce that we recently registered our carbon credits for the first time on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change registry. That was done with our own, albeit limited, capabilities. We shall see how the market responds to those new resources. All of those commitments are being made to contribute to saving the planet and life on Earth. I call on all heavy polluters to start that process as well and not to try to manage, tax or punish environmentally friendly production in developing countries, which are the least responsible for the climate crisis. Real change must come from the more developed countries in particular.

In conclusion, together let us harness our collective strengths, knowledge and determination to create a world where resilience and inclusivity are not just aspirations but realities. Only through joint efforts can we build a future where no one is left behind and where the Sustainable Development Goals become a shining beacon of hope and progress for all. We owe that to our current and future generations. I appeal to all of us to work constructively and collectively towards a new and better world order and to recommit to the original goals of the Charter of the United Nations, only now with more dedication, passion and love for one another.

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Suriname for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Chandrikapersad Santokhi, President of the Republic of Suriname, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Address by Mr. Zeljko Komšić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

*Mr. Zeljko Komšić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Zeljko Komšić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Komšić** (*spoke in Bosnian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): Building on the theme of this year's session of the General Assembly, "Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity: Accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals towards peace, prosperity, progress and the sustainability for all", from this important rostrum, allow me to talk about vital elements from the point of view of the small but proud State of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

For its part, Bosnia and Herzegovina has given support to the 2030 Agenda, especially its Goals, which are fully related to creating a world and an environment among United Nations members so that we as States and our societies can train and prepare ourselves to implement all the steps that can lead us to self-sustainable development. However, in today's world, often dominated by war and various geopolitical goals, that will be very difficult to achieve, at least in the way it was planned in the 2030 Agenda. For that reason, I want to emphasize that our first step should be one that leads us to enduring peace. That is the world's first priority. From there we can move to other mutually connected actions that can prepare our countries and societies for solidarity and progress. Those actions are by no means easy, and they require a great deal of wisdom, planning and good management of all the processes and procedures that can help us implement the 2030 Agenda.

If we start with the theme of this year's session of the General Assembly, which talks about building trust and encouraging global solidarity, I would like to point out in a few sentences the elements that could possibly make achieving those goals difficult.

At the outset, I take this opportunity to remind the Assembly that migration is one of the elements that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is attempting to address systematically and through the implementation of specific governance. Although the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

recognizes migrants as agents of change and enablers for development in countries of origin, transit and destination, the Agenda primarily focuses on the migrant as a beneficiary of the ends of sustainable development, e.g. through greater protections, rights and transparency. Furthermore, the Agenda does not make reference to the broader concept of diasporas or to the role that they do and can play in development. That statement, taken from the document entitled *Migration in the 2030 Agenda* of the International Organization for Migration, is certainly true, but when it comes to the starting point of migration, that is, the situation on the ground in certain countries, we see several things that are undeniably happening.

The current form of migration management has reached a stage in which large and powerful countries, for their own benefit, are carrying out a certain type of selection of migrants in such a way as to select the best and most educated among them, such as doctors, engineers, scientists and other highly qualified persons, and are ushering them to larger countries where their knowledge and abilities are exploited exclusively for the benefit of those larger systems. In larger countries and larger systems, such selected migrants can be agents of change or bearers of various improvements, but at the same time the potential and capacities of the smaller countries from which the migrants are coming from are being weakened. Small countries, in addition to losing their most qualified personnel, are also losing all the investments they have made, including financial investments, in creating those highly qualified profiles.

Of course, it is completely clear that there is a form of migration in which large groups of people are trying to escape war and the horrors of war, but there is also what we call economic migration through which migrants are being directed based on their potential and capacities. In both cases of migration, large countries and their larger systems are the ones that are doing the selection and choosing the best profiles of migrants, in line with their needs and aspirations, while, at the same time, the systemic weakening of the small countries from which the migrants come from is taking place. What do I mean by that? In short, it is difficult to talk about building trust while larger countries and their large systems are taking over the population of smaller countries through migration and simultaneously the smaller countries are emptying out, resulting in the creation of an environment in which poverty develops and any form of economic or social development

is completely prevented. Therefore, the possibility of creating the prerequisites for self-sustainable development in smaller countries is under attack.

From the point of view of my country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is very easy to provide additional arguments and proof confirming that situation. In my country, there is a significant outflow of the population going to larger and more developed countries, mostly to countries we view as Western democratic countries. While investigating why our people, the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, decide to leave their country and seek better living conditions in other countries, we came to the conclusion that the fundamental reason for their departure is their belief that there is a lack of prospects in Bosnia and Herzegovina. When we considered what our people referred to in terms of the basic shortcomings with regard to the prospects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we saw that it was specifically the fact that the country's political system is not a complete democracy, but rather a form of ethnocracy or a system in which elections for Government institutions, the exercise of power and the distribution of jobs in the State, even in the real sector, are primarily based on membership of a particular ethnicity as a prerequisite. In such a system, one usually does not have the best people in key positions — people who, with their knowledge and abilities, can build a political, economic and social system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example. On the contrary, you have ethnically and politically suitable staff who can hardly be expected to lead the overall progress of the country. That value system has been in place for a very long time. In such a system, the key jobs are not performed by the best and most qualified people, but by the politically and ethnically suitable ones.

The current political system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, based exclusively on ethnic and then on political affiliation, completely degrades democracy as an important principle for creating an environment with equal opportunities for all people. Such a system, which guarantees participation in Government to certain political actors and their ethnically based political parties, has the form of former and current totalitarian systems, in which power is exercised in an autocratic manner through autocratically inspired political actors. As a result of that unfinished political system, the development of the country is slow, and such politics obstruct what, in my opinion, is one of the key goals of my country — its path to membership

in larger supranational systems, such as the European Union or NATO.

The irremovability or particularly difficult replaceability of the authorities creates such an environment where even the authorities themselves no longer work for the benefit of their citizens, because they feel that there is no need to do so. The distribution of political and social power is already guaranteed to them in advance by the system itself, a system based on ethnicity.

Our current political system is skilfully used by our Eastern and Western neighbours and by ethnic communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to which they claim national rights. They are running Bosnia and Herzegovina not with the primary aim of helping the members of those ethnic communities, but with the aim of dividing Bosnia and Herzegovina or making it meaningless as a State. Our two neighbours, through the ethnic communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to which they strive to claim every right, even 27 years after the aggression they carried out over Bosnia and Herzegovina, are in that manner attacking the sovereignty of our country, which makes it almost impossible to develop the democracy of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That practice also violates the minimum of inter-State trust because, unfortunately, our neighbours are not sincerely investing energy with the goal of building inter-State cooperation but are rather investing energy in weakening our State. One can see that this a problem, and it extends to the entire region of the Western Balkans, where there are different ideas, plans and intentions to change the internationally recognized borders and to reorganize the region into something that has no connection with democracy.

For such activities and policies, neighbouring countries very often have, at first glance, surprising and unexpected support from countries that we consider to be democratic liberal States and societies, but certainly also from those that are not democratic and that we recognize today as aggressor States with authoritarian regimes. Regretfully, there are many, both in the East and the West, who believe that their barely hidden support for those who want to completely control and ultimately divide Bosnia and Herzegovina will bring stability to the Western Balkans. We, who represent the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the United Nations, believe that this will not bring about stability or progress in the Western Balkans. Our neighbours cannot divide Bosnia and Herzegovina among themselves without

entering into mutual conflict. We will certainly not allow the division and disappearance of our thousand-year-old State at any cost no matter what anyone thinks about it.

That is why we believe that it is in the interest of the United Nations, if peace is to be preserved in the Western Balkans, to support the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its institutions. If the United Nations wishes to preserve peace in the Western Balkans, then it should support those who have not violated democratic and civilizational norms, have not committed genocide, were not part of joint criminal enterprises, did not destroy people's lives due to their ethnicity, did not destroy other people's temples or shrines and did not advocate revanchism or revenge. If such support is absent, then the responsibility and blame for destabilization does not lie with us, who will certainly not calmly and idly observe a new attempt to destroy our Bosnia and Herzegovina.

However, the fundamental problem of Bosnia and Herzegovina lies in the inequality of citizens within the political and electoral system, the result of which is a system of ethnic governance in the country, a system that is destined to be conflictual, in itself.

In addition, the ethnic system of exercising power in my country continuously creates space for nepotism and corruption in all segments of society, especially in Government institutions. As a consequence of the ethnic system of exercising power, we have nepotism in the selection of people to perform the most important political and economic jobs. The ethnic political system in my country generates and encourages nepotism and corruption the most, and nepotism and corruption are the elements that are most harmful to social cohesion and trust within a society.

That is why, for decades, we have not been able to create a society of equals and, with that, a society of equal opportunities, because employment through family connections and corruption pertaining to the most important positions make one lose hope in positive future prospects.

In that connection, allow me to ask an important question — how is it possible to build and achieve trust that will lead to achieving prerequisites for development when we do not actually have enough democracy in our country, when our right to democracy is being taken away and when an embargo to democracy is being imposed upon us, thus generating great uncertainty



among citizens and often prompting them to leave the country?

The latest interventions of the international representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, such as that of the High Representative, through legal violence and the suspension of the entity Constitution for 24 hours, which is an inconceivable precedent in the democratic world, did not remove obstacles to the normal functioning of the State, but rather strengthened the undemocratic ethnic principle and deepened the discrimination of citizens in the Constitution and the electoral law.

Democracy is the most important segment for building trust, both in our countries and globally. In order to create the prerequisites for self-sustainable development, it is very important that transitions in societies from former totalitarian, autocratic systems to systems based on full democracy end as soon as possible.

We therefore expect the support of actors from the international community, even though they occasionally resort to undemocratic tools for their own interests, like completely denying the possibility of developing democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Of course, we are fully aware that there are a number of United Nations Member States whose history and historical context make them uninterested in democracy and its development. On the other hand, some indicators tell us that over two thirds of the Member States are oriented towards democracy and its development. My point of view is therefore oriented in that direction.

I wish to add another important element that is indispensable in building trust for self-sustainable development — creating a system of full human rights, which ultimately offers a society of equality among people and citizens and, therefore, of equal opportunities, with possibilities for everyone.

Without a system of equals, it will be difficult to build trust in such a system, especially in a still post-war society, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is particularly true, considering that our society has suffered aggression from our western and eastern neighbouring countries, a direct consequence of which were atrocious war crimes and even the crime of genocide.

Such scenarios for Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be implemented, through political means this time, in times of peace, while continuously asking for support from various parts of the international community.

At the same time, regardless of the aforementioned scenarios, our obligation is to create internal prerequisites for building a society of equal people and equal citizens as one of the basic tools that will enable us to avoid future conflicts. Contained within the judgments of the eminent courts that deal with the protection of human rights, such as the European Court of Human Rights, there is a valuable resource for building a stable society in which the risk of internal conflict is reduced to a minimum. But those judgments also take away an effective mechanism for violating the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the hands of potentially aggressive politics of the neighbouring countries.

In short, that means that we, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, will have to change the entire societal paradigm and shift from ethnic political representation to civic political representation, which is the standard in the democratic world.

We must use this opportunity to draw the attention of the United Nations to something that, in my opinion — and I am sorry to say this — is the very uncivilized stance of the Government and the Prime Minister of our neighbouring country, which have rejected the latest judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the Kovačević case and have defended the very principles rejected in said judgment, such as the political principle of legitimate representation based on ethnicity, which is a generator of inequality among the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and a means by which the neighbours undermine the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That was done in such a way that it could be qualified as interference in the internal affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Disregard for the judgments of international courts, as voiced by the Prime Minister of a neighbouring country, is reminiscent of the attitudes towards international law that Vladimir Putin has adopted in the case of Ukraine.

However, this is not only about having a negative attitude towards the international standards of the United Nations, but also about a neighbour-led policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. Only when civic political representation is accepted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, through the implementation of the

judgments of the European Court of Human Rights and when, in parallel, the neighbourhood attacks on the sovereignty of the country stop — only then will we be able to participate in projects, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in our full capacity and more efficiently as an equal participant and actor of all planned activities.

When that time comes, we, as a country, will be ready and equipped to take on all challenges related to self-sustainable development, to build our mutual social trust as a society of equals and to be an active participant in building trust on a global level. I believe everyone shares my opinion that, in societies dominated by inequality, one cannot be a meaningful participant in promoting ideas of self-sustainable development through building trust and global solidarity for all.

First, we must reform our society so that it can understand the importance of solidarity for everyone, with a system that provides full equality and offers solidarity towards others on an equal footing.

In the conclusion of this address, I would like to emphasize that Bosnia and Herzegovina will actively work on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We will work on building trust and solidarity for all. By rejecting the discriminatory ethnic concept, we are simultaneously rejecting a system dominated by nepotism and corruption and thus bring our society into the ranks of democratic and mature societies. Then we will become a society and a country that can actively participate in world processes, based on the fundamental principles on which the current world order and what we call the international community. The transition process of our society can and should be relatively short, because the equality of all people is the basic premise of every modern democratic society. In that respect we count on the support of that part of the international community that can help us to that end. I am aware of the existence of other parts of the international community, which for their own geopolitical reasons will offer resistance in order to keep Bosnia and Herzegovina and the entire region of the Western Balkans in a continuous state of destabilization and tension. Such people do not want democracy, but rather ethnocracy, disorder and violence.

Lastly, I can say with certainty that Bosnia and Herzegovina has become a place in which democracy and its values are defended. And there are only two sides

in that regard — one that is in favour of democracy and its values and the other that is opposed to democracy because its goal is the establishment of autocratic systems that are undemocratic in character.

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Zeljko Komši, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana**

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Ghana.

*Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Akufo-Addo:** Ghana presents its compliments to the President and congratulates him on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session.

Ghana also uses this — the greatest of all platforms — to express the deep condolences and sympathies of its Government and its people to the Governments and the peoples of Morocco and Libya over the recent tragic events that have engulfed their countries.

I do not need to employ any hyperbole or find fancy words to state the reality of the situation that humankind currently faces. Our world is not a happy place today. Wherever we look and to whichever area of our lives we turn our attention, there is unhappiness, distrust and a loss of confidence in the structures that have guided the governance of the world since the end of the Second World War, nearly eight decades ago.

The theme chosen for the seventy-eighth session is “Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity: accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals towards peace,

prosperity, progress and sustainability for all". The choice of that theme implies that there is a general acknowledgement that things are not what they should be in our world. The mutual trust among nations, which is required to ensure harmony, has considerably diminished. The cohesion that we need to build the peace and prosperity of our societies is disintegrating and nearing Cold War lows. We do not seem to have any common values on which we can all agree, or common goals to which we all aspire. The fault lines are not just between the poor and the rich, the South and the North, or the developed and the developing countries. Even within well-established and rich countries, the tensions over trade, climate, political boundaries and geopolitical spheres of influence are palpable. Long-held definitions are being challenged, sacred truths and beliefs are being questioned or discarded outright and, in some instances, the deliberate peddling of blatant untruths has become acceptable.

The United Nations Organization, under whose auspices we, the nations of the world, are gathered for the annual review of the world, was established in the belief that our common humanity would be the overriding consideration in dealing with the problems that would invariably arise when we deal with one another. There is no doubt that the Organization has achieved a great deal in its 78 years of existence, of which we can all be justifiably proud. But it is also true that the reluctance of the nations that were the major Powers at the time of its founding to agree to any reform to reflect current realities has led to the undermining of the credibility of the United Nations and some of its organs, in particular the Security Council. Ghana is currently serving out the second year of its two-year term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. That is the fourth time that we have had the privilege of serving on the Council in the 66 years since we joined the United Nations, as the first post-colonial African nation to do so.

It has been a sad and disappointing experience for us. We have witnessed at first hand, over and over again, that the great Powers of the United Nations might be preaching democracy, fairness and justice around the world, but they are happy to practice the opposite here at the United Nations, prioritizing parochial interests over those of humankind. In 2017, the first time I addressed the General Assembly as President of my country (see A/72/PV.11), I spoke at length on the need for reform of the United Nations and of the Security Council in particular. I said then that the urgent need to reform

the Organization had been talked about and scheduled for a long time, but that somehow we had never found the courage and the will to execute it. I said then that Ghana supports United Nations reform, especially of the Security Council, as set out in the African Common Position on Security Council Reform based on the Ezulwini Consensus.

I said then that the time was long overdue to correct the long-standing injustice that the current structure and composition of the Security Council represent for the nations of Africa. After serving on the Council at this difficult time in the world, our views on the need for reform have been even more strongly reaffirmed. We cannot continue to preach democracy, equality and good governance around the globe, and we cannot insist on peace and justice in the world, when our global Organization is seen by the majority of its Members and the people of the world as being hampered by an unjust and unfair structure.

The Assembly has quite properly chosen the rebuilding of trust as critical for restoring stability and prosperity to our world. We cannot rebuild such trust when the Organization that should bring us together is seen by many as helping to perpetuate an unfair world order, which is reinforced by an inequitable, dysfunctional global financial architecture.

For the past year and a half, a full-scale war has been waged in the centre of Europe. The United Nations appears unwilling or unable to influence the events taking place in Ukraine. Ghana has sat on the Security Council throughout that period and can testify that the global solidarity we seek to reignite under the umbrella of the United Nations will happen only if, and when, it suits those who wield the mighty power of the veto. And, at the moment, there is nothing to show that those countries have any interest or inclination to make that happen. Ghana still believes that the Organization provides the best vehicle for the world to manage its hydra-headed problems, but it can function effectively and meet our expectations only when we reform the pillars upon which it rests. Anything short of that will continue to undermine its credibility.

I do not refer to the events in Ukraine and seek to pretend to ignore the tragic events in my own neighbourhood of West Africa and the Sahel. Instability in the Sahel and widespread terrorist activities have put West African countries under severe political pressure and economic strain. Several countries in the region

have lost vast stretches of territory to the rampaging terrorists. Coups d'état have re-emerged as what some mistakenly hoped would be the solution to the threats that confront their nations. We in the West African region are trying as best as we can, under the very trying conditions we face, to deal with the situation. We are convinced that the conflicts that continue to plague our continent, and our region in particular, would be more satisfactorily resolved if the international community were to support, and not undermine, the efforts of our regional and continental organizations to deal with them. Africans fought and died in the Second World War in defence of Europe and its allies and reset the world towards the path of peace and prosperity that their nations and citizens have enjoyed for decades now. It is surely time for the world to reciprocate in our time of need.

We in Ghana are holding firm to our belief in democracy as the best route to building the prosperous nation that is our aim. It is true that the economic dividends that many of our citizens justifiably expected from the democratic process have not come as fast as had been anticipated, but we are determined to hold fast to the course because we believe that ultimately it will succeed in delivering freedom and prosperity for the mass of our people. We are also obliged to countenance, for the first time in recent human history, not just the questioning of democracy and a deliberate campaign of disinformation against democracy but also the propagation of authoritarian rule as a faster route to economic advancement. The belief of young people in democracy as the governance model that is best suited to building peace and prosperity in our society is under systematic attack. The economic impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic and the impact of the war in Ukraine have only added to the pressure and the anxiety of our young people.

We can certainly also do without having to spend the huge amounts of money we currently spend on security, at our northern borders in particular. At this time, unhappily, we feel no sense of the international solidarity that we believe we should receive. It is surely in the interests of the whole world that West Africa should be peaceful and prosperous. We want our young people to be part of a peaceful and prosperous West Africa, rather than part of the thousands who arrive at an unwelcoming Europe after perilous journeys across the Sahara and the Mediterranean Sea.

We do not seek to shirk any responsibility for the problems we face that are of our own making, and it bears repeating that we are not craving for sympathy and do not want to be a scar on anybody's conscience. But we cannot — and the world should not — pretend that the current economic and social conditions of Africa have nothing to do with the historical injustices that have fashioned the structures of the world. It is time to acknowledge openly that much of Europe and the United States was built from the vast wealth harvested from the sweat, tears, blood and horrors of the transatlantic slave trade and the centuries of colonial exploitation. Maybe we should also admit that it cannot be easy to build confident and prosperous societies from nations that for centuries had their natural resources looted and their peoples traded as commodities.

For centuries, the world has been unwilling and unable to confront the realities of the consequences of the slave trade, but that is changing gradually, and it is time to bring the subject of reparations firmly to the fore. Granted that current generations are not the ones that engaged in the slave trade; however, that grand inhuman enterprise was State-sponsored and deliberate, and its benefits are clearly interwoven with the current economic architecture of the nations that designed and executed it. Reparations must be paid for the slave trade. No amount of money will ever make up for the horrors, but it would make the point that evil was perpetrated, that millions of productive Africans were snatched from the embrace of their continent and put to work in the Americas and the Caribbean without compensation for their labour. If there is any hesitation in some minds about the paying of reparations, it is worth considering the fact that, when slavery was abolished, the slave owners were compensated for the loss of the slaves, because the enslaved human beings were labelled as property, deemed to be commodities. Surely, that is a matter that the world must confront and can no longer ignore. The African Union has authorized Ghana to hold a global conference on the issue in Accra in November.

It is probably also the time to return to that vexed subject of illicit financial flows out of the continent of Africa. I refer to the report of the panel chaired by the highly respected former South African President, Thabo Mbeki, on the illicit flow of funds from Africa, which states that Africa is losing more than \$88 billion annually through illicit financial outflows. Yes, those monies too must be returned to the continent. It is

difficult to understand why the recipient countries are comfortable about retaining such funds and are happy to call those countries from which the monies are taken as corrupt. I believe that a joint task force of the African Union Commission and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development secretariat, under the auspices of the United Nations, should be charged with finding ways of stopping the damaging outflows.

*Mr. Pieris (Sri Lanka), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

Before the pandemic, as in many other parts of the world, we were making progress with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and we had good reason to believe we would achieve the 2030 target. Today the picture we have of our performance is not very bright. Most of the 21 targets designated for achievement by 2020 have not been met, and we are not on track to achieve many other targets by 2030. According to *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023*, just 12 per cent of the SDG targets are on track to be achieved. Progress on 50 per cent of the targets is weak. The most disappointing part is that we have stalled or retrogressed with respect more than 30 per cent of the targets. We need to accelerate action on the entire project.

It is within our capacity to turn things around. A good start would be to make the needed changes to the structures of our Organization; then, we can rebuild trust and reignite global solidarity.

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Ghana for the statement he has just made.

*Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Address by Mr. Gitanas Nausėda, President of the Republic of Lithuania**

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

*Mr. Gitanas Nausėda, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Gitanas Nausėda, President

of the Republic of Lithuania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Nausėda:** We are meeting at a critical moment. Political, economic and cultural divisions are deepening before our eyes. Conflicts, instability and civil unrest are erupting around the globe. Disruption of the rules-based international order threatens the world we all know and cherish. The time for decisive action is now. We must rise to the challenges and work together to preserve peace, prosperity and stability, to safeguard the rules-based order, democracy and the universality of human rights, to save our home, planet Earth, from the effects of disastrous climate change and to fight hard against global poverty and inequality. That will certainly not be easy. Global trust will have to be restored, the Sustainable Development Goals implemented, and a meaningful Pact for the Future negotiated and signed.

I am standing here to express my great concern about the devastating impact of climate change and to share the Lithuanian experience. Today green transformation is no longer a matter of choice. We need decisive action to keep the goals and spirit of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change alive. Lithuania is resolutely committed to preventing, minimizing and addressing climate change. We aim to achieve a 70 per cent reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions by 2030 and become climate-neutral in 2050. Renewable energy will play the central role in our strategy. Our ambition is to turn Lithuania from a net importer of electricity into a self-sufficient green-energy producer by 2030. The development of solar energy, as well as onshore and offshore wind parks, should substantially increase our installed capacity for renewable electricity generation.

There can be no sustainable development in the midst of a war. Wherever we look — Europe, Asia, Africa or the Americas — peace is an all-important condition for humankind to thrive and to create. An old-style colonial war is back in Europe. Russia's aggression against Ukraine is aggravating the global situation across many areas, such as food and energy security, climate, finance, global health and migration. Established international norms and the entire vision of an open and cooperative world order are currently being held hostage to Russia's imperialist ambitions. The very framework of the multilateral cooperation that sustained peace, stability and prosperity in the post-Cold War era is being threatened. The integrity of

the Charter of the United Nations and the rules-based international system is being put at serious risk.

The international community can no longer allow Russia to manipulate and abuse global rules. Its numerous crimes, such as the wholesale destruction of Ukrainian cities and towns, the murder of thousands of innocent civilians and the displacement of millions more, have brought disgrace on the Security Council, where Russia still sits as a permanent member with the power of the veto. The international community should put more pressure on Russia to stop its deliberate attacks on Ukrainian civilians and civilian infrastructure. The unprecedented ecological catastrophe caused by the destruction of the Kakhovka dam should not be replicated in new and even more dangerous forms.

That war of aggression must stop, with an immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of troops and military equipment from Ukrainian territory. And what I mean by that is Ukraine's entire territory, within its internationally recognized borders and territorial waters as of 1991. Lithuania strongly endorses President Zelenskyy's peace formula. It is a robust foundation for achieving peace, aligned with the universal principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence. Meanwhile, Lithuania calls on all the States Members of the United Nations to provide substantial humanitarian, military, economic and diplomatic assistance to Ukraine.

As we work for sustainable peace, we should ensure the accountability of those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity. While contemplating the issue of justice, we should also address the actions of the regime in Belarus, which is participating in this war of aggression by providing military assistance and facilitating the offensive from its territory. Specifically, we should all support Ukraine's efforts in the International Court of Justice and endorse the Court's provisional measures ordering Russia to immediately cease its military action in the territory of Ukraine.

Another institution, the International Criminal Court (ICC), is playing a crucial role in prosecuting war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity in Ukraine. Lithuania supports the arrest warrants issued by the ICC for Russia's President and Children's Rights Commissioner, which represent a promising step towards accountability for targeting children in military conflict. Bringing back the Ukrainian children forcibly deported to Russia and Belarus is a

necessary next step. The initiative to persecute sexual crimes perpetrated by Russian forces in Ukraine also deserves our united support. Lithuania commends the unwavering dedication of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict in addressing that critical issue. What is still lacking is a tribunal specifically designed to prosecute the very crime of aggression committed by Russia's top political and military leadership. Lithuania calls for the establishment of such an international tribunal, supported by a General Assembly resolution. Failure to do so will mean further damage to the credibility of the entire global justice system.

From the very beginning, Russia's aggression against Ukraine has been a truly global issue. It affects global food security as well as nuclear safety. Russia is currently holding the world hostage by blocking Ukrainian grain exports, looting the occupied Ukrainian territories and devastating local agricultural infrastructure. Unilateral actions such as Russia's withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Initiative, endangering at least 82 countries, with 350 million people currently on the food-insecurity front lines, should be universally condemned. But the solution is not lifting the sanctions on Russia. To reinforce vulnerable economies, we must search for geopolitical solutions. One possibility could be the opening of more solidarity lanes by offering alternative transportation for Ukrainian food products, for example, through trusted Baltic Sea ports. The availability of local food production and fertilizer in vulnerable regions could also be boosted by international support.

Looking into the issue of nuclear safety, Lithuania expects more active cooperation from Russia in protecting the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, in accordance with the recommendations of the International Atomic Energy Agency. We are also following Russia's recent decisions on arms control with the greatest concern. Last year Russia broke the emerging consensus at the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Later, Belarus announced an agreement to deploy Russia's nuclear weapons on its territory, which goes against the international commitments under the Treaty. Finally, Russia officially announced its withdrawal from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. That means it is preparing for more war — not to settle for peace.

The only way for us to turn back the tide of destabilization that threatens us all is to join forces in building a better world. We need a collective effort to rebuild trust among nations. Violations of international law and universal human rights cannot be normalized. Neither justice nor peace is free. We must stand for peace. We must stand for justice. Accountability and the rules-based international order will be vital to forging a world that is fair and secure. That is our responsibility to future generations.

Today I expect the Assembly to remain steadfast in its condemnation of all kinds of aggression that clearly violate the Charter of the United Nations. However, condemning them is not enough. Decisive action must be taken. The politics of fear and coercion on a global scale must be stopped once and for all. We must resolutely defend the equality of sovereign nations, both large and small. We must remain true to the Charter's fundamental principles, including respect for international law and arms control. Those principles must guide our path forward. Each and every nation is important. We must stand together against the power of fear. Together we can change the world.

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of the Lithuania for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Gitanas Nausėda, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Address by Ms. Zuzana Čaputová, President of the Slovak Republic**

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Slovak Republic.

*Ms. Zuzana Čaputová, President of the Slovak Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Zuzana Čaputová, President of the Slovak Republic, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

**President Čaputová:** In the General Assembly and other global forums we hear many words spoken about the challenges we face, from the growing intensity of armed conflicts to the devastating effects of climate change. We discuss the task of providing for a growing global

population with limited resources and overexploited ecosystems. We debate the opportunities of emerging technologies that can transform our lives but can also trigger the destruction of our democratic way of life. Those challenges have one common denominator. They are human-made, and it therefore falls to us to deliver human-made solutions. The time for talking, discussion and promises is over. The Assembly must start by working for the ultimate purpose for which the United Nations was founded — the restoration of peace.

Last year we recorded more conflict-related deaths in the world than in any year since 1994. Russia's illegal full-scale invasion of Ukraine, an immediate neighbour of Slovakia, has greatly contributed to that rise. For more than 570 days, Russia's forces have been killing innocent Ukrainian civilians, kidnapping children and destroying towns and cities. They have bombed infrastructure and ports that export Ukraine's grain to people who need it in Bangladesh and Egypt. That is why Moscow must let that grain leave Ukrainian ports. We do indeed need a New Agenda for Peace, as the Secretary-General rightly said, but first and foremost we need action for peace from Russia, a permanent member of the Security Council.

The Climate Ambition Summit starts today. But when it comes to our planet, the time for action is running out. Our cities are becoming warmer, our oceans more acidic and our lands more arid. That is a result of human-caused climate change. This summer gave us another preview of what we can expect if we sit on our hands. In scientific report after report, we see the same conclusion — we are not doing enough. The current pace of our reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions and our mitigation measures is not sufficient to prevent a 1.5°C rise in the global temperature by 2100. Globally, our emissions still exceed the levels we agreed on in the Paris Agreement. We can still prevent the worst-case scenarios. Global emissions must peak before 2030. That is seven years from now, and it is our responsibility, not that of the Governments that will come after us. If we are to see results seven years from now, we must all act today. Let us turn that ambition into our joint and global commitment. Feasible, effective and low-cost options for mitigation and adaptation are already available. They can speed up our green transition.

In Slovakia, we are doing our share. Eighty-five per cent of our electricity is already produced with zero emissions. In the next seven years, we will use 5 per

cent of our gross domestic product to decarbonize our economy and increase the use of renewables. In 2030, our emissions will be 55 per cent lower than in 1990.

Europe may be warming twice as fast as any other continent, but Africa, while responsible for less than 4 per cent of global emissions, is the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Working together as partners, we can solve that challenge. The green technologies that already exist must be made available to everyone. Slovakia will continue to meet its obligations under the global climate finance commitments.

My final point about climate change is simple. But we need to wake up. We are not battling an external threat. This is not a meteor heading for Earth. It is an existential crisis that we ourselves have created, and we alone must solve it.

These crises are hitting hardest those who are least responsible for their creation — vulnerable populations, women and children and the world's poorest peoples. We cannot achieve peace and prosperity if they are excluded. We have been acknowledging that women's rights are human rights for decades. It is time to turn those words into action. Our collective wealth can enable us to provide dignified conditions for everyone on the planet. But today, halfway to 2030, only 12 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goals are on track. Those targets are not advisory guidelines. They are benchmarks for creating a world built on fairness, equity and stability.

Seventy-five years ago, we adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Human dignity, freedom and justice must be universally protected. That is even more important today, when new technologies promise to unlock huge potential in areas such as public health, connectivity and addressing climate change. However, technological progress sometimes moves faster than human minds and emotions can evolve. The rapid rise of social media platforms and the related flood of disinformation and hate speech prove that. Platforms have removed barriers across the globe, linking people as never before, but they have also destroyed barriers that protected others' rights and integrity. Any technology must be used with one goal in mind — ensuring the dignity and rights of every individual. If these issues are not addressed, social media platforms, artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies can act like steroids on our current crises. That is why we cannot postpone their democratic regulation. Facts and science

are essential to overcoming our global challenges. The coronavirus disease pandemic illustrated that well. Disinformation is undermining our efforts to build consensus and a common vision. If humankind continues to build alternative truths and we continue to distrust one another, we will never be able to take the action we need to address these universal challenges.

In my final words, I would like to leave the Assembly with a message of hope. When I meet with young people in Slovakia, I am left with a feeling of great optimism for the future. Data shows that equality is the most important societal value for them. We should listen to our children and work to achieve a vision of humankind where equality is the rule, not the exception, where development can be sustainable and climate-resilient and where we can live in peace. They are looking to us to take action. The cost of our joint failure is not an abstraction. It will be counted in concrete deaths, displacement, injustice and the loss of species and ecosystems. We politicians are often asked about our legacy. Should this be our legacy? For me the choice is clear, and our response should be clear as well.

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Slovak Republic for the statement she has just made.

*Ms. Zuzana Čaputová, President of the Slovak Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Address by Mr. Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland**

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Finland.

*Mr. Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Niinistö:** More than 10 years ago, when I addressed the General Assembly for the first time as President of Finland (see A/67/PV.6), the world seemed complicated. In the Middle East and North Africa, many nations had gone through tremendous changes following of a wave of uprisings. Europe was



struggling with the deepest financial crisis of its post-war history. People all over the world were affected by instability and conflicts. Yet our common task in this Hall was to create a constructive atmosphere, understand one another and find solutions to the challenges we were facing. And that is why we gather here in New York. It is not just to make speeches or to be seen, but to collectively ensure that our global community is moving in the right direction. Today, as I address this body for the last time, I have to ask: have we succeeded in our task? The world has grown even more complicated. Global tensions are running high and great-Power competition is accelerating. Different world views seem to be on a collision course. The theme of this year's session is "Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity: Accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals towards peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all". That must not remain empty rhetoric. We need to put those words into practice.

We all have much to gain from cooperation on an equal footing. The many global challenges that we are facing — from climate change to pandemics, poverty and wars — cannot be solved by one country or group of like-minded countries alone. The opportunities presented by new technologies are also best harnessed together. The multilateral system remains the best way to respond to the challenges confronting the international community. But that system now finds itself under pressure. As global realities have changed, many have started to question existing structures. As we strive to strengthen multilateral cooperation, all voices must be heard, particularly the critical ones. Instead of rushing to judgment, we need to learn to listen. In my first address here, I spoke of the rapid economic growth in the so-called global South and the tremendous changes it was bringing about. Those changes have been clearly visible for some time now. Asian, African and Latin American countries are powerful geopolitical players. Today's fastest-growing and most populous economies are to be found in precisely those regions, and that should be reflected in our debates.

More than a year and a half ago, Russia launched its large-scale war on Ukraine. Russia's aggression is a direct violation of the Charter of the United Nations, to which we are all committed. By aiding Ukraine, Finland, together with many other countries, is supporting Ukraine's inherent right to self-defence. For many Finns, Ukraine's fight for freedom carries

echoes of our own history. We too have fought for our freedom and independence against an enemy far greater in size and paid a high price for it. We do not want to see the world regress to a state where the big consider it their privilege to subjugate the small. While the war is directed against Ukraine, it affects us all in both principle and practice. It has serious consequences globally. The war in Ukraine must not become one of the many protracted conflicts that we are seeing around the world today. Peace that respects Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity is in all of our interests, and it must be the objective.

Finland supports Ukraine's efforts towards a just and lasting peace. But they cannot be Ukraine's efforts alone. We need as wide an international participation as possible. It is essential that the discussions recently held in Jeddah continue, and the open debate taking place today in the Security Council (see S/PV.9421) is also a very important opportunity to discuss and find avenues forward. Bringing the war to a just end is essential for the Ukrainians, but it may also help to lower tensions on a wider scale. We are witnessing the erosion of the international arms control architecture. Important treaties have been abandoned. What is left seems to be in jeopardy. Rebuilding and strengthening arms control in the current international environment is difficult, but we have to understand that a world without mutually agreed upon rules and transparency is an unpredictable one.

Emerging technologies are further complicating the picture. The risks are mounting. We must come together to tackle those issues.

Globally people's sense of security has decreased to an alarming level. There are over 100 armed conflicts ongoing worldwide. People in Afghanistan, the Sudan and Yemen and in many other countries continue to face enormous humanitarian needs. We should not lose sight of any of those emergencies.

I commend the Secretary-General for his vision outlined in the New Agenda for Peace. We must prioritize diplomacy and make full use of the United Nations.

Finland has long underlined the importance of the universal and binding nature of human rights. Human rights need to be respected even when our societies face turmoil. In difficult times, the rights of women and girls are often eroded. We need to be decisive in safeguarding those rights. As a member of the Human

Rights Council, Finland works together with all stakeholders to uphold universal human rights.

No country is perfect when it comes to human rights; we can learn from each other. When one of us fails, the international community needs to ensure accountability for violations.

Earlier this week, we were rightly reminded that the lack of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals has severe implications both for people's lives and prosperity and for global peace and security. That is a most urgent task: to ensure a sustainable future for all life on this planet, and we are not on track. We need to take our commitments much more seriously.

If we fall behind on one goal, the effects are likely to be multiplied in other areas. Climate action is a clear example. Important steps have been taken, but more needs to be done. Any progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals will be undermined if we do not manage to cap global warming at 1.5°C.

Climate change and biodiversity loss are challenges that the global community cannot escape. The past summer was yet again the hottest on record. We have seen devastating floods, drought and wildfires in all parts of the world. We must understand that these are existential questions.

It is also important to realize that climate change does not treat us equally or fairly. Those least responsible for it are often the ones who suffer the most. We must raise our collective ambition. New, strong commitments to reduce emissions are urgently needed. And those must be backed by swift and effective action.

As Secretary-General Guterres yesterday aptly stated, the United Nations was created precisely for moments like this —moments of maximum danger and minimum agreement. During the years that I have been attending the Assembly, we have seen tremendous challenges. We have also seen concrete efforts to make the multilateral system work better in responding to them. Yet we often fail to deliver. We should all look to ourselves to find the root cause of those repeated frustrations. The United Nations is a sum of its members. It is our task to make sure the system rises to the occasion.

Mutual understanding and agreement can be increased only through dialogue and a genuine willingness to engage. None of us can afford to dismiss

the concerns of the other. None of us has the right to impose our thinking or constructs on others.

We, as a global community, have to be prepared to meet each other from a position of mutual respect and with a keen understanding of our common obligation to work together. If we do so, I am convinced that we will find we have much more in common than we had thought.

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Finland for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Address by Mr. Rumen Radev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria**

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Bulgaria.

*Mr. Rumen Radev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Rumen Radev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Radev:** I am deeply honoured to address the Assembly. I believe that our commitment will lead us to the answers of the pressing challenges that humankind is facing today.

Today we live in a world of increasing risks and uncertainty. The resurrected ghost of self-destruction, as a result of the full-scale war in Europe, is a nightmare that my generation wrongly believed to be a bygone phase in human history. War, conflicts and terror challenge the future of our civilization. So do the higher level of socioeconomic distress, the growing food insecurity, the disruption of supply chains and the rise of inflation rates which started during the coronavirus disease disaster. After the weakening of the pandemic, the hopes for rearranging the broken societal and economic links brought some optimism, but then the war in Ukraine erupted. It exacerbated crises of various kinds and destroyed not only thousands of human lives,

but also the optimism that we would be able to build back better.

The systematic erosion of democracy and human rights and the rise of authoritarianism are completing the picture. The consensus that humankind may live according to the rules of an internationally adopted world order is blatantly violated. Those rules, which have been forged in this green marble United Nations Hall, are now vehemently contested. All those negative developments are about to distract our attention from the challenges that may turn out to be equally deadly for humankind. The triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution threatens life on our planet. All those risks and challenges must be addressed with full consciousness of the fact that the future of our civilization is at stake.

The first mission that leaders must see as their historical vocation at this crossroads for humankind is to rebuild trust in multilateralism and to uphold the rules-based international order, which must serve the firm will of all peoples to live in peace. That is the fundamental precondition for survival and for embarking on the path of building prosperity. Restoring peace and security is our most pressing priority.

Nineteen months ago, a permanent member of the Security Council unleashed a war of aggression against its neighbouring country, violating the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. From day one, Bulgaria has strongly condemned the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Every day of this war threatens global peace and security. Moreover, it has turned into a war of attrition, challenging economic and social development worldwide.

The latest events show an increasing risk of spillover in the Black Sea region, affecting countries neighbouring Ukraine. An important priority of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly should be to find modalities that could pave a way towards restoring peace in Ukraine. What we need is stronger political will, diplomacy and active talks about comprehensive, just and sustainable peace, based on the internationally recognized United Nations Charter.

Bulgaria is deeply concerned about the decision of the Russian Federation to withdraw from the Black Sea Grain Initiative. The bombing of the Ukrainian harbour infrastructure and the restriction of navigation in the Black Sea leads to further global food insecurity,

especially in the Global South, where the price of the war is particularly high.

The maintenance of international peace and security faces challenges all over the world. The attention is now turned towards Ukraine because that conflict has a growing potential to turn into a global disaster. We are deeply concerned about the potential victims of each and every war and conflict. Human lives are equally precious all around the globe.

The Middle East and the use of violence in the Israel-Palestine conflict are a source of great concern. We call on all parties to refrain from the use of force and to resume direct negotiations leading to a fair and sustainable two-State solution.

The political solution to the ongoing conflict in Syria marks the only way ahead. Bulgaria maintains its unwavering position in support of the unity and sovereignty of Yemen. We support the international efforts for peaceful solutions and humanitarian assistance for the entire region.

On Afghanistan, we emphasize the importance of preventing terrorist threats and irregular migration. We strongly condemn the Taliban's actions, exacerbating the human rights situation, especially of women and girls, ethnic and religious minorities and human rights defenders.

My country is a strong supporter of the European path of the Western Balkan countries as the most effective way for stabilizing the region. Good neighbourly relations, comprehensive reforms and the fulfilment of accession criteria are the core of integration process.

Bulgaria is a staunch supporter of further strengthening the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. We call for dialogue among nuclear-weapon States on confidence-building. Russia's suspension of its participation in the New START Treaty is a cause for great concern. Its intention to deploy nuclear weapons in Belarus undermines the strategic stability and the overall security architecture. We call on Russia to prove its commitment to the 3 January 2022 joint statement on preventing nuclear war and avoiding arms races. We call on Iran to return to its obligations under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to stop challenging international non-proliferation agreements.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Summit is a vital opportunity to get the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development back on track. Access to financing and strong partnerships between the United Nations and international financial institutions is key to achieving sustainable development. Bulgaria is actively engaged in focusing their activities on effective financial support for all countries in need.

The Global Digital Compact should harness the potential of digital technologies to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs. Our digital future and artificial intelligence should be guided by a human-centred approach based on human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Bulgaria welcomes the adoption of political declarations at the three health summits during this high-level Week. Those documents of high-political commitment will foster the One Health approach, thus contributing to the strength of national health systems and the global health architecture.

The coronavirus disease pandemic resulted in a setback in the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially with regard to education. We support the vision of the Secretary-General for the creation of learning societies, for recognizing education and lifelong learning as a public good, and we stand ready to deliver on the commitments made at the 2022 Transforming Education Summit.

During these days, we have spoken a lot about peace among nations, but we also need to make peace with nature. Climate change is a threat multiplier and mitigating it is essential. Decisive climate action is a pressing global imperative and a test for the ability of the multilateral system to respond.

Urgent action is crucial to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. Bulgaria welcomes the recently established Global Biodiversity Framework Fund and the adoption of the agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Sustainable water management is critical to the achievement of the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This year we celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This remarkable document is a powerful enabler of equality, fundamental freedoms and justice. Bulgaria remains a firm supporter of the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and

of the United Nations human rights system at large. Strongly committed to further advancing the human rights agenda worldwide, my country has presented its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the 2024-2026 period and will strive to ensure its wide support and successful implementation.

As co-Chair of the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict, Bulgaria consistently advocates for the rights of the child, an issue that ranks high among our priorities as member of the Executive Boards of UNICEF and UN-Women. Investing in children's health, nutrition, education and protection from violence is crucial for responding to the basic principle of leaving no one behind of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

My country consistently emphasizes issues such as gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, promoting the rights of people with disabilities and fighting against discrimination and hate speech. This year Bulgaria also commemorated the eightieth anniversary of the rescue of the entire Jewish population of my country, amounting to 50,000 people during the Second World War. That remarkable episode of our modern history inspires us to continue efforts to affirm tolerance and understanding as core values of modern democracy.

Taking into account the increasing challenges to the fundamental principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, Bulgaria welcomes efforts to increase the transparency and accountability of the Security Council and is a co-sponsor of landmark resolution 76/262, on the use of the veto. While the veto initiative has further empowered the General Assembly, genuine reform of the Security Council remains a difficult and sensitive issue. Bulgaria would like to see the Council be more effective in carrying out its primary responsibility. Allocating at least one additional non-permanent seat to the Group of Eastern European States in a future reformed Security Council remains a priority for us.

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Bulgaria for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Rumen Radev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

### Address by Mr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana.

*Mr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Ali:** I would like to congratulate the President on his election to lead the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session and to assure him of Guyana's full support as he carries out his responsibilities. I also want to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi for his leadership as President of the Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. And I join those who have spoken before me in expressing Guyana's solidarity with the Governments and peoples of Libya and Morocco in the wake of the recent devastating flood and earthquake.

The theme of this year's session recognizes the need for us to collectively reset our global relationships and imbue them with enhanced trust and solidarity. Only through that can we hope to confront the most pressing challenges of our era — climate change, conflicts, the energy and food crises and the achievement of sustainable development. I continue to believe that multilateralism remains the most effective approach to addressing those challenges, foremost of them climate change. We are all experiencing its devastating effects. The difference, however, is in our capacity to respond. It is well established that those bearing the brunt of climate change have made no contribution to the current crisis. Small island developing and low-lying coastal States such as Guyana are among the hardest hit and require adequate financing to address the attendant effects. The commitments in that regard by developed countries, including the pledge of \$100 billion per year, remain unfulfilled. How much longer must developing countries wait for those commitments to be fully delivered on?

Although Guyana's emission levels are already at net zero, we continue to pursue growth premised

on a low-carbon development strategy. Our goal is to ensure that we use our resources sustainably to foster inclusive and equitable development for our people. As the country with the second-highest forest cover per capita in the world, we know the importance of forests in mitigating the effects of climate change at the global level. Our advocacy in that regard has resulted in Guyana being issued 33.4 million tons of carbon credits — the first jurisdictional-scale programme in the world. We have secured \$750 million for the period from 2016 to 2030 so far. Guyana is committed to a clean-energy transition, and we are aiming for more than 80 per cent reliance on renewable energy by 2030. Technology, capacity and financing are key to developing countries' ability to build a relevant energy mix and the necessary share of renewable energy. We are using revenue from oil and gas resources to finance our transition to renewable energy, despite our already globally recognized net-zero status.

Let me expound on the critical question of a just, affordable and equitable transition. Bloomberg estimates that achieving global net-zero emissions by 2050 requires annual investments of more than triple the 2021 level, to \$6.7 trillion per year. To limit the global temperature rise to less than 2°C, the International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates that investment in the energy sector alone will have to increase by approximately \$1 trillion annually. At the same time, in developing countries, the situation is more frightening, with close to 900 million people worldwide having no access to electricity. All of that has to be seen against the backdrop of a widening financing gap in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, with adaptation alone estimated at between \$160 billion and \$340 billion by 2030, and between \$315 billion and \$565 billion by 2050, according to the United Nations Environment Programme.

More than 90 countries have committed to net-zero emissions. If we are to achieve that, the IEA estimates that by 2050 more than 85 per cent of buildings must be net-zero-carbon-ready, more than 90 per cent of heavy industrial production must be low-emissions and almost 70 per cent of electricity will have to come from solar photovoltaic sources. Based on those targets, the share of renewables in generating electricity will have to increase from 29 per cent in 2020 to 88 per cent by 2050. Meanwhile, in order to remove carbon from the atmosphere, the world will need to simultaneously halt deforestation and double the rate of the increase in

tree-cover gain by 2030. That means that by 2050, 7.6 gigatons of carbon dioxide will have to be captured and stored, compared to 0.4 gigatons in 2020. According to McKinsey & Company, it will cost \$375 trillion in cumulative spending on physical assets to transition to net zero by 2050.

In the circumstances, the question is how realistic the transition path to net zero is. It is clear that the global ambition of net zero by 2050 is not currently realistic, given the cost of transition and the financing commitments made so far. I say all of that not to reduce ambition, but for us to honestly and frankly direct our energies to a more balanced approach to achieving net zero in a realistic environment. My country, Guyana, is blessed with the best of both worlds — that is, our ability to lead on climate change and to use our expansive oil and gas reserves can contribute to the advancement and development of our country and region.

But let me hasten to add that the twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) will not achieve the desired objectives of definitively putting our planet on a net-zero trajectory if we continue to address this matter in a doctrinarian way, ignoring the current realities. Given the growth in demand for energy, a significant part of that demand will come from many in the developing world who continue to live in energy poverty. It is also a fact that renewables will not meet the growth of demand in the near future. If the debate at COP28 is framed by two camps — one calling for no cuts in fossil-fuel production, including its most polluting forms, such as coal, and the other saying that the only solution to net zero is an end to fossil-fuel production — we will fail once again to achieve a viable outcome and give our world the energy it needs to grow and prosper.

I believe that net zero by 2050, as a target, can be achieved only by a combination of measures that include cuts in fossil-fuel production, incentivizing the introduction of renewables at scale, exploring advances in technology in using carbon capture and storage, curtailing deforestation and land degradation and introducing measures to curb demand for energy. As custodians of a rainforest the size of England and Scotland combined, we are of the view that the lack of financing for standing forests suggests that they are worth more dead than alive. That is why we support the expansion of financial mechanisms that appropriately

value the environmental services provided by forests, including through the carbon market.

We are at the midpoint of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — our global blueprint for sustainable and resilient development. Financing is the cornerstone of all efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the challenges faced by developing countries, including the funding gaps, which I highlighted at the SDG Summit. Commitments, including the commitment made 50 years ago to provide 0.7 per cent of gross national income in official development assistance, must be fulfilled. The existing financial architecture is incapable of addressing current global challenges and must be reformed. In that regard, the reform agenda must include the early adoption of a multidimensional vulnerability index that implements the measures contained in the Bridgetown Initiative and addresses liquidity support, private capital, development lending, trade and more inclusive governance of the international financial institutions.

The world is currently experiencing a global food crisis marked by soaring food prices, heightened food insecurity and increasing levels of hunger. Conflict, climate change and the effects of the pandemic contribute to that dire state of affairs. Approximately 119 million people in 26 least developed countries have faced severe food insecurity since the beginning of 2022. Due to rising food prices and trade restrictions, the situation has worsened. By 2030, it is estimated that nearly 670 million people, equivalent to 8 per cent of the global population, will suffer from undernourishment. Global agrifood systems must be urgently transformed to ensure that they are more resilient and that nutritious food is affordable for all. We also condemn the weaponization of food as an instrument of war.

Guyana welcomes the convening of the three high-level meetings on health and the important commitments contained in the respective political declarations. But we must together move rapidly to implementation if we are to achieve universal health coverage for all and be adequately prepared for future pandemics. Guyana has already made tremendous strides on a path to universal health coverage. In doing so, we increased our per capita health spending by 64 per cent in the past three years.

Global peace is hinged on respect and human dignity. Our work at all levels must advance the dignity and rights of every person on our planet in order to create

a just, equitable and peaceful world. We have noted that, since the war began in Ukraine more than one year ago, the developed world has provided approximately \$220 billion in support to Ukraine, while the World Bank added more than \$37.5 billion in emergency financing — a total of almost \$260 billion mobilized in less than two years. On the other hand, aid to the Palestinian people over a period of 26 years amounted to just over \$40 billion, according to figures compiled by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Haiti has received just over \$20 billion in aid for reconstruction and development over the past 60 years. According to the OECD, African countries were recipients of just over \$113 billion over a three-year period to fight hunger. To be clear, Guyana unequivocally supports the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and remains in full solidarity with the people of Ukraine and what they justly require from the international community. However, I cannot overlook the disparity in the approach to other countries and regions of the world. That must be corrected. Clearly, that is a demonstration of an unjust ecosystem surrounding and supporting development financing, peace and security. Importantly, it also proves that, if truly committed, mechanisms exist to unlock financing at scale.

Adherence to the rule of law, including international law, must continue to be the cornerstone of all our engagements. That is being undermined by threats and naked acts of aggression against sovereign States and by the perpetuation of old conflicts and disputes among States. The Russian invasion must end. Greater diplomatic efforts must be made to bring an end to the war. The ongoing crisis in Haiti is of grave concern. Urgent and decisive action must be taken to secure a comprehensive solution. I commend the offer of the Governments of Kenya and Rwanda to lead a multinational force in Haiti, as well as the offers by the Bahamas and Jamaica. Guyana is committed to working closely with partners within the United Nations and Caribbean Community (CARICOM) frameworks to find a long-lasting, stable and sustainable solution to the Haitian crisis so that our Haitian brothers and sisters can live in peace and dignity.

The Republic of Cuba has been the object of aggression for more than six decades. We repeat our call for the dismantling of the unacceptable embargo against our sister Caribbean State. The economic and

political aggression, along with the designation of Cuba as a State sponsor of terrorism, must come to an end.

I also reaffirm Guyana's long-standing solidarity with the Palestinian people and support for their dignified existence in their homeland, in accordance with the two-State solution. As States Members of the United Nations, let us do more to move past rhetoric so that the peace process can progress.

When I addressed the Organization of American States (OAS) last Friday, I recalled to that hemispheric body how Guyana was excluded from the OAS for 25 years after its birth as a nation, on account of a spurious territorial claim to two thirds of our homeland by Venezuela. But justice prevailed, and Guyana was ultimately admitted. It is sad, however, that 57 years after Guyana's independence, we remain threatened. Venezuela's efforts to undermine our freedom, sovereignty and territorial integrity are today before the International Court of Justice, as decided by the Secretary-General, under the Geneva Agreement of 1966. The jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice in the matter has been twice affirmed by the Court. We are confident that Guyana's sovereignty and territorial integrity will also be affirmed when the Court issues its final judgment.

I regret to inform the Assembly that Venezuela's threats continue. Just last night, Guyana received a very threatening message from Venezuela, in the form of a communiqué attacking Guyana for putting certain oil blocs in our sovereign waters up for bid. Guyana considers that a threat to regional and international peace and security, as well as to Guyana's investment partners. We demand that Venezuela honour its obligation under the Charter to pursue only peaceful means to settle any disputes it may have with Guyana, including adjudication before the International Court of Justice. Allowing the Court to decide would ensure a resolution that is peaceful, equitable and in accordance with international law. Guyana will spare no effort in defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity. I express appreciation to every member of the international community that has continued to support Guyana's efforts to preserve its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

As Guyana takes its place next January as a member of the Security Council, those principles of international law and justice, so prominent in the Charter of the Organization, shall be our guide. And I therefore

express heartfelt gratitude for the overwhelming support of Member States for our candidature to the Security Council for the 2024—2025 term. I wish to assure the entire United Nations membership that Guyana is committed to working with fellow Council members and the wider United Nations membership to fulfil the mandate of the Security Council. As I reflect on the state of growing insecurity in the world, let me also reiterate the calls made by CARICOM for the early and urgent reform of the United Nations Security Council to make it more effective and inclusive.

September is the month dedicated to Indigenous people in my country. We are aware that, globally, indigenous peoples are often left behind. That is not the case in Guyana. My Government is investing heavily in Indigenous peoples' development, ensuring their inclusion and participation in decision-making at all levels. Our land-titling programme has resulted in Indigenous peoples obtaining legal ownership of 16.4 per cent of Guyana's land mass. In addition to regular Government investment, 15 per cent of all proceeds from the sale of carbon credits go directly to Indigenous villages to finance their development. Guyana is the first country to implement such an initiative. We are proud of our record and stand ready to share our experiences.

Allow me to conclude by renewing Guyana's solidarity with the peoples of the world, our commitment to multilateralism and our readiness to partner with States large and small in the quest for peace and prosperity for all.

**The Acting President:** I thank the President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Address by Mr. Zoran Milanović, President of the Republic of Croatia**

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Croatia.

*Mr. Zoran Milanović, President of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United

Nations His Excellency Mr. Zoran Milanović, President of the Republic of Croatia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Milanović:** It is my particular honour to address the General Assembly. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the President on being elected to his position and to wish him every success in his work during these challenging times.

The world in which we live today requires joint, global and concerted efforts as the key to success in addressing serious global crises. We strongly believe that we must strengthen the multilateral system based on international law. We must make sure that it is effective and fair and able to endure and deliver results that will serve to achieve our common goals and commitments, as well as a better future for our planet and peoples. We need to safeguard the role of the United Nations as the centre of global cooperation. We are also hopeful that genuine efforts will be invested in the reform of the Security Council, as our main instrument for securing global peace and security.

In 2015, we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development based on the consensus that, in order to transform our world, we need to realize that sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security, and that peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development. In 2023, at the mid-point in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the assessments of the *Global Sustainable Development Report* show that the efforts to achieve that synergy have proved insufficient to date. Time to reinvigorate our political commitments to the full and efficient implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is irreversibly running out.

In the meantime, the necessary boost came with the Secretary-General's vision offered in *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982) as an overarching road map for fighting the multiple crises. The preparatory process for next year's Summit of the Future — along with its outcome, the Pact for the Future — represents a unique opportunity to strengthen national and international governance and to make it more sustainable and resilient to future crises and shocks, thereby safeguarding the planet for future generations.

The international financial system is increasingly unable to adequately and efficiently respond to the challenges at hand. More needs to be done to update and upgrade the global financial infrastructure so that



it becomes more adapted to the needs of the world. Most notably, we need to scale up development and climate financing. In that regard, we support the efforts by the international financial institutions to review their structures and operating processes with a view to reform in order to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Peace is not maintained by itself. Investment in conflict prevention is far more cost-effective than investing in conflict resolution and post-conflict recovery. That is why conflict prevention and sustaining peace should be at the centre of the framework of the New Agenda for Peace, intertwined with a renewed commitment to multilateralism, global solidarity and trust. Croatia, as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) for 2023, strongly advocates for the strengthening and enlarging of both its geographical and thematic scope. We support the Secretary-General's call for the universality of conflict prevention and sustaining peace. The PBC should also work more closely with international financial institutions and regional actors, forming a sustainable peace network. In addition to its advisory powers, the PBC could also be vested with decision-making powers, enabling it to establish United Nations civilian missions upon request by the countries concerned and thereby helping to address the root causes of instability. In that regard, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals can be an excellent prevention tool by fostering prosperity and inclusion, while leaving the world a safer place for future generations.

According to *The Global Sustainable Development Report 2023*, Croatia's performance in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals was among the top-ranked countries. However, we still have a lot of work ahead of us. Croatia has a large natural heritage that it wants to preserve for future generations through the implementation of the SDGs. While accepting the clean energy transition, Croatia is taking a number of measures to alleviate the transition shock due to the rejection of fossil fuels and to ensure a fair transition and prevent energy poverty.

With regard to biodiversity, Croatia is committed to working jointly for the development and full implementation of the ambitious and transformational Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Furthermore, we firmly believe that the protection, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity is essential for the prevention of pandemics and the

promotion of the One Health Approach, which needs to be included in future prevention plans. We are also committed to working together to intensify cooperation in protecting the marine environment and combating plastic pollution. If we want healthy oceans and seas, our ambition needs to be high and ocean protection needs to be stepped up significantly. Croatia welcomes the landmark adoption of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction. The successful negotiation of that agreement is the most recent proof of devoted multilateral work and represents not only a milestone in conserving the marine biodiversity of nearly two thirds of the world's oceans but also a triumph for multilateralism. Today Croatia proudly joined the first tier of countries that have signed the high seas treaty and is committed to ratifying it as soon as possible. We call on other countries to do the same in order to enable its swift entry into force and the commencement of its effective implementation.

As a State member of the European Union, Croatia has already committed itself politically and legally to contributing to making Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. By further pursuing that course and accelerating the development of renewables and increasing green investments, we believe that we can turn the current crisis into a new chance for our economies. In that regard, I would mention as an example one such project that can boost new growth in the European economy based on decarbonization and clean industry. It is the North Adriatic Hydrogen Valley project, which encompasses Slovenia, Croatia and the Italian region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia. When we put the clean energy transition at the heart of the fight against climate change on the global level, we should not forget that the most vulnerable communities, which have historically contributed the least to climate change, are often the ones most and worst affected — both by climate conditions and by the costs of the green-energy transition as a remedy. The establishment at the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) of a loss and damage fund to help vulnerable countries cope with the destructive effects of climate change marked a historic breakthrough in that respect. How we go about addressing the issue at the Climate Ambition Summit and COP28 will be a true test of trust and solidarity among nations and will have an impact on current and future generations.

Creating a world of peace and security that respects human rights and promotes social progress is the very foundation of the United Nations. The number of human rights violations and humanitarian crises around the world shows that more must be done to prevent atrocities and operationalize the responsibility to protect. Croatia is honoured to be contributing to that cause by serving as co-Chair, along with Costa Rica and Botswana, of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect in New York. The Croatian Government remains committed to determining the fate of 1,806 persons who went missing during our homeland war in the 1990s. Based on that tragic national experience, we continue to give our unwavering support to all efforts to provide answers to people still suffering the anguish of uncertainty anywhere in the world.

We remain committed to combating hate speech, advancing the rights of women and children, protecting minorities and abolishing the death penalty. Gender equality is the foundation of a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. In that regard, we want to highlight the importance of education and equal opportunities for girls and boys. We will continue advocating against discrimination and hate speech, including antisemitism.

Croatia continues to attach the utmost importance to the welfare of its immediate neighbourhood in South-Eastern Europe. We must fully tackle issues relating to the past and the legacy of war, such as resolving the remaining missing-persons cases, engaging in meaningful cooperation in handling war crimes without discrimination and in line with international standards, ensuring access to archives, and other unresolved and highly sensitive problems. We actively support the European perspective of our close neighbour Bosnia and Herzegovina and warmly welcomed the recent European Union (EU) decision to grant Bosnia and Herzegovina the status of an EU candidate country. We continue to advocate for electoral reforms that can ensure the legitimate representation of all its constituent peoples — particularly Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs — at all levels of Government, which in our view is essential to the country's future stability and prosperity.

We are very concerned about the latest developments in relations between Kosovo and Serbia and would like to encourage measures to de-escalate tensions. And those two countries need to focus on normalizing relations, delivering on their commitments and starting to implement what was agreed on this year in Brussels and Ohrid. We continue to advocate

for universal recognition of the Republic of Kosovo and its right to existence as an equal member of the community of nations. It is in our interests to promote the stability and further development of the region, in addition to the process of European integration, which we believe remains crucial to the future prosperity of our neighbours and which we hope will be accelerated in the coming years.

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Croatia for the statement he has just made.

*His Excellency Mr. Zoran Milanović, President of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. Guillermo Lasso Mendoza, Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador**

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador.

*Mr. Guillermo Lasso Mendoza, Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Guillermo Lasso Mendoza, Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Lasso Mendoza (spoke in Spanish):** We are here to renew our commitment to the ideals and principles that animate the United Nations — peace, the diplomatic resolution of conflicts and respect for human rights and freedoms. In this brief address, I will share our vision and efforts to address the global challenges we face, from climate change and chronic child malnutrition to the most urgent threats to our security.

Since the beginning of my Administration, we have implemented a historic environmental transition policy that preserves our natural heritage. At the same time, we have made great strides in the transition from unsustainable production systems to a circular and low-emission economy. In January 2022, we expanded the protection of the Galapagos Islands with the creation of the Hermandad Marine Reserve, which has an area of 60,000 square kilometres. This decision constitutes the greatest advance in my country's history towards

the preservation of our incomparable biodiversity. In addition, we strengthened the Eastern Tropical Pacific Marine Corridor in a unity of purpose with our sister nations of Colombia, Costa Rica and Panama, and together we have created the world's largest transboundary reserve, protecting 500,000 square kilometres inhabited by countless unique species that use those migratory routes. We did it for our peoples and for the world.

Above all, my Government has been able to balance environmental concerns with good economic sense. We have pioneered the implementation of an innovative debt-for-conservation swap initiative that redirects resources to the protection of the Galapagos Islands — which is certainly great news for the world. The debt swap amounted to \$1.63 billion, making it the largest operation of its kind in the history of humankind. That figure is equivalent to 10 per cent of the public debt owed by Ecuador to external private creditors. Of that amount, \$450 million will be directed to the Galapagos Life Fund, for the protection of marine ecosystems and their more than 2,500 species, 38 of which are migratory.

We are thereby showing the world how debt and all its attendant financial burden can be turned into various kinds of opportunities. We therefore want to take this opportunity to express our concern about the imminent and increasingly likely El Niño phenomenon, which could cause devastating floods in Ecuador and throughout the region. On the threshold of the potential occurrence of an event of such proportions, we have prioritized prevention and are working together with the United Nations to seek financing alternatives through multilateral organizations. We call on the international community to consider risk-mitigation measures through large financial funds and non-reimbursable international cooperation, given that it is climate change that will determine the severity of the phenomenon.

We are facing an enormous task that will require a coordinated approach by all sectors of the international community if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and safeguard the future of all. However, our concerns are not limited to environmental issues. We are also focusing on improving the quality of life of the most disadvantaged sectors of society, particularly children. In the face of the alarming numbers that we identified regarding chronic child malnutrition, we have been implementing the successful Ecuador Grows Without Child Malnutrition

programme, through which, in just 28 months, we have reduced the rate of malnutrition in children under two years old by 3.5 per cent, lowering the overall figure from 23.6 per cent to 20.1 per cent.

Children who suffer malnutrition at that stage of life face grave and irreversible consequences. It affects their neurological development and ability to learn, communicate, think and relate to others. In other words, those children are faced with enormous disadvantages from the beginning of their lives that will have a negative impact on their future. In view of that painful reality, we have been implementing our public programme strategically, by providing pregnant women and children in their first 1,000 days of life with medicines and vitamins, in addition to refitting and equipping health centres, recruiting more doctors specializing in family medicine, obstetricians and nurses, and hiring 50,000 community workers to monitor neighbourhoods in order to detect cases of malnutrition in a timely manner.

Thanks to that action, more than 20,000 children under the age of two are free from chronic malnutrition, and my Government has achieved all of that through an investment of \$650 million in a matter of 28 months in office. Achieving solutions does not depend on how much money a State has but on the degree of political will of those who govern it. Even in a context of lower-than-average oil prices, my Government has prioritized State resources for this cause because there can be no growth or economic development if we do not invest in social issues and in our children. We hope to share our experience with everyone here in this Hall and to unite our efforts so that in the near future we can all say together that the world is growing without child malnutrition.

Ecuador is striving to promote safe and responsible migration. We are one of the few countries that has experienced every facet of migration. We are a country of origin, destination, transit, return and even refuge. Migration has been a challenge for the region in recent years, as it involves addressing complex situations that create great challenges with cultural, economic and social implications. Given the fact that Ecuador has welcomed thousands of migrants of various nationalities, identifying their distinct needs, conditions, experiences and activities has become a key objective in ensuring a comprehensive approach. In that regard, we have launched a registration process for foreign nationals residing in our country, regardless of their immigration

status, and that registry now numbers some 201,000 persons. Most of them are Venezuelan citizens who arrived in Ecuador fleeing hunger and authoritarianism. We want to give them a better future, guarantee all of their rights and grant them humanitarian visas so that they can regularize their status and integrate more easily into society. We have opened our arms to protect those who have sought refuge in our country. Children, with or without documents, are admitted into schools, and anyone can receive care in our public hospitals. However, that open-door policy requires the valued support of the international community. Our action has been consistent and supportive, and we humbly expect reciprocal cooperation.

After 31 years, this year Ecuador took on the challenge of returning to the Security Council. We did so at a critical time for humankind and in the context of extremely complex situations, including the global vulnerability in the wake of the pandemic and an unexpected military conflict that has increased nuclear tensions. Meanwhile, new problems related to radicalization and violent extremism have also been emerging, and Ecuador has risen to the challenge. During the nine months of our membership on the Council, we have consistently acted in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, prioritizing the peaceful resolution of conflicts, the protection of civilians, the women and peace and security agenda and the fight against illegal arms trafficking. Our actions have responded in particular to new threats such as transnational organized crime, which undermines democratic stability, citizens' security and the rule of law.

I want to reiterate the statement I made at the Council's high-level meeting this morning on Ukraine (see S/PV.9421), in which I urged once again for an end to the military aggression in compliance with the order issued by the International Court of Justice, and for progress towards a peace based on the territorial integrity of Ukraine and the Charter. We have warned that the conflict is not only inflicting pain and destruction on the people of Ukraine but also worsening global food insecurity and destabilizing the global economy, especially for developing countries. We therefore insist on the resumption of the Black Sea Grain Initiative. All wars and conflicts must end.

I shall devote the remainder of my statement to an issue that is of the utmost concern to Ecuador and the world — the historic moment that required that

I become Head of a State that, like few others, faces the violent siege of an enemy whose allies traverse the porous borders that continue to divide the legal world from the illegal world. I refer to transnational organized crime, in particular drug trafficking and its dangerous and growing ramifications in the public sphere. My Government has broken records in drug seizures. We have seized more than 500 tons in just two years, a figure that far exceeds that of previous Governments. What we face today are the repercussions of the blow dealt to the pockets of criminals. Our policy has had such an impact that, last year, the United Nations recognized Ecuador as the third-foremost country globally in the seizure of drugs, after the United States and Colombia.

A few weeks ago, Ecuador experienced an unprecedented event in its history: the assassination of a presidential candidate. I refer to Fernando Villavicencio, a brilliant and brave Ecuadorian who boldly denounced the operations of organized crime and its links with political mafias. Transnational organized crime is a corrupting and murderous system that infiltrates society and the State, challenges the democratic stability of our countries and develops at great speed. The problem is not exclusive to Ecuador; it is a global problem, given that much of the planet suffers from the same phenomena as Ecuador — trafficking in drugs, weapons and humans, forced migration and illegal mining. If we do not fight together, we will continue to suffer alone. If the enemy has the capacity to multiply, then States must multiply our efforts even faster. It is imperative for the future survival of States that we establish lasting, robust and effective mechanisms to put an end to criminal organizations and those who sponsor or cover up for them. If we wish to fully share the benefits of the globalized world, we must also confront together the adversities that entails. In that and each of the battles we face together, States can always count on the unwavering commitment of Ecuador.

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Guillermo Lasso Mendoza, Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço,  
President of the Republic of Angola**

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Angola.

*Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Lourenço** (*spoke in Portuguese; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): It is with great pleasure that I take the floor at the General Assembly, at a time when the world faces a very complex situation that requires our Organization to strengthen its role and its ability to formulate the most appropriate responses in order to be able to tackle the serious challenges facing the world.

I would like to wish Mr. Dennis Francis all the best during his term of office, starting now, as the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session. I would also like to express my thanks to Mr. António Guterres for his tireless efforts in service of peace and development under very challenging circumstances.

As I did not attend the session of the General Assembly held in 2022, I did not have an opportunity to express, on behalf of Angola and Angolans, our views on and concerns about the problems facing the world, which were exacerbated by the eruption of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine in that year. In spite of the great efforts made to create a more peaceful and prosperous world, we recognize that, 78 years after the founding of our Organization, it has not been possible to build a solid foundation of trust among nations in order to prevent the emergence of pockets of tension in a number of places, which have degenerated into open conflicts in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and now in Europe, where a war of such large proportions as the one currently being waged was not expected.

The management of interests at the global level in terms of security, science and technology, as well as the management of resources in general terms, in particular of strategic raw materials and energy sources, does not yet meet the interests and expectations of the different

nations and peoples of our planet. It is therefore essential that we do everything in our power to continuously promote respect for, and the observance of, the values enshrined in the Charter of United Nations and in international law, so that we can correct the dangerous trajectory that the world took after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In discussing contemporary problems in international relations, we highlight the importance of objectively assessing the nature and origin of conflicts and the prospects for resolving them, while always upholding the universal norms that govern relations among States. We must recognize that the gap between developing and developed countries remains an unacceptable reality, because in many cases there is no real political will to overcome it, resulting in difficulties in accessing the financial and material resources that are needed to carry out development projects. We must also recognize the constraints imposed on technology transfer, which are factors that delay the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I would like to welcome the call of the Secretary-General for reform of the global financial architecture and for SDG stimulus funding to the tune of at least \$500 billion dollars per year in order to tackle emerging challenges.

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Makayata-Safouesse (Congo), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

Because developing countries are not adequately represented in most global governance institutions, they are not in a position to express their sensitivities and make their points of view heard at the appropriate levels, and thereby to contribute to the formulation of realistic solutions to their problems. That situation generates anxiety and frustration among the most vulnerable populations who, by not having their expectations met, become easily prone to negative influences that are dangerous to the order and stability of their respective countries.

Over the past decade, Africa has witnessed transformations that have galvanized changes with an impact on upcoming generations. Many African countries have their resolved conflicts, invested as much as they could in socioeconomic development and have promoted the education of their citizens, making them more informed and ready to contribute to the economic and social development of their respective countries.

Democratic transitions have become regular, and essential institutions for consolidating democracy have become more active and therefore more capable of sustaining and solidifying the democratic achievements in our nations. That is a record that should be commended, and we are convinced that everything must be done to prevent a return to the models that prevailed before the advent of democracy in Africa. However, the lack of economic and social prospects in many of our countries creates fertile ground for unrest and the weakening of our continent's recent democracies. It is therefore urgent and imperative that real support be given to development through financing in favourable conditions for the construction of production and distribution infrastructure and water-related infrastructure, road and railway routes, basic sanitation, the construction of schools, as well as direct private investment in African economies, so that Africa can make a greater contribution to the world economy.

In Africa, we have sought ways out of the current state of affairs, such as the initiative to establish the African Continental Free Trade Area, which has more than 1 billion consumers and is therefore an important platform to boost progress on the continent. Africa's international partners must believe in and invest in our market because they will surely see a satisfactory return on their investments in the different sectors of our economies in which they decide to invest.

We would like to meet the expectations of young Africans who are forced to try to make their dreams come true outside their continent in contexts that are almost always difficult to adapt to, in addition to the major life risks that many of them face when undertaking dangerous crossings of the Mediterranean.

Angola has promoted dialogue which, in our opinion, should not be limited to political and diplomatic spaces, but should also include a wide range of protagonists, including civil society organizations, companies and individuals, with a prominent place for young people, who are the real driving force behind the changes we are seeking in order to guarantee the progress of our nations. It was in that spirit that Angola decided to host the Pan-African Forum for a Culture of Peace in Africa, organized in partnership with the African Union and UNESCO, whose third edition will be held in November this year in Luanda. The Forum, also known as the Biennale of Luanda, is a privileged platform for exchange among different cultures, religions and social models, through interactive and

constructive sessions aimed at identifying, promoting and disseminating viable and inclusive models of peaceful conflict resolution on the African continent, and can serve as a potentially inspiring reference for other regions of the world.

The Republic of Angola has sought to contribute its experience in terms of peacebuilding, harmony and national reconciliation to the resolution of conflicts on the African continent, with special emphasis on what is happening in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where we believe it will be possible to build a basis of trust between the belligerents, which will contribute to an easing of tension in the Great Lakes region and lead to the long-awaited peace. Those efforts to contain the spread of terrorism and other destabilizing actions entail high financial costs that our countries are not always able to bear, and which can therefore jeopardize the success of the peacemaking operations that are being carried out and dash the hopes that are nurtured with regard to those processes.

It is therefore essential that we reaffirm the need for adequate, sustainable and predictable funding for efforts in the fight against terrorism on the continent, which is why I believe it is appropriate to renew our call to the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, for the use of fixed contributions for peacekeeping operations mandated by the African Union.

Until relatively recently, the Sahel region was plagued only by the actions of terrorist groups reinforced by mercenaries for hire, who, having found a power vacuum in Libya, settled there and expanded into neighbouring countries. Added to that already dangerous situation, a wave of unconstitutional changes of power led by the military emerged in more or less the same region. Those new powers should not be rewarded with the possibility of sharing with us the same political stages. Alternatively, we will convey the wrong message that is contrary to the principles we advocate.

We are increasingly convinced of the existence of an invisible hand interested in destabilizing our continent, only concerned with expanding its sphere of influence, which we know will not provide the necessary support for the economic and social development of African countries.

The international community is concerned not only about the situation in the Sahel countries, in the Horn of Africa, in Mozambique and the Democratic Republic

of the Congo, but also about the conflict in the Sudan, which, in addition to the high number of deaths, injuries and the destruction of the country's infrastructure, has caused countless internally displaced people and refugees and has become one of the biggest humanitarian disasters the world has ever seen, the consequences of which are being felt by neighbouring countries.

The world must not forget the suffering of the Palestinian people, let alone ignore the need to resolve the conflict in the Middle East, especially the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, whose formula of two States living side by side peacefully has for years been found by the United Nations to not have made any progress and to lack implementation. The international community runs the risk of being accused of prioritizing the conflict in Europe to the detriment of others, because they are in the Middle East and Africa, including the conflict in the Sudan which is as deadly and devastating as that of Ukraine but receives less international media coverage and less attention by the major centres of decisions on global peace and security.

In Europe, the war between Russia and Ukraine deserves our full attention. There is an urgent need to put an immediate end to the war, given the levels of human and material destruction there, the risk of escalation into a major conflict on a global scale and the impact of its harmful effects on energy and food security.

All the evidence indicates that it is unlikely that there will be winners and losers on the battlefield, which is why the parties concerned should be encouraged to prioritize dialogue and diplomacy as soon as possible, to establish a ceasefire and to negotiate a lasting peace — not only for the warring countries, but to guarantee Europe's security and contribute to world peace and security.

In the past three years, we have faced a major global challenge posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which has demonstrated the importance and strength of solidarity among nations as a basis for tackling and solving major global problems.

This example should serve as a paradigm for our behaviour in facing other challenges, especially those relating to the fight against poverty and the disparities between developing and developed countries in the field of science and technology, which, as we all know, are critical factors for boosting the development and well-being of the peoples of our planet.

Coordination among all the world's nations, which has been the keynote in the process of combating COVID-19, has highlighted the central role of multilateral institutions. We therefore believe that pluralism in international relations is the main guarantee of the effectiveness of the actions we take to resolve the major issues affecting humankind today.

It is clear that, from the point of view of multilateralism, the United Nations needs to be empowered to play an effective role in fulfilling its duties and that there is an urgent need to reform the Security Council so that it reflects the reality of the times, which is totally and profoundly different from that experienced immediately after the end of the Second World War.

The Republic of Angola therefore defends the need to review the representation of the different regions of the world on the Security Council. In this area, as far as the African continent is concerned, we defend the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, which establish the need for Africa to be granted permanent membership of the Security Council, with all the privileges inherent in that category.

For decades, the United Nations has been dealing with a series of situations in which it has adopted a series of resolutions that are simply ignored and disrespected, without any consequences for those involved. I think we need to reflect together on the need to try to create mechanisms to strengthen the Organization's authority so that we do not discredit it or weaken its decisive role in building an effective world peace and security architecture, to which all the world's nations must feel bound with a strong sense of commitment, regardless of their economic and military power.

It is therefore appropriate to emphasize the importance of complying with the current resolutions on the embargo against Cuba and the decades-long conflict in the Middle East between Israel and Palestine.

It is important to remember that in 2021, I took part in a Security Council meeting in this city (see S/PV.8802) to discuss the issue of lifting the arms embargo on the Central African Republic. Since then, there has been no progress on that issue, which seriously affects the exercise of a fundamental right of countries to have their own national army to guarantee the defence of independence, sovereignty and the normal functioning of the country's institutions. Once again, I would like to reiterate the relevance of putting that issue on the agenda

of the Security Council, so that a decision can be taken that will allow the Central African Republic to fully assume its role as an independent and sovereign State, without having to resort to hiring foreign paramilitary forces for an indefinite period of time.

The Republic of Angola is chairing the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OEACP) Summit of Heads of State and Government, which gives us the responsibility to address some aspects of that organization. The negotiation of the partnership agreement between the OEACP and the European Union was successfully concluded, and the signing ceremony is expected to take place soon, thus marking a new phase in that cooperation, adapted to the current reality and the aspirations of the member States of both organizations. This important instrument, which will be the basis of cooperation between the OEACP and the European Union, lays the foundation for actions in a wide range of areas, with a particular focus on environmental sustainability and climate change, human and social development and migration and mobility.

The OEACP comprises 79 countries from three continents and three oceans, representing enormous potential for cooperation for those who establish partnerships in priority areas for the member States, thus generating reciprocal benefits. I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to investors to look to the OEACP countries as a safe destination with important advantages for their business.

I would also like to take this opportunity to speak briefly about the issue of climate change, which is currently a central concern for humankind, Governments and societies in all our countries. The international community must do its utmost to fulfil the promises made at the two most recent Conferences of the Parties on climate finance, so that at the twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change summit, to be held in the United Arab Emirates, that issue no longer takes up a significant part of the agenda and we can focus concretely on the need to urgently implement the measures to be taken to reduce polluting gases, deforestation and global warming and, thus, save our planet Earth while there is still time.

Allow me to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Angolan Government and people, to express our deepest sympathy to the authorities and the people of

Morocco and Libya for the sudden loss of thousands of human lives and valuable national heritage as a result of natural disasters. We express our total solidarity with the families and loved ones who feel the pain of the irreparable loss of loved ones.

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

*Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. Edgars Rinkēvičs, President of the Republic of Latvia.**

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

*Mr. Edgars Rinkēvičs, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Edgars Rinkēvičs, President of the Republic of Latvia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Rinkēvičs:** First of all, I would like to congratulate Mr. Dennis Francis of Trinidad and Tobago on assuming the post of President of the General Assembly. I assure him of Latvia's full cooperation along the way.

The topic of this year's general debate invites us to focus on rebuilding trust and global solidarity. Rooted in the Charter of the United Nations, both concepts are crucial for effective multilateralism. Today I would like to highlight the following points.

We are at a transformative moment for the global order. Russia's unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine continues to challenge the world in many ways. It is a test for the rules-based multilateral system. The Russian Federation's brutal invasion of its neighbour runs counter to the fundamental United Nations principles of refraining from the use of force against the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of States. The blatant breach of those principles undermines the entire international system, especially if the aggressor



is a nuclear-weapon State and a permanent member of the Security Council. It is not a dispute between two neighbouring countries; Russia's attack was unprovoked. Russia is trying to redraw international borders by force to restore its former sphere of influence.

In 2008 and 2014, the international community made a grave mistake by not responding to Russia's aggression against Georgia and the illegal annexation of Crimea. It sent the wrong message to Russia, allowing its aggressive imperial ambitions to advance. We are now seeing the consequences. Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a reminder of the struggle of a colonial empire to keep its territories. Ukraine is not Russia. It never was and never will be. Having experienced 50 years of Soviet occupation, Latvia knows the value of freedom and independence, like so many countries in other regions. The international community must stand together firmly against Russia's attack, based on the principles and norms of international law. Respect for the United Nations Charter is in the vital interest of all States. The outcome of the war will determine global security for years to come. Latvia condemns in the strongest possible terms Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine, which has been enabled by Lukashenko's regime in Belarus. We cannot talk about restoring international trust until Russia ends the war and withdraws from Ukraine. Russia must withdraw all its forces and military equipment from Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. Russia must stop its terror and atrocity crimes.

In response to those who call for a ceasefire and peaceful dialogue, I would like to recall that only Ukraine can decide when to start peace negotiations. Latvia supports Ukraine's peace formula. Sustainable peace must be based on Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. I call on all Members of the United Nations to support those principles. Ukraine has shown remarkable determination in exercising its right to self-defence against Russia's aggression. I urge the international community to continue providing all needed support to Ukraine and its people. Latvia will support Ukraine for as long as it takes. Our assistance to Ukraine has already exceeded 1.3 per cent of Latvia's gross domestic product. Together with the private sector and civil society, we have sent humanitarian aid to Ukrainian regions. Latvia continues to give safe refuge to the Ukrainian people. We provide rehabilitation to wounded Ukrainian soldiers and victims of sexual violence. Comprehensive support for the Ukrainian

people to rebuild their country will be required. It is important to already start laying the ground for the reconstruction of Ukraine.

Even in times of war, the rules of international humanitarian law apply. The evidence of Russia's deliberate attacks on the civilian population and infrastructure in Ukraine is mounting. Innocent civilians, including children, are being killed. More than 11 million people have been forced to leave their homes. The illegal adoption and forcible deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia is of serious concern. We call on the United Nations to take a more active stance on the issue. Latvia knows all too well the heavy toll that the deportations and acts of repression by the occupying regime have cost generations. Russia must bear the full legal and financial responsibility for its aggression. We must ensure full accountability for all crimes committed in Ukraine. That means the responsibility of Russia as a State for violations of international law, as well as individual liability for the most serious international crimes. I commend the steps taken by the International Criminal Court to investigate atrocity crimes in Ukraine. Latvia has provided financial contributions to the Court, including to the Trust Fund for Victims. We support other international mechanisms documenting and investigating Russia's violations.

However, neither the International Criminal Court nor any other existing mechanism is able to exercise jurisdiction over the crime of aggression against Ukraine. Every effort should be made to hold Russia's leadership and military personnel accountable. At stake is whether impunity or abiding by the international rule of law will prevail. Latvia reiterates the need to establish a special international tribunal for the crime of aggression against Ukraine. The creation of a tribunal under the auspices of the United Nations would provide the strongest international legitimacy. I encourage other countries to support the proposal. The Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which was created by the Council of Europe, is an important step towards establishing a future international compensation mechanism. As the current holder of the presidency of the Council of Europe, Latvia launched the Register. We hope that more countries beyond the members of the Council of Europe will join that important initiative.

By blocking Ukraine's exports and destroying its agricultural sector, Russia has disrupted grain deliveries worldwide; yet it claims to care about

global food security. There is no doubt that Russia is directly responsible for the suffering of people worldwide. Increases in costs and food insecurity affect all regions. The Black Sea Grain Initiative was paramount for global food security. We condemn Russia's unilateral termination of the Initiative. Food and energy are instruments of Russia's warfare, fuelled by disinformation. Lies must be countered with truth and facts. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has caused shortages of food and fertilizer supplies; it was not the sanctions. Sanctions do not block the export of mineral fertilizers or grain from Russia. The truth is that Russia is benefiting from higher prices. Access to food is a human right, and hunger must never be used as a political tool. International efforts to facilitate Ukrainian exports for global food security must continue. Latvia cooperates with the World Food Programme to improve food security worldwide. I urge the United Nations to resolve the issue of the removal of the remaining Russian-owned fertilizer from Latvia's territory so it can be delivered to countries in need as soon as possible. The United Nations system must respond more effectively to humanitarian needs.

The concept of solidarity has defined the work of the United Nations since the birth of the Organization. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit, held two days ago, reaffirmed the importance of dialogue, cooperation and solidarity. At the same time, the Summit acknowledged the stark reality of the fact that achieving the global Goals by 2030 will be very challenging for many countries. International cooperation will be key. The global SDG Index ranks Latvia fourteenth among Member States for overall achievement of the global Goals. Latvia firmly believes that strengthening an innovative and eco-efficient economy, quality education and good governance will contribute to our development. The participation of the non-governmental sector and of young people has become an integral part of our national decision-making processes.

In a spirit of solidarity, Latvia's development cooperation policy is becoming more global. A notable part of our development support has been provided to Ukraine and countries of the European Eastern Partnership and Central Asia. Latvia has now expanded its cooperation projects to countries in Africa, and we are ready to contribute to the promotion of peace, good governance, economic growth, digitalization and gender equality. Latvia also recognizes the climate-induced

challenges that small island developing States (SIDS) face. Strengthening resilience remains at the core of SIDS sustainability, and Latvia is committed to contributing to the successful preparation of the United Nations SIDS conference next year, including financially. We will continue to follow the evolving work of the International Law Commission on the legal aspects of sea level rise, and we are already engaged in international legal proceedings addressing the obligations of States regarding climate change. Resilience to disinformation is another area where Latvia has meaningful experience. We must address the issue of the accountability of actors in the information environment, including at the global level.

The United Nations is not a perfect institution. Its inability to stop aggression or conflicts has often called its effectiveness into question. Still, as our only truly global organization, it is at the core of the multilateral system uniting all sovereign States, and it is especially important for smaller countries such as my own. The revitalization of the United Nations system and meaningful reforms of the Security Council are essential. The paralysis of the Security Council resulting from abuse of the veto is a serious concern, which is why Latvia supports efforts to make the Security Council more transparent and accountable for its lack of action. The power of the veto was created not as a privilege but as a responsibility. Latvia supports a more just, equitable representation of the world's regions on the Security Council, including for African countries and SIDS.

Latvia will continue to be a responsible and reliable partner involved in peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts. Our determination to protect the fundamental values of the Charter of the United Nations is guiding our candidacy for the Security Council elections in 2025. This Organization is as effective as the collective will of its Member States, and it is in our hands to safeguard and improve it.

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

*Mr. Edgars Rinkēvičs, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

### Address by Mr. Yoon Suk Yeol, President of the Republic of Korea

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

*Mr. Yoon Suk Yeol, President of the Republic of Korea, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Yoon Suk Yeol, President of the Republic of Korea, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Yoon Suk Yeol** (*spoke in Korean; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I congratulate His Excellency Mr. Dennis Francis on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session. Let me also pay tribute to Secretary-General António Guterres for his dedication to global peace and prosperity.

This year marks the seventieth anniversary of the Korean War armistice. After the invasion by communist totalitarian forces, the fate of the Republic of Korea hung in the balance. Thankfully, with the support of United Nations forces, the nation dramatically defended its freedom. The determined decision of Trygve Lie, the first Secretary-General of the United Nations, who viewed the armed invasion of the Republic of Korea as a challenge to world peace and led the effort to convene the Security Council to adopt resolution 84 (1950), intervening in the war, remains deeply ingrained in the minds of the Korean people. Over the past 70 years, Korea has risen from the ashes of war to blossom into a liberal democracy and a market economy. Today Korea is determined to contribute responsibly to the international community with the goal of promoting social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom, as championed in the Charter of the United Nations.

The theme of the seventy-eighth session of the Assembly is “Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity: Accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals towards peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all”. The war in Ukraine, which has been going on for a year and a half, has deepened the divisions in values and ideologies within the international community. It has also exacerbated the economic repercussions of the

coronavirus disease pandemic, causing the global economy to contract and leading to food and energy crises in many parts of the world. In difficult times, it is the vulnerable who suffer more. In the face of today’s multifaceted global crises on an unprecedented scale, the divisions among countries are widening in various areas, including security, economy, technology, health, environment and culture. To bridge those divides and ensure harmonious coexistence among all nations, the international community must stand together, with the United Nations at its core.

Today I would like to address those divisions in three key areas — the development, climate and digital arenas. Many countries around the world still lack infrastructure essential to everyday life. Development is unattainable without basic infrastructure such as water and sewage systems to process and supply water for drinking and daily use, energy facilities to provide electricity and health care to treat the sick. To narrow the development divide, countries with financial and technological capacities must take on responsible roles. Korea is intending to boldly increase its official development assistance (ODA). Despite this year’s fiscal austerity measures, the Korean Government has raised the ODA budget plan for the upcoming year by more than 40 per cent. As a result, Korea’s ODA budget is expected to more than double next year compared to fiscal year 2019. We will allocate the increased ODA funds to foster development cooperation tailored to the needs of our partner countries. In particular, we will actively channel our ODA efforts into education and training, to help partner countries build the capacity to progress economically and socially on their own. It is said that a year of education can increase income by approximately 10 per cent. That impact is more pronounced among low-income groups and women. We must expand those benefits on a global scale.

The climate crisis is another challenge that exacerbates the economic divide between nations and impedes humankind’s sustainable development. This past July, we experienced the hottest summer ever recorded on Earth. On this boiling Earth, extreme weather events such as heatwaves, torrential rains and typhoons have become the norm. Climate change is causing geopolitical shifts in agriculture and fisheries, worsening the crises in countries that are vulnerable to food shortages. To assist countries that are vulnerable to climate change in reducing their carbon emissions and accelerating their transition to clean energy,

Korea will scale up its green ODA. In particular, we will contribute an additional \$300 million to the Green Climate Fund. We anticipate the international community's active financial support for the Green Climate Fund. We also hope that the international community's collective resolve to bridge the climate divide will lead to tangible actions.

Korea will not only harness renewable energy, but it will also extensively employ high-efficiency carbon-free energy, such as nuclear power and hydrogen, as a realistic measure for accelerating our pursuit of carbon neutrality. We also plan to share those energy sources with countries that are vulnerable to climate change, ensuring that they can benefit as well. To that end, Korea aims to pursue international joint research on carbon-free energy and facilitate technological innovation and investments from the private sector. Korea will also launch a carbon-free alliance — an open platform that anyone in the world can join to promote the adoption of carbon-free energy.

Next, Korea plans to play a leading role in bridging the digital divide, utilizing our strengths in information and communications technologies. Today, with advancements in digital technology, cultures and industries are shifting towards digital-based paradigms. The digital divide is a major cause of economic divide. Therefore, bridging the digital divide will contribute positively to resolving the challenges faced by the global South. Korea will support the digital transformation of countries with limited digital penetration and utilization, which will enhance their citizens' access to education, health care and financial services.

Last September at New York University and in June at the Sorbonne in Paris, I stressed that digital advancements can be achieved only when fair access to artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technologies, as well as their safe use, is ensured. I have also proposed the establishment of an international organization under the United Nations to discuss and set forth rules regarding digital ethics. If we fail to curb the spread of fake news resulting from the misuse of AI and digital technologies, our freedom will be at risk, the market economy anchored in liberal democracy will be in peril and our very future will be under threat. Korea plans to introduce in the near future a digital bill of rights to outline a desirable future for the digital order. To support the creation of an international organization under the United Nations and provide concrete directions for the development of AI governance, the

Korean Government plans to host a global AI forum. We also plan to collaborate closely with the high-level advisory body on AI being established by the United Nations to provide a network for communication and collaboration among global experts.

Without international peace and security, development and prosperity will remain elusive. During my visit to Kyiv last July, I saw the sorrow in the eyes of children being treated at the national children's hospital. Children are our future, yet children are often the first victims of war. In line with our commitment to our Ukraine Peace and Solidarity Initiative, the Korean Government will implement a comprehensive support programme that encompasses security, humanitarian assistance and reconstruction. Furthermore, as I pledged at the Group of 20 Summit just two weeks ago, Korea will actively support Ukraine's reconstruction by providing \$300 million next year, as well as a mid-to-long-term support package exceeding \$2 billion.

The nuclear and missile programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea pose not only a direct and existential threat to the peace of the Republic of Korea, but also a serious challenge to peace in the Indo-Pacific region and across the globe. It is paradoxical that a permanent member of the Security Council, entrusted as the ultimate guardian of world peace, would wage war by invading another sovereign nation and receive arms and ammunition from a regime that blatantly violates Security Council resolutions. In such a situation, the call to reform the Security Council will receive broad support. If the Democratic People's Republic of Korea acquires the information and technology necessary to enhance its weapons of mass destruction capabilities in exchange for supporting Russia with conventional weapons, the deal will be a direct provocation that threatens the peace and security of not only Ukraine but also the Republic of Korea, which, together with its allies and partners, will not stand idly by.

While military strength may vary among countries, by uniting in unwavering solidarity and steadfastly adhering to our principles, we can deter any unlawful provocation. As a member of the Security Council for the 2024–2025 term, the Republic of Korea is committed to playing a responsible role in promoting and building global peace as we work closely with fellow United Nations States Members. Passing on to future generations an international order grounded in justice and the rule of law, along with sustainable freedom,

peace and prosperity, is a historic responsibility shared by all of us here today. The Republic of Korea, together with the United Nations, will readily take on that responsibility.

The Republic of Korea aspires to host World Expo 2030 to fulfil its responsibility and contribute to the international community. Busan served as the last bastion defending the freedom of the Republic of Korea when most of the country was invaded and conquered by communist forces more than 70 years ago. It was also Busan that rose from the ruins of the Korean War and became the world's second-largest transshipment hub, leading the Miracle on the Han River. Without Busan, Korea would not have been able to stand where it is today. Now the Republic of Korea will play its role as a responsible member of the global community by hosting World Expo 2030 in Busan — a gateway that links the Eurasian continent and the Pacific. Korea intends to give back to the international community by sharing its experience of economic growth and development, reciprocating the help that it has received in the past. The Great Exhibition of 1851 in London was an exposition of the industrial revolution, while the 1900 Paris Exposition was one of culture. The 1962 Seattle Expo was an exposition that inaugurated the new space era. The 2000 Hannover Expo was an exposition devoted to the environment. The 2030 Busan Expo will be an exposition of solidarity.

Freedom and solidarity are the basis of Korea's foreign policy. Building upon those values, the 2030 Busan Expo will serve as a platform for solidarity, through which the world's citizens can overcome crises and spread freedom together. The Busan Expo will be a festival in which all nations can come together to share their history, culture, goods and visions for the future. The Expo will make a significant contribution to the freedom, peace and prosperity of citizens around the globe.

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

*His Excellency Mr. Yoon Suk Yeol, President of the Republic of Korea, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

### **Address by Mr. Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan**

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

*Mr. Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Rahmon** (*spoke in Tajik; interpretation provided by the delegation*): In today's challenging and turbulent times, the international community needs integration and trust more than ever. We are now witnessing alarming developments in the international arena, against the backdrop of increasing modern threats and challenges. Terrorism, extremism, transnational organized crime, rapid armament and the escalation of the Cold War imperil international peace, security and development. At the same time, the disastrous impacts of climate change — extreme heat, floods, droughts, fires and other natural disasters, in addition to water shortages and famine — pose a serious threat to humanity. In that context, joint concerted efforts to address these threats and challenges and to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development have become more imperative. To that end, we welcome the theme of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, "Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity: Accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals towards peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all."

Despite the international community's efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda, the world is not on track to meet most of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Unfortunately, developing countries, least developed countries and small island developing States are bearing the brunt of that. While Tajikistan has made significant progress on some of the SDGs, in particular Goals 1, 7, 12 and 13, the country still faces challenges in fulfilling its pledge to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Therefore, we understand that solidarity, financing, the implementation of commitments and other practical measures should be strengthened, and doing so requires a truly fundamental shift.

Tajikistan therefore supported the Secretary-General's proposal made by the Secretary-General in his report, *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982), to reverse the course and turbocharge the SDGs. We also welcome the Secretary-General's *SDG Stimulus to Deliver Agenda 2030* and call for at least \$500 billion to be made available to developing countries, least developed countries and small island developing States annually in order to accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda. We also welcome the call to reform the international financial architecture in order to ensure the mobilization of stable and long-term financing and investments, among other things, to achieve the SDGs and tackle climate issues.

As we can all observe, climate change impacts are increasing across the globe. This year we witnessed the highest air temperature recorded in the period since observations began. Asia is warming faster than the global average, according to the World Meteorological Organization's most recent *State of the Global Climate* report. The negative consequences of that process, such as droughts, floods, landslides and fires in different regions of the world, including Tajikistan, are very alarming phenomena. With 93 per cent of its territory covered by mountains, Tajikistan is experiencing the impact of climate change first-hand and is considered one of the countries most vulnerable to the impact of climate change.

Frequent climate-related disasters in the form of landslides, mudflows, floods and droughts in Tajikistan result in loss of human life and infrastructure on an annual basis. To that end, Tajikistan attaches particular importance to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, which contains calls to promote the improvement of early warning systems, to increase investments in programmes on natural disaster risk reduction and to render financial assistance to developing countries. Tajikistan is one of the pilot countries implementing the Secretary-General's Early Warnings for All initiative.

More than 13 thousand glaciers are registered in the Republic of Tajikistan. Sixty per cent of the region's water resources form in our country. Unfortunately, over the past decades, Tajikistan has lost more than 1,000 glaciers, with significant implications for future food security, water availability and the ecosystems of Central Asia and beyond. The intense melting of glaciers, which are the primary source of fresh water, requires the adoption of concrete measures, including

research, data collection and processing and enhanced international cooperation. I express my gratitude to all Member States for their cooperation in adopting General Assembly 77/158 of 14 December 2022, which declares 2025 the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation. I invite all interested parties to join efforts to ensure the targeted implementation of the resolution. We stand ready to work with the international community within the newly created Group of Friends of Glaciers and beyond to implement the mandates contained in the resolution. Tajikistan is convinced that that initiative will give a powerful impetus to a new global movement to take necessary collective action and to protect glaciers from intense melting.

I would also like to highlight the successful outcomes of the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018–2028. I believe that fulfilling the commitments made by the international community at the Conference will contribute to achieving Goal 6 and addressing other internationally agreed water-related goals. Recently, following the Conference, the General Assembly unanimously adopted another resolution, proposed by Tajikistan, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Senegal. We hope that Member States and other partners will join our efforts in that process. It is worth noting that Dushanbe will host the third International High-level Conference on the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018–2028, in 2024 and the International Conference on Glaciers' Preservation in 2025. We expect the international community to take an active part in those important international conferences. As a proactive country that champions the global water and climate agenda, Tajikistan will continue to strive to promote cooperation between countries and organizations.

In modern conditions, the formation of a green economy has become one of humankind's urgent tasks. In our country, 98 per cent of electricity is produced from renewable sources, that is, hydropower, and Tajikistan ranks sixth in the world in that aspect. Tajikistan's effective and rational use of its tremendous hydropower resources can provide a favourable basis for the development of green energy generation throughout the region. We consider the role of the Green Climate Fund to be positive and constructive in the process of addressing environmental challenges and

adapting to climate change. In support of the Fund's strategic plan for 2024–2027, we invite Member States, especially developed countries, and other stakeholders to contribute to financing its implementation.

Regional solidarity and integration are of paramount importance in today's interconnected world. It enables countries to address shared challenges, promote peace and respond effectively to emergencies. Currently, as a result of joint measures taken by the countries of Central Asia, a favourable atmosphere has been created for strengthening regional integration. It was fully demonstrated during the fifth consultative meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia, which took place on 14 and 15 September in Dushanbe. That initiative will contribute to a stable atmosphere of peace, cooperation, sustainable development and prosperity in our region.

Security, stability and regional cooperation in Central Asia are directly linked with the situation in neighbouring Afghanistan. Afghanistan continues to face a difficult political, economic and social situation. As stated by the Secretary-General, 97 per cent of Afghans live in poverty. In this challenging time, Tajikistan reaffirms its commitment to continue providing humanitarian assistance and allowing the use of its infrastructure, including six bridges on its border, to support the Afghan people. I would like to take this opportunity to once again appeal to the international community to increase the volume of humanitarian aid to the suffering people of Afghanistan. In that regard, we are ready for further increased cooperation with international partners and other interested parties.

We continue to consider the establishment of intra-Afghan dialogue and the creation of a truly inclusive Government, with the participation of representatives of all peoples, nations and political and social groups, as an important basis for achieving lasting peace and genuine stability in Afghanistan. Drug trafficking, especially from Afghanistan, has increased dramatically over the past two years. During that period, the competent authorities of Tajikistan seized more than 10 tons of narcotics on the border with that country, which is several times more than in previous years.

The Government of Tajikistan is continuously taking practical measures within the framework of its national strategy for combating terrorism and extremism for 2021–2025. In cooperation with the international community, we intend to hold the next

international conference on counter-terrorism and its financing in Dushanbe in 2024. Tajikistan reiterates that the response to the growing threats of terrorism, extremism, trafficking in narcotics and other global modern threats and challenges must be comprehensive and uncompromising. In that connection, we believe that the Office of Counter-Terrorism can and should contribute effectively to the integrated and balanced implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and other relevant documents to address all aspects of that threat and challenge. The efforts should also be focused on preventing the use of the Internet for radicalization, recruitment and propaganda in service of extremism and violence. Tajikistan welcomes the adoption in June of the eighth review of the United Nations Global Counter-terrorism Strategy. We believe it provides a robust framework in further guiding our counter-terrorism efforts.

The fabric of our societies is woven with the threads of different cultures, traditions and faiths. That solidarity is a good basis for peaceful life in a space of mutual understanding between different cultures and religions. In that regard, manifestations of discrimination or racial and religious hostility, with an understanding of their negative consequences, are absolutely unacceptable. Those actions, as well as the politicization of religious issues, undermine the very essence of our international community. Insulting religious sentiments or perpetrating hatred or violence against any religion or belief has tragic consequences. In most cases, such provocative actions trigger intolerance and mistrust, causing divisions and conflicts among civilizations. In that sense, Tajikistan strongly condemns any insult to the religious sanctity of peoples, including the Holy Qur'an and other cultural and religious values of humankind.

As a co-sponsor of the resolution entitled "Promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in countering hate speech" (resolution 77/318), recently adopted by the Assembly, Tajikistan reiterates the importance of promoting dialogue and mutual understanding among civilizations for peace and harmony in the world. We believe that spreading the values of tolerance and peace is the best way to confront hate speech, fanaticism, extremism, violence and incitement. Let us stand united against actions that seek to divide us and instead work towards a world in which mutual respect and recognition are the cornerstones of our global society.

As a nation that has demonstrated resilience, stability and commitment to peace, Tajikistan seeks to secure a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for 2028–2029. I take this opportunity to call on the Member States to render their valuable support for Tajikistan’s candidacy during the 2027 elections.

In conclusion, I would like to once again emphasize that achieving all our agreed goals will be possible only based on mutual understanding, coordination, integration and tolerance. To that end, allow me to recite a poem from the famous Tajik-Persian poet, writer and thinker Saadi Shirazi that is very relevant, speaks to the theme of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly and corresponds to our shared commitments: “Human beings are members of a whole; In the creation of one essence and soul. If one member is afflicted with pain; Other members uneasy will remain”.

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

*Mr. Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Ms. Iris Xiomara Castro Sarmiento, President of the Republic of Honduras**

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

*Ms. Iris Xiomara Castro Sarmiento, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Iris Xiomara Castro Sarmiento, President of the Republic of Honduras, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

**President Castro Sarmiento** (*spoke in Spanish*): Today marks one year since I last appeared before the General Assembly (see A/77/PV.5) as the first female President of the Republic of Honduras, an event that emerged from the resistance in the streets and the fight against the coup d’état that defeated the democratically elected president, José Manuel Zelaya Rosales. My Government’s progress and results have already been recognized by the international community and

financial organizations: greater economic growth, public finances salvaged through the elimination of corrupt trusts, a single treasury, fiscal discipline, the timely payment of the burdensome debt and decreased inflation and country risk. Together with the National Congress, we repealed the Secrets Law, an instrument of corruption of the previous regime. We repealed the Employment and Economic Development Zone Law, that divided the territory into 17 pieces and gave them to 25 economic groups. In terms of security, we have already achieved a significant reduction in extortion, homicides and violence through the Solution Against Crime programme, the intervention of detention centres and the state of emergency.

To my gratuitous detractors, I should also point out for the record that the greatest increase in the budget of the social sectors has been ordered, with a view to reducing poverty and promoting health, education and school meals for all children in primary school. We have also brought back the historic free tuition programme, fuel subsidies and free energy for the poorest, implemented massive bonuses for agricultural production, repaired 12,000 abandoned schools, ensured productive roads in all the municipalities of Honduras, repaired the road network and begun the construction of eight new hospitals.

In 2022, the previous President of Honduras was accused by the United States of conspiracy, of organizing the trafficking of thousands of tons of drugs for a decade, and of leading a criminal organization that included various figures from the underworld and State authorities, such as mayors, ministers, deputies, generals and police chiefs, some of whom have already been sentenced. Those assailants who took the State hostage now conspire against my Government. They are organized in an alliance of corrupt politicians and supposed civil society with the aim of stopping the proposed structural changes that the people ordered me to carry out at the polls. They are the same people who murdered Morazán. Today they oppose the approval of the Tax Justice Law and are boycotting the election of the new Attorney General to perpetuate the impunity to which they are accustomed and to hinder the arrival of the international commission to combat corruption and impunity.

It is impossible to understand the magnitude of the tragedy suffered by the majority of the Honduran people and the constant caravans of emigrants that arrive in the United States if we deny the 13 years of



dictatorship overseen by the international community, which multiplied the country's debt by six and saw the country reach a 74 per cent poverty rate — the highest in the history of Honduras. The Honduran people, in their noble aspiration for justice, have vehemently mandated that I combat and dismantle the narco-State and the public-private corruption that looted and destroyed institutions, corrupted the popular will with electoral fraud and imposed State terrorism with death squads. Popular support has been demonstrated in the recent mobilizations of popular resistance at the national level, with hundreds of thousands of grateful men and women who have expressed their support for our fight for the return to the rule of law and the restitution of dignity to the Honduran people and the presidency of the Republic.

On Monday, 18 September, upon my arrival in New York, after participating in the Group of 77 and China summit in Havana, Cuba, in line with the commitment subscribed in my plan of Government and in accordance with the memorandum of understanding signed with the United Nations in 2022, I gave the Secretary-General the official proposal for an agreement to establish the International Commission Against Corruption and Impunity for Honduras, which is impartial, autonomous and independent with the capacity to investigate and prosecute cases of high-impact corruption networks and financial crimes. That is the only way to clean up a State where public institutions, the pirates of the political class and public-private partnerships have been infiltrated by organized crime.

Next year I will assume the pro tempore presidency of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the Central American Integration System (SICA). That includes all the great homeland dreamed up by the liberators and those of us who fought for the unity of South America, the Caribbean, Central America and Mexico.

Today I propose to open spaces for dialogue among us to formulate proposals to solve the challenges facing our region. We are not only one of the most unequal and poorest regions, but also one of the regions with the lowest economic growth and technological backwardness, which affects our ability to address the threats we are facing. Only by supporting each other will we be able to move forward.

We must not forget our brothers and sisters in Haiti. The humanitarian crisis of an oppressed and

revolutionary nation deserves our full support and solidarity. At the third summit of the European Union and CELAC, held in July, I clearly stated Honduras' views on international issues, which, as I have stated in the General Assembly, require an urgent solution.

And as for SICA and Central America, I would like to state how important it is to strengthen the integration process, which has seen sluggish development over the past 30 years. We must express therefore a genuine political will that allows us to advance the customs union, social and environmental policies and the safe transit of people and their goods.

Today the great economic interests are confronting each other in the war in Ukraine. In the end, the most affected are always the poorest countries and peoples of the world, who are suffering from inflation, food shortages and high fuel prices. The military industrial complex consumes the majority of the budgets of developed countries with trillions and trillions of dollars, but that is in contrast with the indifference and inability to contribute to humankind and to the protection of nature.

The world of Bretton Woods has hit rock bottom, and we must now recognize that at the current pace we will not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and secure sufficient financing for climate adaptation. It is not an issue of taking steps, but of proposing changes to the economic system that require a deep commitment to humankind and nature.

There is no such invisible hand. There is no spillover. Practice teaches us that the application of global capitalism and the neoliberal model creates only misery, inequality and a crazy individualism of consumer societies in the face of enormous deprivation for billions of people. The war in Ukraine must come to an end. All humankind must find a way to achieve peace. We cannot live with the permanent threat of a conflict that will put an end to our planet.

It is important to put an end to the practice of sanctions, piracy and the confiscation of the assets of one nation by another. We cannot talk about a civilized world when we live with the risk of being embargoed and having our reserves frozen in foreign banks, as is currently happening to Venezuela, whose assets have been confiscated, violating all the norms of international law.

The General Assembly every year demands the end of the blockade against Cuba, owing to it being an arbitrary and obsolete measure that is contrary to international law, violates the principle of respect for the self-determination of peoples and sacrifices a noble people who, despite the limitations imposed on them, continue to contribute to the world's solidarity. We condemn the long and cruel blockade against Cuba and Venezuela. We also demand the removal of Cuba from the list of terrorist countries, as that is a distorted, bogus and capricious measure. Similarly, the unjust measures and sanctions against Nicaragua must be eliminated, because they are barriers that prevent us from normalizing our relations with that fraternal country.

I believe in a multipolar world, where exchange and cooperation for development is based on the principles of independence, sovereignty and non-interference. On the basis of those principles, a couple of months ago, I officially opened relations with the People's Republic of China. Similarly, we have reached out to financial organizations and new initiatives for us, such as the Andean Development Corporation, of which

we are already a member, and the administration of the New Development Bank of the BRICS group of countries — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

I would like to reiterate, as I did at the CELAC-European Union summit, the vehement call for the freedom of Julian Assange, a faithful defender of free expression, a principle that we must all defend.

In defence of the indigenous peoples who fight for the land and the rivers, I am proud as a woman to convey the message of our comrade and martyr Berta Cáceres. Wake up humankind. Time is running out.

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

*Ms. Iris Xiomara Castro Sarmiento, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

*The meeting rose at 2.40 p.m.*