



General Assembly

Seventy-eighth session

12th plenary meeting
 Saturday, 23 September 2023, 9 a.m.
 New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Francis (Trinidad and Tobago)

The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

Address by Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Legal Affairs and Information of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Legal Affairs and Information of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Legal Affairs and Information of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Legal Affairs and Information of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Gonsalves (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Saint Vincent and the Grenadines would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on Trinidad and Tobago's assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session. We also affirm our solidarity with the Governments and the peoples of the Kingdom of Morocco and Libya at this their current hour of peril, consequent upon the recent natural

disasters in their countries. We express our sincerest condolences for the immense loss of life.

Across the world today, in large measure, men and women are feeling pain. They are gripped with melancholy and adrift. They are perplexed, even confused, by the complexities and challenges of our human condition, which is awash with multiple contradictions from which arises a yearning for sustainable resolutions. Large numbers of people, globally, are possessed of a mixture of resignation, a sense of futility, a routinization of indifference, even cynicism. And yet at the same time there resides in them, in us, an elemental hopefulness and a sense of social solidarity, a quest for justice and goodness, for the pursuit of equity and equality and for peace, security and prosperity for all — not just for a privileged few in a handful of privileged nations.

It is widely acknowledged that the global political economy is broken and needs fixing, not by tinkering here and there, but through fundamental restructuring of a kind that will endure for the benefit of all humankind, especially those who are disadvantaged, dispossessed or marginalized. It is widely accepted, too, that the vital Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will not be attained by 2030. Indeed, there will be a significant deficit for practically every developing country. Similarly, it is widely recognized that the climate-change agenda is stalling and in some respects reversing, with dire consequences for humankind, particularly the most vulnerable countries. At the same time, war and conflict rage senselessly across the globe. In at least one case, Ukraine, the principal

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adversaries may be unwittingly opening the gates to a nuclear Armageddon.

Contemporary drivers of insecurity and conflict are all jostling one another in an invidious march to infamy and human misery. The expansive and expanding list includes racism and xenophobia; the continuing oppression of women under a patriarchy in too many countries; the seemingly uncontrollable chariots of artificial intelligence; threats of pandemics and the anti-people consortiums of Big Pharma; poverty and food insecurity; ignorance, miseducation and disinformation; terrorism and its associated malcontents; illegal trafficking in persons and narcotics; the subversion of participatory democracy and human rights; the failure or refusal of former colonial Powers to entertain just and legitimate demands for reparations to remedy the contemporary legacies of underdevelopment caused by native genocide and the enslavement of African bodies; and the failure or refusal of the major emitters of greenhouse gases to cough up the resources that the vulnerable countries affected need for adaptation, mitigation, loss and damage. And the list goes on. The melodies that are heard are troubling, while those that go unheard are damning.

Powerful countries and blocs of like-minded States are unwilling or unable to fashion inclusive, effective modalities through genuine multilateralism to address the global challenges facing humankind. Their reflex actions in quest of a continuing imperium or an emergent hegemony are dressed up as self-serving calls for a new world order — all sauce and gall but of little or no substance, and difficult to swallow. From the rough trenches of the periphery, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines responds yet again with three haunting questions. What exactly is new? Which world? And who gives the orders? In that context, after decades of futile bickering and foot-dragging, we should urgently embrace genuine reform of the Security Council. Surely sensible compromises on the matter, reflective of the condition of our world today, are long overdue.

In these troubled and uncertain times, enveloped in limitations and weaknesses, there are nevertheless possibilities and strengths. We need this collective, the United Nations, to immediately display wise and mature leadership in our great endeavour to put things right for humankind. We who are gathered here to represent national or regional interests are not, and cannot reasonably be, agents of purely impersonal forces inexorably driving humankind to further peril or

even damnation. Notwithstanding the imperfections of a multilateral system grounded in international law and civilized norms, we in the Assembly, in concert with one another and our peoples, can be the fresh hope, the beacon and the light, not merely to inspire but to draw out of each other and our respective peoples a goodness, a quality and a nobility that we may often not yet know we possess.

In that process, let us clear certain ideational cobwebs from our brains. For example, it is wholly unhelpful to frame the central contradictions of our troubled times as revolving around a struggle between autocracies and democracies. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, a strong liberal democracy, rejects that wrong-headed thesis. It is evident to all right-thinking persons devoid of self-serving hypocrisy that the struggle today between the dominant Powers is centred on the control, ownership and distribution of the world's resources. The struggle has been and continues to be about who gets what, when, where and how. Civilized living now demands fairness, justice, peace, security and prosperity for all. That civilized goal is unlikely to ever be satisfactorily attained if the strong and powerful continue to do what they can with impunity while the weak and fragile suffer what they must, despite their often-eneebled resistance. Throughout history, powerful countries have exhibited a certain schizophrenia. They possess and deploy all their instruments of domination yet are racked by bewildering insecurities that frequently turn them into beasts of unreason, to their own detriment, as they overreach and sow the seeds of their own downfall, sadly and needlessly hobbling humankind in the process.

Let us accord mature consideration to a matter of immediacy in “our America”, to use José Martí's telling formulation. We urge our friend the United States of America — the most powerful and economically dominant country since the dawn of human civilization, a nation that espouses humane values — to end the unilateral and oppressive sanctions and impositions, contrary to international law, that it has rolled out against Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela. It is also plain silly and factually incorrect to label Cuba a State sponsor of terrorism — a label prompted by partisan domestic politics in south Florida that hurts the Cuban people massively and unnecessarily. The sanctions and coercive measures against Venezuela, including the weaponization of the United States dollar, have caused the collapse of the PetroCaribe agreement, which delivered substantial benefits to more than a dozen

Caribbean countries, including Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. We in the Caribbean have thereby become collateral damage.

At the same time, it is long overdue for the Republic of China, Taiwan, to be brought in from the diplomatic cold. That magnificent Chinese civilization, through the fever of history, has delivered to the contemporary world, in practical terms, more than one recognizable national political expression institutionally. Surely Taiwan's quest for participation in the relevant specialized agencies of the United Nations is reasonable and ought to be accommodated. Taiwan has repeatedly shown itself to be a responsible member of the international community. Peace across the Taiwan Strait is an imperative for the prosperity and security of the world.

On the bundle of issues related to climate change, including global warming, biodiversity challenges, land degradation and desertification, we see a veritable Tower of Babel. There is an overabundance of sweet-sounding lyrics by the major emitters, but they turn out to be bitterly deceptive. The lack or inadequacy of meaningful corrective action by the irresponsible climate polluters, both countries and companies, is an unpardonable, egregious wrong and indeed a species of barbarism. The upcoming twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in the United Arab Emirates is a critical test of humankind's commitment to saving our planet from the ravages of human-made climate change. We know the oft-repeated benchmarks and the corrective agenda. I do not have to repeat them here. In that composite package of policies and measures, special consideration has to be accorded to the most vulnerable countries, such as small island developing States in the Caribbean and the Pacific and the poorer communities in climate-distressed areas of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Criss-crossing the issue of financing for development in the era of climate change, and the ramifications of the downside of structural distortions in the global economy for poor and vulnerable middle-income countries, is the Bridgetown Initiative 2.0, which has already been endorsed by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), the Alliance of Small Island States and dozens of countries in the African Union and elsewhere. That progressive initiative contains creative financing proposals that would result

in much greater resources, made available on highly concessionary terms, for poor and vulnerable regions. The Multidimensional Vulnerability Index championed by vulnerable middle-income countries, including those in the Caribbean, has a place in the reform mix of financing for development. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines urges the Assembly to show strong support for the Bridgetown Initiative and the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines also endorses the initiative of the Bahamas to remove from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development — the rich club — any global authority it assumes for suzerainty on international taxation and related matters. Properly, they ought to be resident in the United Nations.

As developing countries, we must refrain from being mere prideful villagers, obsessed with immediate trifles and blind to far more compelling issues beyond our individual control, which demand a unifying solidarity with others in order to confront our struggles successfully. Poor, vulnerable, climate-distressed and resource-challenged developing countries are absolutely fed up and insulted by the unfulfilled perennial promises of the developed world on climate financing.

In September 2015, at our United Nations, all nations signed on to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, targeted for achievement by 2030. Earlier this week, the bundle of issues centred on the SDGs were accorded special consideration and there has been canvassing to revitalize them, which is admirable. But the critical issue of ensuring sufficient financing for development, including climate financing and reparations, remains the proverbial elephant in the room and must be effectively harnessed if we are to serve the deserving. Here again, the commitments we have agreed on and entered into must be translated into real action.

As part of the conversation on the SDGs, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has been insisting that there must be a special carveout for reparations from European countries for the legacies of underdevelopment engendered by the genocide of indigenous peoples and the enslavement of African bodies — horrendous crimes against humanity. In that matrix, we need a special focus on Haiti. The case for reparatory justice within the framework of the SDGs is compelling and unanswerably strong. The time for reparations has come — the demand will not go away. Africa, the Caribbean and our diaspora, and others

who hanker for a just world, are insisting on it. In our Caribbean Community, one of our member States, Haiti, continues to be confronted by immediate and multiple existential challenges in the political, security, social, humanitarian and environmental domains. CARICOM is seeking to facilitate a political solution by engaging with the widest possible cross-section of stakeholders to fashion a Government of national unity to replace one that is bedevilled by a lack of legitimacy and effectiveness, and to pave the way for democratic elections in a suitable time frame.

The Security Council cannot reasonably remain aloof from that process, considering the circumstances in which criminal gangs, including those with links to the Government and the National Police, are essentially in control of the capital city. Security supports — not an imperial invasion — are required to accompany a political consensus so as to bolster humanitarian assistance, economic development and a more orderly way of life and living. The situation is dire and growing worse by the day. We must not allow ourselves the luxury of Haiti fatigue. Indeed, the guns and bullets in the hands of the Haitian gangs are also in the bosoms of assorted criminals across the Caribbean and Latin America, and are sourced mainly from the United States. The United States, the Caribbean and Latin American Governments must work together more earnestly to stop the massive flow of guns and bullets.

We urgently need solutions for the wars and perennial conflicts across the globe. For example, the terrible situations in Ukraine, Palestine and a number of countries in Africa and elsewhere are crying out for peaceful settlements between the warring tribes. It is inhumane and wrong that the Palestinian people have had to endure colonial domination and externally induced suffering for decades.

In our America, CELAC, currently led by the pro tempore presidency of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, is at the forefront of the quest to fortify our political cooperation and enhance integration efforts. CELAC is building vital bridges with several blocs and countries across the world, with the aim of promoting peace, security, prosperity and sustainable development for all. It is vital that our shared experiences be translated into shared expressions, including institutional expressions, in order to do the practical work of enhancing life, living and production for all humankind. In addition, CELAC ought to be allowed to follow the African Union into membership in the Group of 20. Let us be more

inclusive in solving intractable problems in practical ways. I therefore welcome the European Union's proposal to initiate an institutional summit bringing together the European Union, the African Union, CELAC, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Secretary-General of the United Nations. I await the details.

The days of masters and vassals are over. The end days of imperialism are drawing nigh, and the would-be hegemony waiting in the wings with their illusions of grandeur, past or imagined, are bound for disillusionment. In any new world order, the metaphoric lions and lambs must lie down and rise up together in mutual self-interest and for a better world. This world of 8 billion people deserves better. We in the developing world reject the crumbs. There is a loaf to be shared reasonably, with equity, and we must be at the tables where the decisions are made and the food is eaten. Those who think that our heads are in the clouds are profoundly mistaken. We know that in the great cathedral of the sky there is a sun for a steeple. It illuminates our pathways, and we see things clearly, and men and women who see things clearly will never give up on the pursuit of peace, goodness, equity and justice. We do so with urgency, yet with patience and calm, knowing that even now the greener leaves explode, sun brightens stone and all the river burns.

As I conclude, a summation by Daniel Williams, one of my country's poets, is apt. "We are all time; yet only the future is ours to desecrate. The present is the past, and the past our fathers' mischief". In order to avoid desecrating the future, we must be serious about the challenges at hand and work assiduously, in solidarity, to address them satisfactorily. To be sure, there is no perfection this side of eternity, but we can do better than we have been doing. Time is not on our side. Let us not sleep to dream, but dream to change the world for the better.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Legal Affairs and Information of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Legal Affairs and Information of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Her Excellency Ms. Fiamē Naomi Mata’afa, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa

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

Ms. Fiamē Naomi Mata’afa, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Fiamē Naomi Mata’afa, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, and inviting her to address the Assembly.

Ms. Mata’afa (Samoa): Samoa extends its congratulations and best wishes to you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session. We are delighted to see Trinidad and Tobago, a sister small island developing State (SIDS), at the helm of our organization for the next 12 months, and you will have Samoa’s full support in the successful execution of your mandate. It is an honour to address the Assembly on behalf of the Government and the people of Samoa. We remain steadfast in our support of this multilateral institution and recognize that international cooperation is essential in the fight for a just, more sustainable and peaceful future for our people and planet.

While many global challenges remain, it is our hope that in a spirit of global solidarity and unity we can address with urgency the threats of the climate crisis, the accelerated loss of biodiversity, the erosion of human rights and human health, worsening conflicts, the abuse of information and new technologies and the task of finding the political will to strengthen our collective effort to achieve sustainable development. The theme for this year’s General Assembly speaks to our priorities and helps frame our continued engagement with our United Nations family.

The effects of climate change are etching a deepening and more devastating impact on our lives. The first half of 2023 was characterized by record temperatures in many regions of the world: intense water temperatures in various ocean basins; droughts in parts of Africa, Europe and Asia; and severe flooding, as well as cyclones and devastating wildfires, in Greece,

north-eastern Canada and Hawaii, decimating lives and livelihoods to ash and barren landscapes.

I extend Samoa’s deep condolences to the people of Lahaina, Maui, in the United States, and the families and friends of those who have been lost in one of the worst wildfires to have ever affected a Pacific Island community. Indeed, our sympathies go out to all those affected by those devastating disasters.

But our sympathies will only take us so far, and we will continually face these ever-worsening disasters if we continue to refuse to address their root causes. Scientists have warned of imminent, more frequent and many more extreme weather events, resulting in more lives lost and costlier, less resilient infrastructure.

June of 2023 is remembered for the warmest ever recorded global average temperatures, up by more than 1.2°C compared to pre-industrial levels. Efforts to reduce global emissions such as investing in clean and affordable energy, moving towards green resilient economies, tackling deforestation, reducing the reliance on fossil fuels and protecting nature must be everyone’s priority for the sake of humankind. Targeted solutions must be complemented by ensuring climate finance for front-line countries and utilizing the best available science and technology.

Our expectations for the upcoming twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in the United Arab Emirates include crystallized commitments to bring about our envisioned reality. In particular, we wish to highlight the importance of operationalizing the loss and damage fund as quickly as possible. For all members of the Alliance of Small Island States, maintaining global temperatures below 1.5°C is a point of no return. Crossing that threshold spells the end of many of our island societies.

We view the climate crisis as an intersecting one, causing damage to the wider environment, such as the biodiversity that forms the web of life we depend on for our livelihoods and economic growth. More than 1 billion people rely on forests for their livelihoods, and land and the ocean absorb more than half of all carbon emissions.

The climate problem is worsening as the world’s natural carbon sinks, such as our oceans and rainforests, cease to spawn life. Samoa, as a core member of the small island developing State Coalition for Nature,

joins the crescendo of voices for the better protection of our biodiversity.

The ocean is a vital resource for food and livelihoods and hence requires responsible stewardship that is integral in maintaining our Pacific identity, as the ocean is in us, and we are the ocean. A healthy ocean will help in our fight against climate change.

As the Blue Pacific continent, we must ensure that our oceans can still provide for us as we sustainably manage our marine resources, ecosystems and biodiversity. We urge our Member States to assist in combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in our region which deprives our small island developing States of much-needed revenue in a time of increased fiscal stress.

We believe in the interconnectedness of our responsibilities to our people and planet as reflected in the collective stewardship of our ocean and the goodwill that resulted in the adoption of the new 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. That is an important milestone on the path to sustainably managing the high seas and our oceans resources. Therefore, let us all sign the treaty for a timely ratification.

Similarly, we are engaged in the ongoing negotiations on a treaty to end plastic pollution. The need to address the global plastic pollution problem, especially in the marine environment, is a priority as that is a threat to our ecosystems and health.

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are a priority area for Samoa and our blue Pacific continent. Currently, chronic NCDs are overtaking communicable diseases as the dominant health problem and are the leading causes of mortality, morbidity and disability. At the national level, NCDs account for almost half of the deaths — premature deaths in fact — in Samoa. We have one of the highest obesity rates, in particular among children. Current data, however, shows some positive trends in the falling prevalence rates of alcohol drinkers and an increase in the prevalence of people who are physically active. Those statistics are a catalyst for programmes to promote healthier lifestyles.

The Government of Samoa has made people-centred health services and NCD control a priority in its Pathway for the Development of Samoa 2019-2025 and has also issued the National NCD Policy 2019-2023.

With support from its development partners, the Samoa Government launched a comprehensive programme in May 2020 aimed at building people-centred and systematic NCD service provision to strengthen primary health care, empower communities, promote early detection and effective referral of NCDs, and increase population awareness of NCD risk factors. Samoa remains committed to the global fight against NCDs through scaled-up capacity-building of all stakeholders, quality-assured data collection and statistics for informed and forward-looking policy decisions, as well as strategic partnerships to mobilize resources and support.

To help address the rising burden of non-communicable diseases, we believe that access to a balanced and nutritional diet is a national priority. It is important to return to locally produced quality fresh foods with less reliance on processed imported foods. Nutrition and exercise in combination with other lifestyle changes will do more to curb NCDs but those efforts must be enhanced by financial support for advocacy and capacity-building of our health and education professionals.

We learned from the coronavirus disease pandemic experience that, in the event of a global crisis, supply-chain issues will disproportionately affect small island States in favour of larger markets. We targeted measures to enable self-reliance, in terms of food production and responsible consumption and the promotion of local food systems. In that area, we relied on support from our partner agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, particularly in the promotion of transformative food systems.

Small island developing States face a unique set of vulnerabilities that impede their ability to achieve sustainable development. Most SIDS, including Samoa, face high-indebtedness, which is compounded every time there is rebuilding after a natural disaster. We know that natural disasters will increase in frequency and severity for as long as climate change remains unaddressed.

A multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI), therefore, will allow for the inclusion of more than just income-based criteria to assess eligibility for concessional finance. We appreciate that the MVI is a tool that aims to create a richer lens on vulnerability, and as SIDS, we look forward to early endorsement and implementation of the MVI.

We believe that there are a great many opportunities that arise from an increasingly digitized world, especially when it comes connecting our people in remote areas. We need to take better care of our citizens from the very real threats — cyberfraud and cyberattacks. We need assistance in ensuring that our infrastructure and financial institutions are safeguarded against cyberthreats and that we can build our capacity to address and combat those threats. In that regard, we are mindful of the ongoing work of the Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021-2025, which will report to the Assembly in 2025.

We remain concerned that the war in Ukraine is still ongoing, with no resolution in sight. We hope for a future of world peace, free from conflict, high-tech cybercrimes and electronic crimes, social media abuse and online child sexual exploitation and threats of terrorism, in any form. In a small island developing nation like Samoa, we rely on the collective responsibility of the global community to achieve that through international cooperation, compliance with international law and diplomacy, with the Charter of the United Nations as our guide.

We live in a highly contested region that is attracting intensified geostrategic interest. For small island countries in the Pacific, like Samoa, security is more than geostrategic power. An expanded definition of security for the region reflects our desire to nuance our priorities and the demand for climate-resilient and environmentally-conscious infrastructure, rather than simply viewing issues through the lens of strategic competition. That is how we can ensure living in peace. As a small nation with no military force, we continue to highlight the importance of multilateral platforms and the United Nations in conflict resolution and governance.

We believe in the rule of law, and we hope that respect for that principle guides us through the types of conflicts we see today. International cooperation is needed now, more than ever. Building resilience at the national level can take us only so far. Samoa is confident that despite all the challenges — and even existential threats, for some of us — there is still hope if there is unity among our United Nations family. We have a moral obligation to change our world for the better and leave hope for our future generations.

In conclusion, let me reaffirm Samoa's commitment to the United Nations and our conviction that it remains

the foremost forum to address all issues that transcend national boundaries. We reiterate our call to the United Nations, through its multiplicity of agencies, to better understand our unique cultures, respect our diversity and embrace our differences in order to help build the future we want through mutual and sustainable partnerships.

I wish everyone a successful seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, and I am grateful for this opportunity to address the Assembly.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Terrance Michael Drew, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, National Security and Immigration, Health and Social Security of Saint Kitts and Nevis

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, National Security and Immigration, Health and Social Security of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Terrance Michael Drew, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, National Security and Immigration, Health and Social Security of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Terrance Michael Drew, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, National Security and Immigration, Health and Social Security of Saint Kitts and Nevis, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Drew (Saint Kitts and Nevis): It is my honour, in this, my second year as the Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis, to join with members of the global family of nations and speak on behalf of the people of Saint Kitts and Nevis, at home and in the diaspora.

However, I must first extend condolences across the world to people, who in a summer of scorching heat — the hottest in recorded human history — suffered every disaster known to humankind: fires, floods, droughts, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes and, with

them, untold personal, social and economic tragedies. I especially express the heartfelt pain of the people of Saint Kitts and Nevis with regard to the recent disasters in Libya and Morocco. We, in Saint Kitts and Nevis, are suffering the worst drought of our history, resulting in severe water shortage. Of course, we too have not escaped unscathed.

I extend my sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to preside over the General Assembly during its seventy-eighth session. Your election has given pride and satisfaction to Saint Kitts and Nevis and indeed the Caribbean Community, and it stands as further testimony to the fact that small island developing States (SIDS) can contribute to positions of global leadership. Your term comes at a time of international complexity and conflict, of great global tensions and even greater global aspirations, and of new geopolitical dynamics and even newer technologies, which are transforming every aspect of life as we know it. These are times of great divides in income and well-being, combined with such growing insularity and loss of trust that they shout the need for what Secretary-General Guterres has rightly identified as the centrality of prevention, coordination and partnership. Saint Kitts and Nevis shares the view that this must be a period in which we work to prevent an enormous downward slide socially, economically, environmentally and with regard to security for the people of the world.

There is an alarming lack of trust the world over — a lack of trust in State and global organizations, of trust in the traditional media and what some regard as its management and manipulation of information, and of trust in the political class. In a world of distrust, the United Nations and its Member States must show a sense of caring, inclusion and respect for the dignity of all to ensure that “We the peoples” is a statement of unity, and a clarion call for the word “common” to be truly reflected in how we view the global commons and how we work together to achieve the agenda for the common good. If we are to rebuild trust and reignite global solidarity, leaders, particularly those in wealthier countries, must mean what they say and say what they mean. Developing countries are groaning under the weight of burgeoning challenges not of their own making, and I daresay some of which were inherited as a result of colonization and the transatlantic slave trade. Millions of Africans were uprooted from their homelands and transported across the Atlantic in the hulls of ships to be enslaved on plantations. That was the largest forced migration in human history, and it

resulted in great wealth for some at the expense of the lives and dehumanization of African peoples.

It must be noted that compensation was paid to plantation owners, while the survivors of that crime against humanity were left in suffering and were hindered in their socioeconomic development. It is therefore past time for reparatory justice, and I encourage all to work together constructively as partners in the pursuit of justice and of respect for justice. For, as Martin Luther King, Jr., said, “[T]he arc of the moral universe is long but it bends towards justice”.

We must maintain our focus on the climate challenge. The behemoth industrial countries and companies are pushing small island developing States (SIDS) and others onto the front lines of climate change. They accept little responsibility for financing the adaptation and mitigation measures necessary to the survival of developing countries, which suffer the consequences of the lifestyles and industries of others. As a result, countries like mine, which are unable to access concessionary funding, are forced to fix the climate crisis by obtaining loans at exorbitant rates from the very countries where the problem originated. Our carbon footprint, as a country, is very small, and yet we are facing the existential threat of climate change. That is unjust. We therefore call for climate justice.

There is an urgent need for the international community to address the gaps and shortfalls of the current international financial architecture with a view to strengthening support for SIDS, in particular through a multilateral sovereign debt mechanism, meaningful reform of the governance of the international financial institutions and enhanced access to financial resources. I congratulate the World Bank on its recent steps in the right direction. However, there is still much ground to cover if States like mine are not to fail and our economies and societies are to remain viable. I commend the Bridgetown Initiative of my sister Prime Minister Mia Mottley, as having the potential to effect the kind of changes that are essential to ensuring equitable growth and sustainable development. I see as an outcome to addressing the issue of access to capital the development of a relevant and effective multidimensional vulnerability index. I would like to caution, however, that to be effective, debt must be part of the metrics used for the assessment and ranking of countries. Furthermore, the risk and cost of wipe-out environmental events, in which a single event or series of events literally wipes out 5 per cent or more of gross

domestic product, as well as the capacity to recover from such events, are all important metrics if such an index is to work.

At the national level, our Government has commenced efforts to further ensure the holistic and resilient development of our communities. That undertaking is articulated in our vision for transforming our country into a sustainable island State by 2040, and demonstrates the determination with which we take ownership of our own destiny and pursue our sustainable development aspirations. Our vision is buttressed by seven pillars — food security, a green-energy transition, economic diversification, sustainable industries, the orange economy, coronavirus disease recovery and social protection. Those overarching areas include environmental sustainability, sustainable lives and livelihoods, health and wellness and fiscal and debt resilience. To that end, we have made strides towards geothermal energy production and have utilized loans from the Caribbean Development Bank for that national development project, together with the collaboration of groups such as the Atlantic Council and the United States-Caribbean Partnership to Address the Climate Crisis. We have strengthened our health-care delivery and management. We have learned the lessons of the pandemic and are now better prepared for crises in health, although the work continues. We are also building more transparent and participatory governance structures, as demonstrated by our enactment of legislation on integrity in public life and good governance. We have developed programmes for the most vulnerable and marginalized, specifically women, young people, the elderly, the disabled and the Rastafari community. We want to ensure that Saint Kitts and Nevis leaves no one behind.

We aspire to create a society where our people can live in safety and security. However, we are plagued by the scourge that is the proliferation of illicit and untraceable weapons flowing into our region. The States that manufacture those weapons must take greater responsibility for combating those illegal flows, which can threaten our national and regional security and have devastating socioeconomic consequences. We cannot win the fight against the guns on our own. International cooperation is necessary if we are to ensure the protection of our societies and our people. To that end, we thank the United States for increasing its collaboration with the region, and with my own country, in order to deal with the illicit trans-shipment of guns and buttress our overall national security

apparatus. We must continue to work together to ensure continued success in that regard.

It is a matter of great concern that glaring global inequities persist and are growing wider, despite sustained calls for global solidarity, action and cooperation. For example, Venezuela has been placed in a precarious situation as a result of the application of sanctions, and its people continue to bear the brunt of those unilateral measures. We therefore urge strongly for constructive dialogue between the Governments of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the United States to relieve the hardships that those impositions have caused the Venezuelan people. It should also be noted that while others benefit from access to Venezuela's natural resources, its Caribbean neighbours are denied as a result of the sanctions.

Continuing on the subject of inequities and the need for respect for sovereign States, Cuba, which has been a generous global partner, is caught in the clutches of an unjust and continuing economic, commercial and financial embargo that has caused suffering to a people who do not deserve it. The people of Saint Kitts and Nevis stand in solidarity with the Government and the people of Cuba and call for an immediate end to the embargo and for Cuba's removal from the unilateral list of State sponsors of terrorism.

Speaking to the issue of Governments and peoples excluded from full participation within the United Nations and the global multilateral systems, I would like to point to the situation of Taiwan, which has proved to be a reliable development partner that greatly contributes to collective efforts to address the pressing global issues of today. It is our firm belief that Taiwan should be able to make its contribution to the work and budget of multilateral institutions such as the United Nations and the World Health Assembly in furtherance of the common global goals. It is our hope that the right of its 23 million people to adequate representation can be realized. Beyond that, we urge for peace in that region of the world, as war would have severe consequences for all of us.

Closer to home, the ongoing dire situation in our sister nation of Haiti demands the sustained attention and support of the international community. Haiti, the first Black Republic in the Western hemisphere, continues to grapple with an unimaginable scale of human suffering. A political resolution is urgently needed, along with recognition that appropriate measures must be taken to reverse Haiti's legacy of underdevelopment. We

cannot move forward with the acceleration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development if we continue to knowingly and deliberately leave some people behind.

We are living in a world in flux, where new and emerging poles and spheres of influence are challenging the existing so-called rules-based order. New currencies are being internationalized, new trade routes are taking shape and new security, political and economic blocs are emerging to drive geopolitical advantage. The voice of the Global South is growing bolder, with increasingly louder rumblings among powerful blocs calling for change. The need for an enhanced role and presence of developing countries from the Global South within the Security Council could not be more compelling. We are convinced that in the face of those complex changes, reform of the Security Council is needed to better reflect contemporary geopolitical realities and enhance its effectiveness.

In conclusion, that reform is critical. Let us consider a reset. On the heels of the fortieth anniversary of my country's independence, we declare that there should be a reset. We can consider it here, for it gives us the opportunity to establish an improved path to what we seek to achieve as an Assembly. Today, at a time that is as challenging as it is exciting, we stand at the juncture of what is and what could be. We know what is, and we understand what could be. Ours is a challenge to ensure peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all. Saint Kitts and Nevis accepts that challenge and remains a ready and willing partner in our collective quest for a better world that we all deserve.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, National Security and Immigration, Health, and Social Security of Saint Kitts and Nevis for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Terrance Michael Drew, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, National Security and Immigration, Health and Social Security of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. José Ulisses Correia e Silva, Prime Minister and Minister for Reform of the Republic of Cabo Verde

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Reform of the Republic of Cabo Verde.

Mr. José Ulisses Correia e Silva, Prime Minister and Minister for Reform of the Republic of Cabo Verde, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Mr. José Ulisses Correia e Silva, Prime Minister and Minister for Reform of the Republic of Cabo Verde, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Silva (Cabo Verde) (*spoke in Portuguese; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I would like to extend my greetings to you on behalf of the people of Cabo Verde, Mr. President. We have engaged in this session's general debate with a view to accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The theme of the general debate must indeed mobilize nations towards peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all.

The world has been experiencing periods of intense crisis. We have been seeing a resurgence of populism and extremism, as well as attacks on democracy. There have been successive coups d'état in African countries. In this difficult time of war in Ukraine, Cabo Verde is on the side of the values and principles of freedom and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of peoples and nations. Based on those principles and values, we condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In these challenging times caused by instability and successive coups d'état in various countries of Africa, Cabo Verde supports the principles and values of constitutional liberal democracy. Based on those principles, we condemn the use of such coups as a path to power. A recent Afrobarometer survey shows that two thirds of Africans prefer democracy to any other form of governance, but only 38 per cent are satisfied with how democracy functions in their countries.

If, on the one hand, there is a disconnect between citizens and those with political power with respect to the workings of democracy, on the other, there is an opportunity. The preference of our citizens for democracy is an opportunity for greater and better democracy; good governance; greater citizen empowerment; the fight against corruption; fiscal and financial transparency; and for policies based on results that have a real impact on people's lives and create trust and hope. Credible and trustworthy electoral and judicial systems, freedom of the press, the promotion of pluralism and strong institutions are fundamental to ensuring the trust of political actors and citizens in the rules of democracy. They prevent grave crises

and extreme conflicts, in addition to strengthening democracy. They are political matters that deserve to be addressed and discussed as a matter of priority by political leaders in order to establish the trust and stability necessary to promote peace, progress, prosperity and sustainability. Cabo Verde is committed to working in a spirit of cooperation and determination alongside all Member States to address insecurity in Africa and the rest of the world. Together, as the United Nations, we can transform that challenge into an opportunity to build a safer world in which peace, stability and prosperity are accessible to all.

The world has become increasingly interconnected. The magnitude and severity of the coronavirus disease pandemic showed us that in a context of spreading insecurity that does not recognize borders, no one is safe. Partnerships among nations are key to overcoming threats to global security. We should consider security from a broad-based, global perspective that takes into account health, climate and environmental security in the context of pandemics and climate change; food security and overall security in addressing profound inequalities in access to basic goods such as water, electricity and household sanitation; and security in the face of drug trafficking, terrorism, maritime piracy, human trafficking and cybercrime. We know there is a huge risk that any of those security factors could become endemic. Only through close cooperation, partnerships and solidarity can we create an environment with lasting global security. We must commit to ensuring that conflict prevention and resolution and post-conflict reconstruction are key elements on our path towards achieving the SDGs.

The challenges to our ability to achieve the SDGs have increased, but we cannot allow the difficult global context to weaken or end our commitments to the 2030 Agenda. On the contrary, it should encourage us to implement reforms, engage in investment, financing and partnerships and uphold international solidarity. It should encourage us to reform the international financial architecture, operationalize climate and environmental financing instruments, substantially increase special drawing rights, simplify the rules for their issuance and allocation and provide debt relief to the least developed countries. It should encourage us to ensure the fair and meaningful representation of African countries in the community of nations, including on the Security Council and in international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. It should encourage us once and for all to move

forward with the normalization of the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index and the international community's application of it as a benchmark for granting access to low-cost and long-term financing, as well as greater levels of financing, for small island developing States.

Development is a long and demanding journey in which countries' external relations play a decisive role. Development partnerships, and the conditions for financing in particular, are important. But there is one determining factor in that regard. The only way for countries to achieve development is by making strong commitments within their own borders through their Governments, citizens, companies and civil-society organizations. There must be a strong commitment to creating a political, institutional, economic and social environment that encourages citizens, businesses and civil-society organizations to channel their energy, skills and resources towards personal, organizational and collective development. There must also be a strong commitment to ensuring good political, economic, social and environmental governance. In Cabo Verde, we believe that people, institutions and trust are the keys to success.

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

Africa needs expanded growth and better integration into the global economy in order to enable it to engage in production and export, create well-paid jobs, eradicate extreme poverty and ensure the happiness of its peoples. It needs structural transformation to be able to make its many commodity-based, low-added-value economies more diversified, with greater integration into value chains and increased competitiveness. It requires transformations in terms of reducing vulnerabilities, increasing resilience and responding to external economic, financial, energy, climate and health shocks. We also need transformation in terms of technological connectivity, which is a major obstacle to Africa's economic integration. Africa needs to decisively, consistently and effectively invest in human capital, including through quality education and health for all and access to basic needs such as water, electricity and household sanitation for every family.

In order to yield significant results, long-term transformative investments require considerable concessionary funding, predictability, scale-up effects and enough time to implement them. The weight of external debt, the levels of sovereign risk and the financing conditions for African countries and

companies are serious issues that block their pathways to development. They require structured and consistent solutions. We need mechanisms that create virtuous cycles. The conversion of debt into climate and environmental financing is one such mechanism. Such transformations can free up resources for investments that improve resilience, reduce exposure to external shocks, lower carbon emissions, protect biodiversity, create investment opportunities for the private sector and skilled job opportunities for young people. Cabo Verde and Portugal recently signed an agreement to convert bilateral debt into climate and environmental financing to help to achieve those goals. Contributions by additional partners would increase the scale of transformative investments and accelerate their impact.

Cabo Verde reaffirms its commitment to achieving the SDGs through integrated policies. Our goal is eradicating extreme poverty by 2026, leaving no one behind in education and accelerating our energy transition. We are investing in reducing our dependence on groundwater sources for agriculture. We want to transform Cabo Verde into a digital nation and diversify our economy. We embrace the 2030 Agenda as our path towards achieving progress, and our second sustainable development plan is geared to that commitment. We reaffirm our firm commitment to realizing the commitments we have just agreed on at the SDG Summit, which are vital for the Decade of Action. They call on us to forge intelligent actions aimed at achieving international peace and security so that we can advance more rapidly towards achieving prosperity, progress and sustainability for all, leaving no one behind.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister of Reform of the Republic of Cabo Verde for the statement he has just made.

Mr. José Ulisses Correia e Silva, Prime Minister and Minister of Reform of the Republic of Cabo Verde, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Hamza Abdi Barre, Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Somalia

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

Mr. Hamza Abdi Barre, Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Somalia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have great pleasure in welcoming to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hamza Abdi Barre, Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Somalia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Barre (Somalia) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to stand before the General Assembly on this historic rostrum to participate in the Assembly's seventy-eighth session. I would like to express our heartfelt congratulations to the President of the General Assembly, as well as the State of Trinidad and Tobago, on his election. I assure him of Somalia's full readiness to work with him as he undertakes his responsibilities. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, for his successful leadership of the previous session.

Given the theme of this year's 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", I would like to recall a Somali proverb: "to be without knowledge is to be without light". Somalia is a country that has been blessed by God with resilient people who have great and countless abilities. We clearly see the great contradictions between the promise on the ground and the harsh realities and challenges that we face. Therefore, I stand before the Assembly today to bear witness to the dire consequences of inaction.

I realize what inaction means for ordinary innocent people in terms of failing to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As we stand at the halfway point of the implementation of the SDGs, we must be able to scale up and accelerate our actions. The time for complacency has passed. Future generations are looking to us as leaders, States and institutions, to enhance efforts to find innovative solutions to our problems and crises and to create effective partnerships that will transform promises into policies and commitments and tangible measures. We must fully honour our moral responsibility not to leave anyone behind. That is the best way to ensure that everyone lives in peace, prosperity, progress and sustainable development.

The coronavirus disease pandemic exposed the fragility of our interconnected world, but it also showed the power of solidarity and cooperation during difficult times. That painful experience has demonstrated gaps in mobilizing resources and in preparedness and pandemic prevention mechanisms, which requires an

urgent response to international emergencies. We must therefore adopt an approach that includes the whole of society. In that regard, we call for the establishment of platforms to coordinate policies at the global and regional levels and to collect resources and expertise, with a view to enhancing measures to protect against pandemics and maintain readiness. Those platforms must adopt an approach that realizes equality and the SDGs as essential principles for enhancing our collective ability to detect, respond to and recover from shocks while promoting global solidarity.

The differences and inequalities in the ability to mobilize resources during the pandemic demonstrate the need to restructure the global financial order, which has become more urgent than ever before. We live in one interconnected world, whose peoples have the same aspirations and challenges. Therefore, we must urgently adopt a financial system that is capable of changing those tangible and painful realities. The time has come to leave behind obsolete structures, remedy historic ills and build a financial order that is in line with the values of joint prosperity and collective progress.

We can plant the seeds of stability and progress only in a land that is nourished by the principles of consultation and inclusiveness. Today our world faces unprecedented challenges as we witness a dangerously increase in violence. We see that new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, pose new and terrifying threats to all of us. The noticeable increase in armed conflicts and military coups, especially on the African continent, is a source of deep concern, because those conflicts have a devastating impact on the lives of civilians and lead to a significantly increase in displacement and poverty. Those are all issues from which Somalia is still struggling to recover. In the light of the most recent international incidents, which recall our painful past, we call for an immediate and comprehensive cessation of violence and destruction. We call for adherence to democratic principles and the protection of constitutional systems that guarantee civil liberties.

In an era of increasing hatred and violence, Somalia remains guided by the principles of noble Islam. We remain firm advocates for the principles of tolerance among the different faiths and enhancing mutual understanding. We clearly and unequivocally condemn the racial discrimination and oppression that targets Muslim communities in many areas of the world. We

firmly believe that we cannot achieve global harmony except through diversity and the eradication of bigotry.

The question of Palestine, which remains intractable, continues to be a source of shame to us all. We reaffirm that Somalia will continue to defend the inalienable rights and self-determination of the brotherly Palestinian people. We also reiterate our call for a just two-State solution that respects the 1967 borders. Our solidarity with Palestine is a true testament of our steadfast commitment to justice and protection of human rights.

Somalia welcomes the New Agenda for Peace proposed by Secretary-General António Guterres, because it reminds us that conflicts arise from problems of inequality. We completely agree with the need to make every effort to remedy the root causes of conflicts through comprehensive development, dialogue and the protection of human rights.

We live in an international system that is both fragmented and unequal. Therefore, I call on my fellow Heads of State and Government to work together to reform multilateral institutions, such as the United Nations, development banks and the Security Council, because those institutions with their current structures are no longer fit for addressing the challenges that we face today. We must all work together to implement a collective agenda that will make those institutions more inclusive, transparent, accountable and fit for their purposes, goals and objectives. The Summit of the Future, convened by the Secretary-General, provides a rare opportunity to address those shared objectives. We call on everyone to ensure that peace, justice and the rule of law prevail, thereby laying the foundations for a world in which conflicts are resolved through diplomacy and peaceful means.

Climate change constitutes an existential challenge to all humankind. It is a challenge that transcends barriers and will not respond to isolated efforts, and can be addressed only through united resolve. Extreme weather events, the increase in temperature and the raging forest fires that are ravaging communities in an unexpected and often unpredictable manner are all real reminders that the consequences of failing to take responsible collective action are no longer a distant concern. In recent years, Somalia has been caught in a vicious cycle of long droughts and devastating floods that have claimed thousands of lives and dispersed millions. It is extremely unjust that Somalia, the country that has contributed the least to global carbon

emissions, has had to bear the brunt of the adverse impacts of climate change. From this rostrum, we call on the international community to support us in addressing that urgent issue and bolstering our resilience in confronting climate change.

There is no country poorer than Somalia, when compared to its situation in the 1960s. Nevertheless, over the past decade, Somalia has achieved remarkable progress towards peace and stability, and we have begun to see tangible socioeconomic growth. The principle of a Somalia living in peace with itself and its neighbours is the cornerstone of our Government's foreign policy as it works towards peaceful coexistence and effective cooperation with our neighbours and partners to achieve shared prosperity. At the local level, we have adopted a conciliatory approach with a view to reaching political settlements and promoting lasting cohesion within our society. We have used a firm hand in uprooting and eliminating extremism. Our recent campaign against terrorism has achieved a quantum leap against terrorists at the military, financial and ideological levels, with 45 per cent of regions previously occupied by the terrorist group Al-Shabaab being liberated in less than one year.

Thanks to our efforts over the past year and our effective commitment, resolve and cooperation with our partners and local communities, there will not be a single rock left for terrorists to hide under. We therefore call for a similar approach to be taken to eradicating international terrorism and for the effective integration of local communities and the protection of their rights through the enforcement of justice and the rule of law. In that regard, I take the opportunity to commend the courage and sacrifices of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). We also thank troop-contributing countries and all our partners and allies for their fraternal support. Somalia is committed to fully implementing the security transition plan and assuming full responsibility for security once the African ATMIS troops have withdrawn from the country by the end of 2024.

In that context, I would like to reiterate Somalia's call for the full and unconditional lifting of the arms embargo imposed by the Security Council in 1992, which is the longest-running and most expansive embargo of different kinds of arms in the world. Today Somalia has stronger administrative systems in place to regulate the possession, use and storage of firearms. Lifting the embargo will enable us to effectively

address terrorism and build a future marked by peace and prosperity for our people.

Somalia looks forward to a fruitful and bright future. To that end, we need to take three critical steps.

First, we need to fulfil the requirements of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. We have successfully reached the decision point under the Initiative. We expect to reach the completion point by the end of this year, paving the way for alleviating the debt burden on Somalia and unleashing its vital resources to achieve autonomous growth.

Secondly, we need to put the era of the Al-Shabaab terrorist movement behind us. As we continue to wage our robust campaign against terrorism, we are optimistic about the limitless opportunities to achieve socioeconomic progress in a country free of security threats.

Thirdly, we need to reach the post-ATMIS period. The withdrawal of foreign troops and the assumption by Somali troops of full responsibility for national security constitute an important step towards restoring our sovereignty, re-establishing our social compact with our people and promoting a peaceful and cohesive society. We stand ready to rejoin the international community as an active and productive partner. We call on the international community to join us in that process and to be a part of our success.

In conclusion, Somalia is a beautiful country, rich in human and natural capital. Our doors are wide open to any cooperative effort to invest in its varied capacities and achieve prosperity for everyone. An investment in Somalia is an investment in the future.

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

Mr. Hamza Abdi Barre, Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Somalia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Saleumxay Kommasith, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Mr. Kommasith (Lao People's Democratic Republic): At the outset, I would like to extend my profound congratulations to Mr. Dennis Francis on

his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session, and I wish him a very successful presidency.

Today the international community is facing multiple crises at a level we have never experienced before. Following the negative impacts of the coronavirus disease pandemic, the major challenges facing developing countries range from an increase in extreme poverty, external debt and an unjust international financial architecture to the extreme natural calamities seen in many parts of the world, especially the recent natural disasters that occurred in Morocco and Libya. I join other speakers in expressing our sympathy and condolences to the peoples of Morocco and Libya. Those challenges have already been compounded by regional tensions and unilateral measures as a result of geopolitical rivalries, all of which have not only hampered the hard-earned development progress during the last decade but also threatened the survival of all humankind.

At this critical juncture, the most appropriate solutions are required in order to address such challenges. There is a need for unified and collective actions guided by the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and we must firmly uphold multilateralism in tackling those challenges. To rescue our world from another catastrophe, our shared wisdom and united political determination are more critical than ever. That must be done by putting aside any unilateral interests and resolutely avoiding greater confrontation and division among Member States. To that end, the United Nations must be reformed in a way that enables it to effectively fulfil its mandate. We need the United Nations to be more relevant and effective in our rapidly changing geopolitical landscape and to be able to address the challenges that threaten international peace, security and sustainable development. We believe that we are now better equipped to tackle the global challenges, which include scientific and technological advancement and innovation. Yet without our collective will, shared responsibilities and collective actions, the world's most vulnerable peoples will continue to be left behind.

Resolving global conflicts and disputes by peaceful means is the only viable way to ensure long-lasting peace and coexistence. In that regard, we urge an immediate end to the conflict in Ukraine through peaceful dialogue, without which we all will continue to be affected. We also demand a peaceful resolution of the Middle East

problem. The Lao People's Democratic Republic calls on all the parties concerned to resume dialogue and restore mutual trust in order to resolve the long-overdue Palestinian issue through the establishment of two sovereign States, coexisting peacefully, in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Like many others, the Lao People's Democratic Republic believes that unilateralism, particularly unilateral coercive measures, not only contravene the principles of the Charter and international law but also severely cause negative consequences for innocent people and hinder the national development of many developing countries. In that regard, my delegation continues to join the global call for lifting the economic embargo against Cuba and removing it from the list of State sponsors of terrorism, in addition to calling for an end to all unilateral coercive measures.

As we approach the midpoint of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, many countries are still lagging behind. We must therefore further strengthen and scale up our collective efforts, including by harnessing scientific and technological achievements to accelerate sustainable development and providing new impetus for innovation-driven growth. At the summit of the Group of 77 and China held in Havana last week, the Heads of State and Government of developing countries echoed that science, technology and innovation, including information and communication technologies, have become fundamental for addressing global challenges and are one of the driving mechanisms of the transformation to accelerate progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda. In that context, a global governance system based on science, technology and innovation is essential to identify problems and find effective solutions for sustainable economic development, environmental conservation, poverty reduction and addressing inequality.

Similarly, in order to scale up the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the United Nations development system, development partners and international financial institutions must act together in a more coordinated manner. The United Nations development system at all levels must also play an essential role in resource mobilization and coordination, including by supporting countries that are in special situations, in particular the least developed countries, the landlocked developing countries and the small island developing States, to address their specific challenges.

It is evident that one of the key obstacles to the implementation of the SDGs has always been insufficient financing. Secretary-General Guterres said that “the global financial system is biased, morally bankrupt and skewed to benefit wealthy countries”. That is a clear signal that the reform of the international financial architecture is an urgent and long-overdue task, which cannot be done without strengthening the participation of developing countries in international economic decision-making, norm-setting and global economic governance in order to adapt to the changing global economic landscape.

For the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, the SDGs are not just a global development goal but a national commitment. In addition to the 17 global SDGs, my country is also working towards achieving SDG 18 — saving lives from unexploded ordnance. Although progress has been made to different degrees on most of these indicators, unexploded ordnance remains a threat to our national development and poses an obstacle to other SDGs. We therefore take this opportunity to call for the continued support and assistance of the international community to address that prolonged and challenging task.

With regard to the other SDGs, our integration of them into our national strategies signals our unwavering dedication. Despite our great efforts, the progress made remains less than desirable, as the implementation of many SDGs has stagnated or regressed. The Government of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic is now carrying out its third voluntary national review process, conducting track analysis on specific SDGs to identify which of them need more attention and support. We will submit our voluntary national review at the 2024 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. In addition, my Government has taken various measures, including the development of a financing strategy as part of our integrated national financing framework, with a view to building a more resilient national financing architecture and opening a window of opportunity to meet the financing needs.

As for our LDC graduation effort, we are embarking on the adoption of our national smooth transition strategy to help the Government, development partners and relevant stakeholders stay focused more on development priorities by addressing the most pressing needs and challenges that could disrupt the country’s graduation process.

The Lao People’s Democratic Republic has considerable natural capital, rich biodiversity and abundant water resources, as well as the opportunity for renewable energy development and investment in carbon capture and storage, which can provide the country with significant development potential. In that context, we acknowledge the important role of science, technology and innovation in advancing the country’s national development agenda to promote green and inclusive growth, as well as a digital economy instead of a resource-driven economy, with a view to enhancing the sustainable use of natural resources. In that connection, my country has adopted a national digital economy development vision and strategy.

Although the Lao People’s Democratic Republic is among the countries that contribute the least to global emissions, like others, we are a victim of climate change. Nevertheless, we have strongly committed ourselves to the international climate obligations. My Government has already adopted its national strategy for climate change, but ensuring its full and effective implementation will require sufficient financial resources and technical assistance. That means access to climate finance and other funding resources, which would greatly support developing countries. In that regard, my country urges the realization of the international commitment to mobilize \$100 billion in climate finance for the countries in need of it most. To that end, our delegation trusts that the outcome of the Climate Ambition Summit 2023 will lay a foundation for concrete actions in the lead up to the twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Mr. Lapasov (Uzbekistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

This year marks the fifty-sixth anniversary of the establishment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). As an intergovernmental organization for regional cooperation, ASEAN has not only upheld regionalism and multilateralism but also played a central role in maintaining and promoting peace and security and development in the region. We members of ASEAN are committed to further strengthening the ASEAN community, as well as to enhancing ASEAN unity and centrality in our engagement with external partners, including through ASEAN-led mechanisms, in order to promote an enabling environment for peace, stability and prosperity in the region and beyond.

In 2024, the Lao People's Democratic Republic will assume the ASEAN chairmanship under the theme "Enhancing connectivity and resilience". The Lao People's Democratic Republic will continue to build upon the past achievements of ASEAN in strengthening the ASEAN community and enhancing ASEAN external relations with our partners for a more connected and resilient ASEAN.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the Lao People's Democratic Republic's commitment to multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core, as well as our firm determination to advance the implementation of the three pillars of sustainable development — economic, social and environmental — so that no one is left behind.

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

Mr. Hassen (Ethiopia) (*spoke in Amharic; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): It is my honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of Ethiopia. I would also like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Dennis Francis on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session. I assure him of my country's full support in the performance of his duties.

(*spoke in English*)

We are gathered at a time when the world faces a multitude of challenges. In such times, we must ask ourselves whether we have the necessary political will to choose global partnership over geopolitical competition. Are we prepared to work together towards a promising age of shared prosperity? Are we committed to working together to save our planet and to meet the aspirations of more than 8 billion people?

The uncomfortable truth is that we are increasingly witnessing policy choices that escalate tensions, threatening the peace and stability of the world. Poverty and hunger are increasing. Progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is off-track, pushing even further back the objective of eliminating extreme poverty by 2030.

Global inflation and the rise in the cost of living are undermining development gains, further worsening the challenges of the most vulnerable communities. Investment in human capital and skills development remain critical for developing countries.

Climate change continues to have devastating impacts across the globe. Africa and other climate-vulnerable regions are enduring disproportionate adverse effects. The target of mobilizing \$100 billion by 2030 to support the mitigation and adaptation efforts of developing countries has not been achieved. The upcoming twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in the United Arab Emirates, should therefore be seized as an opportune moment to take bold actions.

The threat of nuclear weapons is another source of grave concern for humankind. The international community needs to prioritize dialogue in order to de-escalate tensions and prevent the threat of nuclear weapons. We should also ensure that new technologies such as artificial intelligence are used responsibly, in a manner that benefits humankind.

The global community can address those challenges through meaningful cooperation. The letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations demands that we come together to tackle those challenges with the highest sense of urgency and partnership. Ethiopia calls on all Member States to recommit to the Charter of the United Nations. Maintaining the status quo will not advance our shared interest of ensuring peace and prosperity. We should collectively work for an inclusive multilateral system to renew our global solidarity. A new global collective security system that respects the sovereignty of Member States and prevents conflict is vital. As a long-time champion of, and active participant in, United Nations-mandated peacekeeping operations across the globe, Ethiopia underscores that reforming the Security Council is not a choice but an absolute necessity. We need a reformed and representative Security Council that is fit for purpose. Allocating permanent seats to Africa, as set out in our continental Common Position, is politically and morally justified.

Ethiopia commends the efforts of the Secretary-General with regard to the financing of African Union peace support operations from assessed contributions. National ownership of security responsibilities is imperative. For peacekeeping operations to achieve their objectives, robust capacity-building support should be provided to national law enforcement structures.

Unilateral sanctions and coercive economic measures violate United Nations principles and international law. Ethiopia opposes such measures imposed on developing countries and calls for their unconditional removal. We wish to underline that

diplomatic dialogue among sovereign nations should be the primary tool for resolving differences.

Ethiopia and other developing countries have also been advocating for the reform of the United Nations system as a whole. We call for a more inclusive and effective multilateral mechanism that works fairly for developing countries. The group comprised of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa has championed that call, and that is why Ethiopia is grateful to have been invited to join the group.

While the world has the financial resources to fund all the development targets set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, its implementation has fallen behind. Therefore, what we need is firm political commitment and renewed global partnership. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda should also be fully implemented to meet the SDGs. Ethiopia has aligned its 10-year development plan with the SDGs. We are resolute in accelerating our inclusive political and economic reforms for a more peaceful and prosperous society. We are also committed to finding comprehensive solutions to the climate crisis. The Ethiopian-owned flagship programme — the national Green Legacy Initiative — is a demonstration of that commitment. The objective of the programme is to cultivate a green culture and ensure the country's development through rural and urban green initiatives. The programme has been successful, and we are making every effort to share our experience.

The Pretoria peace agreement ended a two-year-long conflict in northern Ethiopia. The agreement is a practical embodiment of African solutions to African problems. Its implementation continues to make significant progress, despite some delays in the execution of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. There is a need to expedite the process and ensure its successful completion. The continued implementation of the agreement is a clear manifestation of the Government's commitment to resolving political differences through dialogue and constitutional means. We are also actively undertaking rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes in conflict-affected areas.

I would like to reaffirm that the Government is committed to consolidating peace and stability throughout the country. We continue to pursue dialogue for sustainable and peaceful solutions. In order to ensure accountability, reconciliation, truth-telling and healing, Ethiopia is finalizing its transitional justice

policy. Nationwide consultations on policy options for transitional justice have been effectively conducted in all regions across the country. Through the National Dialogue Commission, Ethiopia has also embarked on inclusive dialogue to address both past and current societal concerns. We are confident that will contribute to realizing a prosperous future for all citizens.

Conflict-induced crises in the Horn of Africa require a regional approach, with the support of the international community. We express our solidarity with the brotherly nation of the Republic of the Sudan, which is facing difficult times. We are confident that the Sudan will find a way to resolve the conflict peacefully and re-establish order. Ethiopia has been supporting the efforts for peace, with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Sudan.

It is important to ensure that all peace initiatives be coordinated. Ethiopia continues to fulfil its responsibility by promoting regional integration to advance peace, stability, economic cooperation and people-to-people ties. We are working to realize the development potential of our region. Ethiopia is determined to cooperate with its neighbours to expand trade, investment and regional integration through infrastructure development, efficient logistics and connectivity. Any bottleneck that might constrain the shared prosperity of the region needs to be addressed in a concerted approach. Fostering closer partnership is critical for creating access to seamless connectivity.

Cultivating mutual trust and friendship is the right choice for regional cooperation and interdependence. Regional cooperation positively impacts the lives of people, especially when complemented by well-developed infrastructure projects. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is one such project that meets the legitimate development aspirations of Ethiopians and the region at large. Ethiopia welcomes the resumption of the trilateral talks with Egypt and the Sudan. We remain committed to a negotiated win-win outcome facilitated by the African Union.

Africa is a continent of hope, with immense potential for prosperity. The continent has already been implementing its transformative and ambitious Agenda 2063. However, unleashing Africa's potential requires mobilizing domestic and external financial resources. The international financial architecture should be reformed, with special consideration for Africa's needs and priorities. A fast-track resolution of Africa's debt

crisis and the provision of additional development financing should be at the top of our agenda.

Ethiopia advocates for an inclusive international order that recognizes the contribution of all countries. The very survival of humankind, the safety of our planet and the peace and security of the world are at stake. Therefore, hope, justice and equality for all should indeed define the fundamental agenda of the Assembly. Beyond the rhetoric, this organ has a responsibility to promote global consensus and translate ideas proposed in this very Hall into concrete actions.

As I conclude, I would like to emphasize that we are at a critical juncture when humankind must come together with unity of purpose for peace and prosperity. Fully aware that our time to serve is limited, each of us gathered here today should reflect on the legacy that we would like to leave behind for future generations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. John Rosso, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Immigration, Lands, and Physical Planning of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea.

Mr. Rosso (Papua New Guinea): It is my honour and privilege to address this Hall for the first time as Deputy Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea and on behalf of my Prime Minister, the Honourable James Marape, and the Government and the people of Papua New Guinea. I congratulate the President of the General Assembly and the Government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago on his successful election to preside over the General Assembly's work at its seventy-eighth session. With his extensive diplomatic experience and the unique perspective of a fellow small island developing State, his chosen theme of peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability, with multilateralism at its core, resonates well with us. I wish him well in carrying out his mandate and assure him of our full support. I would also like to thank his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, for ably leading our collective work over the previous year in a challenging environment. We wish him well in his future endeavours. Let me also extend our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his strategic foresight and dynamic and action-oriented leadership to shape a better, peaceful, prosperous and shared future for humankind and the planet through the primacy of multilateral cooperation at the United Nations.

Today we meet against the global backdrop of development indices at the national and international

levels that all point in the wrong direction, and the road ahead is not easy for all of us. That therefore requires our individual and collective partnerships for our people, prosperity and planet. For Papua New Guinea, we continue to face a daunting situation vis-à-vis building back better in the aftermath of the coronavirus disease pandemic. That is compounded by the worsening climate crisis, the adverse socioeconomic and supply-chain-related impacts of the unacceptable war waged against Ukraine, the financial and economic burdens arising from the existing unfair and archaic international financial system and our own domestic challenges, which include economic growth, debt sustainability, meeting our people's basic needs and providing social protection.

However, we are encouraged by the world coming together here to discuss and explore opportunities and solutions to surmount our shared development challenges. Mere rhetorical talkfests and hollow-sounding promises are what we must avoid. Rather, let us use this opportunity to ensure that we put in place concrete, results-oriented and workable ways and means that will enable us to meet our citizens' basic needs in an effective, timely and sustained manner and achieve our countries' development aspirations while protecting our environment.

My Government has decided to take bold, decisive and pragmatic leadership and ownership in order to address our own development challenges head-on in critical areas such as economic growth, health services, education, the law and justice sector and infrastructure, including information and communications technology for e-Government. We have also taken such an approach to dealing with external shocks to our country and our people. Those issues are now being addressed through Papua New Guinea's new five-year Medium-Term Development Plan Four for 2023–2027, which we launched in July, with a theme of national prosperity through growing the economy and 12 strategic priority areas of focus for our national development. The plan also clearly identifies the measures, including funding, that will be needed to attain our development priorities and aspirations.

We are embarking on growing our economy from its current level of \$31 billion per year to \$57 billion by 2030, and we aim to create an additional 1 million jobs countrywide. That will be catalysed by the diversification of our economy from the non-renewable energy sector, which is driven by mining, oil and gas,

to complementary support from the renewables sector, including agriculture, fisheries, the service sector and concrete support for our small and medium-sized enterprises in the informal and formal sectors. It will also entail providing the necessary infrastructure, together with investment in education and health and special economic zones, with incentives for productive investment, to propel our country forward.

The national development plan, together with our overall long-term Vision 2050 strategic development road map, serve as the cornerstone for the future we want. They will deliver for us on improving our people's quality of life, enhancing the country's prosperity, peace and security and promoting better environmental protection and climate change mitigation and adaptation, in addition to enabling Papua New Guinea to become an upper-middle-income country by 2030 and to improve by 2050 our global ranking on the Human Development Index.

Our Medium-Term Development Plan Four also integrates and reaffirms my country's strong commitment to accelerating and delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which currently remains a serious concern for us because of the domestic impact of multiple global crises and our own national challenges. We are determined to ensure that our new development road map is a springboard for the progressive implementation of the 2030 Agenda in a more comprehensive, focused, resourceful and accountable manner.

Papua New Guinea has prioritized health as a core national development agenda, as spelled out in our new fourth Medium-Term Development Plan and the National Health Plan for 2021 to 2030, supported by relevant policies. It underlines our commitment to universal health coverage and quality and affordable health care, by focusing on people and their environment, engaging with social partners and sectors and increasing access to quality and affordable health services. That reaffirmed commitment followed our 2020 national review of the health-care system, which highlighted the need for the review and reform of policies and laws on health issues in the country and for a stronger health system in order to meet our people's basic health needs and achieve universal health coverage by 2030. The review also underscored the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach for strengthening existing partnerships and building new ones in order to mobilize resources, appropriate technologies and financial support,

including capacity-building and training opportunities, with a view to delivering the health outcomes we need for our people and our country, as well as the necessity of ensuring effective governance and accountability in the health sector, including transparency and proper oversight in procurement procedures and processes and delivery mechanisms, which are vital for eliminating overhead costs and malpractice in the health sector.

We continue to face major health-care-related challenges in the prevention and control of communicable and noncommunicable diseases, and in the area of reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health. Tuberculosis also remains a serious concern in our country, and we have continued to witness increasing lifestyle- and cancer-related deaths in recent years. However, the health review and reforms and strategic privatization have made positive impacts, including by transforming our national health system and focusing on training more medical staff, including doctors and nurses. However, much more work remains to be done. We therefore welcome development partnership in the health sector, which is crucial for us given our limitations in terms of health-related experts and institutional and systemic capacity and resources. Those limitations continue to hinder the effective delivery of health care and services to our people, especially the rural majority. We look forward to harnessing the outcomes of the three health-related high-level meetings that just concluded in order to support our recovery from the pandemic and to deliver on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 in the country.

The importance of partnerships for national development, including on the SDGs — especially in a challenging global situation such as the one we face today — cannot be overstated. We therefore welcome genuine and durable partnerships from all stakeholders at all levels in supporting our development priorities and aspirations, including for the SDGs. In our view, however, development partnerships should be on a basis of equality, instead of being approached through a donor-recipient lens that undervalues the contributions of recipient countries. That will help build trust and confidence and enhance effective development partnership.

For Papua New Guinea, strategic development partnership is recognized in pillar 12 of our new Medium-Term Development Plan Four. We call on all our development partners to ensure that their official development assistance to Papua New Guinea is

aligned, under that framework, with the priorities set out in our own national development agenda, thereby averting unnecessary parallel efforts, and we call for cost-effective partnerships so that mutually beneficial outcomes may be achieved. Let me also use this occasion to acknowledge and thank all our valued development partners for their constructive partnerships and support for my country's development efforts. We look forward to further strengthening our cooperative relations going forward.

Financing for development remains a serious challenge for us, as it is for many other developing countries, including in the aftermath of the pandemic. The growing divide between countries that can access affordable financing for development and those that cannot is a serious concern that must be addressed swiftly, if we are genuine about leaving no one behind. We also note the outcomes of the high-level meeting on financing for development and the SDG Summit, held at the level of Heads of State and Government earlier this week, and we strongly support the Secretary-General's call for a \$500 billion annual SDG stimulus to support developing countries. That call is most timely and relevant, given the challenging development circumstances that the world currently faces. If realized, gaining access to such funding support for developing States should be at speed, at scale and less onerous.

My country will need approximately \$26 billion over the next five years in order to grow our national economy to reach our development aspiration of an annual economy of \$57 billion, taking us progressively into the future and enabling us to deliver on our SDG commitment. According to the International Monetary Fund and other pundits, Papua New Guinea is rated as a high debt risk given our debt-to-gross-domestic-product (GDP) ratio. We recognize that concern, but we need to fund our development framework and its effective implementation in order to cater to the demands of our growing population.

We are taking on the leadership and ownership of our domestic-resource mobilization, including financing our development priorities, through measures such as tax reform and enhanced internal revenue collection; strengthening governance laws and policies to halt illicit financial flows; addressing systemic issues regarding foreign exchange; reviewing and revising our domestic laws and policies to ensure that our natural-resources development in the extractive industry is on fair, just and equitable terms; incentivizing public-private

partnerships and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises in the informal and formal sectors. That has enabled us to provide our core funding for development, complemented by a small fraction of external financial support from our development partners. We are also working with the International Monetary Fund and other bilateral development partners to move from a deficit budget to a more balanced one in order to cushion the impact of debt servicing on the delivery of our development needs.

We must ensure that the financial resources needed to advance our national development agenda, including for the SDGs, are accessible, affordable and delivered on a sustained, predictable basis for countries to access. We also welcome development financing partnerships through debt-for-nature swaps as an important tool for addressing our debt issues while conserving our natural ecosystems. We cannot afford to sacrifice our peoples' development needs by merely conserving our natural resources without appropriate incentives to cater to their needs.

Let me also underscore that it is not enough to demand that countries fix their domestic systems to support their development financing. It is also crucial that we effectively and urgently address the existing shortcomings of the international financial system that continue to be a bane of the financing-for-development needs of developing countries like my own. We therefore join other countries and the Secretary-General in calling for urgent and comprehensive reform of the international financial architecture in order to address the economic and financial challenges facing developing nations, especially small island developing States like Papua New Guinea. We further call on the international financial institutions and development partners to use the final report and recommendations of the High-Level Panel on the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index as a tool to take adequate account in their decision-making of the key factors of vulnerability, such as the adverse effects of climate change and natural disasters, rather than relying on GDP or gross national income per capita as the sole measure of a country's development. We also strongly support the Bridgetown Initiative 2.0 as part of reforming the global financial system in order to improve the response to the climate crisis and specific development challenges, including access to affordable financing and debt relief.

One of my country's ongoing concerns in the context of financing for development is about the unintended

consequences arising from anti-money-laundering laws. For a small economy that is primarily rural and cash-based, such laws impede development growth in my country. We need to ensure that the application of one-size-fits-all money-laundering laws does not continue to be a hindrance to the economic growth and sustainable development of small developing countries such as my own. However, that does not imply a derogation of our duties in upholding the rule of law but rather the importance of ensuring that the financing we need for our national development does not become a victim of such laws.

The ongoing extreme and increasingly tragic weather and slow-onset events that have multiplied across the world — which the Secretary-General has aptly described as the era of global boiling — have emphasized the critical need for all of us to confront and address the climate crisis swiftly. From our highland regions to the coastal lowlands and offshore areas in our island communities, the ravages of the climate crisis — as seen in natural disasters, droughts, sea level rise and food insecurity and their impact on our economy — have continued unabated, despite our negligible greenhouse-gas emissions. That provided a backdrop to my country's own second national climate summit, held last week in our capital with our development partners, on what we must do going forward, nationally and with other stakeholders. We applaud the Secretary-General's strong and dedicated leadership on climate change, including at the Climate Ambition Summit held earlier this week. We also commend the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, the incoming and outgoing Chairs of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, on the ministerial meeting held on loss and damage, and we look forward to further engaging on that at COP 28.

Let me reiterate that Papua New Guinea's position, like that of many of our fellow Pacific island countries, is that climate change is a key priority for us, as it remains the single greatest existential threat to the lives, livelihoods, security and well-being of our people. The critical importance and urgency of limiting global warming to 1.5°C through rapid, deep and sustained reductions in greenhouse-gas emissions cannot be overstated. It is critical to the survival of our smaller island nations in the Pacific. That is why Papua New Guinea strongly supported the Assembly's adoption in March of its landmark resolution 77/276, submitted by our Melanesian neighbour, Vanuatu, on an advisory

opinion from the International Court of Justice on climate change, and we look forward to its outcome. As home to 7 per cent of the world's biodiversity, Papua New Guinea has an important role in conserving it, and our evolving national plans, policies, legislation and partnerships on climate change underscore that strong commitment. Again, that is reflected in our new fourth Medium-Term Development Plan and our strategic priority area 10 on climate change and the protection of the natural environment.

Papua New Guinea is indeed pleased to note that we have made much progress nationally on the climate-change front, which we take pride in, given our efforts to implement our targets under our nationally determined contributions so far. At the Climate Ambition Summit, Papua New Guinea announced its national commitments towards the 1.5°C global temperature goal and for climate justice. In brief, those included our milestone achievement in June 2022 of our 2050 net-zero target; the completion and launching earlier this year of our 2022–2030 national adaptation plan on climate-resilient agriculture, infrastructure and transport and health-sector responsiveness to climate-sensitive diseases; and our political commitments to using our marine and terrestrial natural resources to address climate change, including for a just transition to renewable energy.

We therefore call once again call, first, on high-carbon-emitting States and developed economies to do much better.

Secondly, developed countries must urgently deliver on their climate-finance commitment of \$100 billion per year and ensure that the distribution of those funds is equitable, accessible and timely.

Thirdly, we urge international financial institutions and development partners, including the Green Climate Fund, to ensure that countries like mine have timely access to climate finance for mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage in order to accomplish a just transition and ensure resilience to the effects of climate change.

Fourthly, we welcome international support for investments in the downstream processing of our natural resources, with a view to making the transformation we need in order to further support our enhanced climate ambition to achieve the global temperature goal and climate justice. At the Pacific regional level, Papua New Guinea urges the international community to contribute to the Pacific Resilience Facility — a regional financing

facility set up to address disasters and climate-change threats on our Blue Pacific continent — and thanks our development partners who have contributed to it.

As a maritime nation, Papua New Guinea's commitment to protecting and sustainably using the oceans and seas and their resources remains steadfast. Our fourth Medium-Term Development Plan, under strategic priority area 10, on climate change and protection of the natural environment, underscores that point. Not only does the ocean serve as a vital carbon sink, but it is also our main source of economic benefits, revenue generation and daily sustenance, providing food and income for our people and communities. As an example, our waters supply 18 per cent of the global tuna catch and 15 per cent of the global tuna trade.

We therefore strongly supported and welcomed the milestone adoption in June this year of the new global 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 (BBNJ). We are pleased to have contributed to ensuring that areas important to us — such as high-seas pockets, extended continental shelves, rights to fisheries, capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology — were covered in the treaty. The BBNJ treaty also complements our own national protected areas and ocean policies, as well as our regional 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. We thank Singapore for its strategic and able leadership in presiding over the process, and we also commend the international community for rallying to support the BBNJ treaty after nearly two decades of intensive negotiations. We look forward to its early implementation and are therefore encouraged and impressed by the high number of countries that signed the treaty four days ago at the United Nations treaty event. We commend and congratulate them. Papua New Guinea will sign the new BBNJ treaty once our domestic procedural and legal processes are completed.

Papua New Guinea supports the convening of the next United Nations Ocean Conference, on SDG 14, to be led by France and Costa Rica. We are also supportive of the global efforts for a new binding global instrument on plastic pollution to further protect our marine ecosystem and will do our part to ensure its successful conclusion and eventual implementation. And as an integral part of our stewardship of the ocean and seas, 16 days ago my Government hosted the eighth biennial Pacific Tuna Forum, with the support of our

fellow Pacific countries, regional and subregional organizations, the private sector and academia. We discussed the current status of the tuna industry and its sustainability in our region.

Like many other small island developing States, Papua New Guinea is increasingly concerned about the rise in sea levels related to climate change. Sea level rise is threatening not only the lives and livelihoods of our coastal communities and the country's land territories, with consequent economic and other losses, but more fundamentally, the human rights of those of our people who are affected by it. The existing international law does not address that serious concern. We welcome the ongoing important work of the International Law Commission on the issue, to which we are committed to contributing further. In view of that, Papua New Guinea, together with our fellow members of the Pacific Islands Forum, is advancing efforts for another landmark Forum leaders' declaration on statehood and the protection of people in the face of climate-change-related sea level rise. We look forward to our Forum leaders' adoption of it later this year. We call on our development partners to work closely with us in equal partnership to further strengthen the protection and sustainable use of the ocean and seas.

At a time of challenging global and national circumstances, and given the evolving multiple crises everywhere, the protection and promotion of human rights, particularly for women and girls and those in vulnerable situations, must remain central for the international community. Papua New Guinea has a strong commitment to that important issue, which we demonstrated most recently in strategic priority area 11 of our fourth Medium-Term Development Plan, on population, youth and women's empowerment. It demands that we increase the gender parity index for women in education, employment and business, combat incidents of gender-based violence and quadruple the number of women in leadership. Those priority activities will require an investment of approximately \$50 million to deliver the much-needed results by 2027.

We are also continuing to work through our bipartisan parliamentary committee on gender-based violence, led by seven members of Parliament with the welcome and valuable support and partnership of the European Union and the United Nations system, particularly UN-Women, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Development Programme under the Spotlight Initiative, which was launched in

March 2020. Through an evidence-based approach, it addresses the unequal power relations between men and women with a focus on gender equality and women's empowerment.

We have made good progress in areas such as reforming laws and policies and the justice system; health- and community-sector services; policing, medical and sociopsychological services; accessible legal support services; and shelters for the survivors of gender-based violence. However, much more remains to be done, and we are committed to doing our part going forward. We are also working with the United Nations human rights treaty bodies on our outstanding report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. We thank our development partners in those efforts and urge others to join us in strengthening human rights in general and the rights of our women and girls more specifically.

The urgency of the need for a New Agenda for Peace, as called for by the Secretary-General in *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982), is timely, and its importance for world peace and security cannot be overstated. Papua New Guinea strongly supports the Secretary-General's call, given the sobering and increasingly worrisome disrespect that some States have shown for international law, including the Charter of the United Nations; the geopolitical tensions and divides; simmering and unresolved conflicts and associated human rights violations; escalating nuclear-weapon threats; and mistrust between and within countries. Without peace and security, our development aspirations under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and our respective development frameworks will be that much more difficult to achieve. That is a recipe for a catastrophic outcome that none of us want.

Never again must we repeat the horrors of the two world wars. We are seriously concerned about moves by certain countries towards the use of nuclear weapons. Such threats are unacceptable and to be condemned in the strongest possible terms. It is incumbent on us all to rally together in peaceful dialogue and in our common humanity, under the banner of the United Nations, to responsibly address all of those issues.

For my country, peace and security issues are a priority that is addressed through the law-and-justice sector of our Medium-Term Development Plan in strategic priority areas 5 and 6. Our strong commitment to peace and security has enabled us to increase funding and investment for capacity-building and training in

this sector. For us, our founding foreign policy of being a friend to all and an enemy of none continues to guide us in the conduct of our foreign relations. Economic, trade and friendly relations with all countries are in our national interest. We are not interested in taking sides.

Papua New Guinea has also learned the importance of peace by peaceful means from its own internal situations. It is in that spirit that we continue to engage in our Bougainville peace process, which remains a high priority for our country. It continues to be addressed within the parameters of our Constitution and the mutually agreed road map for the peace process, which is capable of delivering peaceful and lasting political solutions for us. We are grateful for the United Nations system's continuing valuable and constructive support, including through the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund and other development partners, to the Bougainville peace process and the new initiatives in two other parts of our country.

With regard to reform of the United Nations, we are supportive of efforts towards meaningful reform, such as the revitalization of the General Assembly and the intergovernmental negotiations process for reforming the Security Council, in order to address today's realities and be more accountable for the greater good of all. However, we cannot afford lengthy and inconclusive processes such as we have seen in the Security Council intergovernmental negotiations. We must do much better.

Before I conclude, as a SIDS, we recognize the important efforts towards a SIDS-specific programme of action for the next decade and the convening of the fourth International Conference on SIDS in Antigua and Barbuda in May 2024. We join other SIDS in calling on development partners and the international community for assistance, including with funding, to support SIDS in charting their path forward to resilient prosperity and the future we want.

Lastly, I reaffirm Papua New Guinea's commitment to doing its part in upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations as a sovereign State equal to other nations. May God bless all of us and the United Nations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jeyhun Aziz oglu Bayramov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Bayramov (Azerbaijan): I congratulate His Excellency Mr. Dennis Francis on assuming the

presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session and thank the previous President, His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, for his hard work over the past year.

The world continues to face a multitude of challenges that transcend boundaries. From deteriorating climate trends to deep-rooted poverty, rising tensions and ravaging pandemics, the challenges plague us all, regardless of our background or location, and require bold and concerted action. International politics is becoming increasingly fragmented, leading to the division and erosion of multilateralism. The growing trend to intolerance and discrimination, in particular Islamophobia and the alarming surge in hate speech, is disturbing. In order to curb that challenge through our centuries-old tradition of diversity and multiculturalism, Azerbaijan firmly believes in fostering dialogue, mutual understanding and respect among different cultures and religions. The Government of Azerbaijan has consistently promoted intercultural and interfaith dialogue through significant global initiatives such as the Baku process and the Peace4Culture Global Call.

Amid the growing challenges, it will be vital for the United Nations to continue to galvanize international solidarity and cooperation. Our Organization has a mandate to ensure that every nation has an equal voice and is treated on the same footing. The purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations are binding worldwide and must be applied consistently, not selectively. Azerbaijan advocates for a reinvigorated and reformed multilateral system with the United Nations at its core, underpinned by strict adherence to the norms and principles of international law and their non-selective application. We look forward to the Summit of the Future as an opportunity to reinvigorate global action and reflect on our collective commitment to the Charter and multilateralism.

In its national capacity and as the current Chair of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM), Azerbaijan has continued to contribute to peace, security and the global sustainable development agenda, and has spared no effort to promote international solidarity and multilateralism. Since the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, Azerbaijan has been at the forefront in advancing a number of global initiatives to overcome that challenge. The lingering effects of the pandemic have created a pressing need for us to redouble our global cooperation and solidarity efforts, anchored in high-level political engagement

and collaboration involving all vital stakeholders. International cooperation and political engagement require the involvement of various stakeholders, including women and young people. Azerbaijan has made that a key focus of its NAM chairmanship through the foundation of the NAM Youth Organization, with a permanent secretariat in Baku, in line with the Shusha Accords, and by initiating the establishment of a NAM platform for women. Azerbaijan also spearheaded the foundation of the NAM Parliamentary Network. We must strengthen our joint efforts to tackle the pandemic's consequences and consolidate efforts for the global recovery from COVID-19.

In the light of that, President Aliyev of Azerbaijan initiated the establishment of a United Nations high-level panel on the post-pandemic global recovery. In March 2023 we hosted the Summit of the NAM Contact Group in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, at which, in his capacity as NAM Chair, our President declared the establishment of two global calls to support the post-pandemic recovery of Africa and small island developing States. As the first donor, Azerbaijan announced that it would allocate funds to both calls. Since 2020, Azerbaijan has provided humanitarian, economic and technical assistance amounting to \$300 million to more than 130 nations.

As we approach the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, many parts of the world are struggling to achieve our shared vision of the future. It is imperative that we work to confront those challenges in concert. Azerbaijan has been a passionate supporter of the universal promotion and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals since their adoption. We have been pursuing transformational changes by remodelling our economy and focusing on sustainability, inclusive growth, social justice and clean energy. Azerbaijan's gross domestic product (GDP) has tripled in less than two decades, and our poverty levels have fallen from 49 to 5 per cent. Our external public debt is expected to be approximately 10 per cent of GDP for 2023, one of the lowest in the world. Achieving a clean environment and green growth is one of the five priority areas of our new national development strategy. Azerbaijan has voluntarily pledged to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions by up to 40 per cent by 2050 and to establish a green-energy zone in its Garabagh and East Zangazur regions.

Azerbaijan's role in global energy security has further expanded from that of a traditional crude-oil

supplier to that of a reliable natural-gas provider. With the completion of the Southern Gas Corridor, the biggest infrastructure project in Europe, Azerbaijan is now supplying natural gas to five more European countries. At a time when European energy security is facing unprecedented challenges, seven countries in Europe are currently receiving natural gas from Azerbaijan, and that number will increase to 10 in the near future. Our projected increase in renewable electricity production will enable us to become an exporter of green electricity to European countries through the landmark transregional Black Sea submarine cable project that Azerbaijan has embarked on with partner countries. Azerbaijan is also a key player in the development of transregional connectivity projects. In 2022 we increased transit flow by 70 per cent by boosting investments in transportation infrastructure and widening cooperation with our regional partners.

Despite the unprecedented suffering, deprivation and devastation that the people of Azerbaijan were subjected to during Armenia's 30-year military occupation, Azerbaijan initiated a normalization agenda and offered peace to Armenia, based on equal and reciprocal respect for the legitimate interests of both sides through mutual recognition of and respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity and the inviolability of their borders. In the past few months, thanks to the concerted efforts of international partners, the negotiations have intensified and yielded limited, but promising, results. But we are seeing Armenia repeat its past patterns by pretending to participate in talks, backtracking on previously undertaken commitments at the last minute and committing political, military, and other provocations at every stage of the negotiations so as to avoid taking concrete steps. As a result, the efforts for durable peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia have once again become hostage to Armenia's policy of revanchism. Since November 2020, armed formations, numbering more than 10,000 and equipped with heavy offensive weaponry, have been maintained by Armenia for almost three years on Azerbaijan's sovereign soil, including by abusing the Lachin corridor in an attempt to fuel separatism. While engaging in negotiations during this period, we have consistently drawn the attention of all international actors involved in the normalization process and of the wider international community to the serious threat posed by Armenia's unwillingness to fulfil its commitments, and we have called for a peaceful solution.

While our legitimate and fact-based concerns were acknowledged behind closed doors, that was not translated into real steps and targeted public messages persuading Armenia to honour its commitments. Armenia therefore felt emboldened and once again bought into the delusion that it would be better off by opting for a status quo based on an illegal military presence and line-of-contact logic in the sovereign territory of Azerbaijan. It also proceeded to ignite tension through a global campaign of manipulation and disinformation targeting Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity and blatantly interfering in its internal affairs. For months now Armenia has mobilized every available resource for its manipulation campaign, based on fabricated allegations of blockade, humanitarian crisis or ethnic cleansing. To that end, Armenia recklessly politicized and essentially obstructed the delivery of goods to the Garabagh region of Azerbaijan in service of its separatist agenda and blocked the consistent efforts of several international actors to find a legitimate and practical solution through dialogue.

On 18 September, a simultaneous delivery of humanitarian goods through Aghdam and Lachin — which was offered by Azerbaijan months ago and positively received by all the international actors involved — was finally conducted by the International Committee of the Red Cross, as Armenia was forced to withdraw its weeks-long obstructions. Azerbaijan, like the broader international community, welcomed that development, hoping it would finally lead to de-escalation on the ground and pave the way for restoring the focus on pressing issues pertinent to inter-State normalization. However, Armenia failed to meet those expectations yet again, resorting instead to military provocation in an attempt to continue its blame game against Azerbaijan. As a result, one day later, mines planted by an Armenian sabotage group led to the tragic death of six Azerbaijani citizens — two civilians and four police officers — in two separate explosions. Another six police officers were seriously injured.

In response, Azerbaijan launched local counter-terrorism measures to neutralize the illegal armed formations in order to preserve its sovereignty and territorial integrity and protect the safety and security of its residents. The measures were limited, proportionate and aimed exclusively at neutralizing legitimate military targets by using high-precision ammunition, in full compliance with the norms of humanitarian law. Every possible measure was taken to avoid collateral

damage. In less than 24 hours, the horrific scale of the illegal militarization of Azerbaijan's territories became clear, with the neutralization of more than 90 military outposts, 20 combat vehicles, 40 artillery pieces, 30 mortars, six electromagnetic warfare systems and two anti-aircraft missile systems. More evidence is being collected now as the disarmament efforts continue on the ground. No sovereign State would tolerate an illegal military presence on its soil, and Azerbaijan is no exception. Our counter-terror measures achieved the goals that had been set. Armenia and its subordinate illegal regime were forced to agree to disarm, dismantle all illegal structures and withdraw from Azerbaijan. The reason that this did not happen peacefully lies in Armenia's brazen aggressiveness and a lack of adequate action on the part of the third-party facilitators involved.

Having concluded our counter-terror measures, we have now embarked on the practical implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts on the ground. The long-overdue meeting of a special representative of the Government of Azerbaijan with representatives of Armenian residents finally took place on 21 September in the city of Yevlakh. The dialogue will continue as a format for directly discussing the Government's reintegration plans and addressing issues related to restoring and operating infrastructure and the delivery of humanitarian goods and public services. The central Government institutions have begun rapidly carrying out the necessary humanitarian support measures, and we have mobilized every effort to address the immediate needs of the local civilians. On that point, I want to reiterate that Azerbaijan is determined to reintegrate the ethnic Armenian residents of the Garabagh region as equal citizens. The Constitution, the national legislation of Azerbaijan and the international commitments we have undertaken provide a solid basis for that.

Despite all the serious challenges created by Armenia's destructive position, Azerbaijan once again reaffirms its readiness for a genuine dialogue and negotiations with Armenia on the basis of equal and reciprocal respect for each other's legitimate interests. We maintain a firm belief that there is a historic opportunity for Azerbaijan and Armenia to establish good-neighbourly relations and coexist side by side in peace as two sovereign States within their internationally recognized borders. It is high time to seize that opportunity.

To that end, it is essential for Armenia to finally realize that rejecting the offer of a just and equal peace — based on its hopes of better conditions for achieving its revanchist aims in future — is not viable and has no chance of succeeding. The Armenian leadership's verbal statements on recognizing the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, including the Garabagh region, must be translated into tangible steps. It will be critical to ensure meaningful engagement by international actors that are able and willing to support Azerbaijan and Armenia in that endeavour in a fair, impartial and unbiased manner. It is equally important for all who are unable to be honest brokers to refrain from projecting their short-sighted agendas onto the process. Every effort should be made to build on the progress already achieved and finalize the normalization process without further delay. Azerbaijan is determined and committed to promoting the normalization agenda.

Along with the inter-State process of normalization with Armenia, Azerbaijan has launched large-scale rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts to eliminate the harsh consequences of the 30 years of military occupation of our territories, aimed at safeguarding the right of hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis to eventually exercise their violated right to a safe and dignified return. Thanks to the Government's tireless efforts, life is now returning to areas that experienced unprecedented vandalism in the 30 years of Armenian military occupation. The first groups of displaced families have already returned to their places of origin.

Regrettably, the massive contamination of Azerbaijan's territory with landmines and other explosive devices remains a significant obstacle to the smooth progress of rehabilitation and reconstruction and is a threat to the people returning home after three decades of displacement. Armenia's refusal to share all of its maps of mined areas, and its continued planting of landmines, booby traps and other explosives even after its declared cessation of all military activities, are further aggravating the situation and increasing the human toll. Since November 2020, 315 individuals have fallen victim to landmines planted by Armenia. Some mines were transferred to and planted in Azerbaijani territory after the signing of the trilateral statement. Given the ongoing landmine problem in Azerbaijan and the challenges facing our national agencies in addressing it, we urgently need greater international support in strengthening our humanitarian mine-action capacity, which would not only aid in demining efforts

but also contribute to the global campaign against landmines and demonstrate a commitment to peace and cooperation in the region.

Ensuring justice for serious war crimes and crimes against humanity is vital to healing the wounds of the past conflict. In addition to upholding the rights and interests of the victims, accountability and redress are also critical prerequisites on the path to genuine post-conflict normalization and reconciliation. Over more than 30 years of aggression and occupation, Armenia desecrated and destroyed Azerbaijani cultural heritage, including numerous monuments of world and national importance, mosques, temples, mausoleums, museums, art galleries, archaeological sites and libraries. The fate of almost 4,000 citizens of Azerbaijan, including 719 civilians who went missing during the conflict, remains unknown. Although several mass graves have been discovered in the liberated territories, exposing the wilful killing of Azerbaijani civilians and other persons protected under international humanitarian law, Armenia refuses to clarify the whereabouts of missing persons. Resolving that issue is essential not only in terms of accountability and the rights of the victims and their families, but also for post-conflict reconciliation and normalization.

Between 1987 and 1991, Armenia forcibly expelled some 300,000 Azerbaijanis from their ancestral homeland in a blatant violation of international law. All Azerbaijani settlements and place names in Armenia were renamed, and our historical and cultural heritage was deliberately vandalized and destroyed. Despite repeated calls by the western Azerbaijan community for launching a dialogue and ensuring a safe and dignified return to their homeland, the Government of Armenia denied them the exercise of their fundamental right to return, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and other important international acts.

The President returned to the Chair.

While remaining committed to its international obligations and open to constructive dialogue, Azerbaijan will not tolerate violations of international law and will continue taking appropriate steps at the international level. In particular, Azerbaijan's initiation of judicial proceedings to hold Armenia accountable for grave violations of international human rights law, and to bring to justice those responsible for such crimes, is a significant step towards achieving accountability.

Azerbaijan is fully committed to the objectives of a peaceful, secure, stable and prosperous South Caucasus. As a responsible actor, we will continue our efforts to advance post-conflict peacebuilding, reintegration and peaceful coexistence, while sparing no effort in all relevant areas, whether those are post-COVID-19 recovery, the global development agenda or energy security. The challenges that we face today require a renewed commitment to international cooperation and solidarity. It is only through joint efforts that we can overcome the complex challenges of the present and future to build a brighter future for ourselves and for generations to come.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Many of the speakers who have preceded me have expressed the thought that our shared planet is undergoing irreversible change. A new world order is being born before our eyes. Our future is being shaped through a struggle between the majority of the world's peoples, who advocate for a fairer distribution of global goods and civilizational diversity, and the few who use neocolonial methods of subjugation in order to hold on to their disappearing dominance. The calling card, so to speak, of the collective West has long been a refusal to accept the principle of equality and a total unwillingness to negotiate. Accustomed to looking down on the rest of the world, Americans and Europeans constantly make all kinds of promises and undertake obligations — including written and legally binding ones — and then simply do not fulfil them. As President Putin has pointed out, the West has truly shown itself to be an empire of lies.

Like many other countries, Russia knows that from first-hand experience. In 1945, when together with Washington and London we were defeating the enemy on the front lines of the Second World War, our allies in the anti-Hitler coalition were already planning a military operation — Operation Unthinkable — against the Soviet Union. Four years later, in 1949, the Americans developed Operation Dropshot, designed to launch massive nuclear strikes on the Soviet Union. Those insane plans remained on paper, and the Soviet Union created its own retaliatory weapon. It took the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, when the world teetered on the brink of a nuclear war, for the idea of unleashing such weapons and the illusion that they could bring

victory to cease to be a basis for the United States' military planning.

When the Cold War ended, the Soviet Union played a decisive role in the unification of Germany and the agreement on the parameters of a new security architecture in Europe. Furthermore, the Soviet leadership, and Russia's leaders after them, were given specific political assurances regarding the non-expansion eastward of the NATO military bloc. The corresponding records of those negotiations are in both our archives and those of the West, and are publicly available. But those Western leaders' assurances turned out to be fraudulent. They had no intention of fulfilling them. Meanwhile, they were not in the least embarrassed by the fact that by bringing NATO closer to Russia's borders, they were flagrantly violating the official commitments, made at the highest level in accordance with Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe policy, to refraining from strengthening their own security at others' expense or allowing any country, group of countries or organization to achieve military and political dominance in Europe.

In 2021 our proposals for concluding agreements on mutual security guarantees in Europe without changing Ukraine's non-aligned status were arrogantly rejected. The West continued to systematically militarize the Russophobic Kyiv regime, which came to power through a bloody coup and was used to prepare for the unleashing of a hybrid war on our country. The recent series of joint exercises between the United States and its European NATO allies, including testing scenarios for the use of nuclear weapons on the territory of the Russian Federation, is a precedent unseen since the end of the Cold War. The obsessive insistence on fulfilling stated aim of inflicting "strategic defeat" on Russia decidedly blinded those irresponsible politicians who while they believe in their own impunity have lost the most basic sense of self-preservation.

Led by Washington, the NATO countries are not only building up and modernizing their offensive capabilities, but they are also trying to shift the armed confrontation into the outer space and information arenas. One new and dangerous manifestation of NATO's expansionism is the attempt to extend the bloc's area of responsibility to the entire Eastern hemisphere under devious slogans touting the "indivisible security of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions". To that end, Washington is creating subordinate, mini military and political alliances such as the Australia-

United Kingdom-United States troika AUKUS, the United States-Japan-Republic of Korea trio and the Tokyo-Seoul-Canberra-Wellington quartet, pushing the participants into practical cooperation with NATO, which introduces its infrastructure into the Pacific theatre. Those efforts, which are openly designed to target Russia and China and bring about the collapse of the inclusive regional architecture that has arisen around the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, create a risk of the emergence of a new, explosive hotbed of geopolitical tension in addition to that in Europe, which has already reached boiling point.

We get the distinct impression that the United States and the "Western collective" that is completely subordinate to it have decided to give the Monroe Doctrine a global dimension. Those plans are both illusory and extremely dangerous, but that has not stopped the ideologists behind the new edition of the Pax Americana. The global minority is doing its utmost to slow the natural course of events. The Vilnius Summit communiqué issued by NATO Heads of State and Government characterizes what it calls "the deepening strategic partnership" between China and Russia as a threat to NATO. Speaking recently to his ambassadors abroad, President Macron of France expressed genuine concern about the potential expansion of the group made up of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS), claiming that it was evidence that

"[T]he increasingly complex situation in the international arena poses the risk that the West, and Europe in particular, will become weaker ... The world order, with its principles and various forms of organization, where the West occupied and continues to occupy dominant positions, is being revised."

Thus, if anyone, anywhere, gets together or makes friends without us or our permission, that is seen as a threat to our dominance. NATO's advance into the Asia-Pacific region is "beneficial", while the expansion of BRICS is dangerous.

And yet history's logic is inexorable. The essential trend we are seeing is the desire of a majority of the world's countries to strengthen their sovereignty and defend their national interests, traditions, culture and way of life. They no longer want to live according to anyone else's dictates. They want to be friends and trade among themselves, but with the rest of the world as well — just on an equal footing and to the mutual benefit of all. Alliances such as BRICS and the Shanghai

Cooperation Organization are on the rise, giving the countries of the global South opportunities for joint development and standing up for the place they deserve in what is clearly an emerging multipolar architecture.

It may be that for the first time since 1945, when the United Nations was founded, we are seeing a chance for genuine democratization in world affairs, which is reason for optimism for all who believe in the supremacy of international law and want to see the revitalization of the United Nations as the central coordinating body of world politics, where we can agree on how to solve problems together, based on an honest balancing of interests. As far as Russia is concerned, there is clearly no alternative to that. However, the United States and its subordinates in the collective West continue to multiply conflicts that divide humankind artificially into hostile blocs and prevent us from achieving our shared goals. They are doing everything they can to prevent the establishment of a truly multipolar and just world order. They are trying to make the world play by their infamous and narrowly self-serving rules.

I would like to urge Western politicians and diplomats to carefully reread the Charter of the United Nations one more time. The cornerstone of the world order, created in the wake of the Second World War, is the democratic principle of the sovereign equality of States, large and small, regardless of their form of Government or internal political or socioeconomic structure. But the West still considers itself superior to the rest of humankind, as illustrated by an already notorious statement by the chief diplomat of the European Union (EU), Josep Borrell Fontelles, when he said that “Europe is a [blossoming] garden... [and] most of the rest of the world is a jungle”. He is not bothered by the fact that Islamophobia and other forms of intolerance of the traditional values of every world religion run rampant in that garden. Acts such as burning the Qur’an, insulting the Torah, persecuting Orthodox clergy and other kinds of mockery of the feelings of believers are literally happening all over Europe.

The West’s use of unilateral coercive measures is also a flagrant violation of the principle of the sovereign equality of States. The countries that have fallen victim to illegal sanctions — and there are more and more of them — are well aware that those restrictions hit the most vulnerable segments of the population hardest, provoking crises in the food and energy markets. We continue to insist on an immediate and total end to the United States’ unprecedentedly inhumane trade,

economic and financial blockade of Cuba and on rescinding the absurd decision to declare Cuba a State sponsor of terrorism. Washington must abandon its policy of economic strangulation of Venezuela, without preconditions of any kind. We demand the lifting of the unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States and the European Union on the Syrian Arab Republic, which are egregiously undermining its right to development. Any coercive measures imposed in circumvention of the Security Council must end, along with the West’s practice of manipulating the Council’s sanctions policies to put pressure on anyone it does not like.

A blatant manifestation of the Western minority’s self-centredness has been its obsessive attempts to Ukraineize the agenda for all international discussions, while relegating to the background a whole series of unresolved regional crises, many of which have been dragging on for years or even decades. It will be impossible to fully normalize the situation in the Middle East without resolving the main issue, which is settling the protracted Palestinian-Israeli conflict, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, originally introduced by Saudi Arabia. The Palestinians have been waiting for the State that was solemnly promised to them for more than 70 years, but the Americans, who have monopolized the mediation process, have done everything they can to prevent it. We call on all responsible countries to unite their efforts to create the conditions for a resumption of direct Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. It is encouraging that the League of Arab States has got a second wind and is revitalizing its role in regional affairs. We welcome Syria’s return to the Arab family and the normalization process that has begun between Damascus and Ankara, which we are trying to assist in together with our Iranian colleagues. Those positive developments reinforce the efforts of the Astana format to move closer to a settlement of the Syria issue, based on resolution 2254 (2015) and the restoration of Syria’s sovereignty.

We hope that with the assistance of the United Nations, Libyans will be able to meaningfully prepare for holding general elections in their long-suffering country. It has been unable to recover from the consequences of the NATO aggression of more than a decade ago, which destroyed the Libyan State and opened the floodgates for the spread of terrorism in the Sahel-Saharan region and for waves of millions of illegal migrants to Europe and other parts of the world. Analysts have noted that Muammar Al-Qaddafi was annihilated as soon as he abandoned his military nuclear

programme. The West thereby created horrifying risks for the entire nuclear non-proliferation regime.

We are concerned about the military hysteria that Washington and its Asian allies have been whipping up on the Korean peninsula, where United States strategic capabilities are being ramped up. The Russian and Chinese initiatives aimed at focusing on humanitarian and political issues as priorities have been rejected.

The tragic evolution of the situation in the Sudan is simply yet another consequence of the West's failed experiments in exporting liberal democratic dogmas. We support constructive initiatives aimed at a rapid settlement of the intra-Sudanese conflict, first and foremost by facilitating a direct dialogue between the warring parties. As we have observed the West's nervous reaction to recent events in Africa, particularly in the Niger and Gabon, we cannot help recalling how Washington and Brussels responded to the bloody coup in Ukraine in February 2014, which I already mentioned. It happened a day after a settlement agreement had been reached under EU guarantees, which the opposition simply trampled upon. The United States and its allies supported the coup, welcoming it as a "manifestation of democracy".

The continuing deterioration of the situation in the Serbian province of Kosovo is a serious cause for concern. In supplying weapons to the Kosovars and helping them build an army, NATO is flagrantly violating the Security Council's keystone resolution 1244 (1999). The whole world can see the sad story of the Minsk agreements on Ukraine repeating itself in the Balkans. I would like to remind members that the agreements provided for the special status of the Donbas republics and Kyiv sabotaged them openly with the West's support. And now the European Union does not want to make its Kosovo protégés implement the 2013 agreements between Belgrade and Pristina on establishing a community of Serbian municipalities in Kosovo, with special rights regarding their language and traditions. In both cases, the EU was the guarantor of the agreements, and apparently they have shared the same fate. Like so-called sponsor, like result. Together with Washington, Brussels is now imposing its so-called mediation services on Azerbaijan and Armenia and helping to destabilize the South Caucasus. Now that Yerevan and Baku's leaders have settled the issue of mutually acknowledging the two countries' sovereignty between themselves, it is time for peace, making life more comfortable and building trust.

Russia's peacekeeping contingent will spare no effort to enable that.

Speaking of decisions of the international community that have remained on paper, we call for the completion, at long last, of the decolonization process in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions and an end to colonial and neocolonial practices.

A vivid illustration of the "rules" that the West wants to make the whole world live by is the fate of the commitments it made back in 2009 to providing developing countries with \$100 billion annually to finance climate-change adaptation programmes. If one compares the fate of those unfulfilled promises with the amounts that the United States, NATO and the EU have spent to support the racist regime in Kyiv, which is estimated at as much as \$170 billion over the past year and a half, one can gain an understanding of what the "enlightened Western democracies", with their so-called values, really think of you.

Overall, it is high time that we reformed the existing architecture of global governance, which has long failed to meet the needs of our times. The United States and its allies should abandon their artificial restrictions on the redistribution of voting quotas in the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, while acknowledging the true economic and financial clout of the countries of the global South. The work of the Dispute Settlement Body of the World Trade Organization should also be immediately unblocked. The expansion of the composition of the Security Council is also becoming increasingly important. That should be done solely by remedying the underrepresentation of the world's majority countries — in Asia, Africa and Latin America. It is important that the new members of the Security Council, both permanent and non-permanent, can enjoy authority in their own regions and in global organizations such as the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Group of 77 and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

It is high time to consider fairer methods of composition of the Secretariat. The criteria in place for many years do not reflect the real weight of States in global affairs and artificially ensure excessive dominance of citizens of countries from NATO and the EU. Those imbalances are further exacerbated by the system of permanent contracts, which links people to positions in host countries of international organization

headquarters, the overwhelming majority of which are located in capitals that promote Western policies.

The United Nations reform should be supported by a new type of association, where there are no leaders and followers or teachers and students and where all issues are resolved on the basis of a consensus and the balance of interests. For example that is truly reflected in BRICS, which has significantly increased its authority following the Johannesburg summit and gained truly global influence.

At the regional level, there has been a clear renaissance of organizations such as the African Union, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council and others. In Eurasia, a harmonization of integration processes gaining momentum within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Eurasian Economic community, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. A Greater Eurasian Partnership is also being naturally formed and is open for participation to all associations and countries of our shared continent, without exception.

Unfortunately, those positive trends are being undermined by the increasingly aggressive Western attempts to maintain their dominance in world politics, economy and finance. It is in the common interest to avoid a fragmentation of the world into isolated trading blocs and macroregions, but if the United States and its allies do not want to negotiate on making globalization processes fair and equitable, then the rest of us will have to draw their own conclusions and think about how to make the prospects for their socioeconomic and technological development not dependent on the neocolonial instincts of their former colonial Powers.

The main problem lies with the West, because developing countries are prepared to negotiate, including on the platform of the Group of 20 (G20), as we saw at the recent Group summit in India. The main conclusion we reached after that summit is that the G20 can and should avoid politicization and should be able to do what it was created for: develop mutually acceptable ways to manage the global economy and finances. The opportunities for dialogue and negotiations are there, and we must not miss this moment.

All these trends must be fully taken into account in the work of the Secretariat, whose statutory aim is to

seek the consent of all Member States within the United Nations, not somewhere else.

The United Nations was founded based on the outcome of the Second World War, and any attempt to revise that outcome would undermine the foundations of the world Organization. As a representative of a country that made a decisive contribution to the defeat of fascism and Japanese militarism, I would like to draw attention to the egregious phenomenon of rehabilitating Nazis and collaborators in a number of European countries, primarily Ukraine and the Baltic States. It is particularly alarming that last year, for the first time, Germany, Italy and Japan voted against the General Assembly resolution to combat the glorification of Nazism (see A/77/PV.54). That regrettable fact casts doubt on the sincerity of the repentance of those States for the mass crimes against humanity they perpetrated during the Second World War and runs counter to the conditions under which they were admitted to the United Nations as full-fledged members. We strongly urge the Assembly to pay special attention to these metamorphoses, which fly in the face of the position of the global majority and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Today, as so many times before, humankind is again at a crossroads. How history will play out is entirely up to us. It is in our shared interest to prevent a downward spiral into large-scale war and the final collapse of the mechanisms of international cooperation that were put in place by generations of our predecessors. The Secretary-General put forward an initiative to hold the Summit of the Future next year. The success of that undertaking can be ensured only through striking a fair and just balance of interests of all Member States, while respecting the intergovernmental character of our Organization. At our meeting on 21 September, the members of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations agreed to actively contribute to achieving that.

As the Secretary-General said at a press conference on the eve of this session:

“If we want a future of peace and prosperity based on equity and solidarity, leaders have a special responsibility to achieve compromise in designing our common future for our common good.”

That is an excellent response to those who are trying to divide the world into democracies and autocracies and dictate their neocolonial rules to others.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Retno Lestari Priansari Marsudi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

Mrs. Marsudi (Indonesia): Today I am wearing a traditional fabric from East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, while members of my delegation are wearing diverse traditional fabrics representing the diversity of more than 1,000 ethnicities in Indonesia. We are diverse, but we are one.

The world now is at a strategic crossroads. Global solidarity and collective responsibility are the only answer to address the trust deficit and global inequality. That is the main essence of the outcome of the Bandung Conference, or Asia-Africa Conference, in 1955. Through the 10 Bandung Principles, we called for respect for human rights and the Charter of the United Nations, sovereignty and territorial integrity, the equality of all races and all nations, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the promotion of mutual interests and cooperation. The Bandung Conference reminded every country of its equal rights and responsibility in maintaining peace and stability, mainstreaming win-win cooperation and championing solidarity.

Indonesia brought along the Bandung spirit when we presided the Group of 20 last year, served as Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) this year and visited Africa last month through our President. We will continue to bring that spirit everywhere we go, including the General Assembly. The Bandung spirit enables Indonesia to listen and become part of the solution.

For Indonesia global leadership should not only be about power or the influence to dictate to others. Instead, Global leadership should be about listening to others, building bridges, respecting international laws consistently and putting all nations on an equal footing.

Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity is the theme for this year's General Assembly. The theme is timely and on point. We are again at a strategic crossroads, as we were in 1955. The trust deficit has reappeared, and the lack of solidarity has resurfaced. Both have hampered the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially for countries in the global South. The question is — do we really have the commitment to rebuild trust and reignite global solidarity to attain the SDG targets together?

Will our presence today at the General Assembly really bring commitment and show readiness for global

unity and collective responsibility? Standing before the Assembly, we have uttered a lot of good words and promises. Let us now be honest with ourselves: do we do what we said we would do? If all of us were committed to doing what we say and saying what we do, I am sure the current world situation would not be what we see right now — where the trust deficit is running deep, where differences are ever greater and sharper and where wars and conflicts are tearing us apart. The problem is that what we do is different from what we said. We talk differently about what we did. We do not walk the talk. Against that backdrop, I would like to share some thoughts on how we can rebuild trust and reignite global solidarity, in line with what we envisioned through the Bandung spirit.

First, on forging collective global leadership, the fate of the world cannot be defined by the mighty few. A peaceful, stable and prosperous world is the collective right and responsibility of all countries, big and small, North and South, developed and developing. We must all do our part and work together towards that common goal. And that can be achieved only if all of us adhere to the same rules. We must uphold respect for international law, particularly the fundamental principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. That will ensure that disputes will be settled at the negotiating table rather than on the battlefield. A collective responsibility is also needed for the people of Palestine and Afghanistan. For far too long, we have allowed our Palestinian brothers and sisters to suffer. Indonesia will not back down an inch in our support for Palestinian statehood. In Afghanistan, Indonesia will do its utmost to help the Afghan people and ensure that the rights of women and girls are respected, including their right to education.

Secondly, on advocating development for all, every country has the same right to develop and grow. But the global architecture of today benefits only the select few. Trade discrimination against developing countries continues to happen. The global supply chain is being monopolized by certain countries. Many developing countries may not meet the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. They also struggle with foreign debt and development financing. All of that will contribute to the erosion of trust and solidarity. Therefore, it is time for us to make a real change. Industrial down-streaming must not be an exclusive call from developing countries. Developed countries should also support that call to build a stronger future together. The same ideals are applicable in our fight against climate

change and sea level rise, as well as safeguarding biodiversity. Indonesia has led by example by fulfilling its international obligation, including being among the early signatories to 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. But developing countries cannot do that by themselves. We also need developed countries to fulfil their responsibility, including on climate financing, green investment and the transfer of technology. Technology and innovation should not be exclusively for the select few. Access to safe and secure digital technology for developing countries, including artificial intelligence, is crucial for future sustainable growth. Now is the time to practise what we have preached.

Thirdly, on reinforcing regional cooperation, regional institutions should be net contributors to, and building blocks for, global peace and prosperity. As this year's ASEAN Chair, Indonesia had to navigate ASEAN through such geopolitical dynamics in the region. ASEAN has already managed to do that for the last five decades. We sent a clear message that we will not let our region be a pawn in rivalries. Instead, South-East Asia must be an epicentre of growth, where all countries can benefit meaningfully. Inclusivity will forever be the pillar of our region's architecture. Suffice it to say — we managed to pull through. ASEAN has maintained its unity and established a long-term vision for ASEAN 2045. It has reinforced its centrality in strengthening regional resilience and preparing for the economy of the future. ASEAN has initiated closer partnerships with the Pacific Islands Forum and the Indian Ocean Rim Association for a stable and peaceful Indo-Pacific. We translated the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific into concrete and inclusive cooperation. With regard to Myanmar, the implementation of the five-point consensus remains the main reference. ASEAN continues to urge the military junta to implement it. ASEAN will spare no effort to ensure that the people of Myanmar are not left alone.

Before I conclude, I wish to underline one point concerning the reform of our multilateral system. Many proposals have been produced throughout the years, but we are still far from getting anywhere. The best time for action may have already passed. But the second-best time is now. Let us translate our commitment into action. The 2024 Summit of the Future cannot fail. Trust and solidarity must be part of those efforts. Our people and the world await, and we must deliver.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Alicia Bárcena Ibarra, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico.

Mrs. Bárcena Ibarra (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of Mexico, please accept our warmest congratulations, Sir, on your election as President. Latin America and the Caribbean feel wholly represented under your presidency, which is a sign of the commitment of our region to the aims of this Organization.

Today the United Nations faces a challenge of huge proportions in order to fulfil the essence of its mandate: to protect humankind from the scourge of war, promote and uphold all human rights, ensure the effectiveness of international law and promote human well-being through environmental sustainability.

I am deeply moved to return to the Headquarters of the United Nations, which I served with pride for decades, this time as the representative of the Government of my country, Mexico. It is a great honour. Today Mexico is going through a process of profound and forward-looking changes. I am honoured to speak on behalf of Mexico and to represent it at the global level. I deliver the greetings of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

Our peoples are facing grave threats to international peace and security. Those threats include the more than 50 active armed conflicts in the world; the proliferation of nuclear weapons; the escalation of multiple crises, ranging from humanitarian to climatic; the forced migration of millions of people; the highest increase in inequality and poverty, with 165 million people falling into poverty in the past three years; and the challenge posed by health and the risk of new pandemics, all against a backdrop of growing scepticism about the relevance of multilateralism and its institutions.

However, there is no doubt that our international action loses legitimacy when our resolutions do not translate into tangible benefits for people, for the planet or for prosperity. According to Secretary-General António Guterres, urgent action is required in order to rescue the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The pandemic has inhibited progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). But the pre-pandemic trajectory was not encouraging, and the current context of macroeconomic and geopolitical uncertainty calls for ambitious and immediate action. Indeed, the stagnation in achieving

the SDGs is not an abstract metric. We are talking about hundreds of millions of people who live in poverty, children facing food insecurity and an environment in crisis.

The future of people and the planet does not depend on chance; it depends on the political decisions and actions we take, guided by the 2030 Agenda. Inequality is the great challenge, because poverty reduction is not enough. What is required is a different development paradigm that redistributes power and wealth and closes the unacceptable gaps and asymmetries that exist between rich and poor people and among countries. Equality is not just about being rights holders; inequality is economically inefficient — hence the need to level the playing field in order to grow and the need to grow in order to level the playing field. We are no longer in an era of change; we are in a veritable change of eras, and that requires rethinking development and making equality central. At both the national and international levels, the achievement of the SDGs hinges on a vision of social justice and solidarity, which certainly includes the mobilization of the necessary financial resources and the urgent reform of the international financial system.

In that complex context, Mexico will continue to draw strength and inspiration from the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations; because in the institutional framework that we built nearly 80 years ago, we have harnessed international cooperation, and Mexico has spearheaded and will continue to propose initiatives that aim to improve the lives of present and future generations, advocating for genuine and lasting peace and security, and a sustainable development that is egalitarian, resilient and inclusive, with full and unconditional respect for human rights.

The desire for transformation and the work of our Government has focused precisely on transforming the development model to build more and better public goods, and on guaranteeing rights with fiscal responsibility, anchored in a basic premise: “for the common good, the poor must come first”. Our Government has demonstrated that it is urgent to restore the role of the State, to regulate the relations among the market, the State and society, and to implement transformative structural policies. The aim is to give our people hope again, the hope of a fairer, more egalitarian country so that no one is left behind and no one is left out. In that connection, 5.1 million people have been lifted out of poverty in recent years.

We witnessed the largest increase in the minimum wage in our history and developed an elaborate network of social programmes that extend rights to the entire population. However, we aspire to a vision of equality among all nations, in which the gaps and asymmetries among countries are bridged. We are committed to eliminating the culture of privileges — privileges that deny rights.

Mexico reiterates the importance of environmental sustainability as a strategic part of development and not as an afterthought, as well as the relevance of moving towards green and blue industrial and production policies that create jobs and reduce the environmental footprint, but that also incorporate the contribution and complexity of ecosystems and their services into the economy and well-being. We are taking decisive steps to implement the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean and the defence of the defenders of the environment, those who are willing to give their lives for life. We signed 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 and hope that it will enter into force soon.

In the words of Nicholas Stern, climate change is a result of the greatest market failure the world has seen, and today it is one of the greatest global risks. Estimates of the costs incurred by its effects show that it will affect not only economic growth but also the most vulnerable sectors. We reiterate our commitment to moving forward with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, but underscore the importance of financing to address climate change and prioritize adaptation, especially with a view to supporting the most vulnerable nations, starting with the Caribbean in our region.

In addition to the current session of the General Assembly, Mexico has participated in the SDG Summit, the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development, the Climate Action Summit and the preparatory meeting for the Summit of the Future. We advocate a thorough reform of the international financial architecture, which should address the profound inequalities between countries and prioritize the provision of assistance to highly indebted countries with new instruments, redistributing special drawing rights to expand the fiscal space of developing countries or debt relief in

exchange for environmental services. We join the Bridgetown 2.0 initiative proposed by Barbados.

Latin America and the Caribbean learned a very hard lesson during the pandemic owing to the lack of global solidarity, and today our most urgent need is to promote, through the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), such initiatives as the Plan for Self-sufficiency on Health Matters for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Regional Medicines Agency for Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Fund for Climate Adaptation. In that regard, we support Ralph Gonsalves as President of CELAC. Mexico is seeking to reach agreements on all issues on the multilateral agenda, because we are interested in bringing positions closer together without excluding anyone. However, we live in unprecedented times that require the sum total of more wills to give a voice to all the peoples of the global South, to which Mexico belongs by virtue of its history and its convictions. Mexico is therefore considering participation in the discussions and endeavours of the Group of 77 and China, on issues and in forums in which we can help strengthen the negotiating position of the global South. We will soon submit a proposal to the Group of 77 and China for their consideration.

I would like to reaffirm before the General Assembly Mexico's long-standing commitment to prioritizing dialogue and understanding in order to promote peace and the peaceful settlement of disputes. It is a commitment that is informed by our deepest convictions concerning the resolute defence of humankind's most important causes. In our region, we serve as a guarantor country for the panel for peace talks between the Government of the Republic of Colombia and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional. We are also working to seek solutions for political dialogue in Venezuela, while always adhering to our constitutional principles of respect for the self-determination of peoples, the peaceful settlement of disputes and non-intervention. Mexico is hosting negotiations between the Venezuelan Government and the Plataforma Unitaria de Venezuela, facilitated by Norway. We support the implementation of the agreements signed in November 2022 in Mexico City and keep our doors open to resume the process in order to reach a solution that benefits the entire Venezuelan people.

With regard to the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, our position is clear: we condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine because it is in violation of the

Charter of the United Nations and international law and because of the unspeakable suffering of millions of people, especially children. We recognize that every sovereign State has the right to have the means to regain its territorial integrity, but it is equally true that, with each passing day, the arms race is taking us farther away from a peaceful solution. We must stop speaking of war and start speaking of peace.

Mexico will continue to fight for disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, as set forth in the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, essential for preventing and eliminating catastrophic humanitarian consequences.

We and the General Assembly have spoken out against a major threat that runs counter to international law. We emphatically reject the illicit trafficking of firearms. Allow me simply to share a statistic — each year 200,000 firearms are trafficked into Mexico from our neighbour to the north, which then fall into the hands of organized crime, claiming countless lives. That is the other side of the drug issue.

Mexico is fulfilling its commitments to combat drug trafficking in good faith, but any effort will be limited if the countries of manufacture and origin of such weapons do not assume their responsibility to combat this scourge. We need strong measures to reduce the widespread availability of firearms. Companies, manufacturers and distributors must act responsibly and take diligent measures to prevent arms from being diverted to the illicit market.

In our region, Latin America and the Caribbean, we are devastated by the situation in Haiti, a country drowning in gang violence that thrives, in large measure, because of illicit arms trafficking, despite the sanctions regime established by the Security Council in resolution 2653 (2022), facilitated by Mexico. We hope that the Security Council will very soon adopt the relevant resolution so that the international community can act decisively to help Haiti regain its stability.

We take this opportunity to renew Mexico's commitment to the two-State solution — Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and with secure borders. We also recognize the right of the people of Israel, but not at the expense of the Palestinian people.

Let us put an end to aberrant situations, such as Cuba's suffering under the continuing economic

embargo, which is totally unjustified, contrary to international law and foreign to the prevailing values and peaceful coexistence among the countries of Latin America. We demand that Cuba cease to be considered as a country that sponsors or encourages terrorism.

Sixty-four years ago, the General Assembly was presided over by one of Mexico's greatest diplomats, Luis Padilla Nervo, who said:

“Victory will not be decided on the battlefields, but in the consciences of men and women because of the nature of this struggle. The best weapons of democracies are moral principles, scrupulous respect for treaties and the principle that the difficulties and controversies of countries should not be resolved by arms, but by negotiation.”

Mexico aspires to be an actor that promotes peace through law. We will do everything in our power to support the genuine efforts of parties to conflict to engage in dialogue that leads to a peaceful solution, because, as our famous diplomat Genaro Estrada once said, “foreign policy is based on renouncing war as an instrument of international policy”, which is the basis for Mexico's foreign policy.

That is why, in the entrance hall to the General Assembly, there is a piece of obsidian — a sacred stone that the Aztecs called “Itztli”, convinced that its origin was the result of lightning striking the rocks of volcanoes, a synthesis of the celestial and the terrestrial. That piece bears an engraved plaque that defines the foundation of our diplomacy. That phrase was pronounced 156 years ago by the first indigenous president of Latin America, Benito Juárez:

“Among individuals, as among nations, respect for the rights of others is peace”.

With that humanist vision, Mexico faces the great challenge of human mobility. Geography has placed us, inescapably, in a very complicated place, but Mexico has a very clear compass — to humanize migration, which should be an option, not an obligation. When people migrate, they should do so in a safe, orderly and regular manner.

This unprecedented level of migration concerns the international community as a whole. Mexico therefore insists on the urgency of addressing the structural and deep-rooted causes of migration. We reaffirm the importance of supporting the communities of origin and to pool the necessary will and resources to do so. That

requires the support and contribution of all countries, especially the host countries that benefit from the work and contributions of migrants. For example, here in the United States, our migrants contribute more than \$500 million in taxes.

It is essential that we evolve towards models of migration management that offer safe and legal opportunities for work and financial integration that facilitate absorption into host societies. Those models must protect the human rights of migrants throughout the migration cycle.

As the Secretary-General rightly pointed out, now, 75 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is time to put an end to the persecution and demonization of migrants. In that regard, we cannot accept calling into question the progressive nature of international standards on gender equality and respect for sexual diversity, which we have worked so hard to build. We call for advancing gender equality and avoiding setbacks, through forceful and innovative actions — nothing about us without us.

Mexico was the first country in the South to announce a feminist foreign policy because we are determined to transform the structures that prevent women from advancing and fully enjoying their rights and autonomy. That implies promoting their substantive participation in decision-making and mainstreaming a gender perspective in all spaces, forums, organizations and international agreements. Every time we break a glass ceiling, our civilization progresses.

The theme of this seventy-eighth General Assembly is relevant and precise — to rebuild trust and to reignite global solidarity. That must be the focus of our efforts.

The majestic space in which we are gathered must not make us forget the crisis of confidence facing international institutions and, in particular, the United Nations. Our debates must be reflected in concrete results, which is critical because we must include the citizens we represent as active subjects.

And we must be very vigilant because multilateralism must not lose its way in polarization and geopolitical rivalries. If the United Nations fails to deliver on its peace and development mandate, we will fuel dissatisfaction and disarray, and the international institutions we have built will suffer.

We stand for a multilateralism that is close to the people, timely and effective and committed to providing

global public goods. We stand for the collective good, for the good of all. Multilateralism is a tool for development, and the work of the United Nations must create a just peace, expand freedoms, build equality, deepen democracy and ultimately, create hope.

Political commitment is key to moving towards a new multilateralism that enables us to restructure international economic and social power relations where development issues create spaces to counter the exclusive and excessive emphasis on mercantilist neoliberalism. We hope that this same vision will prevail among nations in order to achieve a fairer world, with fewer asymmetries.

We propose a multilateralism that is closer to the needs of the people, consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations, forceful, timely and effective. That is because the challenges we face are enormous. On the table is nothing less than uncertainty about our survival. There is no time for gradual measures, which are sometimes merely excuses for maintaining the status quo.

The current model of global development is unsustainable. The promise of inevitable and unlimited progress has run up against the unyielding wall of nature. Just around the corner is 2030, and the minimum essential targets that we set in 2015 are not being reached.

We must therefore spread rebellion and a sense of urgency amongst ourselves. It is on the shoulders of this generation and its leaders that the responsibility to stop the disaster that science has described falls squarely. And it will not be by taking baby steps that we will do it, it will not be with a modest timidity that tries, discreetly, not to upset the power structure that has brought us to this point. It will be with bold and courageous leaps. It will be with the courage to call for and make an egalitarian and just world in which rights are not commodities and nature is not the inevitable victim of our production and consumption patterns — because the obscene concentration of wealth and its destructive influence on the distribution of power are not compatible with the human enterprise. We established our Organization 78 years ago, terrified of the precipice confronting us as we contemplated the possibility of all of us succumbing to the flames of war. Today that same precipice is getting closer — frightening, real and possibly more ferocious. That is why our efforts must be equal to the moment.

In the mid-twentieth century, this Organization was just finding its feet, when the devastating impacts of the Second World War were still fresh. And a young Mexican diplomat was drafting the paragraphs of a landmark essay on my country's national identity. Those paragraphs would be entitled *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, and its author would later win the Nobel Prize in Literature in recognition of his universal work. He was Octavio Paz, and I would like to conclude this statement by quoting his lines from that time. He said,

“We console ourselves by saying that everything has happened as it should not have happened. But it is we who are mistaken, not history. We must learn to look reality in the face; if necessary, we must invent new words and new ideas for these new and strange realities that have come our way ... We live, as the rest of the planet does, at a decisive and deadly juncture — orphans of the past and with a future to be invented. Universal history is now a common task, and our labyrinth is the labyrinth of all men [and women]”.

And for that task — to guarantee succeeding generations a possible world and a possible life, and to get out of the labyrinth together — the Assembly can count today and always on Mexico's fraternal and committed will.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Enrique Austria Manalo, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines.

Mr. Manalo (Philippines): It is an honour to address the General Assembly today on behalf of President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr. of the Philippines and to reaffirm my country's solidarity with the United Nations. As a founding Member of our Organization, our commitment to multilateralism, with the Charter of the United Nations as its bedrock, is unwavering. The United Nations has bound our nations with the common purpose to uplift our shared humanity — through the ravages of Second World War, conflicts and regional and global pandemics — by establishing the universality of human rights and human dignity, and with a rules-based order underpinned by international law that guarantees the flourishing in peace of free and equal nations.

With the United Nations at the centre amid the tides of challenge and change, multilateralism must rise to the occasion. The spirit of our Organization calls on us to respond decisively to existential threats

such as global warming, degrading ecosystems, diseases and food insecurity, and to reclaim the power of dialogue and diplomacy as we manage new complexities of conflict and strategic competition. We must configure our work to the realities of our time, placing people and communities at the heart of our agenda, refocusing consensus through differences and recognizing the agency of many voices — not only the powerful few — in shaping our shared future. The theme of this year's session of the Assembly frames a global conversation on solidarity and trust as essential enablers of global action. Greater solidarity and trust also arise as outcomes of shared triumphs; they thrive more when multilateralism works and weaken when our global institutions fail to deliver dividends for the benefit of all.

The preservation of a rules-based global order is our collective responsibility. The United Nations is underwritten by a rules-based order governed by international law and informed by the principles of equity and of justice. Its present and future rest on the predictability and stability of international law, which safeguards the rights of all States. If multilateralism is to endure, all States must adhere to the rule of law. Guided by an independent foreign policy, the Philippines actively works with nations to promote a rules-based international order. We advocate the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with international law. That has always been our position with respect to the disputes in the West Philippine Sea, in as much as we are prepared to defend our sovereignty, sovereign rights and territorial integrity. As President Marcos Jr. has declared, we are a friend to all and an enemy to none. Our Constitution renounces war as an instrument of national policy, adopts the generally accepted principles of international law as part of the law of the land and adheres to a policy of peace, equality, justice, freedom, cooperation and amity with all nations. We recognize the role of international legal bodies in fostering greater solidarity around the values that underpin the United Nations. This year, the General Assembly adopted by consensus resolution 77/322 to celebrate the one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

As an archipelagic State whose destiny is intimately linked to the oceans, the Philippines is a champion of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and we are proud to have been among the first States to have signed this week 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, which opens new windows for cooperation in the responsible stewardship of the high seas. The primacy of UNCLOS was affirmed by the 2016 arbitral award on the South China Sea, which definitively settled the status of historic rights and maritime entitlements in the South China Sea, declaring without legal effect claims that exceed entitlements beyond the geographic and substantive limits of UNCLOS. For the past seven years, we have celebrated that award, which is now part of international law. Adherence to international law contributes to keeping the Indo-Pacific region, with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) at the centre, free, open, stable and peaceful. In line with that, we are guided by the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific.

Mr. Ayebare (Uganda), Vice-President, took the chair.

During the Cold War, the Philippines shepherded the adoption of the 1982 Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes, convinced that our world should not descend again into large-scale conflict when the possibility of nuclear catastrophe loomed. Humankind remains in a state of danger because there are too many destructive and disruptive weapons now in existence. With thousands of nuclear warheads still present and the fissile material cut-off treaty unrealized, heightened arms races and new method of warfare, including in the cyber and space domains, have transformed the strategic landscape of the twenty-first century. More than ever, the rule of law must reign.

During his address to the Assembly last year, President Marcos Jr. called for rules and norms for the responsible use of emerging technologies (see A/77/PV.5). The Philippines is working with partners to establish rules to govern lethal autonomous weapons systems. In that regard, we will host an Indo-Pacific meeting in December. We advocate the peaceful uses of outer space, the elaboration of the principle of due regard in the space domain and greater responsibility among States to reduce space threats, including debris from rocket launches. We call for United Nations partnerships that guarantee that new technologies are not weaponized or misused in any way to subvert democracy and freedom, challenge international humanitarian law, exploit the vulnerable or violate human rights and human dignity.

We are profoundly concerned about the excessive suffering caused across the globe by extreme weather events. That phenomenon reminds us of three realities, namely, that climate change is evolving into a full crisis, that the fight against global warming and sea level rise is a race against time and that effective climate action requires stronger multilateral cooperation. We need decisive, responsible, just and sustainable solutions that look after populations and protect those who have contributed the least to global warming but have the highest vulnerability by virtue of their geography. That is the meaning of solidarity on climate action.

More than a decade ago, the Philippines pioneered the adoption of a resolution in the Human Rights Council that drew attention to the impact of climate change on human rights. While we are heartened that that link is now acknowledged, much more remains to be done. We join the call for industrialized countries to abide by their obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We look forward to the adoption of decisions by the twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change concerning the establishment of a loss and damage fund and other climate financing mechanisms. We thank Vanuatu and the core group of States for rallying the United Nations to bring the question of State obligations relating to climate change to the International Court of Justice. The Philippines will participate actively in the proceedings. Moreover, we stand in solidarity with island States taking part in the proceedings of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea on obligations relating to climate change and the marine environment under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Cognizant that the future will see more climate-induced migration and displacement, as acknowledged in the Global Compact for Migration, the Philippines and the International Organization for Migration convened a ministerial round table on climate change and migration in the Asia-Pacific region earlier this week in New York. With the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction to be held in Manila in 2024, the Philippines aims to effectively build a bridge between disaster risk resilience and the climate agenda.

We are in the home stretch for securing Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) outcomes globally. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is well-

integrated in the Philippines' mid- and long-term development plans, and we can unlock opportunities for the Philippines and developing countries, including middle-income countries, to advance South-South cooperation and achieve development goals worldwide. As a middle-income country, we support initiatives to make international financial and development mechanisms better attuned to the needs of middle-income countries. Our partnerships should bridge development divides. Our collaboration for the future should make our societies more resilient, more cohesive and more humane, and as I stated at the SDG Summit earlier this week, if we work together, sustainable is attainable.

The continued reform of the United Nations development system is key to ensuring that the Organization delivers transformative development outcomes. The United Nations and its specialized agencies and funds have the duty of providing efficient, coherent and accountable support to host States, with the consent of the latter and in accordance with their national development priorities. Solidarity prepares the ground for international cooperation as we reinforce the global health security system, taking into account the lessons of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

Together with like-minded States, the Philippines has called for equity in the provision of vaccines and resilient health services in the negotiations on the global pandemic treaty. We must never again witness a global emergency on such a scale, in which those most in need will be provided for last. The Philippines supports the World Health Organization Contingency Fund for Emergencies, the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility and other mechanisms that harness the power of partnerships to address persistent health challenges and emergencies.

We affirm that health is primordial to our human development agenda, and we are all indebted to the Filipino health-care workers at the front lines of the pandemic throughout the world. We honour the many who lost their lives in the service of our common humanity. The pandemic compelled the international community, especially countries of destination, to recognize the contributions of migrants to their societies and to protect their rights. The Global Compact is the road map for that.

This year marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Represented by the late General Carlos P. Romulo, a former President

of the General Assembly, the Philippines was an active member of the first Commission on Human Rights, which drafted that seminal document. Following the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Philippines assumed a leading role in the drafting of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the framing of such instruments as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

To date, the Philippines is party to eight core human rights instruments. Recognizing human rights as unfinished business in all parts of the world, we are a dedicated advocate for the human rights of vulnerable groups, especially women, children, indigenous peoples, migrants, persons with disabilities, refugees and older persons. However, human rights is first and foremost about people. In order to foster trust and engagement, the dialogue on human rights must be genuine, based on evidence and depoliticized. When constructive and carried out in good faith and with full respect for the agency of States, collaboration on human rights can achieve concrete impacts.

I have echoed the call for solidarity in fostering and advancing a multilateral architecture that promotes the rule of law and meets the pressing challenges of our century. Such an architecture demands that we invest wisely in sound, inclusive and far-sighted multilateral institutions. The Philippines supports multilateral institutions that adhere to the highest standards of good governance, equity, inclusivity, transparency and accountability. We will work in concert with other nations towards a twenty-first century multilateralism that includes and works for the benefit of all.

The Philippines has served as a pathfinder for consensus on such issues as climate change and human rights and on security cooperation. We will remain a bridge-builder. In keeping with our tradition as a peacemaker, we will sustain our contributions to United Nations peacekeeping operations and continue implementing Security Council resolutions on counter-terrorism and peacebuilding, among other areas.

The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao embodies the vision of the Philippines for people-focused peacebuilding. The Philippines candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the 2027–2028 term manifests our strong desire to offer the best of the Philippines diplomatic

tradition. We count on the support of all Member States in that regard.

Fully living up to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the aspirations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are unfinished projects, and their realization is in our hands — that is our challenge. Through solidarity, we can foster a constructive multilateralism that embraces that challenge with courage and perseveres in hope and common purpose.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Nanaia Mahuta, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Local Government of New Zealand.

Ms. Mahuta (New Zealand): *Kotahi ano te kōhao o te ngira e kuhu ai te miro mā, te miro whero, te miro pango, Kia mau Kia te ture, te whakapono ko te mea nui ko te aroha.*

There is only one eye of the needle, through which the white, the red and black threads must pass. Hold fast to the lore, faith and, above all else, love.

These opening words, taken from my ancestors, remind me that no matter where we are from around the world, we are bound by a shared spirit of humanity.

I acknowledge the Lenape people, on whose tribal lands we stand. *Tena koutou katoa.*

I have been encouraged by the commitment I have witnessed in this great Hall to find transformative solutions to the interlocking challenges we face. At the same time, I am deeply concerned that the sum of our collective efforts to meet those challenges is falling well short of what is required.

We meet at a time of sharply increasing danger for people and the planet. As we emerge from the worst health emergency in the past 100 years, our efforts to build back better have faltered in the face of accelerating ecological and planetary crises, deepening conflict and instability. We are failing to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. We must rise to meet these challenges. We owe it to our citizens and to the generations that follow us.

Mounting distrust and division are eroding the foundation of international cooperation and steering the multilateral system towards deadlock and dysfunction. We have no hope of meeting our shared challenges by going it alone. We live in an interconnected and

interdependent world, in which we will thrive — or perish — together.

For the first time in several generations, we face the very real possibility of conflict between major Powers. We cannot let that happen. The stakes for all of us are simply too high. The international rule of law and the Charter of the United Nations must mean something to a growing generation that is becoming increasingly sceptical.

We are not on track to keep global warming at 1.5°C. Conflict and crises continue to impact, most harshly on women and children. The fabric of democratic principles is being challenged and weakened by misinformation and disinformation, and the list continues.

Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine last year was a direct attack on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a United Nations Member State. But it was much more than that. To witness a permanent member of the Security Council launch an unprovoked attack on a sovereign State, attempting to annex its territory and waging war on its civilian population remains shocking. Russia's actions violate the most fundamental tenets of international law. How can younger generations have confidence in the United Nations when a permanent member of the Security Council acts in a manner so fundamentally contrary to the United Nations Charter?

The consequences of Russia's ongoing war of aggression are stark. The suffering of Ukrainians is immense. Ukraine's neighbours are bearing a heavy burden. Sadly, we are seeing children being weaponized in this unjust war. That is wrong in every way. Aotearoa New Zealand strongly supports efforts to hold Russia to account in both the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

This war has also highlighted geostrategic tensions and heightened nuclear risks. Nuclear weapons must never be used. We must be unequivocal in our determination to reduce nuclear threats and do so immediately. The dangers of nuclear weapons and their toxic legacy, which are visible in our own blue Pacific region, have been with us for decades.

Other, newer technological developments also pose profound challenges in balancing the potential of their peaceful use with the threat of catastrophic harm if their development and military use is left unchecked. We must commit to international rules and limits on autonomous weapon systems and establish clear norms to address responsible use of other new and emerging

technologies, including artificial intelligence, as well as the continued peaceful use of outer space. We must also confront digital challenges, including cyberthreats and online extremism through smart coalitions, in which Governments work effectively with civil society and industry.

That is our approach with the Christchurch Call to Action to Eliminate Terrorist and Violent Extremist Content Online. The Christchurch Call is a global multi-stakeholder coalition that extends beyond traditional statecraft and governmental institutions. It has successfully galvanized significant policy change, improved the crisis readiness of technology companies and built strong, collaborative relationships across sectors.

Conflict and crisis is placing incredible pressure on the humanitarian system. Food insecurity is threatening the lives of hundreds of millions of people across the globe. Let me be clear — food is not a weapon and hunger is not a tool. Pervasive drought in the Horn of Africa and instability and violence in the Sahel, Afghanistan, Syria and Myanmar have left many millions in need of urgent humanitarian assistance.

Playing politics with innocent lives is cruel and immoral. As we mark the halfway point in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is time to move beyond divisive narratives and polemics. Now is the time to act to achieve meaningful progress against the Sustainable Development Goals. The call to action is urgent.

In December, we will celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Last December, we reaffirmed our unwavering commitment to speak out against violations of human rights, wherever they occur. There is no hierarchy when it comes to human rights abuses. We need to resist attempts to undermine or hollow out existing commitments. Aotearoa New Zealand will continue to fiercely protect the rights of women and girls.

New Zealand has long and deep connections to the Pacific through language, peoples, ocean, history, culture, politics and shared interests. We also have a strong connection to the wider Indo-Pacific region. We are concerned that the order that has underpinned prosperity and security in our region for most of the past seven decades is increasingly fraying. We do not believe that recent events witnessed in other parts of

the world need become the inevitable trajectory of our blue Pacific region.

Diplomacy is our strongest tool. Peace and stability is our goal. Our regional architecture must be inclusive and provide space for all those who wish to contribute positively to our region. And those who engage in our region must understand Pacific values and norms. We are committed to promoting the centrality of the Pacific Islands Forum in addressing regional challenges through the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, which is our road map.

International partners are encouraged to listen, engage and contribute to the sustainable development of our Pacific region in a manner that puts the priorities of the Pacific first and recognizes the independence of those for whom the region is home. The message to the partners of the Pacific is commitment with consistency. Recent global shocks have reminded us that building resilient communities and societies requires a broad and holistic approach to development. Strengthening resilience requires us to value progress across all dimensions of well-being. Social, economic and environmental development are interlinked and interdependent.

We must urgently achieve reform that contributes to the intergenerational well-being of developing States. We acknowledge the Secretary-General's call to find systemic solutions to the shortcomings of the international financial architecture. International financial institutions need to evolve to better serve the demands of the current era. We are encouraged to see a growing recognition of the broader measures of development that go beyond gross national income. Tools such as the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index offer opportunities to respond to the realities of those who are most vulnerable to external shocks, such as small island developing States. Sustainable development will be achieved only if the international community delivers on its commitments to those who are experiencing the violent realities of climate change.

Climate change is the greatest existential threat facing our planet. A stable climate is essential to a stable future. New Zealand is committed to playing its part in the global efforts to combat the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. No country is immune to the impacts of climate change, which are real and happening now. The countries of the Pacific are on the front lines and are already experiencing irreversible loss and damage. The

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has sent a very clear message that the world is not on track to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The first global stocktake of the Paris Agreement, which will take place at the twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to be held later this year, is an opportunity for a course correction.

Limiting warming to 1.5°C is vital to achieve our shared development goals. Every increment of a degree and every ton of emissions matters. We have a narrow and rapidly closing window to secure a sustainable and liveable future for all of us and our children. We call on all countries, especially major emitters, to align their actions with limiting the temperature increase to 1.5°C. That means committing to a global phase-out of fossil fuels.

Mr. Valtýsson (Iceland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Aotearoa New Zealand is taking ambitious action to support the transition to low-emission economies, climate-resilient agriculture and sustainable trade policies. Domestically, we are transitioning to a low-emission and climate-resilient future and working to meet our 1.5°C-aligned nationally determined contribution. We have committed to reducing our emissions by 50 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. Our first emissions-reduction plan sets out the actions we will take to achieve our first emissions budgets on a pathway to our 2050 target. We are investing in Pacific resilience, mobilizing climate financing and supporting Pacific partners to prepare and respond to climate-driven events. At least half of our quadrupled \$1.3 billion climate-finance commitment will go to the Pacific. At COP 27, we stood with the Pacific on the priority issue of loss and damage. New Zealand supports Australia's bid to host COP 31 in 2026, in partnership with the Pacific region.

We were delighted by the consensus adoption of General Assembly resolution 77/276, on requesting an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the obligations of States with respect to climate change. We acknowledge Vanuatu's leadership in that regard. New Zealand was a proud member of the core group that drove that initiative, which was an example of effective, cross-regional multilateral diplomacy. Going forward, we will work with a diverse coalition to address the adverse impacts of sea level rise, including preserving the heritage, statehood and sovereignty of

countries facing existential threats as a result of the climate crisis.

Aotearoa New Zealand welcomed the adoption in March 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 (BBNJ), which represents the most significant upgrade of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea framework in 40 years. We celebrate the fact that more than 70 States have signed the BBNJ Agreement this week. It reminds us of what we can achieve when we focus on our interests in the planet we share and work long and hard to bridge divides between States. We also applauded the United Nations Environment Assembly's agreement last year to launch negotiations on an international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, agreed last year, marked a welcome step forward in halting and reversing biodiversity loss. Those significant successes show that the stakes are too high for us to leave the triple planetary crisis solely in the hands of Governments. We need indigenous peoples, businesses, financial institutions, local Governments, young people, communities and individuals to play their crucial roles.

Contemporizing our multilateral institutions to ensure they are inclusive and fit for today's challenges must be a high priority. There has never been a greater need for innovation and creativity to secure the central place of the United Nations in addressing the collective challenges we face. That is why New Zealand actively supports initiatives to revitalize and reform the United Nations, its organs and the wider multilateral system. As a founding Member of the United Nations and an unwavering supporter of the international rules-based system, it is difficult to admit that our multilateral institutions are imperfect. They have — and they will — fail us. But *Aotearoa* New Zealand's response will always be to find ways to make them stronger. Fiercely independent but global in our outlook, we are driven by a strong sense of our responsibility to help to uphold the key tenets of the international rules-based system — respect for State sovereignty and respect for human rights and gender equality, and the will to achieve progress in addressing climate change and nuclear weapons.

It is clear that the norms and rules established by the Charter, including exercising tolerance and uniting in

our strengths, are under considerable strain. *Aotearoa* acknowledges the legitimacy of distinct political systems, histories and cultures. At home, we choose to embrace difference as a source of strength for resolving challenges rather than as a wedge to divide. We hold onto the hope of our forebears and the promise of the sense of nationhood set out in our founding document, the Treaty of Waitangi. The people we serve deserve our vigilance to achieve that goal.

Ours is an Organization made up primarily of small States. To deliver on the needs of small States and to achieve truly effective and inclusive multilateralism, we need to find ways to all pull in the same direction — yes, on our own terms, but in the same direction. Next year's Summit of the Future, which has its origins in the Secretary-General's *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982), provides an opportunity to rebuild trust among nations and contemporize the way we work. We can — and should — take full advantage of that opportunity. New Zealand stands ready to work with partners to ensure a robust outcome that best serves present and future generations.

Never in recent history has there been a greater need for transformative solutions to interlocking global challenges. I for one do not believe in inevitabilities. We must be purposeful. In fact, the disruptions we are enduring provide an opportunity for a reset. We need to rise above polarization and draw strength from our differences, rather than allowing them to create division.

Let me end by saying, *whiria te tāngata* — we must weave all our aspirations and our common and shared humanity together. *Nō reira, tēnā koutou kātoa.*

*Te aroha
Te whakapono
Me te rangimarie
Tātou tātou e
Te aroha
Te whakapono
Me te rangimarie
Tātou tātou e*

With love, faith and hope, we can all unite ourselves amid the sheer desperation.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Nabil Ammar, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisians Abroad of the Republic of Tunisia.

Mr. Ammar (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it is my pleasure to sincerely congratulate Mr. Dennis Francis and, through him, the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on his presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session. I wish him every success in conducting its work. I assure him of our support for his vision of peace, prosperity, growth and sustainability. I would also like to express to Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session, my deep gratitude and appreciation for his successful presidency. I would like to reiterate our appreciation and support for the efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, and for his valuable initiative to promote multilateral action.

Our world today is experiencing a delicate phase with numerous challenges and crises amid growing conflicts and wars, along with deepening geopolitical divisions and obstacles that prevent the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, the crisis of indebtedness faced by developing countries has continued, while the poverty and hunger gap is widening between the countries of the North and the South. We must also mention the unprecedented increase in the number of refugees and migrants, the continuing impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the acute climate crisis. Is that really the world to which we aspire after almost eight decades since the establishment of the United Nations? That image is very distant from the goals and values upon which the Organization was founded.

We call for the creation of new approaches and means that are more effective to meet the challenges of today. We also call for strengthened international cooperation and solidarity on the basis of common but differentiated responsibilities. We would also like to reiterate the need for everyone to truly respect the Charter of the United Nations, international law and human rights, without politicization. That is the way to rebuild trust among States, support multilateral action and achieve security, peace and development. With that in mind, we hope that this session will be a historic turning point and a new start for the multilateral system and international cooperation.

Hundreds of millions of people had great hopes in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and yet what has been achieved to date is regrettably short of our aspirations. Bearing that in mind, Tunisia supports the stimulus plan of the Secretary-General to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and the practical

proposal therein that seeks to provide the necessary funding for their implementation. We also appreciate the Secretary-General's initiative on addressing global crises related to food, energy and finance issues in order to mitigate the impact of the war in Ukraine on food and energy prices. In that context, we would like to recall the appeal of Mr. Kais Saïed, President of Tunisia, during the Food Systems Summit, held recently in Rome, to create a strategic stockpile of cereals for the entire world that can be used when necessary.

We need to acknowledge that the international monetary system that was created following the Second World War has clearly failed to provide a global safety net and to guarantee concessional and sustainable financing for developing and least developing countries. Quite to the contrary, that system has disappointed those countries and contributed to widening the gap between developed countries and developing countries that face difficult choices today, including having to use most of their resources to reimburse and service their debt or meet the vital needs of their peoples. That is why we call today for substantive reforms of the international financial system and for a change in global economic governance. That is an essential priority to overcome current imbalances and differences and establish a sound system that invests in sustainable development and future generations. Furthermore, we call for responsible and serious engagement to facilitate the recovery of looted funds from abroad to help the people of affected countries and make them rely on their own resources. It is also important to avoid those kinds of violations in the future.

The challenges facing the world today — the impact of climate change, deterioration of the ecosystem and worsening of national disasters — compel all of us to take urgent action as an absolute priority despite, the fact that our countries are not responsible for the current situation of our planet. In that context, Tunisia appreciates the initiative of the Secretary-General, who called for the convening of the Climate Ambition Summit. We also reiterate the need to continue and step up international efforts to achieve needed solutions. All responsible actors should assume their responsibility by providing climate funding to countries that are most affected.

Illegal migration has worsened in our geographical area due to the inadequate development of many African States. That can be attributed to prolonged conflicts, the effects of climate change and the fact that criminal

networks are exploiting the precarious conditions of thousands of people who are seeking better opportunities in life and are trafficking them, whether in countries south or north of the Mediterranean Sea or sub-Saharan Africa. While reaffirming the need to adopt a global approach to tackle the issue of illegal migration, which includes addressing its root causes rather than simply its consequences, we once again stress the need for all parties to assume their responsibility. That includes countries of origin, transit and destination, as well as regional and international organizations. In that context, we call for the continuation of the process of the International Conference on Migration and Development, which started in Rome based on a Tunisian-Italian initiative. Tunisia has always dealt with the issue of illegal migration to the extent of its ability based on its firm commitment to human rights and respect for international commitments. We assure that Tunisia will not accept concealed settling of illegal migrants. Furthermore, we condemn all irresponsible political or media exploitation of the suffering of victims of illegal migration for political purposes.

Tunisia has not been an exception to what the world has experienced and continues to experience in terms of economic, social and life challenges. We intend to overcome those difficulties, notwithstanding the current difficulties, and to strengthen our resilience and sustainability in cooperation with our brothers, friends and partners, while preserving the guiding principles of our national policies and independent decisions. We will continue tirelessly the process of reform, the strengthening of good governance and the fight against corruption in order to review and strengthen our democracy and the performance of State institutions. We will put an end to the irresponsible political manipulations that we have seen for over a decade. All of that is in response to the aspirations of the Tunisian people, who sincerely expressed them on 25 July 2021. The people will remain attached to their aspirations until this reform process is completed, despite all challenges and pressures. We also intend to strengthen our resilience in the face of challenges, including regional and global challenges, lack of funding, the effects of climate change and the consequences of COVID-19 pandemic. Our country, as part of a presidential initiative, was the first to call for strengthened international solidarity to combat COVID-19, through the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 2532 (2020), co-sponsored by France.

We also will continue our efforts to empower women and young people and to strengthen their

participation in public life and decision-making. We are also working on transitioning successfully to a green and blue economy, strengthening digital transformation while providing social protection for all our citizens, and ensuring the fair distribution of economic growth. During this important period, Tunisia will rely on its own resources, and we call on our partners to work with us constructively, as part of our process of reform and modernization, and to support our economic recovery efforts on the basis of our shared interests and common destinies, as well as our intelligent political assessment.

Tunisia also stresses the need to continue the process of reform and revitalization in our Organization. In that context, Tunisia has effectively taken part in the implementation of the Secretary-General's report on Our Common Agenda (A/75/982), and we hope that the Summit of the Future will be an opportunity to reiterate the commitment of everyone to our common principles in order to build a secure and lasting future for humankind. That also reflects our vision to create a new global order that is more balanced and with no hierarchy among States, because where justice is absent, we see an increase in poverty, wars and terrorism. We need a new global vision on concepts of security and peace that focuses on the root causes of instability and the trends towards violence and war.

The historical injustice and suffering which have been imposed on the Palestinian people for more than seven decades of occupation, as well as its attendant oppression and atrocities are unacceptable, illegal, immoral and inhumane. The same goes for the silence of the international community as the occupation authorities continue to disregard resolutions of international legitimacy and the principles of international law while carrying out their policy of aggression and settlement plans. That is why we once again call on the Security Council and the international community to assume their responsibilities and compel the occupation authorities to respect resolutions of international legitimacy with a view to achieving a just and peaceful solution based on international agreed parameters, putting an end to the occupation and suffering of the Palestinian people while allowing them to recover their legitimate rights to create an independent, geographically contiguous and sovereign State within the borders of 4 June 1967, with Jerusalem as its capital. We all call for the State of Palestine to be a full-fledged member of the United Nations.

Turning to our immediate neighbourhood, Tunisia reiterates its firm commitment to provide all possible assistance to our Libyan brethren with a view to helping Libya overcome its differences and achieve a political agreement based on intra-Libyan dialogue, with the help of the United Nations, to preserve the unity, sovereignty and independence of Libya. We reiterate our rejection of any military solutions and any form of foreign interference, direct or indirect, in the internal affairs of Libya. Along the same lines, we call for convergence of United Nations and international efforts to achieve political solutions in both Syria and Yemen to put an end to the suffering of their brotherly peoples, to bring peace and security to them and to preserve their sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. Tunisia also calls for an end to the escalation in the brotherly country of the Sudan and for the prioritization of dialogue in order to overcome the crisis. We call on the international community and the United Nations to help Africa to rid itself of the constant crises, for which the continent is only marginally responsible. We reiterate the importance of including a moral dimension in the economic field by taking into account the interests of African countries.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that we are all at a crossroads today. Given the scale of the unprecedented risks and challenges that affect everyone and threaten our world and future generations, the choices we make should be based on our intelligence and long-term vision and on the commitment to our humanity. Those choices should also be based on the belief in our shared destiny and commitment to the United Nations Charter, the principles of solidarity, cooperation and responsibility. Those choices will play a decisive role in restoring credibility in the multilateral system.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Thórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð Gylfadóttir, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland.

Ms. Gylfadóttir (Iceland): First, I would like to thank all those whose daily work is dedicated to the United Nations and its ideals. All across the globe, people work in the name of the United Nations, wearing the colours and emblems of this Organization, giving their effort in the pursuit of making our world a better place. I thank them. I also thank those who are responsible for keeping the buildings and offices clean and ready for business. I thank those who make sure that technology runs smoothly, the translators and security staff, the diplomats of the Member States

and those who are entrusted with making decisions and bearing the responsibility of managing the day-to-day operations of the United Nations. In a large organization, each individual must do their part, and every task — no matter how mundane — is done in the name of our common cause and deserves to be done well. Everyone has a role to play, and all those roles are important.

This week has been dominated by discussions of the many and serious problems that humankind faces. Most of these pressing problems do not respect national borders. We are now — more than ever in the history of humankind — in a state of mutual reliance and dependence. The problems created by some of us often have dire consequences for others. A disruption in production in one part of the world has an impact on the well-being of people in another. Hateful rhetoric that is used for political gain in one country can spread with the speed of light across borders and poison public discourse in another. But there are other and more uplifting parts of that reality. Solutions that are discovered in any distant region of the world can be transported and utilized across the globe in an instant. New ideas in culture, in science and in political thought do not respect any national boundaries. Being interconnected also means that people are aware of each other's humanity.

But, sadly, at the same time, when we need it the most, multilateralism is in serious crisis. I believe that we are at a critical juncture and that when we look back at these times 30 years from now, either we will look back with absolute sadness and horror to a catastrophe that could have been avoided, or these times will be considered a moment of strength, when the international system showed that it could withstand its toughest test without breaking apart. We need to take the long view and contemplate how our actions today will look a few decades from now. How leaders act and how institutions respond will determine the difference between hope and despair. That means the United Nations, and that means us, the people who are entrusted with positions of leadership and service. In that regard, we all have a role to play, and each role is important.

This year marks the halfway point for the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out in 2015. It is estimated that only 15 per cent of the SDGs are currently on track for completion by 2030. Plainly speaking, it is halftime, and we are down by a big margin. During this week some positive steps

have been taken at the SDG Summit, but it will be actions, not words, that count. Iceland presented its second voluntary national review in July. As with many others, we have a mixed story to tell. Some of our goals are on track, others are simply not. My Government remains committed to the timely implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As for most of us, the second half will be decisive.

The Paris Agreement is also in jeopardy. Over the past months, we have witnessed the increased intensity of climate change and natural disasters in the form of flooding, drought and extreme weather patterns. Wildfires are battering every corner of the world. Those phenomena have local and global ramifications, including increased food insecurity, poverty and hunger. This is not just a threat to some in distant parts of the world. This is an existential threat to us all. And it is the most vulnerable, especially women and children and poorer communities, who bear the brunt of these events, which are the consequences of problems that they had no part in creating.

Where there is hope, it continues to be in cooperation and in a multilateral approach to solving problems. A recent example is the historic agreement reached earlier this year on marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), under the auspices of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea — our constitution of the ocean. The BBNJ agreement is a testament to the importance and effectiveness of multilateralism when it comes to tackling the triple planetary threat of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. It was an important milestone to which Iceland is proud to have contributed.

December marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is a milestone worth celebrating. The world has long since learned that when the rights of people are denied in one State, there is a real danger that the effect will be felt by others. Just as domestic violence is a societal problem, not a family matter — brutal treatment of citizens in one State of the United Nations is a matter that concerns us all. Earlier this month, Iceland formally presented its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the term 2025–2027. Human rights are a key pillar of Iceland's foreign and development policy, based on the conviction that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interrelated, interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Our candidature is endorsed

by the Nordic countries. Member States in the Human Rights Council do not have to be perfect. None of us are. We can all do better, and we should all aim to do better.

We are seeing a serious degradation of human rights in many Member States. Women and girls in Afghanistan cannot go to school. Their basic freedoms are taken from them, and they live under cruel and violent suppression. I salute the bravery of the women, within Afghanistan and outside, who continue to bring the attention of the world to the horrors perpetrated by the Taliban. In Iran, the authorities continue to deny women freedom and to punish those who dissent. We should all listen to the voices of people who put themselves in danger by openly fighting for human rights. We are seeing degradation in the rights of LGBTI+ communities in many places. Of all the things that people choose to worry about, I simply can never understand why people should not be allowed the freedom to love and be loved for who they are.

The shocking treatment of women by many countries, and the blatant inequalities in even more countries, are a terribly sad and unfair situation for the women of those countries because, quite frankly, it simply does not make any sense. I come from a country that is considered to have a very strong record when it comes to gender equality. And Iceland is fortunate enough to be a society that has developed from being among the poorest in Europe to one of the most prosperous since we became an independent republic almost 80 years ago. The fact of our equality and the fact of our prosperity are strongly linked. We do not have gender equality in Iceland because it is a luxury that we can afford. It is gender equality that has made us strong.

In Belarus, opponents of the regime are jailed and exiled while the rulers align themselves with Russia's war in Ukraine. All of those who dedicate themselves to ensuring human rights and freedoms for the people of Belarus deserve to be listened to and supported. And there are so many other places around the world where people are being punished for their opinions and for challenging authorities. Civil society, media and freedom of speech are being undermined, not only in autocratic countries, but all over the world. Cases of people being arbitrarily detained by Governments are on the rise and are deeply troubling. There is a trend in the direction of the deterioration of democratic values and civil rights, often led by populist politicians who offer simplistic solutions to complex problems. They spread suspicion, peddle misinformation and foster

polarization in their societies. That poses a dilemma. Those who undermine democratic norms do so under the protection of the same human rights that they are attacking. And while some of these rights are misused, it is also clear that we will need to rely on human-made solutions to our human-made problems. And that will rely on the creative and innovative thinking of individuals who have the freedom to express their thoughts, to challenge the status quo and to test their ideas, services and products in an open and competitive society.

Artificial intelligence asks some serious questions that will demand close multilateral cooperation to avoid the very real risk of this technology becoming a tool of destruction rather than creation. We must also bear in mind that the promise of human rights and freedom applies to individuals and does not necessarily extend to State-sponsored propaganda or artificially generated misinformation that is intended to sow discord and disunity. Freedom of expression is for human beings — not for programmed bots that spread hate, lies and fear — because human rights are for human beings.

Military coups are proliferating in Africa, the situation in the Sudan is deteriorating, the Taliban regime is tightening its grip in Afghanistan, the military junta in Myanmar continues to commit atrocities, and the conflict between Israel and Palestine is frequently flaring up, with a two-State solution nowhere in sight. Russia's war of territorial aggression is not only a brutal assault on Ukraine and its people, but also an unprecedented affront to the international system. That madness has been ongoing for over 18 months and is the sole responsibility of a permanent member of the Security Council that should be acting on behalf of the United Nations membership as a guardian of international peace and security. Instead, the Russian Federation chooses to viciously attack a neighbouring country in complete violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Iceland is proud to have been at the helm when the Council of Europe decided last May to establish a register of damage incurred by the Russian invasion in Ukraine. That is an important step in seeking reparations after the war and holding perpetrators to account. Every country of the world, and humankind as a whole, stands to lose if the international community allows wars of neo-colonial conquest by large powers against its neighbours. There are many grey zones in world affairs, but this is not one of them. Russia is the aggressor and must be stopped. Ukraine is rightly defending its land and, by

extension, our international system, and Ukraine must be supported.

Humankind does not only create problems. We also create solutions, and some of these solutions border on being miraculous. In fact — this very Organization, and the system of international and multilateral cooperation of which it is both the pinnacle and foundation — is an example of a human-made solution to human-made problems. But maintaining relevance and importance throughout many decades is not an easy task. It falls to the Organization itself, but more crucially to its Member States, to avoid the pitfalls that put in jeopardy all organizations as they age. They can take on a life of their own, increasingly independent from their original aims. We will need to be creative, innovative and willing to look critically at how things are done, with the aim of finding ever better ways of serving the States and people of the world. We need reforms to the Security Council that reflect a much changed and evolved world since the institution was set up. And we need more high-level dialogue that is open and unscripted and in which the people responsible for making important decisions can engage with each other and exchange views. Sometimes it is difficult to talk to people that you do not agree with, but I have never found it to be harmful. The people of this Organization, and us — people who hold positions of leadership in Member States — are all human beings who benefit from being in the company of other human beings.

The United Nations must be modern and change with the times. This system — a miracle of the human spirit when it was first set up — must earn its legitimacy over and over again, as new generations replace those who hold the memories of why our current world order, with all its flaws, is still vastly and completely superior to any other alternative. We have no alternative but to adapt. We all have a role to play, and each role is important. Failure is not an option.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sameh Hassan Shoukry Selim, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt.

Mr. Selim (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Arab Republic of Egypt and to demonstrate its voice and vision, as a representative of a noble country that has made civilizational contributions throughout history and plays an essential role in promoting regional and international peace and stability.

Egypt was one of the first countries to join the United Nations and contributed to establishing the goals and principles upon which the Organization was founded. For decades, Egypt has been fully committed to the Charter of the United Nations, the promotion of international peace and prosperity and the achievement of sustainable development. However, our world today faces a persistent question: how effective is the multilateral system in grappling with current challenges? Many discussions have been held regarding the development of this international Organization, especially after developing countries, including Egypt, found themselves grappling with cascading and interlocking crises in which they have no stake and without adequate support from the international organizations created to support their legitimate development aspirations and achieve global economic stability. Having said that, I would like to share with the General Assembly the Egyptian vision, which sheds light on a number of priorities seeking to restore trust in and the efficiency of multilateral action.

First, in a world mainly characterized by interdependence and globalization, no one is secure unless everyone is secure, and no region is stable unless all regions are stable. Our collective security lies in our joint action and in the effective application of the principles of the Charter, rather than selectivity and double standards. The challenges that are facing our world, given their complexity, interrelatedness and diversity, such as conflicts, food insecurity, pervasive terrorism and the inability of the international system to find sustained solutions for them, emphasize that we are still far from realizing the purposes and principles of the Charter. The serious repercussions of the conflict in Ukraine have proved that we cannot guarantee the stability and security of any party without the other, and that settling disputes is the responsibility of all States and not the responsibility of only influential parties. Thus, Egypt has taken active steps with her Arab and African neighbours, including by creating the Arab Ministerial Contact Group on the Crisis in Ukraine and participating in the African leaders' initiative, to put an end to the bloodshed and to find a peaceful settlement for the Russian-Ukrainian crisis.

Secondly, the international multilateral system in the post-Second-World-War era has revealed a structural deficiency in the way we address political, economic, social and security global crises. That deficiency mainly entailed the monopoly by major Powers of the ability to make international decisions and their disregard for

the aspirations of hundreds of millions of peoples and communities. In that regard, Egypt and the African countries insist on the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, with a view to undoing the historic injustice done to our continent by expanding the African representation in the Security Council and securing two permanent seats for Africa with full prerogatives. Egypt has also supported the joint action mechanisms among developing countries and was at the forefront of efforts to found the groupings of those countries. We look forward to playing an active role through our new membership in the BRICS group — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — advocating for the interests and aspirations of 30 per cent of the global economy in the countries of the South that have the human wealth of young people to offer.

Thirdly, we are in dire need of restoring trust in the economic tools of the global system, with a view to enabling it to address the urgent development aspirations of peoples. The best way to prevent conflicts is through comprehensive and sustainable development. That makes it incumbent upon us to uphold the role of international organizations in supporting developing countries in facing ongoing international crises and promoting resilience against international future crises. In that regard, it is essential that the international community synergize its efforts, take constructive steps to reform the current global financial structure and develop the current international financial system in such a way as to enable developing countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). That requires establishing effective and innovative financing tools and promoting existing financing tools, including special drawing rights of the International Monetary Fund. That also calls on us to look into the best ways of allocating them, in addition to modifying the practices of multilateral development banks in order to realize three goals: increasing the amount of funds; providing funds from different sources and tools such as concessional loans and grants; and improving developing countries' access to those development banks for achieving development in line with the national priorities of those countries. It is high time to reform the World Trade Organization and to consolidate its centrality in maximizing the returns of the rules-based multilateral trading system.

If we wish to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs, then we should take immediate steps to prevent global debt crises that not only exacerbate the weak economies of poor countries and increase

challenges for developing economies but will cause a greater global economic crisis. We must, therefore, take immediate steps to address that crisis by way of creating sustainable and comprehensive mechanisms to address the debts of low- and middle-income countries. We must also address the increase in the debt burden and complexity of its global structure while changing patterns of indebtedness, promoting cooperation with development partners for debt exchange and establishing development projects. That will eventually transform the challenges of debt into an opportunity for a just transition to a green economy.

Fourthly, the world is facing the existential threat of climate change. Climate disasters such as devastating floods, deadly hurricanes or continuous drought have become part of our daily life. International reports stress that the world is not on track to address the climate challenge, especially with respect to adequate financing for developing countries to support the implementation of their national pledges. In that regard, given Egypt's conviction of the importance of moving from planning to implementation, we succeeded, at the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) in Sharm el-Sheikh, in mobilizing international consensus to achieve climate justice. We reached balanced decisions there, based on the agreed responsibilities and principles as per the Convention and the Paris Agreement. Moreover, as an international community, we achieved historic progress by securing funds for developing countries to confront climate-change-related losses and damage and established a track towards a just transformation in development. We also focused on the expanded use of renewable energy.

As President of COP27, we note that current efforts are not up to the existing challenge. We also note that certain countries have reneged on their responsibilities, while others have even reneged on their pledges in terms of implementing agreed pledges. Some countries have imposed protective measures and fees under the pretext of climate change. Therefore, to achieve success at COP28 in the sisterly United Arab Emirates, I would like to stress that our success relies upon implementing the pledges and existing agreements, especially by establishing a fund that provides financing for developing countries to face losses and damage and the financing necessary to achieve the goal of the 1.5°C limit.

Fifthly, our vision for developing this international system should take into consideration newer challenges such as the scarcity of natural resources, including drinking water, which was the lifeline of nearly 1 billion people at the beginning of last century. Today we need an adequate amount of drinking water for approximately 8 billion people. That is why we welcome the outcomes of the historic United Nations 2023 Water Conference.

In that regard, I would like to highlight my country's acute water scarcity. Egypt is at the top list of arid countries that receive less rain than others in the world. Egypt's population exceeds 105 million people. That has led to a sharp decrease in the per capita quota of water and an annual water deficit of more than 50 per cent. That compels us to reuse the limited amount of available water more than once and import proxy water in the form of food imports to the tune of nearly \$15 billion annually. Egypt depends on the Nile River for 98 per cent of its water and is very vulnerable to any unsustainable use of the river's water. Here, I would like to stress our unwavering position, which is based on international law. We reject any unilateral measures regarding the management of transboundary water — for example, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, which was built without consultation, adequate prior analysis or study of the impacts on the riparian States. Ethiopia has gone further by unilaterally filling and operating that dam, thus explicitly violating the principles of international law, the 2015 Declaration of Principles on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and the 2021 Security Council presidential statement (S/PRST/2021/18). Notwithstanding those unilateral practices on the part of our brothers in Ethiopia, Egypt is keen to engage seriously in the current negotiations, which have been ongoing for more than one decade, with a view to reaching a binding agreement on the rules concerning the filling and operating of the Dam that takes into account the interests of all involved. We continue to work sincerely with Ethiopia to reach an agreement that takes into consideration the interests of Egypt, the Sudan and Ethiopia. It would be wrong to believe that we would accept a *de facto* situation concerning more than 100 million Egyptians.

Sixthly, one of the pillars of efforts to reform this international system is enabling it to promote human rights at the political, economic, social and cultural levels, far from politicization and double standards. There is an attempt to impose certain concepts that do not respect cultural and social peculiarities. I wonder: how is one system of values morally superior

to others? We warn against the phenomena of racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and its manifestations, including increased violence and hatred against Muslim communities. Most notable among those manifestations was the recent burning of the Holy Quran, as that is a violation of freedom of religion and faith. Laws, policies and programmes must be established to prevent the recurrence of such incidents. We commend the recent Danish initiative in that regard. We also believe in the established principles and the responsibility of the State and its institutions and of communities to promote human rights. At the national level, Egypt has made strides in promoting the rights of its citizens, most notably by launching the national human rights strategy, the strategy for the empowerment of Egyptian women and the strategy to combat violence against women. Moreover, Egypt has made tireless efforts to empower youth and persons with disabilities. Egypt also gives priority to the principle of citizenship, the fight against discrimination and the protection of religious freedoms.

Seventh, the United Nations was created to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to create an Organization based on noble principles. Despite that, the world has, over the past 78 years, witnessed wars and conflicts that have claimed the lives of millions of innocent people. However, that should not make us lose faith in those principles. We must acknowledge the failure in implementing them and in applying policies that contradict those principles. Since we believe in them, Egypt has sought for half a century to be a pillar of stability, security and development. It was the first to make peace in the Middle East. Currently, we are concerned about the deteriorating situation in the Palestinian territories due to the practices of the occupying forces, which endanger the situation, following the recent summits held in Aqaba and Sharm el-Sheikh. Egypt stresses its position in support of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to establish an independent State based on the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with resolutions of international legitimacy. We call on all peace-loving Powers to seize the opportunities available to salvage the two-State solution and achieve a just and comprehensive peace.

Egypt is also working towards establishing peace in the Sudan, Libya, Syria and Yemen, according to the principles of international law and resolutions of international legitimacy. Egypt supports counter-terrorism efforts on our continent, Africa, through a comprehensive approach in line with the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We intend to intensify our efforts during our co-chairmanship of the Global Counterterrorism Forum.

Cairo has launched a summit for the countries neighbouring the Sudan, with a view to coordinating their efforts to settle the current crisis and to mitigate the humanitarian repercussions thereof. We are also working towards a lasting ceasefire with full respect for the Sudan's sovereignty and the preservation of State institutions. The Sudan's neighbouring countries continue their efforts to reach a sustainable political solution.

Egypt supports a Libyan political solution that is in accordance with the principles of national ownership and moves the country out of the transitional period, with the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections as soon as possible. Egypt also stresses the importance of the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all foreign forces and mercenaries from Libya within a time-bound period. Egypt reiterates its categorical rejection of any bypassing of the legislative role of the Libyan Parliament. We have reservations regarding any alternative solutions that eliminate the role of Libyan legislators. Egypt adheres to the mandate of the legislative authority pursuant to the constitutional declaration and the 2015 Libyan political agreement of Skhirat in order to lead the Libyan dialogue towards ending the transitional phase in the country.

In conclusion, our vision is to restore trust in this multilateral Organization by upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of the international law, and maximizing the role of international organizations, chief among which is the United Nations.

The meeting rose at 2.35 p.m.