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Official Records

President: Mr. Lajčák (Slovakia)

The meeting was called to order at 9.10 a.m.

could have done more to respond to conflicts and more to prevent them from happening at all.

Agenda item 65 (continued)

Peacebuilding and sustaining peace

High-level meeting of the General Assembly on peacebuilding and sustaining peace

Report of the Secretary-General (A/72/707)

Draft resolution (A/72/L.49)

The President: I declare open the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

I warmly welcome everyone to this high-level meeting, which will focus on efforts undertaken and opportunities to strengthen the work of the United Nations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, is held in accordance with resolution 70/262, of 27 April 2016, and takes place under agenda item 65, entitled “Peacebuilding and sustaining peace”.

In 1945, the world had seen too much horror. That could not continue, and therefore a change was made. That is why the United Nations was established. From the start, peace was at its core. The first line of the Charter of the United Nations commits us to saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war. In some ways, we have met that commitment. No other world war has taken place since then. However, in many other ways, we have not. We have waited too long to act. We have not been there when people needed us. We

In 2016, we decided to take a new approach. The General Assembly, together with the Security Council, adopted what we now call the sustaining peace resolutions (resolutions 70/262 and 2282 (2016)). We committed to acting earlier, faster and better to prevent the suffering that conflict brings. That was the easier part. The challenge came in making the approach a reality. That is why we are here now — to assess the progress we have made so far and plan how we can do better going forward. I must say that we are meeting at a crucial time.

We need that new approach more than ever before. We need it for the people in Syria, who are in the eighth year of a brutal conflict. We need it for the people in South Sudan, who have known more war than peace in their country’s lifetime. We need it for people facing unending conflict, from Yemen and Libya to Somalia and Afghanistan. We need it for all of us here today. We all see the warning signs: rising intolerance, hate speech, escalating rhetoric and increasing disregard for the principles and systems that we have spent seven decades building.

Today I will start us off by focusing on five areas that demand our urgent attention.

The first is prevention, as it is our top priority. To that end, we need greater mediation and diplomacy at the local level, which will require quick and efficient responses to stop local disputes from becoming violent. It is also needed at the national level. The United Nations

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must do more to support the prevention of hunger and it must also be ready to step in through its own mediators and good offices, if required. Mediation and diplomacy are also needed at the regional level, because we have seen that regional and subregional actors are critical to preventing escalating tensions. Finally, they are needed right here, on the international stage. The United Nations can offer a space for negotiations of every kind. We must do more to use it. We need a drive for diplomacy, and the United Nations must be the engine room.

Prevention also means addressing conflict at its roots before it turns deadly. We must make our societies more resilient. We must respond to early warning signs. We need strong institutions, sustainable development, access to justice and respect for human rights. Perhaps in the past we did not associate those efforts with prevention, but they are all drivers of peace. We must invest in them. We cannot let incentives for violence outweigh incentives for peace.

My second point this morning is that we need to connect the dots within the system of the United Nations itself. We need to be much more coherent, which also means improving coherence across the three United Nations pillars and areas of work. We can no longer talk only about humanitarian work, human rights work or peacekeeping; nor can we view the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a stand-alone framework. That demands additional links, cooperation and coherence. I have seen that in person. In March, I visited indigenous communities in the Colombian town of Totoró. There I did not see merely a United Nations programme. I saw a real partnership. I saw real commitment to peace, from the United Nations and the Colombian Government to local leaders. I look forward to hearing about the lessons learned from President Santos Calderón, whom I am honoured to welcome here today.

A third area for further action is partnerships. Sustaining peace cannot be a United Nations export. It is not something that we can make here and deliver to countries and societies. We can only succeed in partnership, first and foremost, with national actors. If we do not listen to them and go in with our own plans and ideas, we will fail. Regional and subregional partners are also crucial. In 2017, the constitutional crisis in the Gambia showed us how regional action can prevent escalation. I am delighted that we can welcome President Barrow here today to give us his

country's national perspective. Civil-society actors are another key ingredient to sustaining peace. We need their experiences and expertise, and they need far more support from us. Lastly, we must engage more with the private sector and financial institutions. Innovative partnerships are crucial. They can create opportunities. They can build capacity. They can attract investment.

That brings me to my fourth point, with regard to financing. Additional investment in preventing conflicts and sustaining peace is vital. And, as if the moral case were not strong enough, we also have a solid financial one to make. The recent World Bank and United Nations report, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, informs us that for every \$1 spent on prevention, up to \$7 could be saved over the long term. That means that instead of being spent on conflict response, \$7 could go towards actually developing and advancing societies. Yet we continue not to invest enough in prevention, and one of our main funding mechanisms for sustaining peace, the Peacebuilding Fund, is struggling to reach its target of \$500 million. There are concrete proposals on the table, and I am glad that draft resolution A/72/L.49, which we plan to adopt, provides us with a mandate to consider them in more depth.

My final point concerns the need for inclusion. We saw things from the wrong perspective for too many years. We believed that the power to make and build peace lay only in the hands of a few people — the elite, politicians, diplomats and, always, men. Women were seen as victims, and young people as soldiers or agitators. But we are beginning to tear down that narrative. Some of the people in this Hall are doing it with their own two hands. For example, Visaka Dharmadasa helped to save peace talks in Sri Lanka from breaking down through communication and confidence-building. She is not a victim of conflict; she is a champion of peace. Or take the case of Ilwad Elman, who works with survivors of gender-based violence and former child soldiers in Somalia. She is younger than many people here, but we will all be learning from her. With regard to peace, we need more inclusion. We need more actors at the table, and I do not mean standing beside it just for the sake of optics. They must be sitting right at the table, talking, participating and adding their value.

We are making progress. A few years ago, no one had ever heard of sustaining peace. Then, in 2016, we made a firm commitment, and by the end of this week, we will have adopted another draft resolution to keep up

our momentum. We also have the report and concrete proposals from the Secretary-General. Moreover, this morning our meeting on sustaining peace has seen the highest levels of attendance at the United Nations this year. But let me be absolutely clear — that is not enough. The stakes are too high. The effects of conflicts are too inhuman. The warning signs of further outbreaks are all too visible. And disregard of our most fundamental principles is too frequent. That is why we need to go beyond resolutions, statements and words. We need to put all of our cards on the table here this week, and we need to recommit to this new approach to peace. I thank everyone for being here to do precisely that.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres.

The Secretary-General: I thank the General Assembly for this opportunity to renew our joint commitment to building and sustaining peace. I welcome Members' high-level attention accorded to this issue at a key moment for our collective efforts and at a time when peace is fragile and at risk in many places around the world.

Two years ago, the General Assembly and the Security Council sent an unequivocal message by adopting the ambitious twin resolutions 70/262 and 2282 (2016), respectively, pledging to work better together to sustain peace at all stages of conflict and in all its dimensions. Those resolutions stress that although Governments have the primary responsibility for peacebuilding and sustaining peace, we can all do more to build peaceful and resilient societies. Two years on, it is time to look at progress and forge a common path ahead. No one can doubt the many benefits of globalization, including the integration of the world's economies, the expansion of trade, the reduction in poverty and improvements in living standards and stunning advances in technology. But at the same time, we must recognize that in some fundamental ways, our world is going backwards.

More countries are experiencing violent conflict than at any time in nearly three decades. Record numbers of civilians are being killed or injured by explosive weapons in urban areas. Record numbers of people are on the move, displaced by violence, war or persecution. We are witnessing horrific violations of human rights and increases in nationalism, racism and xenophobia. Inequalities are increasing. It is possible for entire regions, countries and communities to find

themselves isolated from progress and left behind in terms of growth. Women and girls face discrimination of all kinds. Those are all indications that we need greater unity and courage to ease the fears of the people whom we serve, to set the world on track to a better future, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development. I hope that this high-level meeting will build greater momentum to implement the resolutions passed in 2016 towards sustaining peace.

The central message of my report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/72/707) is that we need to enhance the coherence of international efforts in support of national Governments and their people. The scale and nature of the challenge that we face call for closer strategic and operational partnerships among all key stakeholders, based on national priorities and policies. Those key stakeholders include Governments, the United Nations, other international, regional and subregional organizations, international financial institutions, civil society, women's groups, youth organizations and the private sector.

To achieve greater coherence, we are strengthening partnerships around all our efforts and at every stage along the peace continuum, from conflict prevention and resolution to peacekeeping, peacebuilding and long-term development. My High-level Advisory Board on Mediation is aimed at building on the expertise of skilled diplomats to support action for peace around the world, strengthening our relationships with regional organizations, non-governmental groups and others who are engaged in this critical activity for peace.

Last month, I launched the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, to mobilize greater support for stronger and safer United Nations peacekeeping missions. One of its important elements is strengthening relationships with all our partners and stakeholders, including the countries that generously contribute not only troops, but also police, equipment and other resources.

We aim to strengthen support to the Peacebuilding Commission, the platform that brings together partnerships to enhance coherence among all stakeholders, by revitalizing the Peacebuilding Support Office, which the reform would strengthen. We further aim to strengthen the role of the Peacebuilding Support Office's role across the United Nations system, which will increase our capacity to facilitate transition in post-conflict situations.

All those efforts are beginning to bear fruit. In Liberia, for example, the transition from the United Nations Mission in Liberia to our country team demonstrated a new level of United Nations-wide coordination and preparation. But clearly, as the President said, more remains to be done, both in countries at risk and at the United Nations. Sustaining peace will be realized only through committed, inclusive national ownership that considers the needs of the most marginalized, including women, young people, minorities and people with disabilities. Women are critically important peacebuilders and I am strongly committed to their inclusion in all peacebuilding processes. The United Nations seven-point action plan on women's participation in peacebuilding sets out measures to increase financing for gender-responsive peacebuilding, expand women's access to decision-making and improve gender-sensitive analysis and planning. Gender-related issues must remain at the forefront of this debate, and our commitment to parity is very much in line with it.

I also warmly welcome the independent progress study on youth, peace and security (see A/72/761), which will have an important role in shaping our engagement with young women and men. It is beyond time to recognize the major contribution young people can make to peace and security. I hope you will support my reforms in this area aimed at putting young people in charge and taking full advantage of their knowledge, ideas and initiatives.

Above all, sustainable, inclusive development, deeply rooted in respect for all human rights—economic, social, cultural, civil and political—is the world's best preventive tool against violent conflict and instability. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is our common blueprint for a more peaceful, stable, resilient group of societies. Sustainable development is an end in itself. But it also makes a critical contribution to preventing conflict. Investing in sustained peace means investing in basic services, bringing humanitarian and development agencies together, building effective and accountable institutions, protecting human rights, promoting social cohesion and diversity and moving to sustainable energy. Quality education, decent jobs and training for young people are fundamental. We need a holistic approach that prioritizes prevention and addresses the root causes of conflict by integrating peace, sustainable development and human rights.

(spoke in French)

My report contains proposals for more effective and efficient United Nations system-wide support for Member States through reform of the development, management, and peace and security sectors. I am determined to prepare the United Nations for the world of tomorrow. For that, its financing is an essential aspect. If no progress is made with regard to the financing of peacebuilding activities, the efforts we have made to save lives, stabilize the situation in countries in crisis, relieve suffering and protect vulnerable people are likely to be in vain.

Over the past decade, the international community has spent \$233 billion on humanitarian response, peacekeeping and refugee reception. We need to invest much more in prevention, because it is efficient and economical and, most importantly, because it saves lives.

The Peacebuilding Fund has already demonstrated its ability to assist national partners; support the transition to peace and stability; enhance coherence by distributing resources through more than 25 United Nations agencies, Governments and other partners and align its objectives with those of the international financial institutions and other actors with a remarkable multiplier effect. The Fund is responsive and can react quickly to an impending crisis. It acts as a catalyst and can mobilize funds from other sources. It funds projects that no one else is willing to invest in and promotes diversity and inclusion, as many of its programmes support women and young people. I ask again that the Fund's resources be increased to \$500 million a year.

In my report, I propose several ways to increase, restructure and prioritize funding for peacebuilding activities through voluntary, regular and innovative funding. I hope that States will give these proposals the attention they deserve. In my peace and security reforms, I also propose increasing the number of permanent posts in the Peacebuilding Support Office by 50 per cent, which can be done without incurring additional costs, thanks to the savings produced by the reform's efficiency gains. The strengthening of the Peacebuilding Support Office proposed in the reform and the increase in the resources allocated to the Peacebuilding Fund must be the link between our work for peace and security and all our other activities, through the sharing of tools and methods and the strengthening of partnerships.

(spoke in English)

I am encouraged that at a time of discord and divisions, Member States have come together around the crucial endeavour of peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Tomorrow I will address the Security Council on the same issue. We need the strong support of both the Security Council and the Assembly to build and sustain peace across the continuum from prevention, conflict resolution and peacekeeping to peacebuilding and long-term development, as I mentioned at the beginning of my statement.

I welcome draft resolution A/72/L.49, on my report, and hope for continued discussions on strengthening the peacebuilding architecture so as to overcome fragmentation and work together effectively and coherently. I look forward to our discussions at this high-level meeting, and to our continued work together to fulfil one of the primary purposes of the United Nations: building and maintaining global peace and security.

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

Before proceeding further, and as indicated in my letter dated 13 April 2018, I would now like to consult members on inviting the following speakers to make statements: Ms. Michelle Yeoh, actress, producer and United Nations Development Programme Goodwill Ambassador; Mr. Ishmael Beah, United Nations Children's Fund Advocate for Children Affected by War; Ms. Joy Onyesoh, President of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in Nigeria; and Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth.

If there is no objection, may I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly, and without setting a precedent, to invite these speakers to make statements in this meeting?

It was so decided (decision 72/555).

The President: In accordance with the decision just taken, I now give the floor to Ms. Michelle Yeoh, actress, producer and United Nations Development Programme Goodwill Ambassador.

Ms. Yeoh (United Nations Development Programme Goodwill Ambassador): I thank you, Mr. President, for granting me the honour to address the Assembly this morning in my role as Goodwill Ambassador

for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). I thank the Secretary-General for sharing his inspiring vision.

Over the past couple of years as the UNDP Goodwill Ambassador, I have met many men, women and children who have been forced from their homes, are struggling to make ends meet and have been left behind. In many cases, their suffering was caused by violence, conflict or crisis. As the Secretary-General pointed out, more countries have experienced conflict over the past few years than at any time in the past three decades. What is more, those conflicts are becoming more drawn-out, complex and deadly as civilians are no longer only casualties but have become targets.

An estimated 65.6 million people have now been forcibly displaced from their homes, primarily due to violence and conflict. The number of refugees in the world has nearly doubled over the past decade. Adding to the tragedy and heartbreak is the fact that more than half of the world's refugees are children, many of whom have been separated from their families. If the current trend continues, by 2030 — the year by which we hope to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals — more than half of the world's poor will be living in countries affected by high levels of violence.

Violent conflict affects men and women in very different ways. Too often, women and girls fall prey to sexual and gender-based violence. They become victims of human trafficking, sexual slavery and forced marriage. For children and young people, the devastating long-term effects of suffering through violence and conflict can lead to psychological trauma and have a negative impact on their cognitive and social development. It can also put them at risk of perpetrating violence, or becoming victims of violence later in life. The human cost of war and violence is tragic, devastating and simply too high; but the financial costs, born by the affected regions and the international community, are also enormous and wide-ranging and have long-term consequences.

Many of the efforts and resources of the international community, amounting to hundreds of billions of dollars, have been dedicated to responding to crises once they have already broken out. What we should be doing instead is preventing conflict in the first place. It could save countless lives and billions of dollars. The Charter of the United Nations establishes the prevention of violent conflict as the overriding

objective of the United Nations, with the aim of saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Conflict prevention is our mandate, and we need to be able to fulfil it. Rebalancing the United Nations focus from reaction to prevention is at the heart of the sustaining peace agenda.

I thank the Secretary-General for declaring prevention to be the priority of the United Nations. That includes not just the prevention of violent conflict, for which the concept of sustaining peace is critical, but also the prevention of crises and human suffering, including through actions such as combating climate change and ensuring disaster preparedness. And we must not forget the empowerment of women. The resolutions on sustaining peace place great emphasis on conflict prevention. They also underline the importance of inclusion and the essential role that women play in the process. Inclusivity means staying true to the 2030 Agenda's pledge to leave no one behind. Inclusive and sustained peacebuilding means the full participation of women in society, without which neither peace nor prosperity can be assured over the long term.

Women's empowerment transforms our communities and makes peace more sustainable. Evidence shows that peacebuilding interventions are more effective if they are directly tied to promoting gender equality. What is more, women should be active agents in peace negotiations and peacebuilding, not merely the beneficiaries of services of protection. The inclusion of women and women's groups in conflict-resolution and peacebuilding processes measurably strengthens protection efforts, deepens the effectiveness of peacebuilding and helps to ensure the sustainability of peace accords.

UNDP, the United Nations agency I work most closely with, knows from experience that this is the most effective approach. Supporting the capacity of countries to prevent violent conflict, sustain peace and include women in the process is a major part of UNDP's work. For example, in Malawi, UNDP and the United Nations Department of Political Affairs supported the Government in establishing a national peace architecture that enables women and youth to act as national conflict mediators. Gender equality contributes to durable peace and sustainable development. Systematic disparities between women and men in the economic, social and political sectors stand in the way of the sustainable development and durable peace.

Women should be engaged in all spheres of social life, and their priorities must inform the agenda for sustainable development, conflict prevention, early recovery from crisis, lasting peace and resilience. To make that a reality, the necessary funds and resources must be allocated to advance gender equality and women's empowerment, especially in peacebuilding contexts. Promoting both the empowerment of women and the maintenance of peace and inclusive societies are key elements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

UNDP and other United Nations agencies have made women's empowerment and sustainable development the centrepiece of their efforts to help support and promote peaceful, just and inclusive societies. United Nations agencies have been undertaking such prevention-focused initiatives in many parts of the world. For instance, thanks to its field presence in nearly 170 countries and the breadth of its technical expertise, UNDP is able to provide tailored and integrated support to nations and their leadership in many areas, including the rule of law, access to justice, human rights, elections, constitutional processes, local governance, sustainable livelihoods and climate adaptation.

The fundamental premise of the recently published United Nations and World Bank joint report, entitled *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, is that we simply cannot achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals without addressing and preventing conflict. In fact, the Sustainable Development Goals provide a blueprint to help eliminate the root causes of violence and unrest. Building and sustaining peace are at the very core of the United Nations. If we are to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, sustainable development will be imperative, but development is neither achievable nor sustainable in the absence of peace. It is critical that we work in concert towards attaining both sustainable peace and sustainable development.

As we know, the States Members of the United Nations carry the key responsibility for achieving and sustaining peace. Realizing lasting peace is a long-term endeavour that involves building resilient institutions, securing economic transformation and addressing inequalities and grievances that can lead to conflict. We must recognize that this process can take years, and even decades. We must therefore give the United Nations system the time, space and resources to pursue long-term strategies that yield lasting results. Let us

focus this high-level meeting on how we can work together to strengthen the ability of the United Nations to deliver on its mandate to eradicate the root causes of conflict, prevent the escalation of violence, bring about lasting peace and leave no one behind.

The President: I thank Ms. Yeoh for her statement.

In accordance with the decision just taken, I now give the floor to Mr. Ishmael Beah, United Nations International Children's Fund Advocate for Children Affected by War.

Mr. Beah (UNICEF Advocate for Children Affected by War): I thank you, Mr. President, and the Secretary-General for convening this timely and much-needed gathering to evaluate the work of the United Nations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. I would also like to thank the rest of those present: Ambassadors and representatives of various nations, United Nations bodies, non-governmental organizations, youth groups and civil society — all who do the vital work of safeguarding and preserving humankind.

Perhaps one of the most important values and an essential trait of the United Nations is that it remains the only place in the world where we can all gather to discuss the importance of being of service to humankind and the world. The world needs the Organization and such gatherings more than ever, and our discussions must be in the spirit of safeguarding the very sacrosanct nature of human life everywhere.

My capacity as a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador for children affected by war and conflict tasks me with advocating on behalf of the world's most vulnerable members and its future — children. If we embark on peacebuilding without them — without serious, intelligent and honest thinking about them and without shaping a world that not only protects them but makes them active citizens of their nations, with the moral and ethical standards that enable them to be decent human beings — we have failed, and all our efforts here today will not yield a future to be proud of.

With that in mind, it is no surprise how worrying and disturbing it is to think about the current state of our world — a world in which children continue to live in myriad conflicts and are under attack on a shocking scale, with parties to conflicts blatantly disregarding international law, policies, resolutions and even national laws regarding the protection of the most vulnerable members of our society.

From Syria to South Sudan, Myanmar to Yemen, Nigeria and so on, children are being targeted and exposed to attacks and brutal violence in their homes, schools and playgrounds. As those attacks continue year after year, we cannot become numb. Those levels of brutality cannot become the new normal. Children have become front-line targets and are used as human shields, killed, maimed and recruited to fight. Rape, forced marriages, abductions and enslavement have become standard tactics in conflict. Millions more children are paying an indirect price for such conflict and are suffering from malnutrition, disease and trauma as basic services, including access to food, water, sanitation and health care, are denied, damaged or destroyed in the fighting. In a good number of cases, those basic necessities are never met or were not available to begin with.

Amid the horrors that children living in conflict are exposed to are moments of hope, such as the release last week of 200 children from armed groups in South Sudan. But much more needs to be done. UNICEF and other organizations are working to protect and provide for children living in war, and we call on all the parties to conflicts and all with influence over them to end violations against children. That call has been made time and time again since I was a child and living through war myself.

We have come a long way since the Graça Machel report (see A/51/306), which led to the creation of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the adoption of optional protocols, the Paris and Capetown Principles and many Security Council resolutions. There is no shortage of important and noble ideas and policies. However, there remains a lack of commitment on the part of nations to fully implementing those wonderful ideas on paper, most of which are not legally binding documents, but rather were created on the understanding that, as a world, we agree that we cannot sink below a certain threshold of human dignity. Nowadays, I am not certain whether that is true.

United Nations University recently issued a study, entitled *Cradled by Conflict: Child Involvement with Armed Groups in Contemporary Conflict*, commissioned by various United Nations agencies, with the participation of civil society in countries where the research was carried out on the ground. It focuses particularly on the concepts of radicalization and deradicalization in three ongoing conflicts in

the world, with case studies on Syria, Iraq, Mali and Nigeria and research from other nations. It is a study that I recommend we all read to understand our purpose here today.

Its argument is that the terrorist and extremist groups that pose new security threats in the world, and particularly the children who find themselves in such groups during demobilization, are being perceived and treated differently by States. Some children face trial instead of rehabilitation. They face punitive measures that are very direct violations of the principles of international law and most of the resolutions that we adopt. The reality that I want to highlight is explained in the research.

“Association with groups determined to be ‘terrorist’ or ‘violent extremist’ is increasingly criminalized, and children caught up in these determinations face detention, prosecution and, sometimes, abuse. Some States are prosecuting juveniles under adult terrorism legislation, and some are ‘lowering the age of criminal responsibility, allowing courts to prosecute children as young as 15’. In Iraq, authorities are holding ‘more than 1,400 foreign women and their children who surrendered with ISIS fighters in late August 2017’ on questionable legal bases; in Kurdistan, boys are being detained and tortured on suspicion of having joined ISIS; and in Syria, boys leaving Raqqa are being arrested and ‘detained, abused and stigmatized for perceived affiliations’. The Nigerian Government is currently thought to be detaining thousands of children (as well as adults) who it fears are associated with Boko Haram. Many of the detained have been encountered during military operations, but others — including large numbers of children — appear to have been arrested arbitrarily as they fled from Boko Haram. These detainees, without charges or access to family and lawyers, are kept in deplorable conditions and appear to be held in violation of Nigerian and international law. Outside conflict contexts, states are also amending criminal laws and administrative procedures to bolster existing counter-terrorism powers. In France, as part of an effort to strengthen the State’s counter-terrorism posture, the maximum period of pretrial detention was increased to three years for children aged 16 and older. Terrorism offences have become so broad that loose affiliation, preparatory or ancillary acts and material support

are increasingly covered, which makes children much more likely to be caught in the net, given that children do not generally play the roles of ordering, commanding or planning terrorist activities.

“Some States are using a child’s (or adult’s) suspected or demonstrated association with armed groups as grounds for barring their re-entry into the country and/or stripping their citizenship. Some states have implemented administrative measures to discourage people from returning from conflict zones, and have gone so far as to refuse to let children back in their countries after suspected involvement with an armed group. For example, the United Kingdom Home Secretary announced that the Government has the power to revoke British citizenship if doing so is in the public’s interest.”

There are already significant underlying problems in societies that are exacerbated by the presence of jihadists or radical groups. The way forward is to attend to those problems rather than holding children accountable for it all. There must be an exception when it comes to what we agree on to protect children, and that must always be in the best interests of the child.

If we leave here today — and we have to be honest with each other — to build peace in the world, we have to make sure that, in so doing, we do not violate the very principles or fundamental rights of human dignity as we move forward. We all understand that there is a need for security in the world and what must be done to attain that, but as we do so, let us not forget our humanity in that process.

The President: I thank Mr. Beah for his statement.

In accordance with the decision just taken, I now give the floor to Ms. Joy Onyesoh, President of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom in Nigeria.

Ms. Onyesoh (Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom): I thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the honour of addressing the General Assembly this morning.

In my capacity as the President of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom in Nigeria, I have had the opportunity to work at multiple levels. In one of my visits to an internally displaced persons camp in a community in Borno state, in north-eastern Nigeria, I met a lady whom I will call Amina. Amina recounted her story of the conflict that pervades north-

eastern Nigeria. As she fled her community, which had been attacked by Boko Haram, she had with her three children: a young child of seven months, a daughter of ten and a son of four. As they fled the attack, she strapped her baby daughter onto her back and asked her oldest daughter to take care of her younger son, and they ran. In the course of running, she did not know when the child she had strapped onto her back fell off. Her oldest daughter did not know when she lost hold of her younger brother. That is one of the realities of the human cost of conflict.

In talking about sustaining peace, we should be aware that we need a multi-pronged, integrated approach that involves putting local women's voices and rights at its centre and a shift from crisis response to more proactive conflict prevention. That requires reorienting work around amplifying local women's meaningful participation and analysing root causes in order to achieve peace. An effective, gendered conflict analysis involves a participatory approach that engages and utilizes the experience of diverse stakeholders. The process should aim to exchange structural power for gender equality and women's human rights.

Amina is just one of the thousands of women whom we see in various countries, from Nigeria to Cameroon, and from the Niger to Chad and Columbia. They are the faces and reality of armed conflict. If the United Nations and the international community are to effectively support the participation of and curb overt risk to marginalized communities, therefore, it is critical to ensure a holistic approach to prevention that strengthens women's human rights and reduces armed and violent conflict, including by addressing violent masculinity and disarmament.

A commitment to gendered conflict analysis must prioritize increased engagement with civil society as a key stakeholder, driving measures aimed at ensuring its substantive participation. That should go beyond the tokenism of numbers to concrete engagement and the development of targeted interventions that are contextually relevant and appropriate. It also requires creating an enabling environment for female civil society that ensures access to justice and increases core ongoing and sustained funding and political support for the work that women are doing on the ground.

I commend the increase in the number of civil-society speakers who addressed the Security Council last year. The Security Council mission to the Lake

Chad basin, which prioritized early meetings with civil society and the increased engagement of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict with civil society, was really very commendable.

On my flight to New York from Nigeria, I had the opportunity to watch an American-produced movie, *Hidden Figures*. The movie narrates and visualizes the different realities of three female United States National Air and Space Administration mathematicians, portrayed by Octavia Spencer, Janelle Monáe and Taraji Henson, who transcend gender and race lines to help launch an astronaut, portrayed by Glen Powell, into outer space. One thing that struck me about the movie is the extent to which women are hidden figures in conflict prevention, conflict transformation and peacebuilding processes. We keep talking about women being at the centre of sustainable peace, but how do we implement those strategies and words that we have repeated for so long on the ground?

We live and work within structures that persistently exclude, discriminate against and stereotype women. The talk we hear does not match the actions being taken on the ground. As female activists, we will keep pushing and advocating for an integrated approach that puts the rights and perspectives of women at the centre of sustaining peace. The women and peace and security agenda is one of the most recognized at the United Nations, and yet funding for gender equality and the building of women's movements remains inadequate.

Between 2012 and 2013, only 2 per cent of peace and security aid for fragile States targeted gender equality. Between 2010 and 2015, the financial support allocated by major donor countries to promoting gender equality dropped by more than 50 per cent. Of the approximately 74 existing national action plans on women and peace and security, only 23 per cent include an allocated budget for implementation. We continue to witness gender-blind national budgets that have resulted in cuts in public health and social service-related expenditure, contributing to the feminization of poverty and further deepening gender inequality.

As part of the more than 100 years of action by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom for an integrated approach to peace and security, we call for action to put women's participation and rights at the centre of conflict prevention on sustaining peace. In particular, we call for a gendered conflict analysis

across the United Nations system that is based on the perspectives of local women and on partnerships that prioritize women in civil society as key stakeholders, with financing that substantially scales up funding for gender equality, including core ongoing support for women in civil society. Finally, sustaining peace requires a consistent and committed political will to move out of our comfort zones and challenge the dominant narratives on gender, conflict analysis and power.

As we continue our dialogue as part of the high-level meeting, I will leave the following big question for us to reflect on. Beyond the rhetoric, are we committed to taking the bold steps that will ensure an inclusive, accountable and demilitarized approach to sustaining peace? That is a question that we need to ask ourselves as a collective. The United Nations system is a beacon of hope for men and women alike, and we should keep that hope and its flame burning.

The President: I thank Ms. Onyesoh for her statement.

In accordance with the decision just taken, I now give the floor to Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth.

Ms. Wickramanayake (Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth): What if I said that conflict was good? "Conflict is not bad; in fact, it is good", 25-year-old Mohammed told me as we sat inside a temporary shelter in a camp for internally displaced persons in Baghdad. The camp was overpopulated with displaced Iraqis who had come from Mosul last August, and all had lost their homes, property, education or loved ones during their dreadful journey escaping Da'esh.

"How can someone who lost everything to a conflict say that conflict is not bad?" I asked him in surprise. Mohammed went on.

"Over time, the term 'conflict' has received a negative connotation. I beg to differ. The existence of conflict means that there is diversity, that there are differences of opinions and that the status quo is being challenged, all of which are important for the growth of human civilization. But what truly decides if a conflict is good or bad is the way that we choose to deal with it and resolve it. The decision to use non-violence over violence, dialogue over arrogance and compromise over intransigence will decide how conflicts are written in the history books. We have grown up in an age of

unfathomable conflict, violence and unprecedented forced displacement. If any generation knows the value of peace, it is ours. It is therefore our responsibility, as a generation, not to repeat the mistakes of past generations. There will always be conflicts, but our generation will choose to resolve them in peace."

I could not agree with Mohammed more. The complex nature of sustaining peace requires us to tap into the potential and creativity of young people, the largest generation in the history of the world. An estimated 408 million young people live in settings affected by armed conflict and violence. Yesterday I had the privilege to brief the Security Council on youth, peace and security (see S/PV.8241). At the heart of the debate were discussions on the contributions of young women and men to conflict prevention, humanitarian relief, peace negotiations and durable peace. There was a resounding call to support young people who work on peace and stability in their communities, often with very little support, funding or visibility and sometimes under direct threat.

I encourage everyone to read the independent progress study on youth, peace and security (see A/72/761), which contains the unfiltered views and aspirations of more than 4,000 young people from across the world. It gives us unique insights into how young people see and experience the world we live in, their hopes for peace and security, and their demands towards Governments and the multilateral system.

According to the progress study on youth, peace and security, and illustrated over and over in my interactions with young people on the ground, there are two key issues that we need to address immediately. The first is the growing mistrust of young generations for formal political institutions, and the second is the exclusion of young people from meaningful participation in civic, political and economic life.

Supporting youth participation mechanisms, such as youth councils, youth-led organizations and networks, and including young people in electoral processes, political party structures, formal peace processes and decision-making bodies at the local, national and international levels, is key to durable peace. As I always like to say, meaningful youth participation is prevention. I am confident that this high-level meeting will emphasize concrete actions that can address the mistrust that young people have

so vehemently expressed and the structural injustices that they face, which prevent them from realizing their true potential.

For too long, young people have been calling on the United Nations to go beyond addressing the immediate needs of war-torn countries to focusing on sustaining peace. We need the United Nations to be proactive, not reactive. That is why we need to build on the youth, peace and security agenda mandated by Security Council resolution 2250 (2015). It lies at the intersection of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the women and peace and security agenda and the human rights framework, and is a core contribution to the prevention of conflict and violence. The agenda was born to ensure that young people are called on not only when it is time to wave flags, when their votes are needed, or to go to war, but that they are also listened to and taken seriously when they want to shape their present and future.

Yesterday, on behalf of young people, I asked the Security Council to further strengthen the youth, peace and security agenda and open up regular discussions on the role of youth in sustaining peace. Today, I issue the same call to members of the General Assembly. The General Assembly is composed of representatives of every Member State; with its enormous reach it can make a huge difference to the current generation of young people. In doing so, those young people will open doors for future generations to come. Youth-led peacebuilding can benefit from members' political, institutional and, most importantly, financial support. That is why I call on them now to ensure that youth rights are central to sustaining peace.

I have two brief recommendations for consideration at the interactive dialogues today and tomorrow.

First, sustainable financing for peace should entail a significant funding increase for the peacebuilding work that is led by young people. Earlier this morning, the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General called for an increase in the Peacebuilding Fund's resources. Allow me to take that call a step further and invite members of the General Assembly to consider adequately financing the youth instrument of the Peacebuilding Fund in order to offer tangible support to young peacebuilders on the ground. Those young people have a unique ability to access remote communities and marginalized stakeholders. They need

accessible funding streams and support to strengthen their organizations.

Secondly, Member States must see young people as their partners in the sustaining peace agenda and not as a footnote to be dealt with in their policies or problems. Transforming the United Nations work on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, especially in the field, requires making sure that Governments and United Nations country teams are equipped with the know-how and structures to engage young people as the productive and positive actors they are. Our new approach to peace must ensure that young people are integrated into all sequence stages of the sustaining peace agenda, from planning to implementation, from its review to ensuring durability.

Uninformed discussions and mainstream media highlight young people as a threat to peace and security, but I have had the unique privilege of meeting young peacebuilders on the ground. I met with a youth group in Iraq that is working with young people from diverse backgrounds, religions and ethnicities to train one another to resolve conflicts through dialogue and negotiation. In Somalia, I met young people who formed an emergency response group to the Mogadishu terror attacks last year. In Colombia, I met with young people who organized a peace camp and who, through silent protest, applied pressure on their Government until a new peace deal was reached. Here in the United States, I watched young people march for their lives.

That is the potential and commitment that young people offer to Member States as policymakers. We can choose to ignore that call and we can choose to exclude that potential. However, that would mean that 20 years from now, I would sit in this Hall and would have to listen to another young person calling for youth empowerment and demanding her rights, and we would still be at the same point in history, without having moved an inch forward. I ask members of the General Assembly to please remember that a generation is counting on them to make the right decisions.

The President: I thank Ms. Wickramanayake for her statement.

We have heard the last speaker for the opening segment of the high-level meeting.

We shall now begin the high-level segment, to be followed by the plenary debate.

I would like to remind members that action on draft resolution A/72/L.49 will be taken after we exhaust the list of speakers for the plenary debate.

The Assembly will now hear an address by His Majesty King Philippe, King of the Belgians.

King Philippe (*spoke in French*): Achieving sustainable peace in the world — is that not our shared ambition? Peace is more necessary than ever, but also more than ever within reach. It is not a utopia. We have to believe in it and act accordingly. The fact that the number of major violent conflicts has tripled since 2010 compels us to react. Hundreds of thousands of women, men and children are dying, being forcibly displaced or going into exile to survive. Economies are being destroyed. Countries are struggling to rebuild. Realizing that compels us to react with even more determination, given that the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted only two years ago, is at risk in many countries because of internal conflicts.

In the course of its history at the heart of Europe, Belgium has lived through major armed conflicts. My country committed fully to the United Nations and to European construction, because both projects support lasting peace and are based on dialogue, solidarity and respect for others. Europe was built on extensive reconciliation and gradual rapprochement. For a country like mine, which has for centuries been a land of battlefields, being home to the capital of a peaceful Europe is not just a historical victory; above all, it is the result of sustained effort. Europe is an exciting project, which we must continue building and improving. It requires constant vigilance and a real force of conviction. The lasting peace we aspire to is more than the absence of war, and even more than the creation of institutions. It is the implementation of a framework that upholds human dignity.

This lasting peace is also what the Charter of the United Nations advocates when it invites us “to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace”. As its Preamble states, the Charter is based on “the dignity and worth of the human person”. Our shared ambition is to create a society where nobody is humiliated and nobody is left behind — a society that enables all of us to have confidence in ourselves and express our talents. The dignity of a society is measured by its ability to take care of the weakest and the most fragile within it.

That is why Belgium firmly supports the guidance of the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly to make prevention of violence central to our Organization. The 2030 Agenda is an instrument of prevention, and therefore of development. Reducing poverty, inequality and discrimination, ensuring the protection of and respect for human rights, recognizing the equality of women in society, combating environmental degradation and establishing resilient institutions that are able to detect and manage tension are all actions that will enable us to tackle the root causes of conflicts. In our societies, stimulated, but also made more vulnerable by new technologies, increased vigilance is needed. And in a world with more fuzzy borders, that vigilance must be assumed by every one of us. Over the years, our Organization has developed effective instruments for risk detection and mediation. Let us use them fully, together with regional partners. Joining forces in order to better achieve our goals, does not imply giving up sovereignty, but rather fully exercising it.

Our Organization has also gained a great deal of experience in peacebuilding. We understand the importance of determined national leaders and of restoring inclusive and representative institutions that serve their people in preventing States emerging from conflict from plunging back into violence. The people must recognize themselves in these institutions and trust them. Lasting peace can only take root if it involves the whole society, including women and young people, who in many countries represent a growing share of the population. The common work of all these partners and the adoption of the process lays a solid basis for lasting peace.

While peace is forged through action, it takes hold through time. Human relationships are not decreed, they are patiently built or rebuilt based on trust. Conflicts and wars cause wounds so deep that the end of hostilities is only the beginning of a long journey. When addressing the Israeli Knesset in 1977, the late Egyptian President Anwar El-Sadat perfectly highlighted the importance of reconfiguring the relationships between parties. He said,

“[T]here remained another wall. This wall constitutes a psychological barrier between us, a barrier of suspicion, of rejection, of fear of deception ... a barrier of cautious and erroneous interpretations of every event and statement... Today ... I ask you — why do we not stretch out our

hands with faith and sincerity so that together we might destroy this barrier?"

Time is needed to heal the wounds caused by humiliation and violence. Time is needed to demobilize, disarm and reintegrate. Time is needed to judge and punish. Time is needed to remember and for victims of humiliations to find in themselves the strength to stretch out their hand anew. Aware of the time necessary to achieve this work, our common duty, in every crisis, is to build the framework which makes lasting peace possible, without delay.

The failure of our Organization in recent years to prevent wars or bring them to a rapid conclusion should not overshadow the success that has been achieved, thanks not only to the determination of the international community when it has proved itself capable of acting for the common good, but also to the resolve of the parties involved and the leaders concerned.

Nevertheless, the scale, complexity and duration of many ongoing conflicts must encourage us to find other means that will ultimately bring us closer to the sustainable peace that is the subject of our discussion today. This is not an easy task, but it depends first and foremost on our faith in humankind and our loyalty to the Charter of the United Nations, to which we remain committed. Belgium intends to wholeheartedly honour that commitment and to pursue this ambition with determination.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia.

President Santos Calderón (*spoke in Spanish*): Achieving sustainable and lasting peace and closing the door permanently on a conflict that has been embedded in our society for more than five decades is the greatest challenge a nation can face. Just as it is more difficult to make peace than to wage war, it is more difficult to build peace than to silence the guns. That is the most sublime and significant challenge that any single nation must overcome and the only way in which we will be able to enjoy development, prosperity and understanding. In order to attain it, we had to lay the right foundations from the beginning. It was not enough to simply put an end to the conflict; we had to turn peace into a historic opportunity to overcome the major problems left unresolved by the war.

The first and undoubtedly most complex throughout all the negotiations was the tension between peace and justice. In order to find the right balance, our compass and our course placed the victims and their rights at the centre of our discussion and conflict resolution. We turned to the concept of transitional justice. We established more than a tribunal; it is a true system of truth, justice, reparation and non-recurrence. It was the first time in history where both parties agreed on a justice system before adhering to it, in line with the Rome Statute. This special justice is responsible for prosecuting and punishing those who are ultimately responsible for the most serious crimes. It demands the whole truth, reparations for the victims and a commitment to non-recurrence. It also imposes sanctions within the concept of restorative justice.

The chief desire of many victims, even more than punishing those responsible, is to know the truth about what happened to their loved ones. To respond to that, we established the Commission on Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition, which is specifically tasked with establishing the truth of what happened in the conflict. There is no more pressing need than the search for the truth and knowing what happened. What happened to the people who disappeared during the conflict? It is for them that, as part of the transitional justice system, we created a special unit for searching for persons deemed missing. We managed to ensure that these three elements were up and running in less than a year and a half.

The success of such efforts is essential to achieving a stable and lasting peace, but we did not wait for the peace accord to honour the victims and their rights. Seven years ago, even before beginning peace negotiations, we enacted a historic law on victims and land restitution to begin repairing their damages and guaranteeing their rights. Former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was present at its proclamation.

Today, Colombia has a national system for treating and making reparations to victims that is unparalleled in the world. We have already provided reparations to 800,000 victims, an unprecedented number, but we still have a long way to go. We are returning land to those who lost it as a result of the violence. Some 300,000 hectares of land have already been returned to their legitimate owners, and another 500,000 are awaiting a judicial ruling. Just as recognizing and defending the rights of victims is key to building peace, it is equally

important to preventing more people from falling victim to such violations.

In that respect, once the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace was signed, the priority was to achieve the effective and rapid disarmament and demobilization of combatants. In Colombia, we achieved this with the invaluable support of the Security Council. It has been a process in which the greatest possible number of weapons per combatant have been surrendered in the shortest time. Just eight months after the signing of the Agreement, former combatants are beginning their reintegration process.

Colombia has vast experience in this area, and we have learned from it. We have learned to formulate productive endeavours and real-life projects. It is not easy, and simply having economic resources is not enough. It is necessary to educate and train people and have sustainable projects, or reintegration is doomed to failure and fuels further risks of violence, which we will not allow to happen.

A crucial component of the solution to an internal armed conflict was opening the doors of democracy to former combatants. The guerrilla faction that devastated our country for decades is now a legal political party that participates in elections and seeks to win the favour of citizens with words, not arms.

We are also clearing the Colombian countryside of the hidden and inhumane weapons that are anti-personnel mines. Of more than 670 contaminated municipalities, 225 are now free of suspected landmines, and we are currently taking action in another 230. Farmers, soldiers, ex-combatants and the international community are working together to completely rid our country of that covert enemy by 2022.

In Colombia, the scourge of drug trafficking has fuelled conflict, and conflict has made it difficult to effectively combat drug trafficking. That is why we have included the issue of drugs on the agenda for negotiation. Without the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo, we now have the opportunity to resolve the problem of coca production in a structural way for the first time. This has already begun in the form of voluntary substitution and forced eradication programmes. At the same time, our teams are continuing to fight on the front line against the other links in the chain, with unprecedented results in the volume of drugs seized, for example.

However, as I said two years ago at the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem (see A/S-30/PV.5), the war that the world declared on drugs here at the United Nations more than 40 years ago has not been won. The strategies based exclusively on their prohibition and repression have generated only more deaths, more prisoners and more dangerous criminal organizations.

Today, drug trafficking remains our main threat to peace. Transnational cartels kill social leaders in my country who are committed to crop substitution. The struggle to gain control of the business — which will continue to be a business as long as demand exists — has caused deaths and more violence in Colombia and in the region, as we saw in Ecuador just a week ago. If we want to end the litany of deaths and social destruction left behind by drug trafficking and protect peace in Colombia, the entire region and around the world, we must change our global strategy for overcoming the drug problem.

I would once again like to reiterate my urgent appeal to the world to open its eyes. We must recognize that, if we continue doing the same thing, we will continue to have the same results: more prisoners, more deaths and more mafias with more power. Jailing consumers and farmers does not work. Let us change our approach under the principle of shared responsibility. Let us work together to reduce demand and punish the transnational criminal organizations that profit from this business and sow trails of pain and death in their wake.

Building peace is like building a cathedral — it is a lengthy and complex process that takes time, brick by brick. We are only just beginning, but we can already see results. Last year was the most peaceful in Colombia's recent history, and we saw our lowest homicide rate of the past 42 years. We have encountered difficulties, of course, but we are moving forward. The Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, chosen by both parties to oversee the process, has highlighted the Colombian peace accord as one of the best and most comprehensive in the world. According to the Institute's consideration of the 558 points of the agreement, the implementation of 238 of them has begun, which corresponds to 43 per cent of the total.

Immense challenges lie ahead, the most complex of which involves entrenching the State in every corner of the country and generating opportunities

for long-term economic and social development, in which sustainable peace also has a part to play. On this front, we did not wait to sign the peace accord to start changing the fundamental conditions necessary to make it sustainable. In the past almost eight years, we have reduced poverty, made education the main priority of our budget, and established health care as a fundamental right for all Colombians. Having signed the Peace Agreement, we set up an implementation framework plan with a 15-year horizon that serves as our road map.

We have identified 500 indicators for the next 15 years. By the end of this year, we will have achieved 80 of them. We have so far met 61 per cent of these goals and we intend to accelerate our pace to reach 100 per cent. In the next 15 years, we have planned more than 129 billion pesos' worth of investments, or approximately \$40 billion, to bring health care, education, housing, infrastructure and opportunities to the regions that suffered most as a result of the conflict. The actions and support of the international community will be just as crucial in the future as they have been until now, and for which we are truly grateful.

We had the honour of hosting Secretary-General Guterres in our country in January and the President of the General Assembly in March. They were able to witness first-hand the advances we have made and the challenges we face. We thank them wholeheartedly for their support and their presence.

This is the very essence of the concept of sustainable peace that brings us together today — an approach that includes an end to violence, reconciliation among people and with the environment, and a firm commitment to sustainable development. It is a peace that, as in the case of Colombia, empowers communities, especially women and the indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities that suffered most from the hardships of the conflict. In Colombia, we have shown that putting an end to the highly complex conflicts and finding paths to understanding is possible. It is possible to heal wounds that are the result of decades of confrontation.

We are sharing our story with pride and hope for a better future, not only for ourselves but for all of humankind. We are sharing our story in the hope that it may prove useful in many other areas of our planet that still suffer the hardships of war, and we remain convinced that putting an end to armed conflicts, even the most complex and protracted, is possible. These are not just

words or good intentions; the facts are there for all to see. In Colombia, with the support of the international community, we made the impossible possible.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Michael Higgins, President of Ireland.

President Higgins: On behalf of the people of Ireland, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly, for convening this meeting, provoking as it does some fundamental questions about our very existence as the United Nations.

Is it not a profound condemnation of what we have made of the legacies of our cultures, reason, ethics and belief systems that we, in these first decades of the twenty-first century, live in a world that is home to so much war — wars for which the preparation absorbs the finest minds in science and technology, and in which civilians are more at risk than ever before, subject to atrocities, famine and starvation and, to an unprecedented degree, displacement?

Surely it is an affront to humankind that, in these first decades of the twenty-first century, with all its promise, at a time when we have the capacity to abolish all forms of human poverty, we share a planet with hundreds of millions who are deprived of their most fundamental rights and of a dignified existence even as we speak here today? Why have we resorted, I ask, to the politics of fear, rather than to the promise of the politics of possibility? Is it not nothing less than a moral outrage, too, that our boundless capacity for creativity and innovation and the fruits of new science and technology are turned not to the promotion and preservation of peace but to the pursuit and prosecution of war?

The President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General have invited all of us to gather here over these two days to reflect on the achievement of five specific objectives, each of which has been the subject of many debates, not only within the Assembly and the Security Council but in civic forums throughout the world. These objectives, in their scale and their ambition, are a confirmation that while building and sustaining peace is an enormous task, it is one that we must achieve together as a community of nations if we are to live up to the basic ideals of the United Nations and give the ring of authenticity to our words as public figures once again.

Ireland, the country I represent, knows from its own peace process, which continues to this day, that peace does not come without engaging with the experience of the other and that it remains a process to be nurtured. The Belfast Agreement, signed on Good Friday 20 years ago, demonstrates some of those conditions that you, Mr. President, have identified as essential to successful peacebuilding — direct engagement by the Governments involved in the negotiations; sustained financing for peacebuilding activities; strong support from the European Union and generous and patient backing from other Members of the United Nations, particularly those with a connection to Ireland, such as the United States. Nor could our peace have been achieved without the steady and courageous activism of those civic organizations campaigning for a more just and peaceful society, many of which were led by the women of Ireland, north and south.

Yet while we celebrate the end of violence in Ireland, as well as the lives saved and the futures transformed, we are reminded daily of the challenges of sustaining peace. I therefore did not look in the abstract at any of the objectives you have set for our meeting for these two days, Mr. President. The Secretary-General's report (A/72/707) outlines an ambitious plan of action and inclusion, particularly of gender and youth, for the agencies of the United Nations. But let us make no mistake — the Secretary-General is very clear that sustaining peace is the responsibility of all of us as Member States. Let us again recall the words of the founding Charter of the Organization:

“We the peoples of the United Nations, determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind”.

Through these words, as Members we all assumed a most profound political and moral responsibility not only to the citizens of our own nations, but to the peoples of other nations. We must have the courage now to ask how we have come to lose this discourse of peace. What are the inevitabilities of the connection between economy, ecology and society that serve as obstacles to bringing a new paradigm of sustained peace and development into being?

The Secretary-General and the agencies of the United Nations will be successful in pursuing our common objective of sustaining peace only if we, the Member States, recommit to those founding principles

to which we dedicated ourselves so many years ago. We must allow the new thinking and the new paradigms of critical thought to emerge.

As the Assembly recognized two years ago, the outbreak and recurrence of conflict can be prevented only by addressing its root causes. This demands political imagination and financial commitment, which must be met with answerable determination on the part of Member States. Investing in conflict prevention is, of course, a matter not only of moral duty, but also of financial prudence. I am aware that many Member States have been hesitant to commit resources to conflict prevention.

Yet as the Secretary-General has so often reminded us since he assumed office, sufficient and effective investment in building peace will not only save lives but will open all the possibilities and opportunities for development and human flourishing that peace brings. These are indeed necessary if we are to accomplish the goals of that most remarkable recognition of our shared global responsibility, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Ireland is pleased that the Secretary-General has laid down this challenge. We know that when the United Nations and its Member States work coherently across the pillars of peace and security, human rights and development, real sustained and measurable progress is possible.

Humanitarian actions must no longer be allowed to serve as sufficient responses to crises that are political in their origins. Humanitarian action is not a substitute for political dialogue and mediation, nor is the remarkable work of United Nations peacekeepers, whose service, including that of many Irish men and women over the past 60 years, I salute here today. United Nations peace support operations save countless lives, but they can only ever be a single element in a comprehensive response.

If we are to truly commit ourselves to the objective of sustaining peace, we must discard any easy route, laziness or media cynicism. For example, the young people of the world are appalled by the suggestion that what is normative here in the General Assembly does not reflect the structure of the powerful in the Security Council, where the wielders of power can prevail. That is why we are losing them.

Let us instead heed these lost hopes of all our collective past, those pleas for wisdom that were the whispers from the gallery when so many of the newly

freed States brought the hopes of their peoples and the wisdom of their struggles to the United Nations. Let us once again, in this Hall, recall the energy of that moral moment — the bravery, the critical scholarship and the hope that animated our forebears in their better moments. Let us devote ourselves to the cause of a universal peace that encompasses all the people of our shared and vulnerable planet.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Faustin-Archange Touadéra, President of the Central African Republic.

President Touadéra (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Central African Republic, I would like to greet the world leaders united here, and to particularly thank the Secretary-General for organizing this high-level meeting on peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Since 1945, the issue of peace has been central to the Charter of the United Nations and has called out to all humankind. That is why I express my support for the new shared vision that the Secretary-General intends to forge to bolster the actions undertaken by Member States to build peace and construct resilient, prosperous nations, in accordance with the commitment to leaving no one behind.

The Central African Republic wholeheartedly supports this vision. Indeed, since I took office on 30 March 2016, I have firmly enshrined peace within our constitutional legality and the shared responsibility of the Government and all national stakeholders. The necessary institutions called for in the Constitution, with the exception of the Senate, were therefore established within 12 months. The representation of women at all levels as a tool for conflict prevention and resolution, as well as peacebuilding, is also a part of this vision. On 24 November 2016, our National Assembly enacted law No. 16004, establishing gender parity in the Central African Republic, with the aim of achieving total parity by 2030.

At the political level, through a series of meetings, I have established a frank and sincere dialogue with the armed groups in order to bring them into the Republic, and, under my authority, we set up a programme for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation, security sector reform and national reconstruction. Of 14 identified groups, 12 joined the programme and their participation in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration component has

been a great success, with young people making a significant contribution.

Furthermore, the United Nations peacebuilding and development assistance framework for the Central African Republic, which assists the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan for 2017-2021, supports national priorities, including preventive diplomacy, thanks to the pivotal role played by regional and subregional organizations in the implementation of the Libreville road map and through the Panel of Facilitators of the African Initiative, which is currently analysing the demands of armed groups. I also believe that the efforts made by the Peacebuilding Commission on cross-border and regional issues should be supported and coordinated in order to facilitate close collaboration with our partners, including the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union and the World Bank.

At this pivotal moment in its history, the Central African Republic is making progress in the restoration of State authority and security, thanks to the installation of prefects and sub-prefects and the initial deployment of the Central African Armed Forces and internal security forces upon the gradual return of the territorial administration. We are seeing encouraging progress in the restoration of the rule of law in the fight against impunity, as exemplified in the recent trial of members of armed groups of all stripes before the Bangui Criminal Court. The full operationalization of the Special Criminal Court and the establishment of a truth, justice, reparation and reconciliation commission are expected shortly.

However, many challenges remain, including in the security situation. To that end, we reiterate our thanks and gratitude to the United Nations and to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) for its essential role in securing and protecting civilian populations. We reiterate our call for reinforcing MINUSCA with operational and professional troops and through the transition from peacekeeping to peace enforcement, in order to avoid undermining peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts, which is often the result of the diffuse, illogical and sometimes contradictory nature of international action.

The Central African Republic would like to be able to serve as a model of success for the efforts made by the international community.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Adama Barrow, President of the Republic of the Gambia.

President Barrow: With warm greetings from the Gambia, I thank the President of the General Assembly for my invitation to participate in this high-level meeting on the pertinent topic of peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

The United Nations was founded for the purpose of ending the scourge of war and building peace in the aftermath of the Second World War. In the light of our current geopolitical realities, the fulfilment of this mission has become even more relevant today. We have come very far, but we are still witnessing too many conflicts in too many parts of the world. In Africa, we are committed to silencing the guns on the continent by 2020. With the support of the United Nations and the international community, we can achieve this challenging objective.

As we chart a way forward in our deliberations in the next two days on how to better equip the Organization for building and sustaining peace, I call on the Assembly to take a moment to reflect on the dividends of sustained peace for our countries and the world at large. For us in the Gambia, the recognition of the urgent need for peacebuilding and sustaining peace in our restored democracy has compelled my Government, from its inception, to embark on a number of initiatives with a view to consolidating our democratic gains and achieving good governance.

Following the adoption of our new national development plan for 2018 to 2021, my Government's priorities have been geared towards economic growth, transformation and development, with an emphasis on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. In this regard, I would like to highlight some of the achievements we have attained with the assistance of our partners, whose continued support and cooperation remain unwavering.

Following our successful transition, I am happy to say that we have carried out the first phase of our security sector reform programme. The security situation in the Gambia has improved steadily, and the Government is fully committed to scaling up the programme during the next phase.

To promote economic growth, we have reduced our domestic borrowing and addressed our unsustainable debt burden. We have adopted efficient fiscal and

macroeconomic policies and strategies to those ends. Since December 2016, interest rates have been steadily declining, which is encouraging local businesses to borrow and invest without fear of high interest rates.

A critical review of the 2017 budget has led to a reduction of Government expenditures by approximately 1 per cent of our gross domestic product. My office was the first entity to receive a budget cut, of 75 per cent. The budget support agreements concluded with our development partners, such as the European Union (EU), the World Bank, the African Development Bank and many others, have given my Government renewed optimism with respect to development and ultimately economic growth.

The growing youth population has become an added priority that cannot be ignored. Youth unemployment must be addressed in ways that give young people the opportunity to realize their full potential. For that reason, my Government has launched a joint youth empowerment project with the EU, focusing on the development of skills and job creation for young people and providing opportunities for business start-ups. In an effort to administer justice and address human rights violations committed against innocent victims by the former regime, in 2017 my Government successfully concluded a nationwide consultation on establishing a truth, reconciliation and reparation commission. Truth and reconciliation should help us to heal as a nation. The commission will therefore soon commence its work.

Consolidation of the rule of law, democracy, respect for human rights and the pursuit of economic growth are major priorities of my Government. In that connection, I am happy to report that, with our dedication and commitment to good governance, my Government has successfully assured the citizenry of a Government rooted in democracy and the rule of law. The suppression of freedom of expression and undermining judicial processes and independence have been consigned to the dustbin of history.

Last, but by no means least, our laws, including the national Constitution, are being reviewed as part of the process of strengthening democracy.

With the measures that I have outlined, our overarching goal is to build and sustain the peace that we have achieved. Today, I am hopeful as I stand before the General Assembly with renewed optimism for the future of our country. We thank our neighbours and partners in the Economic Community of West African

States, the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations, in particular the Peacebuilding Commission and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, which we continue to count on for their relentless support. With zeal, confidence and optimism, we are now on a solid path to durable peace. Our experience underscores the importance of regional and international solidarity and cooperation, together with sustained preventive diplomacy, as important elements of peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

In drawing up our recently adopted national development plan, my Government took into account the importance of democracy, transparency, the rule of law and economic growth and highlighted those elements as key priorities for sustainable peace and development. In our quest to advance sustainable peace, we firmly believe that those key areas of concern must be mainstreamed in our national efforts.

Institutional reforms and people-centred approaches will continue to inform our peacebuilding efforts. My Government will remain committed to creating an enabling environment that encourages constructive criticism, including a new and vigorous role for civil society. As a partner, civil society plays a crucial role in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

We strongly believe that it is the duty of every Government to provide its citizens with an atmosphere that will enable them to develop their full potential if they are to grow as a people in a sustained peaceful environment. By extension, it is urgent that we have support for both our national and regional strategies to eradicate organized crime, trafficking in persons, terrorism and violent extremism.

We recognize that we have huge challenges to overcome, as is to be expected in any restored democracy. They include reviving our economy and undertaking comprehensive reform of our laws and various administrative institutions. Amid all those challenges, peacebuilding and sustaining peace will receive their due attention in the new Gambia.

In view of our circumstances, while reiterating my appreciation to our partners, I urge them to be steadfast in their continued material and financial support, capacity-building initiatives, technical cooperation and exchange of ideas. I also reaffirm my confidence in our ability to achieve our collective goal of peacebuilding and sustaining global peace. However, our efforts must be effectively coordinated. The United Nations,

regional organizations and the international community will continue to learn from each other's best practices by forging or consolidating partnerships for peace. In the same vein, national efforts or programmes need to be supported through the provision of material and technical assistance geared towards peacebuilding. I urge that the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Peacebuilding Fund be provided with generous financial resources so that timely and critical interventions may be launched to support Governments. In short, we must embark on a renewed push for partnerships at the national, regional and global levels.

In conclusion, I would like to leave Member States with an old African proverb: If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jüri Ratas, Prime Minister of the Republic of Estonia.

Mr. Ratas (Estonia): I thank the President of the General Assembly for organizing this timely meeting on how to build sustainable peace for all.

The conflicts and crises in today's world have grown in intensity and scale, becoming increasingly troubling to resolve. Focusing on conflict prevention helps us to spare resources in responding to crises and, most important, to save lives.

The United Nations is an important pillar in today's multilateral architecture. Estonia is an advocate of maintaining a strong multilateral system. We must continue to strengthen it. Considering the number of crises and the tragic consequences that they have on the civilian population, we have to admit that the United Nations has not always lived up to its full potential and tasks.

The United Nations system therefore needs to work in a more integrated, flexible and coordinated manner. Estonia supports the Secretary-General's reform agenda and the sustaining-peace concept. I am convinced that prevention should be at the core of the work of the United Nations. Peace will be sustainable only if we make progress with regard to development and address the root causes of conflict. The United Nations reform agendas on peace and security, management and development should reinforce coherence and the One United Nations and fit-for-purpose visions. I am glad that support for the reform of the United Nations system by all stakeholders is greater than ever today.

In fostering the sustaining peace agenda, we cannot rely on the United Nations system alone, since sustaining peace is primarily the responsibility of Member States. We must have the will to put into practice policies for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. I am proud to say that two years ago, Estonia was among the first countries to present a voluntary review on achieving them.

The role of Member States in investing more in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and peacekeeping is also critical. Estonia had the privilege of being a member of the Peacebuilding Commission last year. We believe that the Peacebuilding Commission is a central actor in conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the United Nations system, and we support its broader focus.

Inequality and political, social or economic exclusion are among the most common reasons that lead to internal violent conflict. The World Bank and the United Nations drew that conclusion in their joint study, entitled *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*. Democratic governance, the rule of law, the protection of human rights and transparent, accountable State institutions are therefore essential to achieving stability and peace. It is also crucial that we fully recognize and support the role of women and young people in sustaining peace.

Over the years, Estonia has participated in several United Nations peacekeeping missions and has given humanitarian and development aid all over the world. We have been contributing to the Peacebuilding Fund for five years, and we believe that it is an effective instrument for providing fast and flexible assistance. Estonia currently contributes to missions in Lebanon and Mali and to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization.

I can assure members of the General Assembly that Estonia is fully committed to implementing the sustaining peace agenda and will work to maintain peace. We are also promoting those ideas in our first-ever bid for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period from 2020 to 2021.

I hope that today's discussions will lead to concrete actions towards building more peaceful societies together.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mikheil Janelidze, Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia.

Mr. Janelidze (Georgia): I would like to start by thanking you, Mr. President, and the Secretary-General, for putting the issue of peacebuilding and sustaining peace at the top of the United Nations agenda and convening this high-level meeting.

In a world fraught with conflict, our collective resolve to advance the cause of sustaining peace is more timely than ever. By adopting twin resolutions in 2016 — resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016) — on the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, we took a step towards a common vision of peace. With due attention given to all the phases of conflict, we put prevention at the core of United Nations efforts and committed to the fact that sustaining peace is a nation-driven and joint responsibility that flows through all three pillars of the United Nations. To that end, let me share some observations from my national perspective as a representative of a country that has now been struggling with foreign occupation, conflict-driven violence and forced displacement for more than 25 years.

Since the early 1990s, Georgia has needed international engagement in assisting it in addressing the consequences of ethnic cleansing, violations of its sovereignty and territorial integrity, mass expulsions of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, and grave violations of human rights in the occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali. While Georgia has never hosted a United Nations peacekeeping mission with a full-fledged mandate, the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) played an important role in helping to achieve security after 1993. The termination of the UNOMIG mandate through the use of a veto in the Security Council, and of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe mission after the 2008 military aggression of the Russian Federation, created a vacuum in the international presence in the occupied regions, where arbitrary detentions, abductions and killings are the norm.

Despite the growing awareness and calls on the part of the international community, as well as the resolutions of the Human Rights Council, the existing international security and peacebuilding architecture cannot effectively address that loophole to ensure international peacekeeping, human rights monitoring or any other type of presence on the ground. Despite the clear provision of the ceasefire agreement of August 2008 mediated by the European Union (EU) on the creation of international security arrangements,

no progress has been achieved to that end. Even the EU Monitoring Mission, which is an unarmed civilian mission that works effectively in the Government-controlled territory of Georgia, is not allowed to enter the regions illegally occupied by Russia.

One month ago, a Georgian IDP, Archil Tatumashvili, who crossed the occupation line was detained and killed by the occupying Power in the Tskhinvali region, and the perpetrator is at large. Before that, another IDP, Giga Otkhazia, was murdered on the occupation line of the Abkhazia region. Again, the perpetrator is at large. Hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons are not allowed to go back to their homes, and those who live there are completely discriminated against and have no basic rights.

That leads me to emphasize the important link between justice and sustaining peace. Justice and peace are intrinsically linked. The chances of achieving lasting and sustainable peace without addressing the fundamental issue of justice are practically impossible. I would therefore like to voice Georgia's strong, continuing commitment to international norms and principles in resolving the conflict.

We are grateful for the strong and unwavering support of almost all the members of the United Nations with regard to a peaceful settlement of the Russia-Georgia conflict, based on international law and respect for Georgia's territorial integrity within internationally recognized borders. We hope that members of the General Assembly will continue to call on Russia to abide by its international obligations and create an environment that is conducive to conflict resolution, based on international norms.

Despite this deadlock, we should not abandon the cause but should rather make every effort to find solutions to address the needs of people living in those territories in order to shoulder our common responsibility to leave no one behind. Despite all the provocations and barriers on the road, therefore, the Government of Georgia continues to take bold action under its reconciliation and engagement policy to build confidence, improve economic ties and foster people-to-people contacts across the dividing lines. This month, we announced a major peace initiative, "Step towards a better future", to bridge and bring closer together the communities living in and outside the regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali. The comprehensive legislative package incorporates three key directions.

First, we want to enhance and facilitate trade along the dividing line through the support of individual and joint business projects. Secondly, we want to create opportunities for access to quality education and facilitate access to education at all levels. Youth is at the centre of our engagement policy, since it is the young people on both sides of the dividing line who will live together in a unified Georgia and participate in the rebuilding of the country. Thirdly, we wish to facilitate access for the people living in the two regions to the benefits that are available to Georgian citizens through our development, including European integration, visa liberalization and free trade, among others.

That is an ambitious initiative that the Government of Georgia is pursuing without any politicization. We appreciate the support that the international community has expressed for that endeavour, and we hope to see the active engagement of members of the General Assembly in the process.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to all the peacekeepers who risk their lives all over the world. Georgia is a contributor to global peacekeeping efforts, being one of the largest contributors to the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, as well as a supporter of the EU missions in the Central African Republic and Mali. We join others in calling for the enhanced effectiveness and efficiency of United Nations peacekeeping, since it is the United Nations instrument most vital to achieving peace and security.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Marija Pejčinović Burić, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia.

Mrs. Burić (Croatia): Allow me to express my deep appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening this important and timely high-level meeting. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/72/707).

Croatia aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union. In addition, I would like to add several remarks concerning our national point of view.

Peacebuilding is one of the most important and complex challenges in contemporary international relations, which are plagued by increasing instability, regional conflicts, civil wars and the suffering of

millions of civilians. To address those issues properly, a parallel focus on the political, security, development, environmental and human rights aspects is required. No country or international organization can meet those challenges alone; they can be addressed only through the concerted efforts of all stakeholders.

In that context, we greatly appreciate and welcome the Secretary-General's reform proposals in the field of peace and security, with the aim of achieving greater efficiency on the ground and a higher synergy among the three United Nations pillars. With that in mind, the review of the peacebuilding architecture on a regular basis serves as a very useful platform. We encourage the Secretary-General to continue his work regarding the United Nations reform processes. It is our task to enable and empower his efforts with concrete support, as well as to keep this subject high on our collective agenda in the future.

As a victim of aggression in the last decade of the twentieth century, Croatia gained an in-depth understanding and first-hand knowledge of peacebuilding and post-war recovery, and we stand ready to share that valuable experience. Within the United Nations agenda, today's topic remains a central tenet for Croatia. Our presidency of the Peacebuilding Commission in 2013 was just one of many examples of Croatia's active engagement.

Sustaining peace is often as difficult as achieving it. We know all too well that the absence of conflict does not always mean that peace has been achieved. In this highly complex process, which usually unfolds in the face of unforgiving social, economic and legal challenges, there are no one-size-fits-all solutions. Flexible and tailor-made approaches, based on expertise and a thorough understanding of the given situation, are the productive way forward. Against that background, we strongly support improved data-gathering and analysis capacities within the Secretariat.

Development, humanitarian, human rights and justice actors should receive equal attention in performing their roles. In addition, the active engagement of regional and subregional organizations is often essential. Above all, a proper financial framework must be secured, particularly during the fragile transitional period between war and a lasting peace. We must never lose sight of the fact that, as the Secretary-General states in his report, "Nearly half of all people living in extreme poverty reside in

countries affected by conflict and fragility" (A/72/707, para. 39). The bleak prospect of that figure rising is, unfortunately, discouragingly likely.

Croatia welcomes the approach suggested by the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture in emphasizing prevention. Peacebuilding should aim both to prevent parties from sliding into conflict and to avoid any resurgence of armed conflict. A solid prevention system could save all of us major resources that could in turn be invested in improving the living conditions of people all over the world, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Indeed, the Sustainable Development Goals represent building blocks for peacebuilding and sustaining peace. In this context, I am referring in particular to Goal 16, on peace, justice and strong institutions. If we use it not only as a set of specific targets, but also as an inspiration for adding a new dimension to the other Sustainable Development Goals, we may just find more clarity and a pathway towards eliminating the root causes of conflict and securing lasting peace.

Too often, we have seen the horrific consequences of the lack of a timely and appropriate reaction on the part of the international community to certain crises. Our own national experience testifies to that. A deep understanding of the roots of crises, the ability to read early-warning signs and a readiness to act preventively without hesitation are of the essence. Prolonging the settlement of disagreements and grievances that pose a serious threat to peace and security can often lead to new suffering and injustice, and eventually even to the re-emergence of greater violence. We cannot truly bury the hatchet by simply burying problems. Conflicting sides have to address their differences head-on and in an open manner, while half-solutions are not solutions, merely excuses for postponing or avoiding difficult decisions.

At the end of the day, it is commonalities and people's everyday needs that must be first put into focus, as they are often the key ingredients of success in post-conflict rebuilding. That is even more true of regional reconciliation processes, which means finding ways to build bridges, not walls; including, not excluding; integrating, not separating; and sharing and investing, not dividing and exploiting.

The globalization process continues to rapidly reshape the world we live in. Along with many benefits,

it has also created many new challenges and divisions among and within nations. However, Croatia believes that the importance of national ownership and primary-country responsibility can never be emphasized enough.

Policies that provide people with health security, a clean and safe environment, a chance for decent employment, education, modern infrastructure and interconnectivity, and that forge public-private partnerships, all have the additional value of significantly reducing the risk of violent tendencies within and among societies and States. We also feel that all segments of society need to be involved in their development. The role of women and young people in political and decision-making processes is of paramount importance.

On the global level, the United Nations has a crucial leading role across its three pillars. In the more than seven decades of its existence, it has proved its ability to reform and to meet new challenges. We are in the midst of a new comprehensive cycle of reforms that are essential to making the United Nations fit for the twenty-first century. They are not only in the field of peace and security, including peacekeeping operations — and I take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General for his Action for Peacekeeping initiative — but are also essential to development mechanisms and management. The task before us is huge, as these processes are highly complex and require the broadest possible support of Member States, but they are the only solution.

Finally, as stated in draft resolution A/72/L.49, to be adopted tomorrow, we appreciate the Secretary-General's recommendations and stand ready to discuss them further. We hope that we will be able to achieve considerable progress at the seventy-third session of the General Assembly, and we look forward to an in-depth discussion on the peacebuilding architecture review in 2020. In that regard, let us not waver in our resolve to improve our peacebuilding and sustaining peace capabilities, so that they can withstand old and new challenges across the globe.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jorge Arreaza, Minister of the People's Power for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Arreaza (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): On a day like today, 63 years ago, a conference among African and Asian countries came to

a close in Bandung, Indonesia. That conference saw the birth of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM). Sixty-three years later, the three fundamental principles agreed on in Bandung — respect for international law, multilateralism and peacebuilding — still prevail. It is therefore an honour for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and President Nicolás Maduro Moros to speak on behalf of the 120 States members of the Non-Aligned Movement.

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this high-level meeting on a topic of great importance to our Movement, which has always worked tirelessly to strengthen its role as an anti-war and peace-loving force.

The States members of the Movement would also like to take this opportunity to commend the transparency and inclusion with which the Permanent Representatives of Bangladesh and Lithuania, in their capacity as co-facilitators of the intergovernmental negotiations of draft resolution A/72/L.49, conducted the negotiation process for its text, which enjoyed the active participation and constructive spirit of our Movement, under the solid leadership of the delegation of Kenya.

We are living in a world facing multiple and complex emerging threats, as well as challenges that threaten international peace and security, which we believe should always be addressed through multilateralism and within the framework of international law. One of the Movement's core objectives is the adoption of effective measures to suppress acts of aggression and other violations of peace, with the aim of defending, promoting and fostering the settlement of international disputes through peaceful means, in a way that never jeopardizes international peace and security, and certainly not justice. We therefore believe that preserving, promoting, achieving and maintaining international peace and security must remain a central priority on the United Nations agenda, which is why the international community should spare no effort in preventing conflict and sustaining peace.

Preventing the outbreak, continuation and recurrence of conflict is therefore a collective responsibility. More importantly, however, it is a national responsibility that could sometimes benefit from the objective, impartial assistance and support that the United Nations is able to provide, upon request, in cooperation with regional and

subregional organizations and other relevant actors, as appropriate.

Furthermore, the Non-Aligned Movement recognizes that there are various tools at the disposal of the international community and the United Nations for guaranteeing the maintenance of international peace and security, including preventive diplomacy. We stress the importance of using such tools in good faith and not as instruments to interfere in the internal affairs of Member States, and of strictly respecting the principles of international law regarding friendly relations and cooperation among States, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

We also highlight the importance of the participation and inclusion of all sectors of society in peace processes, including, as the Secretary-General has said, women and young people, who play an important role in the prevention and resolution of conflict, as well as in peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts and the development of peaceful and resilient societies. Integration is key to achieving progress in national peacebuilding processes and objectives, with the aim of ensuring that the needs of all sectors of society are taken into consideration.

The Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms its commitment to promoting the peaceful resolution of disputes, in accordance with Article 2 and Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as with all relevant United Nations resolutions and international law, in order to contribute to strengthening international peace and security and to save future generations from the scourge of war and armed conflict, including by strengthening the role of the United Nations in the peaceful resolution of disputes, the prevention and resolution of conflicts, the creation of trust, national reconciliation and peacebuilding, rehabilitation, reconstruction and post-conflict development. In that regard, let us note that, during the eighteenth ministerial meeting of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held just a few days ago in Baku, in Azerbaijan, NAM Ministers stressed that the root causes of conflicts must be addressed in a coherent, well-planned, coordinated and comprehensive manner together with other political, social, economic and development instruments.

They also stressed that the United Nations should give due consideration to the manner in which such efforts are carried out, from the early stages of its engagement in post-conflict situations, and that they

should continue without interruption after the departure of United Nations peacekeeping operations, with a view to ensuring a smooth transition to peace and security, as well as sustainable development. In that context, they also highlighted the need to improve synergies between peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities so as to achieve the ultimate objective of sustaining peace.

Our position is highly relevant, given that in most cases the structural causes of conflicts include poverty, hunger, inequalities — including those related to gender — violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, injustice, a lack of jobs and access to education, a lack of accountability and the mismanagement of natural resources. They are all core elements of a comprehensive goal and process to effectively sustain peace.

The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries has taken note of the Secretary-General's focus on enhancing the relationship between the political engagements of the United Nations and peace operations deployed on the ground. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of breaking down silos within the Organization, including with regard to ensuring that peacekeeping and peacebuilding mandates and operations are well calibrated within the context of the broader political and development objectives for sustaining peace.

NAM member States have also taken note of the Secretary-General's efforts to bring together his reform proposals for peace, development and internal management into a coherent narrative, as well as his concrete proposals for the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, including the Peacebuilding Support Office, serving as a starting point for the promotion of system-wide coherence on peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

We also welcome his proposals for enhanced, predictable and sustainable resources that are aligned with effective United Nations approaches and its work on building and sustaining peace. We hope to maintain the momentum created on this occasion and engage in further in-depth discussions to consider all these proposals and recommendations, including their follow-up and implementation, in preparation for the review of the peacebuilding architecture in 2020.

In conclusion, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries emphasizes that there can be no development without peace and no peace without development. We must therefore work together, redouble our efforts

and improve the synergies between peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities, as appropriate, in order to achieve the ultimate goal of sustaining peace. That will be key to fulfilling the commitments made by our Heads of State and Government when they adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which seeks to strengthen universal peace, among other things. The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries is fundamentally committed to maintaining, building and sustaining peace.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey.

Mr. Çavuşoğlu (Turkey): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the group composed of Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Turkey and Australia (MIKTA).

As strong supporters of sustaining peace and members of its Group of Friends, the MIKTA countries are committed to continue promoting this approach, which represents a paradigm shift within the United Nations system. The identical resolutions on sustaining peace adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council (resolutions 70/262 and 2282 (2016)) provide the United Nations with the necessary strategic guidance for implementation. While some progress has been achieved, more is needed.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/72/707), as well as its recommendations and options, and take note of its connection to his reform proposals and broader vision. As the report says, sustaining peace is a task that must be assumed collectively and comprehensively by all the relevant stakeholders in an inclusive manner. Meanwhile, national Governments and authorities have the primary responsibility for priorities, strategies and activities. We commend Member States and the United Nations system for their achievements and progress, which have led to real improvements. Examples include coherent strategic planning in mission settings and the support of the Peacebuilding Fund.

MIKTA also wants to highlight the key role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding. We reaffirm our support for increasing the role of women in decision-making on conflict prevention and resolution. We welcome the Secretary-General's leadership and commitment to this issue and strongly support his vision.

The support for the new procedural draft resolution (A/72/L.49) on sustaining peace demonstrates the clear expectation of Member States that the United Nations Secretariat, funds and agencies will energetically advance those elements of this issue that can already be implemented without delay. MIKTA countries also look forward to continued engagement with the elements of this issue that require further consideration and steps by Member States. We fully support continued action on sustaining peace.

I would now like to deliver the following statement in my national capacity.

There are many conflicts all around the world, and there is too much human suffering. We cannot continue business as usual — it is time to take action. We more or less agree on the basic parameters. It is necessary to address the root causes, which is where achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will help us. If we cannot prevent crises, we have to intervene at an early stage. We need regional and national ownership to settle disputes and a wider and more effective use of mediation. Our responses must be customized for each case, because a one-size-fits-all approach does not work. The recommendations of the Secretary-General's report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace are especially important.

We therefore know the principles. We also have the basic tools. They are not perfect, but we know how to use them. Yet so far we have not been successful. Why? Because, most of the time, the international community is selective in its responses.

When the Al-Assad regime uses chemical weapons to kill women and children, we all react. That is the right approach. When the Al-Assad regime uses conventional weapons to kill women and children, most of the international community stays silent. That is wrong. When the countries that are the five permanent members of the Security Council agree, all is fine. We can enforce international law. When those countries cannot agree, the international system is locked. We can simply forget about international law. When Da'esh kills innocent civilians, we all react. That is the right thing to do. When the Fethullah Terrorist Organization, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party or the People's Protection Units kill innocent civilians, some countries choose to ignore it, because those terror organizations might be useful to them somewhere else. When there is a terror

attack on a Western capital, we see it in the headlines. When there is a terror attack in the Middle East or in Africa, we do not hear about it. Is human life more valuable in certain regions?

Unfortunately, this is the age of hypocrisy. One thing is clear: we cannot build a better world on double standards. We have to take steps to achieve justice, prosperity and, above all, peace. We need a paradigm shift. Let us first put this house in order. Let us start with the United Nations. Reforming it is more important than ever today, and the Secretary-General's reform initiative is timely and appropriate. His effort can address certain problems, and we support it.

However, nothing will be enough as long as the Security Council is dysfunctional. The world is bigger than five nations, but the Security Council in its current form is not bigger than its five permanent members. It functions only if its agenda fits the national interests of the countries of its permanent members. The Council is supposed to bring peace and prevent massacres, but the veto power stops the Council from fulfilling its responsibilities. If we really want to build and sustain peace, the Security Council must be more representative, more transparent, more inclusive, more politically relevant and more democratic.

We welcome the draft resolution to be adopted. Turkey will continue to contribute to sustaining peace, security and stability, but we all need to see action.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Neven Mimica, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development of the European Union.

Mr. Mimica (European Union): I am speaking on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

This high-level meeting represents a landmark in our joint efforts to strengthen the work of the United Nations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. We welcome the vision of the Secretary-General, as presented in his report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/72/707), pursuant to the 2016 twin resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council on

the review of the peacebuilding architecture (resolutions 70/262 and 2282 (2016)), driven by the desire to pursue peace in a more efficient and effective way and with greater impact. We would like to see those efforts continue through this high-level meeting and beyond, as set out in draft resolution A/72/L.49, to be adopted by consensus, and we are determined to further implement these objectives and pave the way for the next review of the peacebuilding architecture, scheduled for 2020.

Sustaining peace is the joint responsibility of Governments and societies and should flow through all three pillars of the United Nations — peace and security, development and human rights. We are encouraged by the progress achieved so far, including through the diversified activities of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Support Office, which play a pivotal role in integrating cross-pillar action at the United Nations and deserve the attention and sustained support of the entire membership.

Sustaining peace provides a valuable framework for shaping the United Nations reform agendas on peace and security, management and development into a mutually reinforcing and coherent package. It will require full use of all the political tools at the disposal of the United Nations, including preventive diplomacy and mediation. Peacebuilding and sustaining peace is inherently linked to democratic governance and the rule of law and operate in the context of inclusive political settlements.

As the Secretary-General noted, an emphasis on human rights lies at the heart of conflict prevention, which must be our highest priority. Sustaining peace also requires that human rights and fundamental freedoms be respected, protected and fulfilled. Inclusive economic development and strengthening resilience also lie at the core of prevention. The European Union is keen to pursue closer cooperation and sharing of best practices with multilateral partners. Our cooperation with the United Nations and the World Bank on recovery and peacebuilding assessments in a number of post-conflict countries is promising.

We stress the need to enhance the capacity of the United Nations development system in order to address the root causes of instability, vulnerability, exclusion and violent conflict, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goal 16, on peaceful, just and inclusive societies. We would also like to see stronger linkages

between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities, and we stress the important role of the Resident Coordinator in that respect.

Fostering coherence and coordination is one of the golden threads of the global strategy that the European Union adopted in 2016. Last year we adopted a strategic approach to resilience in external action. The European Consensus on Development will also contribute to building the resilience of individuals, societies and States. Our integrated approach provides the framework for a more holistic engagement in external conflicts and crises to promote human security. It involves conflict resolution and mediation and stresses the importance of local ownership, inclusiveness and the sustainability of actions by engaging with national and local authorities, communities and civil society, and it also stresses the importance of a strong multilateral approach.

We welcome the continued emphasis on the empowerment of women and youth and the link between inclusive peacebuilding and engagement at the community level.

We would also like to stress the need to work closely with key international and regional partners. The partnership between the United Nations and the World Bank will be especially important in ensuring that each brings its comparative advantage to sustainable peace, also illustrated by the joint United Nations-World Bank study *Pathways for Peace*.

Peace is the core value and purpose of the United Nations. The Charter of the United Nations encourages us to take effective collective measures and to achieve international cooperation to strengthen universal peace. The United Nations is meant to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of those common ends. As a staunch supporter of multilateralism, the European Union welcomes the ambition of the United Nations in leading the way in our common engagement to build and sustain peace.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran): Maintaining international peace and security and preventing and removing threats to peace constitute the very *raison d'être* of the Organization. A renewed focus on peacebuilding and sustaining peace is therefore of

singular importance in the light of the tensions that we are currently facing, particularly in our region, which has suffered the most from its lingering conflicts and crises.

Preventing conflict in our region requires a focus on the root causes, including the mutually reinforcing afflictions of occupation, foreign intervention and extremism. In addition, efforts to advance illusions of hegemony and attempts to achieve security at the expense of the security of others through exclusion and the creation of blocs have invariably caused tension and conflict, leading to various destructive arms races.

It is therefore now crucial to shift to a new paradigm, based on combining our forces to create a strong region, rather than on any one of us seeking to be the strongest in our region. It means a shift from forming security blocs to accepting security networking. Both these new paradigms are predicated on respect for the interests of all stakeholders, large and small, coupled with a win-win approach. In the current interconnected world, no country's security can be assured by making another country insecure. We believe it is imperative to move away from the current zero-sum paradigm of seeking regional hegemony and exclusion in our immediate neighbourhood, which has witnessed devastating wars in the past four decades. We ask all to join our efforts to advance the goals of a strong region and security networking.

Such a transformational agenda requires accepting and respecting a set of common principles coupled with confidence-building measures. To advance that, we have proposed creating a regional dialogue forum in the Persian Gulf region to overcome the challenge of building and sustaining peace in our region. We invite our neighbours in this volatile strategic waterway, which has seen too many wars, to join us in that endeavour. We expect the United Nations to assist in the process through the arrangements that were envisaged some 30 years ago but never implemented in paragraph 8 of Security Council resolution 598 (1987).

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Heiko Maas, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany,

Mr. Maas (Germany) (*spoke in German; English text provided by the delegation*): I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening today's meeting, which could not have come at a better time.

The international community is facing many conflicts and problems. We all know the main ones: climate change, forced displacement, migration and terrorism, to name but a few. We are also seeing a growing divide between those who support openness and tolerance and those who preach isolation and a return to nationalism. And there is a divide between those who believe in the benefits of rules-based international cooperation and those who seek confrontation and refuse to compromise on the world stage. Seldom has the competition for global order been so intense, or the need to work closely together so great.

The inhumane conduct by the Al-Assad regime is an attack on the core values of the international community. We must not close our eyes to it. Violations of fundamental international humanitarian law cannot go unpunished, and those responsible must be held accountable.

The deadlock in the Security Council poses a dangerous challenge to the international community's ability to act. That is why we have to rethink our approach for the future. We must seek dialogue rather than confrontation, invest in disarmament rather than rearmament and focus on prevention rather than intervention.

The international community must demonstrate the ability to act at every stage of a conflict, from prevention and conflict resolution to stabilization, post-conflict peacebuilding and sustainable development. We cannot address conflicts only once they are on the front pages of the newspapers. Nor must we lose our focus too soon, let alone accept frozen conflicts. We need to be resolute in our search for political solutions. Most important, however, we need all involved, and the Security Council in particular, to take on political responsibility. Let me give just one example.

The international community is active in the Sahel region, where it is conducting a wide range of peace and training missions and providing border management support and humanitarian aid. However, those measures will succeed only if the necessary peace and reconciliation processes can be brought to a conclusion that is acceptable to all.

We firmly believe that preserving and enhancing the rules-based order, with the United Nations at its heart, is the best way to create peace. That is why Germany strongly supports the aim of Secretary-

General António Guterres to make the United Nations more effective and focus on prevention.

Modern peace policy should be funded in the right way. It is not efficient if peacekeeping missions that cost billions are followed by peacebuilding plans that lack funds. That is why we have responded to the Secretary-General's call for a quantum leap. Germany has more than tripled its budget for crisis prevention, stabilization and humanitarian aid, to €2.5 billion in 2017. We were the second-largest donor to the Peacebuilding Fund last year, and will make another large contribution this year. We call on others to play their part.

Germany promotes prevention and a far-reaching definition of security. Germany is aware of the work needed for the challenging transitions from peacekeeping to peacebuilding and actively supports close cooperation among the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council. Together we shall continue working with the States Members of the United Nations on forward-looking and modern peace policy, something we owe to future generations.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Néstor Francisco Popolizio Bardales, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Peru.

Mr. Popolizio Bardales (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Peru welcomes the convening of this high-level meeting to share perspectives and experiences on peacebuilding and sustaining peace and to strengthen the work of the United Nations supporting Member States in achieving those goals.

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

Peru's vision of how to prevent and address the conflicts that are currently multiplying throughout the world is fully in line with the concept of sustainable peace, defined as a general objective and a permanent process in the identical resolutions adopted in 2016 by the General Assembly and the Security Council (resolutions 70/262 and 2282 (2016)).

In that regard, we consider it essential to incorporate the new paradigm into the work of the United Nations system on the ground. That implies understanding that peace and security, development and human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. In particular, it means investing more in prevention activities and paying more attention to the root causes of conflicts

and humanitarian crises. We therefore welcome the fact that in many countries affected by conflicts, efforts are already being made, with the assistance of national actors and the support of regional organizations and financial institutions, to realize the holistic and multidimensional vision required for the consolidation and maintenance of peace.

This priority is consistent with our own experience. In its recent history, Peru has effectively confronted terrorism and has established itself as a peaceful and stable country. That is thanks to a broad national consensus on the need to strengthen our institutions, respect the rule of law, promote democratic governance and development and combat poverty and inequality.

In recent decades, therefore, Peruvians living in poverty, who were particularly vulnerable to the violence generated by terrorism, have gone from being more than half of our population to less than a quarter. In addition, there has been sustained growth in our middle class, which today promotes inclusive national development thanks to a responsible economic policy that promoted free trade and investment in democracy. In that context, we Peruvians are optimistic as we prepare to celebrate the bicentennial of our republic in the year 2021, and we are working to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which have been incorporated into our public policies.

However, we also face significant challenges. Our country is particularly vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters. We have also not been immune to the scourge of corruption, which manifests itself worldwide as a transnational threat that erodes democratic governance and undermines efforts to achieve sustainable peace by diverting resources that should be directed to addressing the causes of conflict. To that end, at the eighth Summit of the Americas, which was just successfully held in Lima, under the leadership of President Martín Vizcarra Cornejo, we prioritized the strengthening of democratic governance and the fight against corruption in our region. That is with a view to relaunching growth and development, which are the foundations on which peace can be built and sustained.

As the current President of the Security Council, Peru organized a high-level briefing (see S/PV.8243) on the Council's role in promoting sustainable peace, and facilitated a new draft resolution (S/2018/373) identical

to the one to be adopted by the Assembly (A/72/L.49). Our aim is to supplement this debate and maintain the coordinated work between the two main organs of the Organization.

We live in a highly volatile international context in which tension levels are similar to those of times that we thought had been relegated to history. There is an urgent need for an effective response to the crises in the Middle East, in countries such as Syria and Yemen, and in Africa, as well as to the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction, including the issue of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. In a world where conflicts and humanitarian crises seem never-ending and enabling to terrorist groups and transnational organized crime, Peru considers it essential to strengthen multilateralism around more coherent, efficient and effective responses.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming Peru's commitment and support for the reforms that Secretary-General António Guterres has been promoting with a view to having a United Nations aimed at contributing to the efforts that each Member State is making to ensure that its population develops in an environment of sustainable peace.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Ine Eriksen Søreide, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway.

Ms. Søreide (Norway): The very first point of the Preamble of the Charter of the United Nations states that the aim of the United Nations is to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Since the beginning, the prevention of conflict has been at the very core of what the United Nations should do, and it still is. But the changing scope and nature of conflicts present a challenge to the United Nations system.

Since 2010, the number of major violent conflicts has tripled. Fighting in a growing number of low-intensity conflicts has escalated. At the same time, United Nations peacebuilding efforts are severely underfunded. This is a fact, but it is also a collective problem. We need to ensure adequate, predictable and sustained financing in order to make progress with the sustaining peace agenda. That is why Norway is one of the largest donors to the Peacebuilding Fund, and that is also why we are increasing our contributions in 2018.

The recent joint United Nations-World Bank report entitled *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to*

Preventing Violent Conflict clearly shows how and why conflict prevention is crucial. The report also shows the potential for closer collaboration between the United Nations and the World Bank. The amount spent on crisis response and reconstruction is about \$7 billion a year. But the report also shows that, at present, spending on prevention efforts is less than \$1 billion. We must therefore shift some of our focus away from managing and responding to crises towards preventing conflicts from breaking out in the first place. That will save countless lives, but it would also mean that we are spending our resources more wisely. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is both an end in itself and an efficient way to prevent conflict and build lasting peace.

There can be no peace without development and no development without peace. Norway spends approximately 1 per cent of its gross national income on official development assistance, and we will continue to do so. The sustaining peace report of the Secretary-General (A/72/707) presents many interesting suggestions about financing peacebuilding. We need to explore those options, including the possibilities of using assessed contributions. The Secretary-General points to the fact that millions of dollars are left unutilized in trust funds or returned unspent to Member States after not being spent in peacekeeping operation budgets. Reallocating those kinds of funds for peacebuilding must be further explored. Channelling assessed contributions towards peacebuilding initiatives does not necessarily mean an increased financial burden but rather a reallocation of existing resources. It could be a smarter way of spending our funds. Together with Indonesia, Norway has mobilized to highlight financing issues in the Peacebuilding Commission, and we are committed to continuing that work. I encourage all fellow Member States to join us.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Srđan Darmanović, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Montenegro.

Mr. Darmanović (Montenegro): It is a great pleasure to address the General Assembly at this high-level event dedicated to peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Montenegro aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union. I would now like to make a statement in my national capacity.

I would like to commend the President's firm commitment to devising ways of fulfilling the priorities of his presidency and creating a strengthened and more effective United Nations.

This event comes at a time when there is a pressing need to address fragmentation in the United Nations and the growing unanimity on the importance of building coherence in our collective efforts to address the issue of sustaining peace. Montenegro therefore welcomes the Secretary-General's report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/72/707) and the draft resolution (A/72/L.49) on the same subject.

The effects of the current conflicts and the complexity of the security situation around the world will be felt for years to come. The time has come for challenges to be addressed more decisively, and we have a shared responsibility to do so. I would like to focus on a few issues that Montenegro finds relevant for peacebuilding and sustaining peace and for our future activities in that regard.

We are all aware that a policy of peace is globally under-recognized, underprioritized and under-resourced. That is especially true for the prevention of conflicts. I would like to underline the significance of the United Nations early-detection and early-warning mechanisms. We believe that changing the perception of a failure to act and shifting to a culture of prevention continues to be essential. That requires political will and leadership from all actors. Investing in preventing conflict is considerably less expensive and more sustainable than merely reacting to crises.

We strongly believe that mediation must receive greater attention and resources, as it is a cost-effective tool. Montenegro is a member of the Group of Friends of Mediation, as well as the Mediation in the Mediterranean Initiative. We are currently planning a conference in Montenegro under the Initiative.

The history of our region has been marked by many conflicts. Our enthusiasm and dedication to mediation and dialogue is a consequence of our direct experience since the time of the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia. Montenegro has managed to sustain peace, open its borders to thousands of refugees from all ethnic and religious groups, and at the same time consolidate its multi-ethnic harmony from the beginning of the 1990s to this day. In the years that followed the dissolution, Montenegro became an example of how a country's independence could be achieved through negotiations in

a peaceful way. Our independence was achieved under the auspices of the European Union, and the current President of the General Assembly, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, played a prominent role in that process.

As a recent member of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Montenegro believes that we could better exploit its potential and enhance its unique and important role. We should also further improve the complementarity between the work of the PBC and the Security Council in order to maximize the impact of the United Nations in preventing conflict and sustaining peace.

If we want to save lives, stabilize countries in crisis, alleviate suffering and protect the vulnerable, we must invest in peace. Building lasting peace requires predictable, sustained and adequate financing to address the root causes of conflict. We strongly believe that the Peacebuilding Fund, with its catalytic effect, is an essential tool in our efforts to achieve that. Partnership with international financial institutions will also contribute to that end.

Cooperation and partnership between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations should also be strengthened, based on the comparative advantage of each. They possess valuable assets, such as a knowledge and understanding of crises, but what is equally important is that they can ensure the involvement and ownership of the countries directly affected.

If we want sustainable peace, we must pursue the values of inclusion, responsibility and diversity. We must support the capacity of women to influence peacebuilding and development policies. In recognition of the fact that women are key actors in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding, Montenegro recently joined the Group of Friends of Women and Peace and Security. We must also invest in young people in order to engage them in the process. One positive example from the region of the Western Balkans, where Montenegro plays an active role, is the recently established Regional Youth Cooperation Office, aimed at reconciliation through joint activities by young people from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia. Young people can make an important contribution to preventing and countering extremism. We must understand that achieving the goals of peace and development is about their future, and they should have a crucial stake in it.

We should keep in mind that the risk of extremism, terrorism, organized crime and conflict grows where people have no education and no hope for the future, where there is exclusion and a lack of development. For countries emerging from conflict, with fragile peace, institution-building and reform are crucial.

The contribution and role of the Organization are essential to the maintenance of international peace and security, but that task is not only for the United Nations and other international organizations. The process requires individual, collective and institutional transformation and inclusive development based on the universal values of respect for life, justice, solidarity, human rights and equality between men and women.

Strengthening the work of the United Nations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace is our joint objective and responsibility. In a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding, we should use a wide range of potential tools at our disposal with focus, dedication and results. We must work together for peace, security and development, and Montenegro is committed to playing its part.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Gudlaugur Thór Thórdarson, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland.

Mr. Thórdarson (Iceland): I would first like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this high-level meeting.

The situation in Syria and Yemen, the repeated use of chemical weapons, the record numbers of refugees and displaced persons — all worrying examples in our world — demand a new approach.

Unfortunately, we cannot discuss peace and security in this forum without mentioning our disappointment with the work of the Security Council, especially as it concerns Syria. The world body responsible for ensuring peace is hampered by its inability to agree and move forward on its most urgent issues. We must hold the Security Council to a higher standard. Thousands of lives depend on it.

Nevertheless, there are positive things to be said of the work of the United Nations system. Under the leadership of the Secretary-General, the Organization is refocusing its efforts to better ensure peace and security.

We spend massive amounts on peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance in response to conflict. The Security Council decides our peacekeeping budget, which is roughly four times the regular annual budget of the United Nations. The past five years have seen an attempt to address that, and important progress has been made at the policy level, including shaping the concepts of sustaining peace and peacebuilding for the twenty-first century. We have realized that firefighting has limited impact if we then leave the site scattered with the original fire hazards. The fire will re-emerge. Prevention is better, cheaper and saves more lives.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is our most powerful framework for peacebuilding and sustaining peace. If we achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we will in fact build peace and provide many of the conditions needed to sustain it. Remarkable conceptual work has also been carried out with the three landmark reports relating to peace operations: the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (see A/70/95), the global study on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture (see A/69/968).

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/72/707). Iceland strongly supports his analysis. Sustaining peace requires a sustained effort, not only when conflict has broken out, but long before, and then later, following the achievement of peace. That means addressing the root causes, including human rights and governance issues. We also welcome the Secretary-General's strong emphasis on the crucial role of women in sustaining peace and conflict prevention. They must be represented at all levels of decision-making.

The President returned to the Chair.

Through a rigorous and transparent process, we all selected a Secretary-General with a clear vision of what needs to be done to sustain peace. The United Nations is never stronger than its Member States. We are now at a point where the membership needs to step up to the plate and support his leadership.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ditmir Bushati, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Albania.

Mr. Bushati (Albania): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this high-level meeting, which testifies to the political will of the international community to work together in building a better world. The maintenance of world peace is our common responsibility and our solemn promise enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

But while I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this meeting, I cannot but also reflect on the numerous occasions when we have been confronted with an urgent need to respond to crises with insufficient means, as well as with the impossibility of action, despite the numerous violations and cases of the breaching of human rights across the world. The raging war in Syria is a horrible example of that.

The complexity of the global challenges we face today calls for new, integrated approaches to peace, for innovative ideas and a more effective management of resources and tools. In our view, prevention is the key word. The United Nations needs to establish mechanisms that can identify signs of potential conflicts in order to enable it to act in time. Putting prevention at the heart of the work of the United Nations requires bringing together the three United Nations pillars — peace and security, development and human rights — in a coherent way.

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is of paramount importance for sustaining peace, as it is the best way to address the root causes of conflicts through inclusive economic development, democratic governance, the rule of law, justice and equality.

Moreover, Albania is convinced that the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms is linked to conflict prevention and sustaining peace. Human rights monitoring and analysis can provide a crucial early warning of grievances that, if left unaddressed, may lead to violent conflict.

Albania supports the vision of the Secretary-General for peacebuilding and sustaining peace and the proposals contained in his report (A/72/707). In that regard, I would like to highlight three important points.

First, we support empowering the Peacebuilding Commission as a dedicated intergovernmental platform overseeing and guiding the United Nations system's approach to sustaining peace. It is one of the most important instruments for preventive action on the

ground. In addition, an increased and more effective Peacebuilding Fund is needed, as it is one of the most important instruments for financing that preventive action.

Secondly, partnerships should be a key element of our common efforts to build and sustain peace. Peacebuilding processes and regional cooperation are two interconnected processes. The United Nations must draw on the expertise and experience of regional and global key actors, international financial institutions, civil society and the private sector.

Thirdly, women and young people are real assets for peace. We now have mounting evidence that the meaningful inclusion of women in peace processes contributes to the achievement of sustainable peace, accelerates economic recovery, counters violent extremism and prevents human rights violations. Similarly, young people can find creative, innovative ways to build bridges and address social and political narratives that drive conflict.

I come from the Western Balkans, a region that in the not-too-distant past was a theatre for major conflicts and human suffering. That is well behind us, and important lessons have since been drawn. Through genuine political will, to which Albania is committed, and thanks to the powerful Euro-Atlantic drive, sound regional cooperation has developed in terms of security, a common market and trade exchanges. A process of dialogue towards the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia has helped narrow mistrust and divisions, leading to increased cooperation and understanding.

We have launched regional initiatives such as the Western Balkans Fund and the Regional Youth Cooperation Office, to which all of the six Western Balkan countries are contributing financially and are governing together. We would welcome further United Nations support for this initiative, including from the Peacebuilding Fund.

Together with our Euro-Atlantic partners and allies, we have pledged to make our region part of a consolidated and united continent as a strategic investment in the peace, democracy, prosperity, security and stability of Europe as a whole. To that end, as a NATO member State and a European Union candidate, Albania is an active contributor to peace and security around the world, and particularly in those regions where both peace and security are most at risk.

Albania will do its utmost and work to counter any efforts to derail and undermine our common drive for peace and security in the world.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Salahuddin Rabbani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan.

Mr. Rabbani (Afghanistan): It is an honour to address the General Assembly at this high-level gathering for a comprehensive United Nations approach to achieving a more peaceful world order based on the sustaining peace agenda.

That vision has taken shape in response to the evolving nature of the challenges facing international peace and security. Addressing those challenges demands a more cohesive approach that is better suited to advancing peacebuilding from a more holistic perspective. The new approach correctly focuses on preventing the outbreak, exacerbation, continuation or recurrence of conflicts, as well as addressing their fundamental drivers and root causes. It also highlights the imperative of a more effective development agenda to advance prosperous societies grounded in the rule of law. In our view, the success of the sustaining peace agenda depends on several factors. As a foundational element, States have the responsibility to respect and adhere to the core tenets of the Charter of the United Nations for a rules-based international order. At times, the causes of conflict are distinct, but instability and violence are most common in situations in which international norms are violated. For the United Nations to be more effective, adequate adjustments within the system are essential for optimal output across the peace, security and development pillars. We fully support the Secretary-General's reform agenda and welcome the ongoing progress in that endeavour.

Afghanistan has been a special focus of the agenda of the United Nations. Our strong partnership with the Organization has helped to shore up global support to help us overcome security, social and economic challenges to sustaining peace. Since 2001, we have witnessed the emergence of a democratic Afghanistan, with viable institutions and a vibrant civil society led by our talented and committed young people. Despite security challenges, the National Unity Government is consolidating those gains with the goal of achieving self-reliance. We can say from experience that international engagement in conflict and post-conflict settings should endure until the fundamental factors

of instability are resolved and the situation is fully stabilized. That will consolidate peace gains and leave minimal space for a relapse into violence and conflict.

The proliferation of new conflicts and the deterioration of old ones have led to a more fragile international landscape, demonstrating that we need to take steps to correct shortcomings in the area of prevention and in dealing with the root causes of conflict. Although the nature of conflicts can vary, terrorism and violent extremism remain a common security threat in many such situations. Afghanistan is engaged in the simultaneous task of fostering peace while also combating a vicious network of terrorist groups supported in the region, which operate to keep Afghanistan off balance and to disrupt our stability. Decisive action is needed to combat all forms and shades of terrorism, without distinction. The establishment of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism is an important development in the context of United Nations reform. We hope that it triggers new levels and modes of cooperation with Member States, especially those most affected by terrorism. The overall focus should be on ensuring timely and proper action in honouring counter-terrorism obligations under the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. In the area of prevention, more needs to be done to detect and resolve trigger situations before they lead to the outbreak of conflict. Moreover, the United Nations response should be able to adjust to diverse conflict situations, whether internal, regional or international in character.

Proper attention must also be accorded to the imperative of eradicating poverty, generating economic opportunities and embedding a culture of respect for the rule of law. The reform proposals for the United Nations development system can help it to avoid duplication of effort and establish clear parameters for the division of labour. We believe that the design and delivery of development assistance must adjust to evolving situations and new realities on the ground as countries consolidate institutions and designate development goals. We know that adherence to the principle of national ownership has a direct impact on the optimal effects of development aid. Afghanistan has also been a strong advocate of the One United Nations approach, which has gained new focus in the context of the United Nations activities in our country.

Afghanistan is well aware of the complexities associated with the task of peacebuilding. That challenging but noble endeavour will always be dogged

by obstacles and setbacks along the way. But we can attest to the fact that, with strong political will, national consensus and international support for peace efforts, success is possible. Under the Kabul process for peace and security, we have spearheaded new momentum in our Afghan-led peace efforts for a political settlement to the current conflict. The peace proposal made by President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani in February offers new incentives. It also incorporates the principles of national ownership and inclusivity, especially the proactive role of women at all stages of the process, including in decision-making. We are also benefiting from the contributions of civil society and religious figures in the process. That embodies the whole-of-society-approach that has been highlighted in relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. We urge all stakeholders, including countries of the region, to contribute to our Afghan-led and -owned peace process to help generate an enabling environment for direct and results-oriented talks.

In conclusion, the commitments that we make at this high-level meeting will provide a foundation for a more effective international framework for sustaining peace. We must strive to uphold the uniform principles and norms governing international law, and strengthen and expand new partnerships in support of a more effective and coherent United Nations approach. Doing so will certainly help ensure a just and lasting peace that holds and endures for all of humankind.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Igor Crnadak, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Crnadak (Bosnia and Herzegovina): I welcome the initiative of the President of the General Assembly in convening this high-level meeting on the important topic of peacebuilding and sustaining peace. I also hope that today's discussion will highlight the importance of a more effective and coherent international response to this complex and challenging task.

Today we are facing an increasing number of violent conflicts, as well as diverse natural crises, all over the world. I would therefore like to express my deep concern about the high human cost and suffering caused by armed conflicts in various regions of the world, which also simultaneously show us the significant number of security and humanitarian crises we are facing, despite our repeated genuine determination to save the world from the scourge of war. The nature of crises today

demands that the membership of the United Nations build a comprehensive multilateral system that can successfully respond to contemporary threats. To that end, the Secretary-General's report (A/72/707) on peacebuilding and sustaining peace can be viewed as a policy breakthrough and a significant contribution to peacebuilding work.

We reaffirm the primary responsibility of Governments in designing peacebuilding and sustaining peace policies. However, we also need to underline the important role of the relevant stakeholders in the process — United Nations entities, regional organizations, civil society, international financial institutions and the private sector. In that regard, we also view sustaining peace as a practice-oriented, comprehensive concept for preventing violent conflict by addressing the drivers of conflict, the patterns of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and the underlying root causes of conflict. Moreover, we see that cooperation among global and regional actors significantly increases the chances of achieving political solutions to crises and sustaining peace.

Development, peace and security, including human rights, are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. In that regard, I agree that development is the first and best front line of defence against the risks of violent conflict. For that reason, the Sustainable Development Goals have the potential to become the most powerful connector within the work of the United Nations and could serve as a channel for sustaining peace. In addition, I must stress the importance of redefining the United Nations approach to peace by adopting a long-term perspective and focusing on prevention, without which the peacebuilding architecture cannot be comprehensive. Moreover, mediation is widely recognized as one of the most effective means for prevention.

Institutions in post-conflict countries are critical to sustaining peace and reducing the risk of the recurrence of violence and conflict. Institution-building in such countries is an important pillar of peacebuilding and an issue that must be considered as soon as hostilities cease so as to establish viable and lasting peace. I would like to take this opportunity to share some examples from our experience on the ground.

No one can better understand a situation in a country than the people who live there, without whom no peacebuilding effort will be sustainable. The

centrality of national actors is therefore indispensable. After more than 25 years of peacebuilding, Bosnia and Herzegovina is a paradigm for what sustaining peace means in practice. Successful and effective peacebuilding mechanisms were essential to creating a stable future for my country and preventing its lapse or relapse into conflict. Nevertheless, certain elements of our experience can offer additional insights into related challenges and needs for the benefit of future peacebuilding efforts.

Peacebuilding efforts have to be carefully coordinated and introduced at an early stage along with peacekeeping activities. The primary focus should be on the rebuilding and capacity-building of vital national institutions, particularly the rule-of-law and security sectors, while ensuring their resilience. Building legitimate and effective institutions is a matter of years, and sometimes even decades. That is a complex, costly and demanding process, which requires the entire collective political will in coordination with the international community's engagement. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Union (EU), together with the United Nations, was among the major partners that played an important role in the process of peacebuilding and institution-building. In addition, the process of EU integration contributed not only to the further strengthening of institutions in the country, but also to better cooperation and dialogue in the region. It is also important to highlight that the period of intervention and assistance of the international community has to transition into a period of support and partnership in building and sustaining peace. The backbone of every peacebuilding effort is made up of the citizens of the respective countries who are open to dialogue, willing to listen to one another and extend respect and support for one another. Fundamentally, only citizens themselves can be keepers of their country, its peace and future prosperity.

I would also like to recall that in 2011, Bosnia and Herzegovina organized an open debate of the Security Council (see S/PV.6472) on institution-building in the context of post-conflict peacebuilding. It was our contribution to the ongoing dialogue and an attempt to shed further light on specific challenges and ways to improve our approach to peacebuilding. As a result, presidential statement S/PRST/2011/2 was issued, the first of its kind for that topic.

In conclusion, I reaffirm that promoting the sustaining peace agenda requires not only conceptual

work and organizational reform designed to address United Nations weaknesses, but also strong political will. Furthermore, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, and especially the Security Council, have critical roles to play in sustaining peace. The catalytic role of the Peacebuilding Fund should also be supported. If properly executed, such actions will help reinvigorate security, legitimacy, accountability and effectiveness, thereby delivering clear peace dividends on the ground. Peacebuilding is a complex and demanding process involving multiple stakeholders and the need to find a balance between achieving short-term results and long-term capacity development. The search for optimal solutions that achieve synergy in that multifaceted endeavour will never end.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Margot Wallström, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

Ms. Wallström (Sweden): First of all, I thank you, Sir, for bringing us all together to discuss the important topic of sustaining peace.

I believe that we have an excellent opportunity to advance this important agenda, based on the twin resolutions on sustaining peace (resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016)), which recognize that efforts to sustain peace are necessary not only at the end of a conflict, but long before it, including by preventing conflicts in the first place and addressing their root causes. The real test will be in translating that into change on the ground. As we all know, that requires continued strong political commitment at the highest level from all countries, in the North and the South, both big and small. I would like to outline three core cases, as I like to call them, that must be addressed in order to realize the sustaining peace agenda. The first is the economic case, which means investing in peace. The second involves sovereignty, which means prioritizing inclusion. The third is the regional case, which means supporting reform for the sake of prevention.

First, the economic case for preventing violent conflicts is indisputable. It can save tens of billions of dollars per year. That is reason enough to review our investment portfolios on peace and security. What does it mean for the United Nations? The largest part of the United Nations budget is devoted to the development system. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development offers an integrated framework to address the economic and social drivers of conflict and to build

stable societies, including by focusing on institutions, human rights and the rule of law. In order to be agile and relevant in-country, we need to provide adequate and predictable resources. Sweden is one of the largest contributors to United Nations development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, and we are currently in the process of entering into multi-year agreements with the relevant funds and programmes, with continued ambitious, and even increasing, levels of Swedish core support. Core funding is an investment in peace. We should heed the Secretary-General's call for a quantum leap with regard to the Peacebuilding Fund. We intend to contribute approximately \$24 million to the Fund this year. Sweden will more than double its core support in 2018, with an increase of approximately \$12 million. We are considering the possibility of forging a multi-year funding agreement with the Fund.

The second case involves combating inequality. In the 1970s, Olof Palme, Sweden's Prime Minister at the time, told the General Assembly that equality within nations is a prerequisite for equality among them. I believe that those words continue to ring true. Building inclusive societies is fundamental to sustaining peace. Equality therefore must be at the forefront of our efforts. Exclusion and discrimination are root causes of conflict that are often overlooked. We have to address all dimensions of inequality. That includes frank discussions about discrimination based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or income inequalities, as well as other mechanisms of oppression. Investments in capacity and legitimate national institutions can also bring about strengthened sovereignty.

Sustaining peace and avoiding a relapse into conflict entail reaching inclusive political solutions and addressing the root causes of conflict. That is why, as we have heard from several of the previous speakers, empowering women, young people and children is critical to sustaining peace, and indeed core peace and security business. Harnessing their potential increases the resilience of all societies and benefits all — women and men, girls and boys. Investing in youth and children today prevents the conflicts of tomorrow.

Advancing the sustaining peace agenda requires political will. We must be open to change. The beneficiaries of our work are not in New York; they are at the country level. My country therefore fully supports the principles for reform articulated by the Secretary-General: a country-level and people-centred perspective, gender parity, decentralized responsibility and

decision-making, and reformed budget procedures. Key to boosting coherence and avoiding fragmentation is an impartial, independent and empowered United Nations resident coordinator who drives the implementation of a United Nations development assistance framework that rallies all members of a United Nations country team to support national efforts on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I call on fellow Member States to go the extra mile in the current negotiations on the United Nations development system, particularly on the financing aspects. Stronger coordination among development, humanitarian and conflict-prevention efforts in the field is very important.

The United Nations cannot, and should not, do this alone. Partnerships at the regional and subregional levels for early warning and conflict prevention have proved invaluable. A case in point is the Economic Community of West African States, whose well-developed infrastructure should be sustainably supported.

In conclusion, we Member States bear an immense responsibility. That responsibility is to turn the promise of sustaining peace into a reality that touches the lives of those living under the shadow of conflict and violence. However, peace is never inevitable. It is clear that, if we want peace, we must prepare for peace.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.