



General Assembly

Seventy-fourth session

11th plenary meeting
Saturday, 28 September 2019, 9 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Muhammad-Bande (Nigeria)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Verdier (Argentina), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

Address by Mr. Lotay Tshering, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan

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

Mr. Lotay Tshering, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Lotay Tshering, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Tshering (Bhutan): I have the honour to convey the greetings of His Majesty the King and the people of Bhutan. I am very happy to represent the land of gross national happiness for the first time at the General Assembly. Last year, with aspirations to serve my country, my party and I campaigned on a commitment to narrowing the gap. In the language of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we pledged to leave no one behind. Therefore, the theme

identified for the general debate is relevant to me and my country.

In order to narrow the gap, all our initiatives and decisions are focused on uplifting the poor. We are convinced that it is only through quality health care and relevant education that we can eradicate poverty in all its forms in the most sustainable manner. Our Constitution mandates free health care and education for all Bhutanese. Although we are a resource-constrained country, our leaders have always insisted on strengthening the social sector. It is an investment. As we all know, it is never an expenditure. I am happy to share that, in July, my Government made teachers the highest-paid civil servants in Bhutan. We aspire to motivate teachers and attract the best and the brightest to that noble profession. It is only through investment in teachers that we can bring about significant improvement in the quality of education. Work is under way in schools to encourage learning beyond textbooks and exams.

While it may not be new to many members, we are also in the process of shifting from summative to formative learning. The focus of our education goes beyond imparting skills and knowledge. We would like to ensure that our children learn to become good human beings, with qualities such as compassion, empathy and respect for nature. Those are the main elements of the gross national happiness-based curriculum we have in the schools in Bhutan. We plan to enhance the school curriculum with practical lessons on climate change so that every student becomes a climate champion.

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A nation can grow only on the strong foundations of a good health-care system. Among the many health-care initiatives, my country is gearing up to launch the 1,000 Golden Days Plus package, which will make sure that every child is taken care of, even before he or she is born — from conception to the antenatal check-ups for mothers, institutional delivery, post-natal care, immunization schemes and exclusive breastfeeding for a minimum of six months. All women civil servants in Bhutan are entitled to six months' maternity leave, with full pay. We will implement that package through financial incentives to all mothers during the 1,000-day period. That will enhance proper care for both mother and child, including their nutritional requirements. As we all know, the health of the mother is equally important during that critical period. After those 1,000 golden days, the Ministry of Health will hand over the precious child to the Ministry of Education for early child care and formal education. That is in addition to totally free secondary and tertiary health care. Both modern and traditional medicines are housed under one roof across the country.

For the services that are not available within Bhutan, we send our patients to high-end medical centres in neighbouring countries. The cost of those referrals are fully borne by the Government. That also includes organ transplants, cardiac surgeries and even joint replacements. I am also pleased to share that universal health coverage should not be too difficult to achieve in Bhutan by 2030.

With deepest appreciation and reverence to our visionary monarchs, I claim with pride that Bhutan is carbon-negative. The principles of gross national happiness — our philosophy of development with values — prevented us from exploiting our national resources for short-term gains. The Constitution mandates 60 per cent forest cover at all times; we have 72 per cent as of today. When climate change has become the greatest threat facing humankind today, is it not a wonder that a small country such as Bhutan had the foresight to take that path from early days?

I am pleased to share that my Government has adopted a national human settlement policy that places importance on environment-friendly and energy-efficient construction. Our energy comes from hydropower, which we all know is renewable. We are also taking initiatives to replace fossil fuels with clean energy. For instance, we have launched a package to procure 300 electric taxis, with support from the Global

Environment Facility. That may appear to be few as an absolute number, but it is almost 10 per cent of the number of taxis in my capital.

Ironically, those contributions and initiatives are rendered futile by the choices of others. I personally feel that those who can are not doing enough. As a practising surgeon, I always share the following analogy. We advise patients to refrain from ill habits. Some listen but most do not. They later return with a terminal illness. By then it is too late to intervene. Such is the health of our environment. If we do not act now, we will leave an incurable, diseased planet. And none of us wants that.

Our focus on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) resonates well with the principles of gross national happiness. It is perhaps for that reason that Bhutan is well on track to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We have in place a joint parliamentary committee comprised of members from both the upper and lower houses. In addition, Bhutan presented its voluntary national review of the SDGs in July 2018. At the SDG summit held earlier this week, we committed to submitting another review in 2020. Just as we did for the Millennium Development Goals, Bhutan aspires to be an early achiever of the SDGs too.

Bhutan is set to graduate from the least developed country (LDC) category in 2023, coinciding with the completion of our ongoing five-year development plan. We have charted out a clear transition plan for graduation. To that effect, my Government has identified nine flagship programmes in critical sectors, which target multiple SDGs, including sustainable water management, waste management, organic agriculture, digital transformation, quality education and health care and, most important, economic diversification. We are mindful that Bhutan was found eligible for graduation based on social and income indicators during two consecutive triennial reviews. However, Bhutan did not meet the economic vulnerability index threshold either time. Today, as we prepare to graduate from LDC status, our last-mile challenges include eradicating poverty, addressing income inequality and ensuring that vulnerable segments of the population do not fall back into poverty due to climate-change hazards and natural disasters. In addition, we are also confronted with inadequate resources and a lack of institutional capacity. I personally feel that the targets of SDG 17 will help my country graduate on a sure footing; I request our development partners to consider that.

At a time when the relevance of multilateralism is often questioned, Bhutan's faith in the United Nations remains unwavering. The challenges we face as a global community are too numerous and multifaceted for individual States to tackle on their own. In order to move ahead, we must work together as one global community, with the United Nations at the forefront. From our perspective, there is no alternative to multilateralism. At the same time, the United Nations must also evolve and keep up with changing realities. In particular, Bhutan considers that the existing structure and composition of the Security Council do not reflect the current realities and circumstances of the world. The reform of the Security Council must go hand-in-hand with the wider reforms of the United Nations system in order for the Organization to remain legitimate, effective and credible. Bhutan has long supported the aspirations of the Group of Four to serve as permanent members of an expanded Security Council, with, of course, Africa also appropriately represented.

Similarly, in our interconnected world, we realize that international peace and security are shared responsibilities. Despite our constrained resources and other limitations, Bhutan joined the fraternity of troop- and police-contributing countries in 2014. Since then, our engagement in peacekeeping operations have gradually increased. As the first country to sign the Rapid Deployment Level agreement in December 2017, our pledged contingent is ready to be deployed to serve United Nations interests unconditionally.

A few hours from now, I will board a flight for the long journey back home. I return with renewed confidence that Bhutan continues to enjoy goodwill and support from the international community. On behalf of my King, my Queen and the people of Bhutan, I offer sincere prayers for world peace.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Lotey Tshering, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Ruhakana Rugunda, Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda

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

Mr. Ruhakana Rugunda, Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Ruhakana Rugunda, Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Rugunda (Uganda): I wish to congratulate Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session and to assure him of Uganda's full support. My delegation is pleased to have an eminent African steering the work of this organ and remains confident that he will lead the Assembly effectively and successfully. I would also like to thank Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés for her leadership during the seventy-third session. I pay tribute to Secretary-General António Guterres for his dedication and commitment to the work of the United Nations.

Uganda welcomes the theme of this session. It reminds us that, by putting the eradication of poverty, the improvement of livelihoods for all and the protection of our planet among its core objectives, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015 is ambitious, inclusive and transformative; it seeks to leave no one behind.

At the outset, I wish to thank the membership of the United Nations, in particular the Group of 77 and China, for their support and for accepting Uganda's offer to host the third South Summit in Kampala in April 2020. We look forward to welcoming all the members and working with them to strengthen and further revitalize our cooperation, within the context of a global partnership for sustainable development.

Uganda has prioritized poverty eradication and the provision of quality education in its national development plan, through deliberate and targeted investments in agriculture, industrialization, strategic infrastructure, such as roads and railways, energy production and human capital development. Uganda is mainstreaming the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the main component of the 2030 Agenda, through partnerships and targeted resource mobilization, from both domestic and external sources. Good progress has been made to integrate the SDGs into national, sectoral and local Government plans, and the progress of implementation is tracked through a national monitoring and evaluation system.

The biggest challenge remains inadequate financing to implement the 2030 Agenda. In order to mobilize domestic resources for the implementation of the SDGs, Uganda is implementing a policy of promoting exports, attracting tourists and foreign investors, mobilizing external development resources on concessional or favourable terms and strengthening institutional capacity to enhance service delivery. We are also committed to promoting integrated national financing mechanisms that will lower the cost of borrowing and facilitate easier access to capital for priority areas such as agriculture, agroprocessing and value added. While we do our part, we call on our development partners to fulfil their commitments and extend support in terms of timely and adequate means for accelerated implementation.

Setting our world on a sustainable course requires that we urgently address one of the defining challenges of our time, which is climate change. Climate change affects each and every one of us. All over the world, we have witnessed environmental disasters, the most recent of which in the Bahamas and Mozambique led to considerable loss of life and property. Those disasters showed the intensity and ferocity of the changes taking place in our environment. We stand in solidarity with the affected people as they continue with the recovery process.

Uganda has not been immune either, as it has experienced prolonged droughts, the melting of ice caps at its highest mountain, the Rwenzori Mountains, floods, erratic rainfall and landslides, which have also caused substantial loss of life. Those frequent and recurring episodes have severe consequences on our socioeconomic growth, which is heavily dependent on natural resources.

Despite being one of the least emitters of polluting gases, Uganda has taken bold measures to move to implement some concrete adaptation and mitigation actions, such as the restoration of 64,000 hectares of wetlands to benefit 4 million farmers, the reforestation of over 200,000 hectares, the generation of an additional 20 per cent of clean energy from renewable sources and the promotion of solar-powered irrigation schemes.

Climate financing remains crucial because investments are required to significantly reduce emissions, adapt to the adverse effects and reduce the impacts of a changing climate. We urge developed countries to scale up their level of financial support as

committed to in a concrete road map to achieve the goal of jointly providing \$100 billion annually by 2020 for mitigation and adaptation.

While the world focuses on climate change, biodiversity loss continues to escalate. However, climate change and biodiversity loss are intrinsically linked, and both must be addressed simultaneously. Biodiversity is part of an intricate web of life that provides \$125 trillion per year in ecosystem services to humans, such as clean drinking water, clean air, fertile soils, climate stabilization and crop pollination.

Recent reports have shown that vulnerable populations will feel the effects of biodiversity loss first, as well as benefit the most from avoiding and reversing land degradation. Uganda is a country with a large population that relies heavily on natural resources. We are therefore likely to feel some of the most extreme affects first, such as the loss of wetlands, forests and even species. That is why Uganda is supporting a proposal at next year's meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity that takes bold steps to create a sustainable planet, including protecting at least 30 per cent of our lands and significantly generating more funding from Governments and the private sector to protect nature, on which our lives and economies depend.

Uganda is prioritizing universal health coverage to ensure that the population can access health services without risk of financial or economic ruin or impoverishment, no matter what their socioeconomic position might be. To demonstrate its commitment, my Government has developed a universal health coverage road map that lays out the main policy actions for quick wins and setting the course for sustainable and faster progress.

My Government is expanding community-level health promotion and prevention programmes to reduce the preventable disease burden. It is enhancing specialized medical care services to address population needs, especially for non-communicable diseases. We are also addressing financial risk protection by ensuring the affordability and sustainability of quality health-care services through legislation and aiding the institutionalization of a national health insurance scheme.

We welcome the high-level meeting on universal health coverage held a few days ago. In addition, we underscore the need to strengthen international

solidarity and cooperation to make bigger and smarter investments in health to achieve universal health coverage by 2030.

Terrorism constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. Terrorism and violent extremism continue to bring death and suffering to innocent people. Terrorist groups such as Da'esh, Al-Qaida, Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram continue to inflict death and devastation. They continue to manipulate young minds by exploiting real or perceived injustices and grievances. The international community must adapt to that changing landscape. We must be unwavering in our resolve to combat terrorism. Uganda will continue to support and actively participate in global counter-terrorism efforts.

Uganda remains committed to multilateralism as a means to achieving comprehensive and equitable solutions to global problems and global challenges. The 2030 Agenda was truly a triumph for multilateralism. We proved that the global community could work together to address pressing issues facing humankind, while making the necessary commitments for the benefit of all. We must redouble our collective efforts to seek common solutions to various pressing regional and global challenges, including unsettled situations and conflicts in various parts of the world, transnational organized crime and disease.

As we saw in the recent period, the Ebola virus and other diseases know no boundaries. Recent outbreaks are a reminder of areas where countries in a region, working with the international community, can work together to detect, assess, notify and respond to such public health threats and challenges. Uganda has been involved in such efforts, and we appreciate the support extended by the international community in dealing with the recent outbreak in our region. I wish to reiterate Uganda's readiness to strengthen international collaboration in that endeavour.

Our development and transformation cannot take place without peace and security, which are prerequisites for socioeconomic development and transformation. We should continue to give attention to supporting an environment that is peaceful, thereby enabling us to concentrate on our growth and on development. The United Nations should continue to support conflict prevention and resolution initiatives undertaken by regional and subregional organizations such as the African Union and Intergovernmental Authority on

Development (IGAD). That partnership should be based on a division of labour and burden-sharing, complementarity and mutual respect. Where there has been such cooperation, we have seen positive results.

We congratulate the Government and the people of the Sudan on the historic milestone of reaching an agreement between the Forces for Freedom and Change and the Transitional Military Council, which ushered in a civilian-led transitional Government in the Sudan. We commend Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, and Mr. Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and current IGAD Chairperson, for their tireless efforts. That was a clear demonstration of the pursuit of African solutions to African problems.

We are pleased with the progress Somalia is making in finding peace and stability. Those developments are taking place against the backdrop of Government efforts to consolidate State institutions, including the building of its national security forces, which will pave the way for the gradual drawdown and exit of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). As the country implements the transition plan, it is essential that the international community address the mismatch between the commitment to generate the requisite Somali national security forces and the drawdown of AMISOM. A failure to carefully manage that process could imperil the political and security gains already made.

With regard to South Sudan, we are pleased with the positive progress in the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. We welcome the progress on the security front and urge the non-signatory groups to join the nation-building efforts. We call on the international community to support the positive momentum and expedite its support for the completion of the remaining critical tasks.

Uganda continues to support the efforts of the peoples of the colonies and non-self-governing territories to exercise their right to self-determination. We believe that, to achieve decolonization, the voices of the people of those territories should be heard by all. We support the right of the people of Western Sahara, the only such territory on the African continent, to self-determination on the basis of respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the relevant United

Nations resolutions. Uganda supports the efforts of the Secretary-General to achieve a mutually acceptable political solution between the parties.

The Assembly made a historic pledge during the 2005 World Summit to strengthen the United Nations with a view of enhancing its authority and its efficiency. In line with that pledge, Uganda has continued to support the cause for a revitalized, reformed and effective United Nations system. It is critical to make the United Nations more responsive, efficient and effective in its support to the efforts of Member States to achieve the SDGs. Uganda welcomes and supports the Secretary-General's reform to make the Organization more efficient and effective.

Uganda is proud to host the United Nations Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, which over the years has proved it can provide the efficiency gains and cost savings that the Secretary-General and the United Nations membership are calling for. Since its establishment, the Regional Service Centre has grown and expanded with the active support of the Government. As Member States prepare for discussions on the global service delivery model during this session, Uganda looks forward to support by the membership for Entebbe as a location for a global shared service centre.

The need to reform the Security Council is more urgent and imperative now than ever before. Uganda supports the comprehensive reform of the Security Council. The present geopolitical realities are compelling for a comprehensive reform of the Council to make way for equitable representation. Africa, with more than 1 billion citizens and over 70 per cent of issues on the agenda of the Security Council, has no representation in the permanent category of membership, in addition to being underrepresented in the non-permanent category. It is time that we address this long-standing injustice and imbalance, perpetuated in the present configuration of the Security Council, without further delay. Uganda supports the Common African Position on Security Council reform, as enunciated in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration. We urge Member States to work to achieve progress in the negotiations on reform in the context of the intergovernmental negotiations.

The predicament of refugees continues to this day. Millions of refugees continue to live in countries facing economic and development challenges. Despite the generosity of host countries and international

actors, the gap between the needs and the humanitarian funding of refugees and host communities has in effect widened. Uganda has maintained its open-door policy on refugees and currently hosts more than 1.3 million refugees — the largest number of refugees in Africa.

Our approach to refugees is anchored in our pan-African spirit, whereby we regard refugees as our brothers and sisters fleeing conflict and distress, who, above all, are seeking peace and security. The influx and prolonged presence of refugees have had an adverse impact on the environment. Forests have been stripped, as refugees need poles for houses, firewood, medicine, thatching and fodder within and far away from the refugee settlements. It is estimated that 15,000 hectares of forest and savannah woodland near several refugee settlements in the country have been lost.

The circumstances of refugees and host communities pose enormous challenges to the national authorities, which need to be addressed as part of international solidarity. Solidarity is not a one-way street. We call for more equitable sharing of the burden and responsibility for hosting and supporting the world's refugees, consistent with international commitments.

Strengthening South-South cooperation is critical to the achievement of the SDGs. We welcome the outcome of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, held earlier this year in Buenos Aires. That meeting underscored, inter alia, the need to promote peaceful and inclusive societies in order to achieve sustainable development and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Finally, I wish to reiterate the readiness of Uganda to work with Member States in preparation of the South-South Summit to be held in Kampala in April 2020. We believe that the Summit will make a significant contribution to our collective efforts towards achieving the SDGs.

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

Mr. Ruhakana Rugunda, Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Christian Ntsay, Prime Minister of the Republic of Madagascar

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

Mr. Christian Ntsay, Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Christian Ntsay, Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Republic of Madagascar, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Ntsay (Madagascar) (*spoke in French*): I am honoured, on this occasion, to represent His Excellency Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Republic of Madagascar, and the entire Malagasy people. Taking the floor before the General Assembly is both a privilege and a duty, as our exchanges and contributions will forge the way forward and the future of our shared vision of a world of peace, prosperity and a United Nations of peoples.

I join those who spoke before me in sincerely congratulating the President of the General Assembly on his election. I am convinced that his conviction in the merits of, and commitment to, multilateralism will ensure concrete progress in addressing the various challenges that face the Organization, in line with the main theme of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Let us no longer bury our heads in the sand. Our world has been torn apart for several decades by unprecedented crises, conflicts and ever-increasing inequalities. Every day, our planet is incrementally further threatened by our reckless excesses and irresponsible actions. Of course, we are committed to marshalling our strength to end all forms of poverty, combat inequality and address climate change, while also ensuring that no one is left behind. We have undeniably worked hard at all the major summits and conferences to achieve equitable and lasting human and economic development. However, the reality is that that is no longer enough.

Together we will need to redouble our efforts to eradicate poverty and promote and ensure quality education and inclusion. We will need to strengthen and coordinate our efforts to combat climate change,

the consequences of which have become increasingly felt, and which unfortunately greatly worsen poverty and inequalities among peoples today. Compensating for decades of hesitation, and even inaction, is a responsibility incumbent upon every one of us.

Beyond words and statements, it is our obligation to do as much as humanly possible in terms of our initiatives and work. We will have to walk together to breathe new life into multilateralism, in which we believe, so that we, the peoples of the United Nations, can continue to always know what we stand for through the Organization, its values and, above all, its work.

With regard to my country, Madagascar, it is integrating ways of meeting the global challenges, with which it is familiar as a Member of the United Nations, within its own national ambitions and projects. I therefore reaffirm that, under the leadership of His Excellency President Rajoelina, Madagascar has set for itself the major goal of achieving emerging country status in the coming years in order to close the development gap.

Madagascar faces considerable challenges. Major structural and sectoral reforms are currently being launched, which we will pursue with unprecedented commitment and determination. The first challenge is that of consolidating the democratic process and governance and strengthening national unity. The Government is committed to and is implementing a policy of promoting and respecting individual and collective freedoms, respect for the separation of powers and the emergence of a responsible and dynamic civil society in which young people and women play an active role. Since the beginning of his term, the President of the Republic of Madagascar has deemed governance issues a national priority — based on the promotion of democracy, human rights, the fight against corruption, and social justice. That is clearly stipulated in our new general State policy, the urgency of which is undisputed. That is why the Government fully supports and takes action to implement it.

The State acts today as institutional guarantor to ensure respect for human rights in Madagascar — one of its main policy areas. To that end, the Malagasy Government is working assiduously to ensure that such issues are addressed appropriately and responsibly, both in terms of one-off news events and of fundamental issues related to the political and strategic dimensions of the issue of respect for human rights in Madagascar,

such as security in rural and urban areas, the judicial and prison system, decentralization, the health-care and nutrition system and the education system. That involves complex undertakings that require new strategic guidelines and innovative and coordinated initiatives, as defined in our general State policy.

One of the first measures taken by the current Administration was restoring peace and security, in particular to protect those living in rural areas from the scourge of the *dahalo*, bandit fighters who steal cattle in the remote areas of Madagascar. *Dahalo* use deadly and unacceptable practices, and nothing stopped them until recently. They attack villages, rape women and girls, kill men and boys and steal herds to fuel an illegal zebu-trafficking network. It must stop. Fortunately, law enforcement officers are shouldering their responsibility to protect the lives and possessions of the population by making the ultimate sacrifice to win that fight.

I reaffirm the full commitment of the President of Madagascar and the entire Government to respect and promote human rights. The Government's action is therefore in line with the need to guarantee the safety of the people and property and ensure equitable justice for all. We strongly condemn all forms of violence, regardless of the source, perpetrated outside of the law, and all forms of abuse of authority. That is why any deviation from those standards, in particular by some law enforcement officers, has led to criminal, administrative and disciplinary sanctions.

Prevention is also one of the pillars of our peace and security policy. Multiple initiatives and actions have been taken, in particular through the reform of the security sector, the redeployment of security forces, along with the construction of new local operating bases, the improvement of equipment for intervention units, the development of a bovine microchip programme, providing location-tracking devices for cattle, an export ban on zebras and the construction of new prisons to meet international standards for better prison conditions that are respectful of human rights.

In line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, education and health are also among my country's national priorities. Madagascar recognizes that its development capacity is based on its capacity to educate. To ensure that every citizen can participate in the life of the nation, the Malagasy Government is committed to ensuring education for all. Inclusive,

equitable and high-quality education for all is an inalienable human right. It is also a measure of a society's harmonious and sustainable development and the stability of a country.

We are committed to ensuring that all girls and boys, equally, complete quality primary and secondary education, which guarantees that their education was genuinely useful. With that in mind, we took the decision to build new local schools across the country, continue recruiting and training teachers, provide students with textbooks and tablets and continue the school-canteen programme for vulnerable schools to ensure good school retention rates. In addition, Madagascar is now voluntarily committed to making health care accessible to all, by building new local hospitals, improving the quality of medical facilities and services through existing training in health-care, recruiting health-care personnel, strengthening the skills of medical teams and improving the management of the public health system, in particular by implementing the universal health coverage policy.

The second challenge faced by emerging economies is that of ensuring inclusive economic growth that seeks to reduce poverty and inequality. Our Government firmly believes that economic development is possible because human capital remains a priority and is now at the heart of all our initiatives and actions. Madagascar is a young, dynamic nation, led by a strong, visionary and inclusive leadership. With that conviction, Madagascar therefore aims to put an end to the paradox of being a country with recognized potential but marked by unprecedented poverty, insecurity and inequality. Making up for lost time in our national development process, which the country has endured for nearly 60 years now, lies at the heart of the vision and commitment of President Rajoelina.

The Madagascar plan for the period 2019 to 2023 will lead our country in its structural and dimensional transformation to accelerate its economic growth. Based on a five-year strategic framework, Madagascar essentially seeks to double its electricity production by developing its renewable energy capacities; develop 100,000 hectares to achieve self-sufficiency in rice production; support a diversified industrialization programme to ensure added value in priority value chains, such as tourism, transport, mines, agroindustry, fishing, animal husbandry and cultural industries; promote entrepreneurship among women and young people; build 50,000 new homes across the country;

build and rehabilitate roads, including in rural areas, ports, airports and markets throughout Madagascar; provide the population with access to drinking water and sanitation; build new sports and cultural infrastructure; promote decent work for all, with social protection mechanisms for all workers, and constantly improve the business climate, while ensuring that savings are passed on not only to private investors but also the people and the State.

Madagascar genuinely seeks to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. My Government is working to ensure the effective use of methods and approaches and the efficient use of resources. The State made the decision to rely on its own strength to mobilize domestic resources to fund its development plan. Nevertheless, Madagascar also relies on international solidarity, support and opportunities in order to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The third major challenge is the environment. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change enabled all signatory countries to make a concrete commitment to combating rising temperatures through nationally determined contributions. However, one cannot but note that all the contributions to which the signatory countries have so far committed themselves are not sufficient to achieve the objectives set out in the Agreement. Based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, I call on the signatory countries to assume their responsibilities so as to ensure that the necessary efforts and resources are mobilized with a view to reverse the current trend, because the most vulnerable countries are often the ones that bear the brunt of climate change.

Despite being responsible for less than 1 per cent of the world's greenhouse-gas emissions, Madagascar is feeling the full impact of climate change, including increasingly frequent and violent tropical cyclones, drought, flooding and disruptions to the agricultural calendar. However, Madagascar is aware of its responsibility and is now showing firm political will in the collective effort to mobilize against climate change. In that context, Madagascar is relentlessly pursuing efforts to preserve and conserve biodiversity and existing natural and environmental resources while committing to the implementation of a bold and ambitious reforestation programme covering an area of at least 200,000 hectares over five years, by planting 20 million trees each year, so that Madagascar can return to its former self, namely the Green Island.

It is worth pointing out the multiple consequences of climate change in the south of the country and the Government's strong political will to provide structural and ambitious responses to them. The upcoming round table on the implementation of the integrated development strategy for the South, with the United Nations co-chairing alongside the national authorities, will undoubtedly constitute a concrete commitment to enhance the value of global partnership.

In dealing with national challenges, my country strongly supports the promotion of the values of peace, social justice, human rights, responsible governance, inclusiveness and the fostering of pride and dignity among the entire Malagasy population. All this is the basis for our long-awaited emergence.

The United Nations is a major partner for Madagascar and has always been an indispensable ally in the course of my country's contemporary history. The recent electoral process was a major step that illustrates once again the determination of an entire population to catch up on its development.

Before ending my statement, let me say that we have a common mission, which is to find, together, a model of mobilization, partnership and cooperation that strikes a new balance so that, together, we can achieve our common goal of sustainable development. We face the same challenges and we will have to work together, as our best interest is the same, namely, our shared planet. I believe that this is a unifying vision that will constantly guide our steps and inspire each and every one of us to strive for a better, fairer and more forward-looking world, a world of dialogue, cooperation and shared prosperity.

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

Mr. Christian Ntsay, Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted from the rostrum.

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

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See.

His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Cardinal Parolin (Holy See): At the outset, I would like to extend the warm greetings of Pope Francis to the President and to all the delegations participating in the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Keenly aware that relationships in the international community today are experiencing particular tension and fragmentation, Pope Francis, who dedicated his 2019 New Year's address to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See to the theme of multilateralism, tirelessly urges every actor on the international stage to strive to promote dialogue at every level as an indispensable step and the antidote to all divisions. In recent years, we have seen the value of effective multilateralism, for example in lifting millions out of poverty, resolving various conflicts, protecting our common home, fighting infectious-disease epidemics and caring for migrants and refugees. At the same time, we are painfully aware of the many ways in which international cooperation and commitment have been inadequate to meet the challenges we face.

Among those challenges, we must consider the situation in the Middle East and the various conflicts, especially in Syria and Yemen, that demand effective cooperation and the courageous commitment of the family of nations in order to put an end to the immense suffering of so many people and to set out on the road to peace and reconstruction. The Israeli-Palestinian peace process, which has been under way for a long time, is of perennial concern and runs the risk of seeing unilateral measures and solutions being advanced instead of a collaborative response from the international community.

Another area of pressing concern involves the situations in Venezuela and Nicaragua, where institutional channels must be fully utilized to find negotiated solutions to political, social and economic problems, ease tensions and alleviate the suffering of the population. In that regard, it is important also that the recommendations presented by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights be fulfilled. Positive signs include the extension for another year of the mandate, as established in Security

Council resolution 2366 (2017), of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. Notwithstanding the many obstacles facing it, the ongoing peace process in Colombia remains an inspiring example for a world of effective multilateralism.

One of the great challenges is the absence of peace and security in many parts of the world. In our common efforts to prevent conflict, end wars through mediation and build post-conflict peace and reconciliation, it is opportune to recall Security Council resolution 1888 (2009) on the tenth anniversary of its adoption. This anniversary is a welcome occasion to renew our dedication to protecting women and children from widespread sexual violence in armed conflict. The use of sexual violence as a weapon of war is absolutely unacceptable and must be stopped. We must never overlook the plight of the children conceived as a result of sexual violence in war. Both mothers and children are innocent victims. They must be protected, assisted and rehabilitated without being separated from their families or communities. No effort must be spared to ensure their full reintegration into society.

The proliferation of weapons is particularly alarming, as it spurs and exacerbates violence, conflict and war. The Secretary-General's report (A/74/1) documents the fact that armed groups are multiplying, worldwide military spending and arms competition are increasing, and the threat of the weaponization of artificial intelligence, cyberspace and outer space is growing.

Greater multilateral cooperation is likewise needed to create the conditions and take the steps necessary for the elimination of nuclear weapons. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) are both important steps towards a nuclear-weapon free world. They are the fruit of the efforts of many States and other stakeholders to promote greater awareness and understanding of the humanitarian consequences and environmental disasters that would result from the use of nuclear weapons and are complements to, not distractions from, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which will hold its tenth Review Conference next year.

One of the triumphs of multilateralism in recent years has been the global mobilization to lift people out of extreme poverty. The implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, in addition to other

achievements, has helped lift nearly a billion people out of extreme poverty. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an unprecedented multilateral commitment. Yet, as the Secretary-General's report notes, while much progress has been achieved, if we continue at the present pace, the targets may not be reached by 2030.

When Pope Francis spoke to the General Assembly four years ago (see A/70/PV.3) immediately before the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, he emphasized that the new paradigm for development called for by the Agenda must begin with the core principle of the dignity of each human person and must recognize that extreme poverty is primarily a denial of that dignity. He said,

“above and beyond our plans and programmes, we are dealing with real men and women, just like the Government leaders, who live, struggle and suffer, and are often forced to live in great poverty, deprived of all rights.” (A/70/PV.3, p. 4)

When we focus on the primacy of the human dignity of every impoverished man or woman, boy or girl, we immediately recognize the need to help them shape their own integral development as subjects, not objects.

Education is a fundamental enabler and key to the achievement of the Agenda for Sustainable Development. Recently, Pope Francis launched the Global Educational Alliance, in which he renewed the invitation to dialogue on how we are shaping the future of our planet and the need to employ the talents of all, since all change requires an educational process aimed at developing a new universal solidarity and a more welcoming society. Pope Francis believes that never before has there been such need to unite our efforts in a broad educational alliance, to form mature individuals capable of overcoming division and antagonism, and to restore the fabric of relationships for the sake of a more fraternal humanity. We are experiencing an era of change: a transformation that is not only cultural but also anthropological, creating a new semantics. In this transformation process, we must have the courage to place the human person at the centre and to work for the promotion of an integral ecology based on the inseparable bonds among concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society and interior peace.

When it comes to care for our common home and the threat posed by climate change, the international community has been galvanizing its multilateral

collaboration. We saw it with the Paris Agreement in 2015. We witnessed it again in December in Katowice, with the adoption of the Katowice rulebook to implement the Paris Agreement.

To enhance a multilateral response, there is a particularly urgent need for a transparent framework to promote trust among nations in fulfilling the commitments made. There is a need for more effective multilateral cooperation between the developed and developing world, for example, on financing measures to curb climate change, on technology transfer, on energy issues and on how to apply the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capacities in burden-sharing. We can and must achieve the goals we set out to accomplish for the sake of future generations. As encouraged by Pope Francis at the Climate Action Summit some days ago, we have to pursue this effort with honesty, courage and responsibility.

As we care for our common home, we must give special attention to the Amazon, where numerous fires have devastated the region. We all recognize how important the Amazon is for the whole world and indeed for the very future of humankind. Beginning a week from tomorrow, on 6 October, Pope Francis will gather in the Vatican a Synod of Bishops from all over the world for the Amazonian region, which will be focused principally on the ecclesial and pastoral challenges of the area, with particular attention given to the indigenous peoples living there and the human, ecological, social and economic issues that are impacting the region and, indeed, humankind.

To ensure that no one is excluded from the benefits of economic development, there must be a multilateral commitment to prosperity for all through the opening up of economic participation to individuals and peoples. People likewise need access to the enjoyment of all their fundamental human rights, which is often denied in situations of conflict or widespread violence, disasters and institutional failure. On this year's seventieth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, Pope Francis recalled that these important international legal instruments impose limitations on the use of force and protect civilians and prisoners in time of war. He urged States always to observe the limitations imposed by international humanitarian law, protecting defenceless peoples and civil structures, especially hospitals, schools, places of worship and refugee camps.

One particular right that the international community must ensure with greater vigilance is the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as enshrined in article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the past year, we have seen an increase in attacks against religious believers. We appreciate the international community's calling attention to attacks on religious believers and its adoption of various initiatives to protect churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and other religious sites.

Finally, the challenges of international migration and forced displacement demand the comprehensive commitment and action of all States. The Holy See actively supported and engaged in the intergovernmental consultations and negotiations on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. Although the outcome of a compromise, the Global Compact, together with that on refugees, is a significant sign of political will, affirming our shared responsibility to act in solidarity not only as Governments but also with people on the move. Looking ahead, the International Migration Review Forum will be central to the follow-up and review of the Global Compact. All States, regardless of their political position regarding the Compact, should take advantage of that unique Forum to address the emerging challenges and concerns that they face in making international migration more safe, orderly and regular.

For the Holy See, the underlying principle of multilateralism is human fraternity. In that perspective, the Holy See hopes that, as we all look ahead to the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations next year, the international community will revisit the reason why it exists and commit itself anew to the task of uniting nations, associating States and bringing peoples together as one family. The Holy See and the Catholic Church, which is a communion of peoples of all nations and races, is wholeheartedly dedicated to that challenging, noble and necessary common commitment, common work and common good.

His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Pham Binh Minh, Deputy Prime Minister of Viet Nam.

Mr. Pham Binh Minh (Viet Nam): I wish to congratulate Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his

election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. I firmly believe that he will skilfully lead our session to success.

May I express my appreciation to Her Excellency María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, for her important contributions to the work of the Assembly, as well as to Secretary-General António Guterres for his work and dedication over the past year.

Eighty years ago, the Second World War broke out and became the deadliest chapter in the history of humankind. That global conflict took the lives of tens of millions and destroyed economies and societies. It witnessed horrendous crimes and the emergence of new weapons and means of warfare with unparalleled destructive power. By the close of that chapter, nations had come to realize the importance of a collective security system based on multilateral cooperation and international law as the foundation of a post-war global order. That has proved to be a wise choice.

For the past 75 years, multilateralism, with the United Nations at its heart, has become indispensable. Multilateral institutions provide the forums for States to deliberate and to establish common policies in all aspects of global governance, from the overarching themes of peace, security, economy, trade, development and human rights to specialized areas of cooperation in the maritime, aviation, postal and telecommunication spheres. They also generate ideas, set standards and strategies to coordinate the efforts of States to address traditional and non-traditional security challenges, and improve the quality of life.

We are at the threshold of the third decade of the twenty-first century. We can pride ourselves on a world of peace, cooperation and development. We can rejoice at the achievements of peace efforts in various regions, from Mali to Liberia and from South Sudan to Côte d'Ivoire. Viet Nam welcomes all efforts to settle disputes by dialogue and peaceful means, including the dialogue process between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States.

We have also seen significant achievements in global development. Hundreds of millions of people have been lifted out of poverty. The universalization of primary education has been achieved in many nations. Maternal and child mortality rates have been considerably reduced. Together, we have established important strategies and frameworks for global

development efforts, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Yet multilateralism is facing acute challenges. It is alarming that narrowly interpreted national interests are chosen over common values and that big Power politics, coercion, competition and confrontation are favoured over cooperation, dialogue and respect for international law. The consequential reduction in political commitment and resources has impacted the efficiency and effectiveness of multilateral cooperation.

All that is happening at a time when the challenges we face are greater in magnitude and more complex in nature. No nation is immune to the immediate and long-term impacts of climate change, environmental degradation or pandemics. Conflicts are protracted in many areas, especially in the Middle East and Africa, while the risk of conflicts looms large in other regions. Battlegrounds are no longer confined within designated war zones but have spread to densely populated cities and villages.

The global arms control and non-proliferation regime is becoming more fragile. The development of science and technology has brought about new means and methods of warfare. Global military spending is at its highest. In the words of the Secretary-General, the world is on the verge of a new Cold War.

In that context, we welcome the timely theme set by the President for this session — “Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion”.

Multilateral cooperation has a special place in Viet Nam’s foreign policy. Our history of reform, development and international integration are closely associated with our participation in global and regional multilateral institutions. The assistance of the United Nations and other international organizations helped Viet Nam to rebuild the country after decades of war.

Solid policy and legal frameworks have allowed Viet Nam to further advance integration and socioeconomic development and better implement global development goals. The United Nations and multilateral forums have provided Viet Nam with important political and legal platforms to expand our cooperation with nations of the world.

Viet Nam has been an active and constructive partner in multilateral processes. We are working with other States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to enhance ASEAN’s centrality in promoting peace, security and prosperity in Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific region.

In the United Nations, members of the Viet Nam People’s Army have joined the Organization’s peacekeeping operations. Our diplomats and experts have contributed substantively to the development of United Nations agendas and policies on sustainable development, oceans and seas, and human rights, inter alia. Viet Nam is strongly committed to the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and in particular is taking concrete steps to put an end to single-use plastics by 2025. Viet Nam is honoured to have been elected as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. On behalf of the Government and the people of Viet Nam, I wish to extend to the Assembly our most sincere gratitude for once again entrusting us with that important position. As a member of the Council, Viet Nam will do its level best to work with the broader United Nations membership towards the ultimate goals of sustainable peace and development.

Given today’s daunting challenges, it is critical that we all work to revitalize multilateralism and strengthen the United Nations. I would like to offer some thoughts on how that can be achieved.

First, we must all reaffirm the fundamental importance of international law and the Charter of the United Nations in international relations and multilateral cooperation. International law is the foundation of equal relations among States. Our actions must be in line with and guided by respect for international law. Viet Nam believes that respect for international law is the most effective means of preventing conflicts and seeking sustainable solutions to disputes. We support all efforts aimed at the settlement of disputes by peaceful means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law, including through negotiation, conciliation and judicial settlement.

We call for the immediate lifting of the unilateral embargoes imposed against Cuba, which contravene international law. We urge the relevant parties in the South China Sea to respect international law, especially the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

(UNCLOS) of 1982, which is appropriately referred to as the constitution for the oceans and seas. Linking the Indian and Pacific Oceans, the South China Sea is strategically important to peace, security and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region. The efforts of the relevant States have yielded positive outcomes in settling differences and disputes. However, Viet Nam has on many occasions voiced its concerns over the recent complicated developments in the South China Sea, including serious incidents that infringe upon Viet Nam's sovereign rights and jurisdiction in our maritime zones, as defined by UNCLOS. The relevant States should exercise self-restraint and refrain from conducting unilateral acts that may complicate the situation or escalate tensions at sea, and disputes should be settled by peaceful means, in accordance with international law, including UNCLOS.

Secondly, it is important to enhance global and regional synergies. Global actions can be effective only if adapted to the particular historical, socioeconomic, political, cultural and geographical conditions of each region and State. Regional organizations could play a critical role in supporting United Nations efforts. Viet Nam welcomes the cooperation between the United Nations — especially the Security Council — and the African Union, the European Union and the League of Arab States in addressing security challenges in Africa and the Middle East.

In the South-East Asia region, ASEAN is a regional institution that is based on shared commitments and collective responsibility in enhancing regional peace, security and prosperity. In the more than 50 years since its founding, ASEAN has become an embodiment of the vision of regional Governments and peoples of a politically, economically and socially connected community. ASEAN has proved its centrality in the regional rules-based security architecture and provided a forum for States of the region and elsewhere to cooperate on matters pertaining to sustainable development and peace and stability in the region and around the world.

In 2020, Viet Nam will assume the chairmanship of ASEAN, at the same time as serving on the Security Council. We will endeavour to enhance cooperation and complementarity between the Council and regional organizations, particularly in the area of conflict prevention and sustainable peace efforts.

Thirdly, multilateral efforts need to put people at their heart. Lasting peace is a prerequisite for sustainable development and can be achieved only when the basic safety and living conditions of people are ensured. Viet Nam deplores all attacks against civilians and the infrastructure critical to their survival. We support and are committed to the advancement of United Nations agendas on women, peace and stability and children and armed conflicts. Viet Nam has endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration with a view to joining efforts to protect children's right to education under all circumstances. We will promote post-conflict reconstruction efforts, particularly mine action, for the safety of people and the socioeconomic recovery and development of States.

Fourthly, multilateral institutions must be reformed in order to meet new requirements and better serve the interests of Member States, especially developing States in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Viet Nam welcomes all efforts to reform the United Nations development system in order to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness. We underline the need to increase Government ownership and to garner the contributions of non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders and communities. Viet Nam will work with Member States to actively contribute to reforming the working methods of the Security Council in order to enhance its transparency, democracy and effectiveness.

Finally, the political commitment of world leaders is indispensable to any efforts aimed at revitalizing multilateralism. The United Nations and the multilateral system can be empowered only if all countries commit to the greater good of the international community instead of narrowly defined interests and invest their will and resources. Only when such commitment is guaranteed can we enter a new, brighter chapter in the history of humankind — a chapter of cooperation and dialogue; a chapter of sustainable peace and development.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Prak Sokhonn, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Mr. Sokhonn (Cambodia): Let me start by congratulating His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande of Nigeria on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. We have full confidence in his leadership, and he can count on our support in the delivery of his mandate.

Since the adoption of our founding Charter of the United Nations, the world in general has become a better place. However, new conflicts have emerged; some persist today while others have raged for decades. My country has the sad record of being one of the most bombed nations in the history of humankind, while being at war with no one. Among its great merits, the United Nations is here to help to prevent such conflicts — modestly called regional conflicts — from degenerating into a full-scale global confrontation, and that was especially true during the Cold War.

The end of the division of the world into two rival blocs gave rise to a new world order, followed shortly by the emergence of new economic Powers. Those dramatic changes paved the way for the new reality of a multipolar world. That new world should enable the peaceful co-existence of countries with different political systems, religious and cultural references and concepts of the economic role of the State, but in which they can all agree to subject themselves to a number of common rules set out in treaties that no State should reject unilaterally. While that multipolarity is undeniable, it continues to face resistance and rebuke. Based on the pretext of the universality of certain values, some Powers are attempting to impose their model of society and governance, thereby fomenting a new form of division in the world that reminds us of the worst moments of the Cold War. Today countries are labelled as enemies simply because they are viewed as competitors or because they refuse to take sides, irrespective of their context and history. Others are pressured to line up behind an ideology, creating a world of us against them. Important treaties are being unilaterally rejected.

Despite the clear provisions against it enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, interference in others' affairs is commonplace and proliferating. Under international law, interference in the affairs of a sovereign State is authorized only for humanitarian reasons, and in a deceptive and deceitful practice, humanitarian reasons have now been used as a pretext to interfere in some countries' domestic affairs and even provoke regime change by undemocratic means. Governments have fabricated claims and accusations, based on false information relayed by the mainstream — or should we say gaslighting — media, to justify interference of all kinds, creating instability, tensions and often chaos and suffering. As a result, the world is full of uncertainties. The international

community is facing damaging challenges in the form of geopolitical rivalry and armed conflicts, to which are added growing terrorism, extremism, radicalism and other unconventional security threats.

The arms race is being revived by the reckless use of threats and by breaking international commitments, to the detriment of the world's efforts to reduce poverty, combat climate change and promote prosperity and a better quality of life. Free and fair trade is being threatened by new forms of protectionism. Natural disasters related to climate change are becoming more intense, dramatic and frequent, with worsening humanitarian consequences.

We have been asked to reflect on how to galvanize multilateral efforts to meet those global challenges. I believe that the answer requires that we address two fundamental issues. The first is how to ensure the peace, security and stability of the world, and the second is how to get multilateralism back on track and make it effective once again. The increasingly serious threats to global security and the future of our planet are a direct consequence of the weakening of multilateralism. It is imperative to reverse that trend.

Development, when truly sustainable, should be a positive factor in tackling most of the problems facing the world. For nearly a century the globalization of the world economy, driven by effective multilateralism, has greatly facilitated trade, investment, the flow of people and technological advances. Yet everything has a flip side. While globalization supports economic growth, it also widens disparities and raises the issues of equity and inclusiveness. Industrialization has created a level of material wealth we have never seen before, but it has also strained the environment and will cause irreparable damage if allowed to continue uncontrolled. Protectionism and self-isolation will lead us nowhere. We firmly believe that openness can offer us new opportunities and counter the zero-sum-game mentality. Promoting inclusive and shared development therefore requires that we favour dialogue and partnership over confrontation and aggression.

Other grave threats, such as new environmental pressures, pose serious challenges to sustainable development and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For far too long we have taken our natural resources, such as fresh air, blue skies, clean water and healthy soil, for granted. We have been unkind to them, and now they are

being unkind to us. The global environmental issues cannot be tackled by the efforts of a few countries alone. Nations both large and small must join hands in a concerted effort to engineer innovative funding to help the countries affected finance green growth and build resilience. That is how we can sustain the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which is a milestone in the history of climate governance. As one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change, Cambodia will continue to take steps to tackle the issue and fully honour its obligations. A few days ago, we convened the Climate Action Summit here in New York. We hope that international solidarity will now be more forthcoming.

(spoke in French)

I would now like to briefly share with the Assembly the major developments in my country. We have reason to be pleased but also to be seriously concerned. Cambodia's commitment to a liberalized economy and multilateralism has led to unprecedented growth in personal wealth and living standards over the past two decades. With an average annual growth rate of more than 7 per cent for more than 20 years, Cambodia is ranked by the World Bank as the sixth fastest-growing country in the world. We achieved most of the Millennium Development Goals ahead of schedule. Our ranking on the human development index has risen considerably over the past several decades, putting us in the medium human development category and positioning us as the eighth most successful country in the world in this area for the same period. Between 1990 and 2017, life expectancy at birth increased by almost 16 years, from 53.6 to 69.3 years. Cambodia has seen sharp drops in infant and maternal mortality and deaths from HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. Access to primary education is now almost universal and primary school enrolment rates are close to 100 per cent for both boys and girls. We are translating our commitments — which can be summed up as being focused on leaving no one behind — into policies and actions. The adoption of a national strategic framework for social protection for the period from 2016 to 2025 was a turning point that emphasized how important my Government considers social protection.

As a country that once benefited from United Nations peacekeeping operations, Cambodia is now one of the most active contributors to those missions, having deployed more than 6,300 Blue Helmets to eight countries in Africa and the Middle East since 2006. As

of this year, Cambodia ranks twenty-ninth of the 122 countries contributing troops to peacekeeping operations and third among the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. My Government has two primary objectives. The first is maintaining peace and political stability and consolidating a pluralist democracy, and the second is making a priority of assuring our people's basic rights, including the right to food, health, education, housing, work and mobility. During our most recent general election, 77 per cent of voters expressed support for those policies.

I also want to share our serious concerns with the Assembly. The 1991 Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict enshrined the establishment of a democratic system based on the Western model in Cambodia, a country that had never had such a system before. As we all know, democracy cannot be decreed but is rather learned gradually. Considering our recent and tragic past, we have made enormous strides in that regard. Our Constitution, legislation and institutions are largely based on Western models. We have held National Assembly elections every five years since 1993, and the voter turnout in this year's elections was 83 per cent, a number that many Western countries can only dream of.

However, we are being confronted with practices that have little to do with democracy because they fail to respect the law, institutions and individuals. We are dealing with a branch of the opposition that has gained popularity by taking the path of demagoguery, racism and xenophobia. Its adherents use universally condemned tactics — defamation, the publication of false documents, the dissemination of false information and incitement to racial hatred, violence and sedition. A critical point was reached when the leader of this opposition told his supporters that he was getting funding and technical assistance from a foreign Power to overthrow the Government using the same methods that we have seen in the so-called colour revolutions elsewhere in the world. We responded by enforcing existing legislation, which, I want to emphasize, is no different from the rule that the West applies when a political party goes outside the law. That is what we are being reproached for today and what some people think justifies the imposition of sanctions.

We are facing interference from Governments and institutions that are going so far as to tell us how to draft and enforce our laws; that are directly or indirectly financing and supporting a political faction;

that are attempting to impose people on our political life who have made themselves outcasts in society by repeatedly violating its laws; that are trying to influence the direction of our foreign policy; and that will not hesitate to inflict sanctions on us in the name of values and principles that they invoke when the circumstances suit them and completely forget when they do not.

Like other peoples, we Cambodians simply want the freedom to be ourselves and make our own choices, and to peacefully defend our essential national interests and sovereignty in accordance with our own values, aspirations and characteristics. The relevance of international law lies not only in equity and justice, but also in the way it is implemented. That is why we expect all countries and international institutions to ensure that international law is uniformly applied and to reject any selective practices of it. Cambodia welcomes genuine cooperation with all countries of the world, with only one condition, which is that its sovereignty be respected. We will not accept interference under any circumstances, and we will not compromise our sovereignty in exchange for any kind of cooperation or preferential treatment.

I would like to conclude by sharing our belief that in a multipolar world, multilateralism can succeed only if it rejects all forms of interference. From the principles of equality and sovereignty that were established more than 360 years ago in the Treaty of Westphalia to the Charter of the United Nations, the world is equipped with the principles it needs to guide its international relations. The sovereignty of all countries — rich or poor, large or small, strong or weak — must be respected. Their domestic affairs do not permit any outside interference. Their social systems and the paths they choose for their development reflect sovereign choices. It is through respect for the right of peoples to self-determination, solemnly enshrined in the Charter, that we can make multilateralism thrive and find paths to peace, stability, solidarity and progress.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Walid Al-Moualem, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Al-Moualem (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to congratulate President Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his election to lead the General Assembly at this session and to wish him every success in the future. I would also like to thank his

predecessor for her important role as President of the previous session.

We are meeting today at a moment when the global outlook may seem bleak. The foundations of the international relations system on the political, economic, legal and security fronts are facing threats that are unprecedented in the history of our Organization. Conflicts and threats to international peace and security are on the rise. The prospects for war are far more likely than the prospects for peace. The possibility of a balanced global economy has become uncertain. Violations of international conventions and treaties are commonplace, while the use of illegal means that go outside international law, such as support for terrorism and the imposition of economic embargoes, has got out of hand. All of that only creates chaos around the world and gradually replaces the rule of law with the law of the jungle. It jeopardizes our countries' future and makes our people pay the ultimate price, sacrificing their security, the lives of their children, their stability and well-being.

Today we are at a crossroads. Either we work in good faith to build a more secure, stable and just world, a world free of terrorism, occupation and hegemony, a world based on international law and a culture of dialogue and mutual understanding, or despite everything we do nothing, leaving the fate of our people and of future generations uncertain and flouting the purposes and principles set forth by the founding fathers of our Organization. That is the issue that the Assembly must address.

Terrorism remains one of the main threats to international peace and security, a danger to all of us without exception. Despite the extraordinary achievements that we have made in Syria, thanks to the sacrifices and heroism of the Syrian Arab Army and the support of our allies and friends, our people have suffered for more than eight years from that scourge, which has brutally murdered innocent people, caused a humanitarian crisis, destroyed our infrastructure and plundered and ruined our country. History will undoubtedly remember the heroism of the Syrian people in their war against terrorism. Syrians have defended not only themselves, their country and their culture, they have defended the whole of humankind. They have defended civilized values and a culture of tolerance and coexistence against the extremism and the ideology of hatred and death that terrorist groups such as Da'esh,

the Al-Nusra Front and their sponsors and supporters are trying to spread.

We are determined to continue the war on terrorism in all its forms until we root out the last remaining terrorist on Syria's land. We will also take every measure necessary to ensure that it does not re-emerge. However, we need genuine international will if we are to put a definitive end to that global nightmare, which haunts us all. We do not need to reinvent the wheel to do that. We already have a large number of related Security Council resolutions adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. But while they focus on fighting terrorism and drying up its resources and funding, the problem is that they remain a dead letter.

Unfortunately, countering terrorism is not yet a priority for certain countries, which have remained deathly quiet in the face of the brutal terrorism confronting countries like my own. While some of those countries merely issue empty statements, others actually invest in terrorism, using it as a tool to impose their suspect agendas on the peoples and on the Governments that reject their external diktats and insist on making independent national decisions. The situation in Syria is a vivid example of that. Tens of thousands of foreign terrorist fighters have been brought to Syria from more than 100 countries with the support and cover of States that are known to all. Moreover, those same States deny us the right to defend our people against terrorists, whom they consider freedom fighters, or against the so-called Syrian armed opposition. However, they seem to have forgotten that if they continue with that approach, terrorism will re-emerge stronger than ever and will threaten everyone, without exception, including its supporters and those who have invested in it.

The clearest example of what I am talking about is the situation in Idlib. It is well known to all that Idlib currently hosts the largest collection of foreign terrorist fighters in the world, as is detailed in the reports of the relevant Security Council Committees. The time I have been allotted to speak today is not enough to list all the crimes that these terrorists have committed. However, I should not fail to mention their continuing rocket and mortar attacks on civilian areas close to Idlib and the fact that they use civilians in Idlib as human shields, preventing them from leaving through the Abu Al-Duhur humanitarian corridor that the Syrian Government has opened.

What I want to ask the members of the Assembly is whether their Governments would stand idly by and watch if they were faced with a similar situation. Would they ever forfeit their right and duty to defend their peoples and liberate their countries from terrorists and foreigners? The Syrian Government has engaged in political initiatives to resolve the situation in Idlib, and we have allowed more than enough time for them to be implemented. We have welcomed the memorandum creating de-escalation zones and the Sochi agreement on Idlib in hopes that such steps would complement the efforts to eliminate the Al-Nusra Front and the remnants of Da'esh and other terrorist groups operating in Idlib with the lowest possible loss of civilian lives.

We have also announced a suspension of military operations more than once. Meanwhile, the Turkish regime has failed to fulfil its commitments under those agreements, instead providing terrorists with every kind of support, including more sophisticated weapons. Al-Qaida's Al-Nusra Front controls more than 90 per cent of Idlib, and the Turkish observation points established inside Syria have been used to support them and block the advances of the Syrian Army and its war on terrorism in Idlib. With the support of some Western countries, the Turkish regime is now rushing to protect the terrorists of Al-Nusra Front and other terrorist groups there, just as it has done every time we confront the terrorists. It is hard to imagine a country directly intervening to protect the Al-Nusra Front of Al-Qaida, the same terrorist group that Security Council resolutions considers to be a threat not only to Syria but also to international peace and security.

The United States and Turkey maintain an illegal military presence in northern Syria. They have been arrogant enough to hold discussions and reach agreement on establishing a so-called safe zone on Syrian territory as if such a zone would be created on United States or Turkish soil. That is a violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Any agreement about any part of Syria without the consent of the Syrian Government is to be condemned and rejected in form and in substance. Moreover, any foreign forces operating on our territories without our assent are occupying forces and must withdraw immediately. If they refuse to do so, we have the right to take all measures against them under international law.

In that regard, I would like to briefly mention the terrorist, criminal and aggressive practices of the secessionist militias known as the Syrian Democratic

Forces against Syrians in Hasakah, Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor governorates. With the support of the United States of America and international coalition forces, they seek to impose a new reality that serves the agendas of the United States and Israel in the region, prolonging the terrorist war against Syria.

Turkey's policies, whether in Idlib or in north-eastern Syria, and its multi-track political manoeuvring undermine all the achievements made in Astana. Turkey cannot claim to uphold Syria's unity and territorial integrity, while at the same time being the first to actually undermine them. If Turkey is truly committed to the security of its borders and the unity of Syria, as it claims to be, it must determine its options. Either it must respect the Astana agreement and the bilateral counter-terrorism agreements between our two countries, in order to guarantee the security of its borders, and withdraw its forces from Syrian territories, or it must choose to be the aggressor and occupier and face the consequences. The safety of the borders of one country cannot be secured at the expense of the security, sovereignty or territorial integrity of neighbouring countries.

Along with our fight against terrorism, we are committed to moving the political process forward. We have continued to participate in the Astana meetings, the results of which have proved to be effective on the ground. We are dealing positively with the outcome of the Congress of the Syrian National Dialogue in Sochi, and the establishment of a committee to discuss the Constitution. To that end, we have engaged seriously and constructively in a dialogue with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria in forming the committee. Indeed, it was Syria's determination to establish the Constitutional Committee upon the persistence of President Bashar Al-Assad that led to this important national achievement for the Syrian people and thwarted any attempt to obstruct it by other parties that have consistently supported foreign forces and imposed preconditions to prevent any return to normalcy in Syria.

During his recent visit to Damascus, we reached agreement with the Special Envoy, Mr. Geir Pedersen, on the terms of reference and core rules of procedure of the Constitutional Committee, as well as the principles governing its work. Those include the following.

First, the whole process should be owned and led by the Syrians themselves, who have the exclusive

right to determine their country's future, without any foreign intervention.

Secondly, the full and strong commitment to fully respecting the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic must not be compromised in any way.

Thirdly, no preconditions or conclusions may be imposed on the Committee and its recommendations should not be prejudged. The Committee must be independent. Its recommendations must be made independently without interference from any other country or party, such as the so-called small group, which has declared itself the guardian of the Syrian people and has already prejudged the outcome of the Committee's work.

Fourthly, no deadlines or time frames must be imposed on the Committee. Each step taken must be prudent since the Constitution is to determine Syria's future generations. We remain fully committed to making constructive progress based on sound foundations in order to meet the aspirations of the Syrian people.

Fifthly, the Special Envoy for Syria must play the role of facilitator of the Committee's work, using his good offices to bring the views of its members together as required.

With those principles in mind, we reaffirm our readiness to engage and work actively with friendly countries and the Special Envoy to launch the Committee's work.

At the same time, Syria is making tremendous efforts to improve the humanitarian situation on the ground and to rebuild what the terrorists have destroyed. Significant progress has been made despite the illegal and inhumane economic blockade that some countries have imposed on our people, limiting access to medical equipment, medicines and oil products necessary for electricity, household gas and heating fuel. The United States of America has even threatened companies that participate in the Damascus International Fair in order to stifle any economic activity in Syria. Having failed to achieve their goals through armed terrorism, those countries have resorted to economic terrorism, which is an equally brutal form of terrorism, by imposing a blockade and unilateral coercive economic measures. We therefore call on all peace-loving countries that respect international law to come together and adopt

effective measures to counter that phenomenon, which not only is used against Syria but also has become a weapon of political and economic blackmail against many other countries in the world.

From this rostrum, we once again call for the lifting of such illegal measures imposed on the Syrian people and on all other independent peoples, in particular the peoples of Iran, Venezuela, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Cuba and Belarus. We stand with China and Russia against the unjust United States policies pertaining to them.

On several occasions we have emphasized that the doors are open for the voluntary and safe return of all Syrian refugees to their homeland. To that end, the Syrian Government is providing the necessary help while rebuilding and rehabilitating the service facilities and infrastructure in their areas that have been liberated from terrorists. However, Western and some other countries of destination for refugees continue to obstruct such initiatives. We have seen a strange change in the position of such countries. Instead of using every opportunity to call for the immediate return of refugees to Syria, as they have always done, those countries are now imposing flimsy conditions and arguments to prevent such returns, using this purely humanitarian issue as leverage to serve their hidden political agendas. It is truly reminiscent of the theatre of the absurd. However, what is happening is a manipulation of the fate of nations and a hideous exploitation of their suffering.

Instead of working for peace and stability in the region, Israel has launched yet another phase of escalation, fuelling regional tensions to unprecedented levels. Israel not only occupies Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan, but also continues every day to violate international law and human rights law and to support terrorism. It has even launched repeated attacks on Syrian territories and on those of neighbouring countries under false pretexts in flagrant violation of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and relevant Security Council resolutions. Such Israeli violations would not continue to escalate were it not for the blind support of certain countries that are fully responsible for the consequences of Israel's actions.

Such ugly manifestations of this support became extremely clear when the United States decided to recognize Israel's sovereignty over the occupied Syrian

Golan and, before that, to recognize the occupied city of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and relocate its Embassy there, not to mention the intensive United States efforts to liquidate the Palestinian question. All those decisions are null and void and represent a complete disregard for international legitimacy. Certain people must understand that the era of acquiring the land of others by force has long passed. It is a delusion to think that the crisis in Syria will compel us to give up our inalienable right to fully restore the Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967 by using all possible means under international law. Moreover, it is a delusion to think that the decisions of the United States Administration regarding the sovereignty over the Golan will alter historical and geographical facts or the provisions of international law. The Golan has been and will always be a part of Syria.

Israel must be forced to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions, notably Security Council resolution 497 (1981), on the occupied Syrian Golan, and to halt its repeated attacks on the countries of the region and to cease its settlement activities. Israel must be compelled to allow the Palestinian people to establish their own independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital, along the 4 June 1967 borders and to ensure the return of Palestinian refugees to their land.

Syria once again expresses its full solidarity with the Islamic Republic of Iran against the irresponsible United States measures, in particular the United States withdrawal from the Nuclear Agreement. We also warn against policies that seek to foment crises and conflicts in the Gulf region under false pretexts. We believe that the security and stability of the Gulf can be achieved only through cooperation and dialogue among the countries of that region, without any external interference that could escalate tensions in the region and run counter to the interests of its people.

The President took the Chair.

In conclusion, I say that Syria, supported by its allies and friends, has stood firm against the externally supported organized terrorism that has targeted Syria, its people and its culture. Today we are ushering in a new era that will bring us closer to our final victory in this war. We aspire to a bright and safe future for our people after the long suffering. We are conscious that the various challenges and difficulties that we are facing today or will face in the future are not less ferocious than the terrorism which we have faced. However, we

are determined to overcome them. We have always had excellent relations with various countries. We have never sought to antagonize anyone. Today our hand is extended for peace. We continue to promote dialogue and mutual understanding, while staying true to our national constants, which we will never give them up.

Of course, there are Governments that have clearly offended Syria and its people. However, we will never hold a grudge or seek revenge. We will engage with others, taking into account the interests of our country and our people, in line with our desire to achieve peace, stability and prosperity in Syria and the region. In exchange, those countries that have antagonized Syria must reconsider their positions and correct any mistakes. They must abandon their delusions and let realism and common sense prevail for the common good.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Minute Alapati Taupo, Deputy Prime Minister of Tuvalu.

Mr. Taupo (Tuvalu): On behalf of Tuvalu and on my own behalf, I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. Tuvalu has full confidence in your leadership. Let me also take this opportunity to thank Ms. María Espinosa Garcés, President at the seventy-third session, for a very successful session under her leadership.

I am honoured to report that Tuvalu has just recently installed a new democratically elected Government. Our honourable Prime Minister therefore sends his warm greetings to this gathering and wishes to convey his regrets that he is not able to attend this General Assembly due to other national commitments.

I want to express Tuvalu's heartfelt condolences to the Government and people of the Bahamas for the extensive destruction and the loss of lives caused by Hurricane Dorian. The scale of the damage in the Bahamas and in natural disasters around the world is clear evidence that we are losing the race to save our planet and future generations.

I also want to express the appreciation of the people and Government of Tuvalu to the Secretary-General, His Excellency António Guterres, for visiting Tuvalu in May this year to see first-hand our extreme vulnerabilities to climate change and to build momentum towards the successful Climate Action Summit, which we all witnessed and participated in earlier this week.

Tuvalu wishes to acknowledge his incredible energy and commitment to saving our planet and humanity from the adverse impacts of climate change.

I congratulate you, Mr. President, on the priority that you have given to multilateralism, poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion by making them the theme of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly. I am happy that those are the core development issues that my country set out to address in our recent national sustainable development strategy, Te Kakeega III. We have made positive progress in quality education, poverty eradication and health. We do not discriminate with regard to gender and our women have equal access to employment, rates of pay and decision-making processes as men, including political participation.

At the regional level, the objectives of your theme are also matched by the development vision of the leaders of our Blue Pacific continent when they met in Tuvalu last month. The outcome of our leaders' summit, the Pacific Islands Forum Communiqué and the Kainaki II Declaration for Urgent Climate Action Now, are strategically geared towards the achievement of those same objectives.

However, the adverse impacts of climate change continue to impede our development. In 2014, Cyclone Pam wiped out 60 per cent of our gross domestic product. In 2011, we experienced the worst drought on record. More frequent and more severe cyclones mean repeated rebuilding every year or so. That is an expensive exercise, well beyond the resources and capacities of our small island economies.

My country is in the front line of climate change. The rising sea level presents a direct existential threat to my country, which is at no more than 3 metres above the sea level. It has contaminated our groundwater resources. Agriculture is now difficult in most places and the rising temperature is damaging our reefs and fisheries. Our food and water security are severely compromised. A life of fear and uncertainty is becoming our way of life. I know that none of us here would like our children and their grandchildren to live their lives in constant fear and uncertainty.

A landmark United Nations report released on Wednesday this week predicts that the sea level rise could reach 30 to 60 centimetres by the year 2100 even if countries step up emission cuts and global warming is limited to well below 2°C. That would affect more

than 1 billion people. According to the report, our small island countries will be submerged and uninhabitable.

We applaud the determination of our young people to address climate change. We must listen to them as future leaders and as the custodian of our planet and its resources and support their efforts. They deserve a future, just as it was given to us by past generations.

I wish to acknowledge the Secretary-General's commitment to the atoll nations in providing assistance to bring young people from Tuvalu so that they could share their stories about living in the most vulnerable part of the world and advocate for their sustainable future. Earlier this week, young people from my country participated in the programmes of the Youth Climate Summit, including hosting a side event. The strong message that they brought to the United Nations is that they want to preserve their cultural identity and traditional knowledge and that moving from their homeland is not an option. Indeed, we are proud of our island nations because they are our own. It is where we have lived for generations and according to our culture.

On Wednesday of this week, a report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights on her visit to Tuvalu confirmed the very real risk of climate change to our culture rights. The report said that the very cultural survival of entire peoples may be at stake as never before, undermining all human rights, including cultural rights.

The science is very clear, as is and the evidence is also very clear. The 1.5°C target is no longer enough to save us. A target lower than 1.5°C is required to save the small island developing States. The target of 2°C is now irrelevant and a senseless target that will not save our planet and our future generations.

The voices of the most affected, who have done the least to cause the harm, such as the voices of Tuvaluans, must be heard loud and clear not just because our survival is at stake but because if the world fails us, it will also fail itself. As Secretary-General António Guterres said during his visit to my country in May of this year, the world must save Tuvalu to avoid the world drowning with Tuvalu.

We therefore urge the United Nations process, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to recognize the three recent approved Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) special reports on global warming of

1.5°C, climate change and land, and the ocean in a changing climate.

For underdeveloped and small island developing countries, mitigation and adaptation are beyond our capacities and resources. Tuvalu has committed to an ambitious nationally determined contribution target of 100 per cent renewable energy in our electricity generation sector by 2025. That is a very ambitious target for a country that makes a negligible contribution to climate change. It is a target that will address the high price of fuel in our region and contribute to our efforts to achieving sustainable development.

In that respect, I wish to extend our deep appreciation to India and France for their initiative on solar energy development, under the International Solar Alliance, and to the European Union, New Zealand, Taiwan, Italy, the United Arab Emirates, Japan and the World Bank for their support as well.

We have also set up a climate change survival fund that is regulated by an act of Parliament. The fund allows us to provide immediate relief and assistance to people when natural disasters strike. The Government is the main contributor to the fund and we welcome the contribution of the international community.

If we are to win the race against climate change, developed nations must lift the deprived with financial and technical resources. There are enough resources on this planet to meet everyone's needs. There are technologies available to support a just transition and decent jobs. In many countries, renewable energy is now cheaper than coal and fossil fuel. We therefore have what we need to save our planet. All that we lack is the political commitment, especially of those that are well resourced and better equipped to help. I want to take this opportunity to express my country's sincere appreciation to countries that have shown a commitment to the 2050 zero emissions target and increased their contributions to the Green Climate Fund.

I wish to acknowledge the efforts of notable members of the Security Council in bringing climate change to the core of its peace and security agenda. That is a genuine commitment to addressing the single greatest threat to humanity. It is our humble hope that the entire Security Council membership can agree to have climate change as a permanent item on its agenda.

Our oceans and fisheries are our greatest hope for sustainable development, providing over 50 per cent of

our annual national development budget. So the security of our exclusive economic zone is an important national priority. I therefore wish to reaffirm the commitment of our Pacific leaders to developing international law with the aim of ensuring that once a Forum member's maritime zones are delineated in accordance with the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the member's maritime zones cannot be challenged or reduced as a result of sea level rise and climate change. Our sovereignty cannot be compromised by climate change.

Genuine and durable partnerships are fundamental to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. However, the exclusion of as genuine and durable a partner as Taiwan from the United Nations systems denied its 23 million people their fundamental rights to participate in, benefit from and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals. Taiwan is already a responsible and able partner to Tuvalu and many countries around the world and could only do more if it were invited to do so.

Tuvalu strongly supports the Republic of China's readmission into the United Nations as a founding member of the Organization and its active participation in the United Nations specialized agencies.

In a similar manner, the long unilateral economic embargo on Cuba directly constrains the development aspirations of the Cuban people. It neglects the human rights and the spirit of cooperation espoused in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The recent increase in sanctions on remittances directly limits private assistance to communities at the grass-roots level.

Likewise, the United Nations must engage with the people of West Papua to find lasting solutions to their struggle. I want to acknowledge and welcome the invitation by Indonesia for a mission to West Papua by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

We must allow the participation of all people in our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, with their human rights protected, if we are to achieve the 2030 Agenda and leave no one behind.

As Members have heard, I have spoken about climate change more than any other part of the theme of our seventy-fourth session. That does not mean that

the other objectives of this session's theme are not important. Multilateralism, poverty eradication, quality education, health and inclusion are very important issues but for a small low-lying island atoll country such as Tuvalu, climate change is also important to our development.

To us, climate change is not only an environmental issue. It is an economic, social and cultural issue. It is a survival issue, as well as a human rights one. It affects all factors and sectors of our development, so much so that our sustainable future and survival depend on climate change more than anything else.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that Tuvalu strongly believes that our collective efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in order to ensure global peace, security and prosperity will be severely compromised unless we are committed to immediate climate change action, as demanded by our youth and young people, and the scientific reports of the IPCC, the authoritative scientific body of the UNFCCC.

The President: I now call on Mr. Chingiz Aidarbekov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Mr. Aidarbekov (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session and to wish you every success in fulfilling this important task. I would also like to express my gratitude to Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés for her successful and effective leadership of the previous session of the General Assembly.

This session's theme of the general debate of the General Assembly "Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion" is particularly relevant. In recent years, the people of the Kyrgyz Republic, having set a course for building a new political system in 2010, have achieved significant results in developing parliamentary democracy, a multi-party system and the legal transfer of power, as well as in strengthening the civil sector and its institutions. One indicator of the success of the path that we chose was the presidential election in 2017, which resulted in a peaceful democratic transfer of power.

The functioning of parliamentary democracy clearly requires ongoing diligent work and seeking

compromises, while at the same time opening up new opportunities. A strong civil society, with a balanced Government, and diverse viewpoints allow for reforms and corruption to be rooted out.

To date, the Kyrgyz Republic has been uncompromising in the fight against corruption. There are of course elements that do not want such changes. At the beginning of August, there was an attempt to undermine our national unity, stability and security. However, the wisdom, unity and firm belief of our people in the irreversibility of the ongoing reforms meant that the situation in our country did not deteriorate.

The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic has set a course to improve the work of the State bodies. Profound changes are taking place. Reforms of the law enforcement, fiscal and educational systems, aimed at ensuring greater accountability and transparency, are making progress. At the beginning of the year new laws entered into force that focus on modernizing criminal legislation and promoting the reforms under way. We have launched the electronic single register of crimes and misdemeanours and single register of offences, which strengthen the capacity of law enforcement agencies and the legal system as a whole.

In the context of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, the Kyrgyz Republic continues to address socioeconomic issues, including reducing unemployment, raising the standard of living of the population by implementing national programmes in the areas of education and health care, youth policies and infrastructure projects, as well as by attracting investment and creating the most favourable conditions to that end.

The national development strategy for 2018-2040 has an entire section on priority areas of development of the Kyrgyz Republic for the period to 2023. That includes areas such as reforming State governance, establishing a fair judiciary, developing the energy sector and introducing information technologies. As part of the Year of Regional Development and Digitalization of the Country and in implementation of the digital transformation concept "Digital Kyrgyzstan for 2019-2023", significant measures are being taken to build the capacity of the regions. Digitalization is being actively implemented in the country at all levels, from kindergartens, schools and universities to Government agencies and the business community, including digital technologies in public services.

Currently, the number of innovative schools is increasing. Ninety-six per cent of schools in the country are connected to the Internet network and electronic health projects are being introduced. Sixty State bodies are connected to an electronic interoperability system called Tunduk and 24 State bodies have started electronic document processing.

There is a programme for the construction and restoration of sections of international transport corridors for the period up to 2025. For the first time in the Kyrgyz Republic, the office of Business Ombudsman and a new model of cooperation between the State and business have been established in order to create favourable conditions and protect business interests. A moratorium on the audit of businesses has been brought in for two years, until 1 January 2021. Entrepreneurs building new enterprises in the regions are exempt from four kinds of taxes for five years, with the right to extension. The Kyrgyz Republic was ranked seventieth out of 190 economies in the World Bank's Doing Business 2019: Training for Reform. A liberal investment and tax regime has been created, which speaks favourably of our country. The Kyrgyz Republic is among a group of countries with a developed public-private partnership sector.

Under the new foreign policy framework of the Kyrgyz Republic, as approved by its President in March, we pay particular attention to cooperation with the United Nations and its institutions. In the area of strategic development, the Kyrgyz Republic prioritizes achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Goals have been successfully implemented as part of the national development strategy for the period from 2018 to 2040, which seeks to further promote economic development and will help us to effectively implement the SDGs.

As further proof of our commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Kyrgyz Republic has requested to submit in 2020 its voluntary national review on SDG implementation as part of the high-level political forum on sustainable development of the Economic and Social Council.

At the international level, the Kyrgyz Republic is also contributing to the implementation of the SDGs. We hosted the World Nomad Games, aimed at preserving the diversity of cultures and traditions, which has been recognized and supported by the General Assembly and UNESCO.

We are grateful to the United Nations for including the Kyrgyz Republic in the financing for development project. As a mountainous country, the Kyrgyz Republic is severely affected by the negative impacts of climate change. According to the assessments of experts, the Central Asian region has experienced the accelerated melting of glaciers, which for centuries have been a source of life and clean drinking water. That will have an impact on vast areas, changing the landscape, and may affect traditional ways of life and lead to mass displacements.

Such consequences of climate change cannot but concern the Kyrgyz Republic as a landlocked mountainous country. With the support of Member States, the Kyrgyz Republic therefore established the Group of Friends of Mountainous Countries and calls on all to engage in broad and fruitful cooperation within that framework. In time, the Kyrgyz Republic drew the attention of the international community to the issue of the sustainable development of mountainous countries and initiated the declaration of 2002 as the International Year of Mountains. During this seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly the Kyrgyz Republic intends to again co-sponsor the updated draft resolution on sustainable mountain development.

In September 2018, the Kyrgyz Republic was the leading country in the number of volunteers who participated in the global action on World Cleanup Day. The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic has now submitted the Paris Agreement on Climate Change for ratification by the country's Parliament.

No less important is addressing another problem related to uranium tailings facilities in the Central Asian region. In 2015, the multilateral Environmental Remediation Account for Central Asia was established. Last year, the Kyrgyz Republic initiated the adoption of the new resolution 73/238, entitled "The role of the international community in the prevention of the radiation threat in Central Asia". I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the countries that supported and sponsored the resolution. During this session of the General Assembly, on 27 September here in New York, the Kyrgyz Republic held a high-level event that focused on preventing the dangers associated with the former uranium mining activities in Central Asia.

The Kyrgyz Republic attaches particular importance to cooperation in the Central Asian region, which is developing dynamically. In that regard, I

wish to draw attention to resolution 72/283, entitled "Strengthening regional and international cooperation to ensure peace, stability and sustainable development in the Central Asian Region", adopted in 2018.

At the same time, in Central Asia there are still problems, whose successful resolution requires the collective efforts of the countries of the region. It is necessary to address, as a matter of priority, the demarcation of State borders, which will make it possible to ease social tensions in such areas and prevent border incidents. Guided by principles of good-neighbourliness, the Kyrgyz Republic takes a responsible approach towards such matters. We have already achieved concrete results in that regard.

Today, Central Asian countries must remove obstacles towards economic cooperation and increasing the region's transit potential. Separately, we are addressing the integrated use of water and energy resources in the region. Forming the main freshwater reserves, as part of existing relations, the Kyrgyz Republic seeks to receive appropriate economic compensation for the storage and conservation of water resources. Those resources are important not only to the region but for the preservation of the entire global balance. Kyrgyzstan therefore supports establishing an integrated administration for water-resource management and proposes developing economic mechanisms in Central Asia for establishing mutually beneficial cooperation in the hydro-energy sector.

We are also focusing on producing green electric power. The implementation of hydroelectric projects will ensure that we meet the needs of Central Asian countries in terms of hydropower, thereby creating conditions conducive to sustainable development across the entire region. In the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we believe equal attention should be paid to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 7, ensuring access to affordable and clean energy. In that regard, the Kyrgyz Republic is working to implement the Central Asia-South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project. From a regional perspective, Kyrgyzstan considers cooperation and comprehensive dialogue to be the only possible way to resolve existing issues in this area.

Ensuring access to safe and affordable drinking water is an urgent issue for our country. According to statistics from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Kyrgyzstan, while an area

of Central Asia that is a significant source of water supplies, has the lowest per capita access to drinking water in the region. In rural areas, about 40 per cent of the population is not adequately provided with clean drinking water. In order to deal with that, my Government is currently implementing its Taza Suu project — meaning “clean water” — designed to provide villages with clean drinking water. In that connection, we urge international organizations, financial institutions and donor countries to support my country’s efforts in promoting such projects.

Current events in the world today show that no State can effectively confront its challenges and threats solely through its own efforts. The widespread expansion of international terrorism and extremism in their various manifestations, along with illegal drug and arms trafficking, human trafficking, cross-border crime and the threat of the emergence or escalation of conflicts, requires collective efforts for implementing preventive measures. In that regard, I want to emphasize that throughout its chairmanship of various regional structures this year, including the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Kyrgyzstan has highlighted the need for greater attention to the importance of constructive engagement and the adoption of comprehensive measures to tackle these challenges and threats, an approach that is fully in line with the purposes and principles of the United Nations and Chapter VIII of its Charter. In that regard, we would like to thank to all States Members of the United Nations for their support in the Assembly’s adoption of resolution 73/334, on cooperation between the United Nations and the SCO, and resolution 73/331, on cooperation between the United Nations and the CSTO.

We reaffirm our commitment to effectively implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We also call on the international community to adopt coordinated measures, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2178 (2014), to prevent people who have previously participated in armed conflict on the side of international terrorist organizations from returning to their countries of origin in Central Asia or from redeploying to our region. We believe that given the existing and emerging centres of instability around the world, the role of the United Nations should be strengthened as much as possible. In that regard, we support the peaceful resolution of

the ongoing conflicts and crises around the world by promoting dialogue between all political and military forces under the auspices of the United Nations.

In the light of everything I have mentioned, I want to once again draw the Assembly’s attention to the fact that on 9 June 2017, Kyrgyzstan, in its efforts to make a substantial contribution to the common cause of the United Nations — ensuring peace, global security, sustainable development and social progress all over the world — as well as to focus the attention of the international community and the United Nations on the problems of small States, put forward its candidacy for non-permanent membership of the Security Council for the period from 2027 to 2028. In the years since it became independent, the Kyrgyz Republic has gained significant international experience as a Member State. We have been selected a number of times to become members of various elective United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, including the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. Kyrgyzstan has twice been elected to the Human Rights Council, in May 2009 and October 2015. The Kyrgyz Republic is also a member and depositary of the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia, and we strongly support international cooperation in the reclamation and destruction of radioactive waste and the restoration of contaminated land.

The Kyrgyz Republic pays great attention to preventive diplomacy, peacebuilding and peacemaking. We have positive experience of participating in the settlement of international and local conflicts, in United Nations peacekeeping operations and within the framework of the Peacebuilding Fund, and we are also contributing to the process of restoring Afghanistan. We believe it is essential that the international community focus greater attention on the prevention of conflicts and the fight against terrorist and extremist activity. With regard to the issue of Security Council reform, and in order to strengthen the consolidating role of the United Nations and adapt its activities to current realities, Kyrgyzstan supports the adoption of the reforms needed to improve it, based on the principles of universality, effectiveness and broad geographical representation.

With the essential support of the United Nations, our country is making efforts to implement multifaceted and diverse reforms, which are confirmed

by the assessments of Kyrgyzstan put forward by the international non-governmental structures that are carrying out research and establishing ratings on important issues pertaining to our progress in sustainable development. According to the April 2019 World Press Freedom Index, the Kyrgyz Republic ranked eighty-third out of 180 countries, improving its ranking by 15 places. We have also ratified eight of the nine international human rights treaties. On 7 May, Kyrgyzstan ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In 2018, we successfully completed our term on the Human Rights Council. According to data from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, this year Kyrgyzstan became the first country in the world to resolve its stateless problem, having reduced the number of stateless persons from 13,000 to zero over the past five years.

We are still facing many challenges in the area of the protection and promotion of human rights. We are keen to harness the potential and experience of the United Nations and other international partners with regard to the specifics of our national development and the historical and cultural traits peculiar to the Kyrgyz Republic. Our active and productive cooperation with the United Nations system is evident in the growing presence of its institutions in our country. We intend to continue our joint work, and we are very interested in the possibility of attracting additional structures and expanding the United Nations presence in our country.

The United Nations is a key global centre for solving the problems of maintaining peace and security, developing friendly relations between nations, cooperating to address development issues, reducing poverty, promoting human rights, protecting the environment, fighting disease and tackling many of the other challenges and problems facing humankind. We are an open country, ready for mutually beneficial dialogue and trustworthy and cooperative partnerships with States. We believe that together we can solve the challenges we face in striving to maintain peace and security and ensure the sustainable development of all States, including by improving the standard of living and well-being of all peoples.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (spoke in Spanish): I would like to express my sincere condolences to the Commonwealth of the Bahamas for the loss of life and the terrible destruction caused by Hurricane Dorian. I urge the international community to mobilize resources in order to provide assistance.

I want to denounce, before the Assembly, the fact that in the past few months the United States Government has begun implementing unusual and criminal measures to prevent fuel supplies from reaching our country from various markets, by threatening and persecuting the companies that transport it, the flag States where the ships are registered and the shipping and insurance companies involved. As a result, we are finding it extremely difficult to ensure the fuel supply that our country needs for its daily activities, forcing us to adopt temporary emergency measures that are possible only in a well-organized country with the solidarity of a united people ready to defend themselves from foreign aggression and preserve social justice.

Over the past year, the United States Government has ramped up its hostile actions and its blockade of Cuba. It has erected additional obstacles to foreign trade and intensified its persecution of the banking and financial relations that we have with the rest of the world. It has imposed extreme restrictions on travel and on any sort of interaction between our two peoples. It has also obstructed the relations and contacts with their home country of Cubans living in the United States.

To this very day, its strategy of anti-Cuban imperialism has been guided by the infamous memorandum issued in 1960 by then Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Lester Mallory, which states that

“[t]here is no effective political opposition ... The only foreseeable means of alienating internal support [from the Government] is through disenchantment and disaffection based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship ... [E]very possible means should be undertaken promptly to weaken the economic life of Cuba ... denying money and supplies to Cuba, to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of Government”.

The illegal Helms Burton Act of 1996 guides the aggressive behaviour of the United States against Cuba. Its essence is a stark attempt to question the Cuban nation's right to free determination and national independence. It envisages the imposition of United

States legal authority and the jurisdiction of its courts on Cuba's commercial and financial relations with any other country, thereby trampling on international law and the national jurisdictions of Cuba and third States, while establishing the alleged supremacy of United States law and political will over them. The economic, commercial and financial blockade continues to be the main obstacle to our country's development and the advancement of the process of updating the socialist socioeconomic and development model that our country has designed for itself. The new measures particularly affect our economy's private sector.

Every year the United States Government allocates tens of millions of dollars from the federal budget to political subversion, with the purpose of creating confusion and weakening the unity of our people, which it combines with a concerted propaganda campaign aimed at discrediting the revolution, its leaders and its glorious historical legacy, denigrating our economic and social policies in support of development and justice and destroying the ideas of socialism.

This Thursday, the State Department announced, based on gross slanders, that General Raúl Castro Ruz, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba, would not be granted a visa to enter the United States. That action, which has no practical effect, is designed to offend Cuba's dignity and our people's feelings, a vote-catching crumb tossed to the Cuban-American far right. However, the open and offensive falsehoods that are being used in an attempt to justify it, which I firmly repudiate, are a reflection of the baseness and rottenness that the current United States Administration resorts to, drowning as it is in a sea of corruption, lies and immorality. All of those actions violate international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The most recent excuse, reiterated on Tuesday right here in this Hall by President Donald Trump of the United States (see A/74/PV.3), blames Cuba for the failed plan to overthrow the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela by force. With the aim of denigrating the feats of the Venezuelan people, the Yankee spokespersons repeat over and over again the vulgar slander that our country has between 20,000 to 25,000 troops in Venezuela and that Cuban imperialism controls it. Just few minutes earlier on the same day, from this rostrum, the President of Brazil read a script of false allegations drafted in Washington, which increased that shameless figure to around 60,000 Cuban troops in Venezuela (see A/74/PV.3).

As part of its anti-Cuban obsession, the current United States Administration, echoed by Brazil, is attacking the international medical cooperation programmes that Cuba shares with dozens of developing countries, designed to assist the neediest communities and founded on sentiments of solidarity and the free and voluntary will of hundreds of thousands of Cuban professionals, and which are being implemented according to cooperative agreements signed with the Governments of those countries. For many years now they have been recognized by the international community, the United Nations and the World Health Organization as a model of South-South cooperation. The upshot is that many Brazilian communities have now been deprived of the free, quality health care that they were offered by thousands of Cuban professionals under the Más Médicos programme. And this period has seen plenty of the most shameless threats, blackmail and brazen urgings aimed at getting our country to betray its principles and international commitments in exchange for oil on preferential terms and with dubious friendships.

In commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the triumph of the revolution, when Cubans achieved true and definitive independence, First Secretary Raúl Castro said,

“[W]e Cubans are ready to resist a situation of confrontation, which we do not desire, and we hope that the most lucid minds in the United States Government can avoid it.”

We have reiterated that even in the present circumstances, we will not renounce our determination to develop civilized relations with the United States, based on mutual respect and recognition of our profound differences. We know that is the desire of the people of Cuba and that the feeling is shared by the majority of the people of the United States and the Cubans who live there. I also want to confirm that no amount of economic aggression, threats or blackmail, no matter how harsh, will extract a single concession from us. Anyone familiar with the history of the Cuban people in their long struggle for emancipation and their steadfast defence of the freedom and justice they have achieved will understand, beyond any doubt, the significance, sincerity and strength of the beliefs and attitudes of our people.

The bilateral relations between Cuba and Venezuela are based on mutual respect and true solidarity. We have

no hesitation in supporting the legitimate Government, headed by our comrade Nicolás Maduro Moros, and the civic and military union of the country's Bolivarian and Chavista people. We condemn the behaviour of the United States Government towards Venezuela, focused as it is on encouraging coups d'état, assassinations, economic warfare and the sabotaging of the country's power supply. We reject its implementation of severe unilateral, coercive measures and the plundering of Venezuela's assets, companies and export revenues. Those actions constitute a serious threat to regional peace and security and a direct attack on the Venezuelan people, in an attempt to break them in the cruellest of ways. We call on everyone to recognize those facts, demand an end to the unilateral coercive measures, reject the use of force and advocate respectful dialogue that is grounded in the principles of international law and the constitutional order of Venezuela.

A few days ago, the United States and a handful of other countries decided to reactivate the obsolete Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, which provides for the potential use of military force. That is an absurd decision that represents a historic setback and poses a danger to regional peace and security, as it seeks to use legal artifice to justify interference in the internal affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. It is also a gross violation of the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, signed by Heads of State and Government in Havana in January 2014. Of similar significance is the United States decision to revive the disastrous Monroe Doctrine, an instrument of imperialist domination under which military interventions and invasions, coups d'état, military dictatorships and the most horrific crimes were perpetrated in our America.

As we witnessed a few days ago in the Assembly, the President of the United States likes to attack socialism in many of his public statements, clearly for vote-getting purposes, while promoting a McCarthyist intolerance of those who believe in the possibility of a better world and entertain hopes of living in peace, in sustainable harmony with nature and in solidarity with everyone else. President Trump ignores or tries to conceal the fact that neoliberal capitalism is responsible for the increasing social and economic inequality that today affects even the most developed societies and that by its nature fosters corruption, social marginalization, increasing crime, racial intolerance and xenophobia.

And he forgets, or does not know, that out of capitalism emerged fascism, apartheid and imperialism.

The United States Government is spearheading the flagrant persecution of political leaders and popular and social movements via defamation campaigns and outrageously manipulated, politically motivated judicial processes, in order to undo policies that, through sovereign control of natural resources and the gradual elimination of social differences, built more just and supportive societies that represented a way out of economic and social crisis and brought hope to the peoples of America. That is what it did to former Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, whose freedom we demand. We reject Washington's attempts to destabilize the Government of Nicaragua and we reaffirm our unwavering support for President Daniel Ortega. We stand in solidarity with the Caribbean nations demanding legitimate reparations for the horrific legacy of slavery, as well as the fair, special and differential treatment they deserve. We reaffirm our longstanding commitment to the free determination and independence of our brother people of Puerto Rico. We support Argentina's legitimate claim to sovereignty over the Malvinas, South Sandwich and South Georgia islands.

The behaviour of the current United States Government and its strategy of military and nuclear domination constitute a threat to international peace and security. It maintains almost 800 military bases around the world, promotes projects to militarize outer space and cyberspace and foments the covert and illegal use of information and communication technologies to attack other States. The withdrawal of the United States from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, and its immediate commencement of intermediate-range missile tests, can be seen as an attempt to initiate a new arms race.

In his address to the General Assembly last year, the President of the Councils of State and Ministers of the Republic of Cuba, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, affirmed that

“[m]ultilateralism and full respect for the norms and principles of international law to advance towards a democratic, equitable multipolar world are necessary to ensure peaceful coexistence, maintain international peace and security and find lasting solutions to systemic problems.” (*A/73/PV.8, p. 33*)

We reiterate our unrestricted support for a comprehensive, just and lasting two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which can enable the Palestinian people to exercise their right to free determination in a sovereign, independent State based on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We reject the unilateral action of the United States in establishing its diplomatic representation in the city of Jerusalem and condemn the violence inflicted on the civilian population by Israeli forces in Palestine and the threats to annex the occupied territories in the West Bank.

We reaffirm our unswerving solidarity with the Sahrawi people and support the quest for a solution to the issue of Western Sahara that will allow them to exercise their right to free self-determination and live in peace in their territory.

We support the quest for a peaceful and negotiated solution to the situation that has been imposed on Syria, without foreign interference and in full respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity. We reject any direct or indirect intervention without the consent of the legitimate authorities of that country.

We express our solidarity with the Islamic Republic of Iran in the face of the aggressive escalation undertaken by the United States. We reject the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran's nuclear programme. We call for dialogue and cooperation on the basis of the principles of international law.

We welcome the inter-Korean dialogue process. Only through negotiations can a lasting political solution be achieved on the Korean peninsula. We strongly condemn the imposition of the unilateral and unjust sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. NATO's continued expansion towards the borders with Russia poses serious dangers that have been aggravated by the imposition of arbitrary sanctions, which we reject.

We support with admiration the recent so-called student and youth marches. Climate change, some of whose effects are now irreversible, is a threat to the survival of the entire world, particularly the small island developing States. Capitalism is unsustainable. Its irrational and unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, along with the growing and unjust concentration of wealth, are the main threat to the ecological balance of the planet. There can be no

sustainable development without social justice. We cannot continue to overlook the separate and differential treatment subjected to the southern countries when it comes to international economic relations. The emergency in the Amazon compels us to search for solutions through universal cooperation, without exclusion or politicization, and with the full respect for the sovereignty of States.

Corruption is spreading among political systems and electoral models, as is their disengagement from the will of the people. Powerful and exclusive minorities, particularly corporate groups, decide the nature and composition of Governments, parliaments, and judicial and law-enforcement institutions. After failing in its attempt to subdue the Human Rights Council, the United States Government opted to abandon it and is consequently further hampering international dialogue and cooperation on the subject.

That news should come as no surprise to us. The United States is a country where human rights are violated systematically, and often deliberately and flagrantly so. In 2018, 36,000 people — a hundred per day — died in that country by firearms. Meanwhile, the Government protects those that produce and trade firearms at the expense of the safety of its citizens. Every year, 91,000 people in the United States die of heart disease due to a lack of adequate treatment. Infant and maternal mortality rates among African Americans double those among Caucasians. Twenty-eight million people do not have health insurance or real access to health services. Thirty-two million people are functionally illiterate. A total of 2.2 million people are incarcerated, 4.7 million people are on probation and every year 10 million people are arrested. It therefore makes sense that the President of the United States is busy attacking socialism.

We reject politicization, selectivity, punitive approaches and double standards when it comes to addressing human rights. Cuba will remain committed to the exercise by all individuals and peoples of all their human rights, in particular the rights to peace, life, development and self-determination. We must prevent the imposition of a single, totalitarian and overpowering cultural model that destroys national cultures, identities, history, memory, symbols and individuality, and that silences the structural problems of capitalism that lead to ever-increasing, lacerating inequality.

So-called cognitive capitalism also lends itself to that reality. Digital capital dictates global value chains, concentrates the ownership of digital data, exploits identity, information and knowledge and threatens freedom and democracy, which have already been analogically eroded. We need other forms of self-propelled, humanist and counter-hegemonic thinking, as well as decisive political action, to coordinate mass mobilization in our networks, in our streets and at the polls. Independent States need to exercise sovereignty over their cyberspace, break free of the illusions of the so-called network society and the era of access and, instead, democratize Internet governance.

The powerful and universal thought of the apostle of the Cuban independence, José Martí, continues to inspire and motivate new generations of Cubans. The words he wrote a few hours before he was killed in battle are particularly relevant today:

“I am in danger each day now of giving my life for my country, and for my duty ... to prevent in time, with the independence of Cuba, the United States from extending itself across the Antilles and falling with that much more force upon the lands of our America. Everything that I have done thus far, and all I will do, is for that purpose.”

Similar strength is found in the words of Antonio Maceo, who wrote in 1888 that “whoever tries to conquer Cuba will gather the dust of her blood-soaked soil, if he does not perish in the fight”.

It is this same and singular Cuban Revolution that was commanded by Fidel Castro Ruz and is now headed by the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba, Raúl Modesto Castro Ruz, and President Miguel Díaz Canel Bermúdez. And if, at this point, someone still intends to make the Cuban Revolution surrender or expects the new generations of Cubans to betray their past and renounce their future, we will repeat with the vigour of Fidel, “Our country or death! We shall prevail!”

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Nicola Renzi, Minister for Foreign and Political Affairs and Justice of the Republic of San Marino.

Mr. Renzi (San Marino) (*spoke in Italian; English text provided by the delegation*): On behalf of the Government of the Republic of San Marino, and on my own behalf, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his election as

President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. We wish you, Mr. President, a productive session ahead. The Republic of San Marino supports the priorities outlined in the programme of work for this session, as mentioned in your inaugural address (see A/74/PV.1), and we assure you, Sir, of our full cooperation in all of the General Assembly’s work.

I would also like to express my country’s gratitude to the outgoing President, Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, for the important work carried out during the seventy-third session. I should also like to extend my special thanks to Secretary-General António Guterres for his energy and determination in leading the United Nations and for his efforts aimed at reforming the Organization.

I welcome the theme chosen for this session — “Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion” — which is a broad and cross-cutting approach, as it deals with human rights, the fight against climate change and sustainable development, to which the Republic of San Marino attaches great importance. It also gives States Members of the United Nations the opportunity to constructively contribute to the work of the General Assembly. It is clear that there is a link between multilateralism — that is to say, the orientation towards common and coordinated policies — and global challenges, the scope of which goes beyond the capacities of each individual State — even the most powerful or technologically advanced — to confront them on its own.

Recent developments in the global political landscape have created obstacles to the development of multilateralism, thereby putting it at risk. However, the increasingly evident interrelationships among various global challenges have highlighted the need, today more than ever, for Member States to work together in order to overcome these difficulties. These difficulties also require that we strengthen international cooperation and our Organization as a whole. My country welcomes the outcome of the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate and promote the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace, which took place on 24 April (see A/73/PV.78). Preserving the values of multilateralism and international cooperation, which underpin the Charter of the United Nations and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is of fundamental importance in promoting and supporting

peace and security, development and human rights. The challenges of protectionism and isolationism facing our world today must and can be countered by the rules of international law, which have guided Member States for decades.

The Republic of San Marino believes it is essential to continue to reaffirm the collective commitment to multilateralism, in particular in the framework of the General Assembly, which is the most representative body of the United Nations owing to its deeply democratic nature, universal participation and undisputed legitimacy. San Marino has decided to cooperate within the framework of international structures and mechanisms — the most important of which is the United Nations itself — because we believe in the effectiveness of dialogue, democracy and respect for others. The peaceful coexistence of peoples relies on such values. However, multilateralism cannot be a mere statement of collective intentions. Rather, it must translate into concrete actions to improve people's lives and leave no one behind.

Four years ago, Member States adopted a very ambitious plan to end poverty and create shared prosperity on a peaceful and healthy planet — the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In recent days, in New York, world leaders have gathered to take stock of the implementation of sustainable-development commitments and to reaffirm our collective ambition for a better world. As the Secretary-General stated in his latest special-edition report (E/2019/68) on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), progress is being made in the implementation of the SDGs. Extreme poverty and child mortality rates continue to fall, albeit not yet at the desired rate; progress is being made in fighting certain diseases, such as hepatitis; important developments are being made with regard to targets on gender equality; electricity access in the poorest countries is improving; labour productivity has increased; and global unemployment has returned to pre-financial-crisis levels. This progress illustrates the great work carried out by Member States and their partners since 2015.

San Marino believes that sustainability is a major issue that must be addressed at the global level in order to ensure the future of the planet and that of young and future generations. The Republic of San Marino therefore recently joined the 25+5 SDG Cities initiative — managed by the United Nations Global Sustainability Index Institute, in collaboration with the

United Nations Office for Project Services — which will be a fundamental tool in transforming our country into a reference hub for various projects, such as sustainable agriculture. However, despite the positive trends and the many initiatives undertaken at the local, regional and national levels, which continue to be inspired by the 2030 Agenda, an acceleration in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is needed if the required level of transformation is to be achieved by 2030.

The Secretary-General's special-edition report also reveals that hunger and malnutrition are far from being resolved, greenhouse gas emissions are continuing to increase, biological diversity is rapidly diminishing, the level of financing for sustainable development is not sufficient and, even at the institutional level, there is a lack of efficiency and strength to respond to the challenges. There is also evidence that the most vulnerable groups of the population remain largely excluded from political, economic and social processes. Overall, young people are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults; one in five children lives in poverty; people with disabilities continue to face multiple disadvantages, often to the detriment of the full enjoyment of their human rights; and gender inequalities persist.

The divergences in the implementation of the SDGs exist not only between but also within countries. A major cause for concern is that the most vulnerable countries and those lagging behind in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda are precisely those in which there are major obstacles to successfully implementing the SDGs. These are also the countries in which situations of armed conflict, political or economic instability and economic losses from natural disasters have jeopardized the implementation of the SDGs or even reversed the progress that had been achieved. Without effective action to contain it, global warming will further inhibit our ability to adapt and increase the sense of vulnerability among large sectors of the world's population.

My country welcomes the convening of the Climate Action Summit in recent days and the ambitious initiatives that were put forward there. Since 2008, the Republic of San Marino has intensified its commitment to environmental sustainability, particularly in the production of electricity from renewable resources. This commitment has resulted in San Marino ranking among the world's leading countries in the production of

photovoltaic energy per capita. We are also committed to improving our strategies and practices in the fields of waste management, sustainable mobility and the raising of public awareness, particularly among the younger generations, with regard to a sustainable and environmentally friendly lifestyle.

The effects of climate change represent the greatest challenge of our time, owing to their unprecedented impact on our lives. Cyclone Idai this year caused devastation in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe. No country or community is immune to the destructive effects of global warming, but the poorest and most vulnerable groups already are already suffering the greatest damage. This is a global problem requiring solutions coordinated at the global level. It is essential to strengthen international cooperation in order to accelerate our collective action.

The special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicated that we had 11 years left to change course for future generations and to get global warming under control. The interlinkages between the climate and the 2030 Agenda must be seen as an opportunity to unleash synergies to drive collective action. Indeed, while achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will help limit warming to 1.5°C, climate action will likewise support the attainment of the economic and social targets of the Agenda through job creation. It also promotes better health and well-being for the world's population.

The eradication of poverty in all its forms and manifestations, in particular extreme poverty, is perhaps the most difficult and important challenge we face in achieving the objective of sustainable development. While the global reduction in extreme poverty continues, as the Secretary-General's report shows, it is not falling fast enough for us to attain the 3 per cent objective by 2030. Those living in extreme poverty suffer deprivation, often exacerbated by violent conflict or vulnerability due to natural disasters. The principle whereby no one should be left behind requires the adoption of targeted measures to support people in vulnerable situations. It is indispensable to take into account the needs of children, young people, persons with disabilities, the elderly, indigenous people, refugees, the displaced, migrants, and people living in areas affected by humanitarian emergencies or in situations of armed conflict.

Universal respect for human rights and human dignity is at the core of the 2030 Agenda. Peace, justice, equality and non-discrimination are fundamental rights that must be fully realized if we are to succeed in building inclusive societies.

It is essential to protect children and young people. We must promote actions to support them to ensure they can grow up free from all forms of abuse and exploitation. Unfortunately, children pay a very high price in areas of armed conflict; many lose their lives, are kidnapped or raped, used as shields or recruited as soldiers.

My country believes that respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law is essential in conflict situations. The Republic of San Marino is part of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, has ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts, and supports the Paris Principles. Moreover, San Marino is among the countries that support the Safe Schools Declaration, an important tool to protect educational facilities from military use during conflicts. San Marino also took part in the launch on 2 April of the ACT to Protect Children affected by Conflict initiative of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba.

If we want to build sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies, we need to promote the full and effective participation of women in decision-making processes. The Republic of San Marino commits to fighting all forms of gender-based violence, sexual abuse and exploitation. We attach great importance to the aims of gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and the full realization of their human rights. Gender equality must also be translated into equal educational opportunities. In this regard, I would like to underline the importance of scientific subjects because technology, science and innovation in general play a vital role in tackling global challenges and thus in the pursuit of sustainable development.

This year San Marino signed, together with other countries, a document entitled "Investment in Women and Girls in Science for Inclusive Green Growth", which recognizes the fundamental role science, technology and innovation play in socioeconomic development and the need to boost investment in these sectors. But, above all, the document affirms the importance of investing

in programmes that promote equality and gender parity in science.

My country firmly believes that, today more than ever, particular attention must be paid to emerging technologies, science and innovation, which should facilitate sustainable development through means of communication that do not distort the truth and thereby undermine the very concept of freedom. This year, having hosted the inaugural High-level Conference on the Dangers of Disinformation, on 10 May, the Republic of San Marino made a concrete and determined contribution to the international discourse around objective information, in contrast to the ever more dangerous, deceptive and out of control phenomenon of fake news, capable of inciting hatred and nurturing prejudice.

Aware that disinformation represents a global threat and a genuine risk to the stability of our democratic systems, my country is committed to becoming a veritable observatory for the study of and scientific research on a dangerous phenomenon that is harmful to democracy and freedom. San Marino's efforts to protect quality information aim to identify new operational strategies and synergies to promote the exchange of best practices on combating misinformation, including at the international level.

The international community must protect and support the most vulnerable groups, ensuring that none are excluded from decision-making process. My country attaches great importance to disability issues and has frequently contributed over recent years to United Nations discussions on this important topic, sharing our experiences and the achievements attained in this regard in our Republic. People with disabilities must be guaranteed full participation in social, economic and cultural life. To this end, it is necessary to fully implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

When we talk about multilateralism and the United Nations, we must also inevitably reflect on the process of reforming our Organization. The United Nations is able to translate objectives into action with a real and measurable impact on the lives of citizens only if it is equipped with structures necessary to implement action on a global scale. In this regard, the Republic of San Marino last year expressed its support for the reform agenda launched by Secretary-General António Guterres covering peace and security, management and

the United Nations development system, based on our belief that it will enhance the capacity of the United Nations to attain more concrete and visible results.

My country is also closely following the process of Security Council reform. We believe that intergovernmental negotiations are the right way to reach an agreement that reflects the interests and positions of all. San Marino favours reforming the Security Council to make it more democratic, transparent and effective. However, it is necessary to take a step forward and overcome the opening positions in order to negotiate an agreement that reaches the broadest possible consensus.

San Marino expresses its concern at the growing number of conflicts around the world, fuelled by threats of religious radicalism, terrorism, transnational organized crime, trafficking in drugs and human beings, weapons of mass destruction, violent extremism, marginalization and exclusion. Over recent years, the United Nations has suffered a loss of credibility, partly due to the failure of the Security Council to fulfil its mandate effectively. With a view to supporting the Security Council to act swiftly and decisively, I recall that my country has adhered to the Code of Conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes, drawn up by the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, and the joint declaration by France and Mexico on the voluntary suspension of the veto by the permanent members of the Security Council.

The international community has, without a doubt, faced major challenges over recent years due to increasing migration flows, driven in part by the effects of climate change, which have forced millions of people to seek refuge in other countries, and in part by persecution and armed conflict, as well as by socioeconomic hardship in the form of lack of food, water, education and health services. No country can face migration alone given the transnational nature of the phenomenon. My country intends to renew its support to the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, adopted last December in Marrakech, Morocco. The Compact aims to manage migration flows through enhanced international cooperation. Moreover, it reaffirms migrants' human rights and dignity in order to ensure the protection of their fundamental rights.

Over recent years, perhaps because of certain difficulties multilateralism has encountered in tackling

global challenges, we have seen the unfortunate growth in some parts of the world of protectionist, isolationist or, worse yet, openly xenophobic ideologies, which go against the principle of international cooperation. I believe that the general debate is an important opportunity to renew our commitment to a stronger United Nations, capable of coordinating economic, social and environmental policies and translating them into effective action at all levels. Trust, inclusiveness and dialogue are essential elements in supporting multilateralism and its capacity to produce concrete results at the global level. San Marino will never fail to do its part.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Ann Christin Linde, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

Ms. Linde (Sweden): Next year, we will celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, which was born from the ashes of the Second World War to maintain peace and promote prosperity and human rights for future generations. The Organization was created to resolve differences, prevent violent conflicts, learn lessons from the past and meet international threats through cooperation. It was established to enable nations, no matter their size, to achieve these goals by acting together. The anniversary is an opportunity to celebrate many significant achievements — most recently, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the sustaining peace agenda.

At the same time, the United Nations and other multilateral institutions, such as the World Trade Organization and the International Criminal Court, are increasingly being questioned. This is a disturbing trend that threatens to weaken international cooperation, accountability and our nations' growth, trade and development.

The climate crisis is the defining issue of our time. Millions of young people are now demonstrating and demanding urgent action. Their commitment and engagement have inspired school strikes and protests around the world. They have left few of us unmoved. Their voice was raised, once again, loud and clear at last Saturday's youth summit. We must not let them down. We cannot let them down.

To keep global warming under 1.5°C and prevent the most extreme impacts of climate change, we need to halve global emissions by 2030. Scientists, including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change included, warn of devastating consequences if we do not take immediate action.

Climate change is a driver of conflict. Action is about the survival of our peoples and our nations. The world cannot afford the cost of inaction. The challenge facing us is enormous, but we can turn this challenge into an opportunity.

I would like to raise two main points. First, we need long-term policy at all levels. The European Union has put in place a legally binding climate framework, sending a clear message to the international community about our commitment. In Sweden, our Climate Act and net-zero emissions target also send a clear signal. But we can and will do more. Our goal is to be the first fossil-free welfare nation in the world. At the Climate Action Summit, together with India and the World Economic Forum, we announced the launch of the Leadership Group for Industry Transition. This initiative will speed up industry transition to pathways that will ensure that we deliver on the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda. The role of trade and labour unions is essential in this transition.

Secondly, transforming financial flows is key. We are proud to see the commitment of our businesses and financial institutions to aligning with the goals of the Paris Agreement. Through our development cooperation, Sweden is investing in renewable energy, energy efficiency and climate-sensitive agriculture. We are the world's leading per-capita contributor to the Green Climate Fund and have now decided to double that contribution.

Today, in many parts of the world, democracy is losing ground. Inequalities are growing. Social and economic gaps are feeding into nationalistic narratives. Anti-democratic forces are creating uncertainty and division. Corruption is a threat to democracy, to economic and social development, and to trade and investment. Together, we must do more to counter these forces because democracy is the bedrock of open and free societies, and of equality and prosperity. Democracy invites all citizens to take part in building sustainable societies and societies free from oppression. Sweden will increase its support for democratic and vibrant civil societies. Voices of democracy need our support.

Human rights around the world are under attack. We must act against all attempts to weaken the respect for human rights and restrict their universality. Sweden will continue to be a strong voice for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights. No one should suffer discrimination, violence or oppression because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Sweden will continue to champion the independence and integrity of the human rights system. Persecution of religious and other minorities occurs in many parts of the world, which is unacceptable. Sweden is strengthening efforts against anti-Semitism. Next year, we will host an international forum on Holocaust remembrance and combating anti-Semitism.

We will continue to protest when the freedom of expression is restricted, whether online or off, when journalists and media actors are silenced, and when human rights defenders are harassed or even killed.

I am proud to be the Foreign Minister in Sweden's feminist Government and to pursue a feminist foreign policy. Gender equality is an issue that concerns us all. It is about human rights, democracy, development and peace and security for all. We are encouraged by the considerable advances made in certain areas, but progress remains uneven. Every day, in many parts of the world, women's and girls' rights are still being violated.

We are also witnessing growing opposition to women's and girls' human rights. This must stop. Every woman and girl should have the right to make her own decisions about her body and her life. These are basic human rights. Sexual and reproductive health and rights, including the right to safe and legal abortion, are fundamental human rights.

Next year marks the anniversaries of several gender-equality commitments. The tasks laid out in those commitments remain unfinished and need our urgent attention. Implementing the women, peace and security agenda and the Beijing Platform for Action is not only the right thing to do but it is also key to achieving sustainable peace and development. On International Women's Day this year, Sweden and France launched a diplomatic initiative to combat trafficking and prostitution, focusing on reducing demand and protecting the victims of prostitution, in Europe and globally.

Empowering women and increasing their political and economic participation are crucial for global development. Sweden fully supports the ongoing efforts of the United Nations to mainstream a gender perspective throughout the United Nations system and its reform agenda. The Secretary-General's determination to ensure gender parity in the Organization is an important part of these efforts.

In adopting the 2030 Agenda, we all committed to taking on significant responsibilities. I am pleased that the political declaration adopted earlier this week (resolution 74/4, annex) not only reinforces the 2030 Agenda, but also sets the course for faster action on the Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations plays a central role in this endeavour. With the reforms initiated by the Secretary-General, the United Nations will become more effective and enable action on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Sweden will continue to allocate 1 per cent of its gross national income as official development assistance. At present, more than 50 per cent of this assistance is channelled to or through the multilateral system. This demonstrates our strong commitment to international cooperation and the importance we attach to the 2030 Agenda for our shared future.

I am encouraged by the high level of engagement from the business sector. Together, as partners, we will achieve the Goals. The business benefits of science-based climate action are clear. We look forward to the launch of the Global Investors for Sustainable Development Alliance in October.

Trade is an important tool for sustainable economic development and poverty reduction, and for the 2030 Agenda as a whole. We need more trade, not less. A strong rules-based and transparent multilateral trading system is vital. Support to developing countries to increase their capacity for international trade is also crucial. Free trade is a powerful engine for growth. We need to make growth sustainable and inclusive and to promote decent work for all. Sweden will continue to be an active partner in the Global Deal for Decent Work and Inclusive Growth partnership, with its vision of a world of decent work and inclusive growth that guarantees workers' rights.

Security must be built collectively. Current security threats leave no nation or person untouched. Sweden's membership in the Security Council focused on conflict prevention, early action and respect for international

law. Our membership has ended but our commitment is ongoing.

This week, Sweden co-hosted a meeting with key partners in support of peace in Yemen, based on the Stockholm Agreement. The United Nations-led process is key. We emphasize that international law must be respected. International law serves as a basis for conflict resolution and prevention, as in the case of Israel and Palestine. An end to the occupation together with a two-State solution within secure and mutually recognized borders is the only way to resolve this conflict.

The illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and the aggression in eastern Ukraine challenge core principles of international law. We will continue to work with international partners until Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty have been fully restored.

The Security Council needs to adopt a comprehensive approach to peace, and to include new risks, such as climate change, on its agenda.

We are a year away from the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the cornerstone of the global nuclear-disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The Treaty has been successful in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. However, the deteriorating international security environment has once again increased the threat of the use of nuclear weapons.

The situation on the Korean peninsula remains a cause for concern. We must continue to pursue our common goal of complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization and of peace and reconciliation on the Korean peninsula through diplomatic means.

We need full implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. We must act urgently and pursue dialogue to restore trust, which is presently lacking in this part of the international arena.

The termination of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, essentially as a result of Russian non-compliance, is a further setback. In June, Sweden, together with 15 countries from various regions, launched a nuclear-disarmament initiative. This initiative aims at building political support for a successful outcome of the NPT Review Conference in 2020. Concrete measures to reduce nuclear risk and increase transparency can serve as stepping stones and unlock disarmament diplomacy. Full and constructive

engagement by nuclear-weapon States will be a necessary ingredient if we wish to move forward.

The International Atomic Energy Agency is an essential part of the NPT. On 23 September, Sweden took over as Chair of the Agency's Board of Governors for the 2019-2020 period. We are honoured to shoulder this great responsibility in these challenging times.

Millions of people are struggling to survive and live just another day. Currently over 140 million people need life-saving humanitarian assistance, most of whom are women and girls. Sweden is proud to be one of the largest contributors of humanitarian assistance in the world in order to save lives and ease human suffering. We stand behind the Secretary-General's vision that tensions and crises can be prevented from escalating into major conflicts.

The role that the United Nations plays in resolving conflicts, through political and diplomatic efforts or peace operations, is crucial for securing inclusive and sustainable peace. Post-conflict reconstruction can be successful only when all segments of society are included. This is especially important when it comes to women's participation. We are firmly committed to supporting the Secretary-General's initiative to strengthen peacekeeping. We will continue our engagement in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and other peace operations.

The late poet Claes Andersson once wrote: "Fear those who say they only want to be left alone — for they fear no means." History has shown us that isolationism, populism and nationalism are all paths to failure. Sweden's foreign policy rests firmly on democracy, international law, respect for human rights, gender equality, a humanitarian perspective, and free, fair and sustainable trade.

The United Nations system is a global public good, and it is in our shared strategic interest to keep investing in it. The long-term gains are far greater than any short-term costs. The prosperity of one nation is not part of a zero-sum game in which nations either win or lose. On the contrary, we can and must choose a path that will ensure that we continue to rise together.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Marcelo Ebrard Casaubón, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Mexican States.

Mr. Casaubón (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am doubly honoured to address the General Assembly today: on account of being in this loftiest of venues, and because I am speaking on behalf of the new Government of Mexico, elected to power less than one year ago. That Government is led by Andrés Manuel López Obrador, whose purpose is to lead the fourth transformation of Mexico.

In its history, Mexico has undergone three major transformations: the first was the independence of the country; the second was a liberal reform headed by Benito Juárez and the restoration of the Republic; and the third was the Mexican Revolution. Today we are undergoing our fourth transformation, which means not only a change of Government but a change of regime in Mexico.

What does this fourth transformation propose? When President López Obrador asked himself how to summarize it, he said that it means, first of all, bringing an end to corruption in Mexico, separating economic power from a political power, establishing respect for our legal norms and austerity, and forging a relationship with society that is different from what has been seen over recent years.

Secondly, we wish to significantly decrease inequality in our country because, as Members are aware, we still have more than 52 million people living in poverty despite being one of the largest economies in the world, with an expansive and successful export base. Reducing inequality is therefore our second great objective.

The third is accelerating economic growth on the basis of self-confidence, productivity, innovation, organizational capacity and global presence. This is what Mexico is doing today.

The fourth objective, building on the other three, is to make Mexico a safe society where Mexican families can enjoy peace and security.

In brief, Mexico has reclaimed its self-confidence. Today I would like to inform the Assembly that strengthening, broadening and deepening our involvement with effective multilateralism is among our top priorities. We are well aware that these are difficult times, with many challenges and risks to global coexistence and international security and peace. The moment is therefore right for this renewed Mexico, once again sure of itself, to participate broadly, deeply

and intensively in strengthening the multilateral order and its objectives.

Mexico therefore recently presented itself as a candidate for a term on the Security Council starting in 2021. Moreover, in many of the most important areas of endeavour among Mexico's priorities, we have sought the support of the United Nations in recent months and we will continue to do so by pursuing and participating in the struggles that all of us represented here seek to overcome.

I must say, first and foremost, that our foreign policy and participation in the United Nations will be guided by the principles of Mexican foreign policy: non-intervention, the self-determination peoples and the peaceful resolution of disputes. This is why, in the context of Latin America and the Caribbean, I express Mexico's opposition to such measures as the embargo against Cuba and the imposition of sanctions against countries, and we advocate dialogue and communication whereby peoples and nations can resolve their differences. Peace can be achieved through political means, not through the use of force.

We are committed to upholding and promoting the values of freedom and human rights. Mexico will contribute, and with great determination, in response to the appeal by Secretary-General António Guterres that we step up climate action and redouble our efforts. We have already put forth additional actions, in the belief that this is a matter of life or death for humankind, so there is no room for delay or excuses when it comes to making these commitments.

Mexico will also engage vigorously in seeking and promoting solutions to the issues of migration and inequality that we are confronting in various regions around the world. Suffice it to say that the number of migrants so far this year in Central America and Mexico has broken recent records. We are talking more than 1.3 million people on the move, placing us among the regions with highest number of migrants in the world.

Mexico requested the support of the United Nations — and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his support — through the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, which is the body at the disposal of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, to develop a comprehensive development plan for southern Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, which was presented yesterday with the

participation and support of 18 United Nations entities and, so far, 35 countries. I mentioned the concept of effective multilateralism because we fully subscribe to multilateralism and believe it is the most efficient tool at our disposal to resolve the major problems facing the world today.

With regard to migration, we believe that coercive measures have no prospect of success. We believe that migration should be a choice, not forced by insecurity or, primarily, by poverty. We therefore have great expectations for the aforementioned comprehensive development plan. For the time being, Mexico has stepped up its cooperation in the plan's implementation by a factor of five this year, by which we wish to show that through committed and decisive participation by several countries we can create, in the region I just outlined, over 60,000 jobs in one year. These efforts will create real opportunities for people where they live, meaning they will not be forced to migrate.

I would also like to express our gratitude to the United Nations and affirm that we will continue partnering with the United Nations to ensure transparency in important decision-making by the Mexican Government in the months and years ahead with a view to accelerating development. We invited the United Nations Office for Project Services and several agencies of the United Nations to partner with us in the great struggle to end corruption. Together we are making progress, and we will continue to do so.

Just a few days ago, I said that the Government of Mexico considers itself a feminist Government. We will endeavour to prove as much through our commitments and actions over the years ahead. We believe that gender equality is at the very foundation of an equitable society. It is impossible to change society without a deep and far-reaching commitment to gender equality. That is why I say to the Assembly today that the Government of Mexico will support all efforts under the Beijing+25 and United Nations initiatives under way.

I should also like to state that we are in favour of measures to ensure no one is persecuted for their sexual orientation. Our Government is and will continue to be active, determined and resolved in favour of protecting the freedoms and rights of all persons, including with respect to their sexual orientation. Persecution is divisive and exclusion destroys hope. We must

therefore remain committed and uphold the human rights and freedoms of all.

We believe that it is necessary to step up efforts to effectively protect the cultural heritage of all peoples, hence Mexico's active participation under the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. Mexico has made it clear in many settings that the international community must not allow the looting of the historical and cultural heritage of peoples. We will therefore continue devoting concerted effort to that end. We will join forces with other peoples and nations represented here having expressed similar concerns.

We remain concerned at, and actively engaged in, the fight against terrorism and recall that, as recently as August, we jointly suffered the effects of the tragedy in El Paso, Texas, where Mexican men and women were among the victims. That tragic event was, according to the perpetrator, linked to, indeed inspired by, that in Christchurch, New Zealand. We must therefore be conscious that, as the Secretary-General has pointed out, there is a strong connection between white supremacy and ideologies involving the replacement of civilizations. We must therefore join together to tackle them. That means not only prevention, that we take all possible measures to ensure such incidents do not continue to occur, but also charge headlong into the battle of cultures and civilizations so as to prevent the further spread of such ideas, which threaten the very pillars of peaceful coexistence, both within our countries and at the global level. The individual who perpetrated that attack uploaded a document 20 minutes before carrying it out stating that the Latino community was his target, similar to what was done in Christchurch against the Muslim community. Mexico will therefore participate resolutely together with several countries present here and United Nations entities to tackle this threat to coexistence and the very existence of democracy, to which all States Members of the United Nations are committed.

As I was saying, we are working to make Mexico a safer and fairer society, and to strengthen multilateralism the world over. We take a critical view of the current state of affairs. We must strengthen multilateralism and contain the growing trend towards unilateralism. It is this critical perspective we wish to bring to bear as a member of the Security Council. That is why we are here with all our fellow Members and will make reform proposals over the months ahead.

However, we are conscious that the United Nations and multilateralism must be strengthened, being as they are the arena for the pursuit of the world's worthiest causes.

I should like to conclude by saying that Mexico has recovered its self-confidence. Mexico has strengths to share with its fellow Member States. Mexico supports such causes as those highlighted by the Secretary-General in his opening address to the General Assembly (see A/74/PV.3). And we have everything necessary to, in the next generation, make great progress through multilateralism anchored in the United Nations. I would like to conclude by reading some verses from the poet-king Nezahualcoyotl:

“With what should I go?
Will I leave nothing behind me on the earth?
How should my heart act?
Did we come to live in vain, perhaps?
To sprout here on the earth?
Let us leave at least flowers!
Let us leave at least songs!”

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Unity Dow, Minister for International Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Botswana.

Ms. Dow (Botswana): I am deeply honoured to address this supremely important Assembly on behalf of the President of the Republic of Botswana, Mr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, and of our people.

Allow me, on behalf of my delegation, to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. We are confident that we will benefit during your tenure of office from your able leadership and wealth of experience. You can count on my country's support in the discharge of your mandate. Let me also take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to your predecessor, Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, for her sterling stewardship throughout the seventy-third session, which has just drawn to a close. She leaves behind a legacy we are convinced you will carry forward.

Botswana fully endorses the theme of the seventy-fourth session, “Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion”. It is both relevant and timely, as it reaffirms the key role of the multilateral system as the ultimate framework through which we can collectively

transform our societies. This theme further challenges us as the global community to recommit to the noble goal of leaving no one behind, and to do our utmost to reach those furthest behind, which usually includes the vulnerable in our societies, such as women, youth and people with disabilities. My delegation is particularly pleased that the theme embodies the priorities you, Mr. President, have identified. We therefore concur that we should redouble our efforts to effectively tackle poverty and all forms of inequality. Inequality remains a problem in developing countries, including middle-income countries such as my own. Inequality and exclusion are threats to peace, therefore requiring that we all come together to urgently address them.

At the same time, we wish to acknowledge the pivotal role of quality education and the need to invest more in this sector to enable us to step up implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In that regard, we applaud your commitment, Sir, to leveraging high-level meetings — such as the summits on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), climate action, universal health coverage and financing for development — to galvanize political commitment to urgently address the most pressing global challenges affecting our people and the planet. Such high-level engagements, involving as they do world leaders from Government, the private sector, academia and civil society, provide a unique opportunity to build and reinvigorate partnerships around our common development objectives.

We note with satisfaction that 2019 has been a significant year for SDG implementation, with a number of countries presenting their voluntary national reviews, indicating their status of implementation against the Goals. Botswana presented its review in 2017. We view the process as a valuable accountability mechanism to monitor progress towards the attainment of the SDGs, and we encourage its continuation.

Botswana, like many States Members of the United Nations, is facing many challenges, including extreme poverty and inequalities. In that regard, our Government continues to direct significant resources towards inclusive development and economic growth. Consequently, we have in place various policies and poverty-eradication programmes to support the most vulnerable in our society, such as orphans and people living with disabilities. The national voluntary review process was indeed instrumental in identifying the gaps and major challenges that still hinder our

full implementation of the SDGs. Those challenges include youth unemployment, poverty, increasing social and economic inequalities, climate change and unsustainable patterns of consumption and production. The process further identified financing gaps. In that regard, we view public-private partnerships as critical for mobilizing resources for the implementation of the SDGs. It is equally important that we continue to work together to create an enabling global environment to ensure that all countries can participate in a fair and rules-based global trading system.

As already indicated, Botswana recognizes the importance of quality education, that is, education that empowers, fuels prosperity and positions citizens to be globally competitive. In recognition of that, Botswana has invested significantly in all levels of education. Indeed, we are pleased to report that we have successfully attained gender parity in access to education. However, much remains to be done. We must address issues including large class sizes, underresourced schools and institutions, old infrastructure and insufficient and outdated technologies. Those challenges are significant because it is only with quality education that a country can be a participant in, and beneficiary of, the fourth industrial revolution.

Climate change is indeed one of the greatest challenges we face today. We therefore commend the Secretary-General for convening two summits on climate change at the present session of the Assembly, involving world leaders and the world's youth. They provided an opportunity for deliberations on climate change-related actions, addressing the reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions and achieving the target of net-zero emissions by 2050. The science is very clear: unless there is urgent action, climate change will reverse the many gains we have made in key sectors of our economy.

Botswana, like others African countries, is already experiencing the effects of climate change, including desertification, heat waves and recurrent droughts. As I address the Assembly today, Botswana and some of our neighbours have declared 2019 a drought year. Crops have failed and livestock are dying. Moreover, our neighbours Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe suffered catastrophic impacts from Cyclone Idai, which resulted in significant loss of life and massive destruction of infrastructure and property. We take this opportunity to commend our subregion and the international community for the timely response they

rendered in support of the countries affected by the cyclone. We note that rebuilding lives and livelihoods will take time, and therefore urge that support continue to be directed to those countries.

We also reiterate our deepest sympathies and condolences to the Government and the people of the Bahamas in the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian. It is clear that we need to adopt permanent mitigation and adaptation measures, as well as put in place robust response systems to collectively support affected countries.

Botswana remains fully committed to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, in which we have anchored our national development objectives. In that regard, as part of our mitigation and adaptation drive, we have developed a climate change policy and strategy. Furthermore, in our intended nationally determined contribution, Botswana has committed to reducing greenhouse-gas emissions by 15 per cent by 2030, based on the 2010 baseline. We therefore appeal for concerted global action to support our efforts through the provision of technology, financing and capacity-building in order to achieve our intended nationally determined contributions.

Allow me to address an equally pressing environmental issue of major concern to Botswana. I must say, as we collectively grapple with finding prudent and innovative ways of managing our environment and its ecosystems for sustainable use, human-wildlife conflict is a serious challenge for Botswana and our subregion. Our elephant population has grown to unmanageable proportions and is now exceeding the carrying capacity of its designated area of habitat. Elephants are now aggressively encroaching on many human settlements around the country. Elephants outside national parks invade homes and farms, kill people and destroy property. Moreover, elephants within parks are destroying their own environment because of overpopulation.

Botswana has an outstanding track record in the conservation and protection of its wild flora and fauna. In that context, 40 per cent of our land is reserved as protected areas for wildlife and conservation. That demonstrates our steadfast commitment to protecting wildlife and curbing the illegal trade in wild species. That commitment comes at a huge cost and sacrifice. A multifaceted response with the support

and understanding of our international partners is urgently required.

We fully concur that, as espoused in the founding principles of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), people and States should and must be the best protectors of their own wild fauna and flora. In that regard, Botswana, together with the Southern Africa subregion, has been working tirelessly to find sustainable solutions.

As I already intimated, Botswana firmly believes that part of the solution lies in working with the very communities that live in, or are adjacent to, protected areas. Those communities must be supported to effectively coexist with wildlife and to enable them to contribute to anti-poaching efforts. That is indeed critical as competition for food and land between people and animals intensifies.

In an effort to bolster our elephant conservation and management efforts, Botswana and the countries of the subregion recently presented a proposal to allow a one-off sale of ivory from countries whose populations are currently listed in CITES appendix II. That prudent approach was regrettably rebuffed, despite our best efforts to demonstrate that revenues accruing from such sales of ivory stockpiles would be used in conservation efforts, just as in the past. We were therefore disappointed that much of the discussion at the eighteenth Conference of the Parties to CITES focused on increased restrictions on wildlife trade, when the fundamental purpose of the Convention is to regulate and facilitate international trade. Equally disheartening were attempts to extend the scope of the Convention in a manner that would infringe upon sovereign matters. That proposal, which did not succeed, sought to close all domestic ivory trade.

I cannot emphasize enough that, in order to deliver on our development aspirations to live in harmony with nature and ensure the sustainable use of our natural resources, we must facilitate the implementation of pragmatic natural resource-management plans that contribute to our national development agenda.

Botswana welcomes the convening of the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development. In that regard, the United Nations should continue to pay special attention to the unique needs of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island

developing States (SIDS), middle-income countries and countries emerging from conflict.

We welcome the convening of the High-level Meeting to Review Progress Made in Addressing the Priorities of Small Island Developing States Through the Implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway. That review will afford us an opportunity to reassess priorities, build on lessons learned and develop meaningful and transformative solutions.

Equally important is the high-level midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action on Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, which will be convened in December. The review will provide an opportunity for us to take stock of the progress made and to address challenges to the implementation of the Programme. At the national level, we consider the Programme to be a vital framework to further drive our development agenda through trade facilitation and greater access to global markets.

Botswana is of the view that South-South and triangular cooperation is a fundamental platform for enhancing cooperation among all countries for mutual benefit. We recognize its importance for sustainable development and that it is complementary to North-South cooperation. To this end, Botswana has developed a South-South and Triangular Cooperation Strategy. The Strategy will facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences, as well as leverage appropriate technologies to bolster national capacities to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

As a global leader in diamond mining, we stand firmly behind the Kimberley Process, an international mechanism set up to stem the flow of conflict diamonds and promote the legitimate diamond trade. We therefore look forward to chairing the Kimberley Process in 2021, and will work with all other members to strengthen its mechanisms. Furthermore, our priorities will include capacity-building for members of the Kimberley Process, especially those emerging from conflict.

As part of our commitment to a peaceful world order, Botswana recently became a State party to the Arms Trade Treaty. We have also just signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. That speaks to our commitment to contributing to global peace and security through complete disarmament by eliminating

the illicit trade in conventional and nuclear weapons. Humankind should invest not in its own destruction but in its own prosperity.

The scourge of terrorism threatens to reverse hard-earned peace and security gains. We should spare no effort in the fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We note with satisfaction that the new Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact will, among other things, provide capacity-building and technical assistance for developing countries, particularly in Africa. Similarly, we welcome the efforts of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism to address these challenges.

Botswana remains fully committed to combating all acts of terrorism and to resolutely confronting associated bad practices, such as illicit financial flows and money-laundering. However, we wish to caution that the de-risking approaches taken by Governments, correspondent banks and other financial institutions should take into consideration the unintended consequences of such measures, including discouraging the use of banking facilities, limited access to banking facilities and the possible collapse of small banks and economies. Moving forward, though, we will remain engaged with all relevant stakeholders to eliminate any deficiencies in our anti-money-laundering and counter-terrorism strategies.

As we strive for world peace and prosperity. I wish to affirm that Botswana aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the United Republic of Tanzania, Chair of the Southern African Development Community, regarding the lifting of sanctions on Zimbabwe (see A/74/PV.10). There is no doubt that those prolonged sanctions gravely undermine the economy of Zimbabwe and inflict severe hardship on the ordinary people of that country. We also wish to note that sanctions against any country negatively affect not only the target country but also its neighbours and trading partners. The case of Zimbabwe is no exception.

In conclusion, it is evident that our multilateral system is under serious threat. We cannot deny that we are experiencing an unprecedented deterioration of the very common values that bind us together in the United Nations family, as enshrined in the Charter. It is imperative that we marshal our collective resolve to revive the culture of diplomacy, tolerance and mutual respect and fully embrace the strength of our

diversity for the survival of our multilateral system. We therefore call for a restrengthening of the rules-based world order, anchored in the principles of international law and geared towards strengthening international cooperation for the prosperity of all nations, large and small. Botswana remains committed to the multilateral order and believes in a strong and effective United Nations as an Organization that is people-centred, representative, harmonious, accountable and anchored in the sovereign equality of nations.

As we look forward to the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, we must seize the opportunity to reconfirm that it remains as relevant today as it was at its founding in 1945.

Once again, I take this opportunity to reaffirm my Government's commitment to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union Agenda 2063 and to creating a better world characterized by shared prosperity and where no one is left behind.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Naledi Pandor, Minister for International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa.

Mrs. Pandor (South Africa): I stand here deeply moved at the coincidence that I should speak following my counterpart, the Foreign Minister of Botswana, given that my grandfather, Z. K. Matthews, stood here in 1966 as the first Ambassador of the newly independent Botswana.

I represent the President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa as I stand here today. I wish on behalf of South Africa to congratulate you, Sir, on your leadership of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. We are pleased to see a leader from our sister country Nigeria preside over the Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. I assure you of South Africa's full support as you implement your priorities and responsibilities during your term in office.

We thoroughly welcome the theme that you have chosen. It is indeed timely and relevant, especially given the complex challenges facing the world today. Far too many of the world's population remain poor, jobless and hopeless. It is imperative that we intensify efforts directed at fundamentally changing their lives.

This debate holds special significance for South Africa as it coincides with the twenty-fifth anniversary of South Africa's freedom and democracy. Our

anniversary is due in large measure to the solidarity we enjoyed from most States Members of the United Nations, and it is because of this history that South Africa is also vested in the ideal of a robust and coherent United Nations as it is this Organization that has the ability to ensure that all who yearn for freedom achieve it. We know from our experience and history that it will only be through the determined efforts of the United Nations family that freedom for the people of Palestine can be achieved and only through the United Nations family that the Sahrawi people can enjoy freedom.

As early as 1946, shortly after the creation of the United Nations, the issue of apartheid South Africa's discriminatory policies was included as an item on the agenda of the first session of the General Assembly. It was therefore with no great surprise that a democratic South Africa eagerly pursued its new international role and enthusiastically took up its responsibilities as an active Member of the United Nations.

We have sought to participate in all aspects of the United Nations, including by serving in its principal organs. The principles that motivate our action derive from a firm belief in multilateralism, especially a global governance system that is fair, equitable and representative; the promotion of peace and security through global disarmament, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the promotion of good governance; the promotion of human rights; and the fight against poverty through the promotion of sustainable development. We strongly believe that a purposive system of multilateralism is necessary to deal with the global challenges we confront us. We are all interdependent in an ever more globalized world, and we can ill afford the pursuit of narrow self-interests.

Today, South Africa is able to partner with the United Nations in addressing the injustice and imbalances that are a legacy of our past. As Government and civil society in South Africa, we respect and act on the decisions of the United Nations. This includes actions in response to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which articulate a transformative global development agenda. South Africa's National Development Plan 2030 is the policy we have adopted to execute our commitment to achieving the SDGs. Our Plan complements our efforts to support peace, development and security on our continent and the aspirations contained in Agenda 2063 of the African Union (AU).

We believe that, in order to achieve these goals, all Member States should establish partnerships, primarily with the private sector and civil society organizations, to ensure a joint commitment aimed at realizing a world free of poverty and underdevelopment.

One of the greatest obstacles to building a world free of poverty and inequality is intolerance. This includes intolerance of other nations and intolerance of our fellow human beings, as well as inadequate care for the natural environment that sustains us all. Intolerance is exhibited most gruesomely by the evidence of gender-based violence and the exclusion of women from many sectors in society. Our country, South Africa, is taking urgent steps to address the scars of gender-based violence. All of us need to act urgently to ensure that we all enjoy full access to our human rights and that all our citizens, in particular, women, enjoy bodily security. We also face an existential threat due to our intolerance and the disrespect and veritable violence we inflict on the planet on which we all depend.

The Organization, however, is a manifestation of the rejection of intolerance. It was created in the aftermath of a devastating world war as a global forum where nations of the world can address differences and work together for the common good of all people. Our annual gathering here in the Assembly Hall should provide us an opportunity to recommit to these important values.

I firmly believe that we are all here because we are committed to the ideal of multilateral solutions to the world's problems, which draws on strength through diversity — diversity of perspective born from differences in upbringing and culture. By being here, therefore, we recognize that we need each other and that we need to work together. We must therefore use this opportunity to rally against intolerance of any kind so that nations can live in peace and respect each other irrespective of nationality, religion, ethnic or social origin, gender or any other status. It is through our differences that we should find strength and not division.

Unfortunately, our country, South Africa, has not been immune from evidence of intolerance and division in some parts of our nation. The incidents of violence and looting that erupted in parts of Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal provinces were regrettable and shameful for a nation with such a proud history of struggle and international solidarity and support. The Government of South Africa strongly condemned these

tragic actions and is working hard to ensure we address the security lapses and intolerance that led to the violence. We are working tirelessly to tackle crime and lawlessness and to ensure that the arrested criminals face the full might of the law.

We are also committed to addressing the inadequacy of our immigration administration in order to curb illegal migration and to make sure that everyone who comes to South Africa is documented and safe. We plan to work with all countries of the continent to ensure that we implement our development strategies and use them to create greater economic opportunities for all our people so as to diminish feelings of resentment and antipathy. Working with civil society, we will build bridges allowing all who live in South Africa to reach out to each other in order to build bonds of friendship and pan-Africanism.

I am pleased that I can honestly confirm to this important global body that South Africa has an unwavering commitment to our continent, Africa. We have made dedicated efforts to contribute positively in support of peace and development on our continent, and we will continue those efforts even as we work to address the inadequacies I have referred to.

Our country, South Africa, has enjoyed democracy for 25 years, and in that time the leaders and the people of South Africa have consistently acknowledged the immeasurable contribution that the people of Africa rendered in support of the struggle against apartheid. Our neighbouring States in particular, and the rest of the countries of Africa made great sacrifices in support of the liberation movements and the oppressed citizens of South Africa.

We wish to reiterate that South Africa does not condone any form of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia or related intolerance. In fact, South Africa has embraced millions of migrants and refugees from all over the continent of Africa, and the majority of our people have warmly embraced their brothers and sisters from the continent. We are determined to ensure that it becomes a national embrace and is not a limited to some communities.

It is an honour for us to address the General Assembly in the first year of the Nelson Mandela Decade of Peace, which the Assembly last year agreed would run from 2019 to 2028. The Decade calls on us to intensify our efforts to pursue international peace and security, development and human rights. South Africa

therefore commits to use the Nelson Mandela Decade of Peace to promote the strengthening of multilateralism and diplomacy as effective tools for addressing the challenges facing the world today.

We cannot decisively deal with the threats of poverty unless we transform the current structure of the global economy, which continues to perpetuate divisions between the global North and global South. While a few enjoy the benefits of globalization, the majority of the people of the world have not reaped those benefits. It is necessary for us all to work together and spare no effort in addressing the challenges brought by the impact of globalization and the untransformed structure of global economy.

The issues of global peace and security continue to be one of our foremost priorities within the United Nations family. In that regard, we welcome the United Nations efforts to address the plethora of challenges to peace and security that serve as a major obstacle to our efforts of the development of the continent.

We are currently serving as a member of the Security Council. The theme for our term is "Continuing the legacy: working for a just and peaceful world". That is the embodiment of the legacy of Nelson Mandela and furthers the objective of silencing the guns on the African continent by 2020. We are using our tenure to promote the maintenance of international peace and security and advocate for the peaceful settlement of disputes and inclusive dialogue. We continue to encourage closer cooperation between the Security Council and other regional and subregional organizations, particularly our African Union.

We further emphasize the role of women in the resolution of conflict. We argue for a gender perspective to be mainstreamed into all Security Council resolutions, in line with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, which was adopted at the initiative of our neighbour Namibia. Despite the commitments in the resolution, women remain excluded from peace processes, including in the drafting of peace agreements, and their involvement in United Nations peacekeeping is limited. We need to ensure that women are fully part of peacebuilding processes and form a part of the institutions that are established once conflict has been eradicated. In October, we will preside over the Security Council's debate on that subject. The emphasis of the debate should be to ensure the implementation of the commitments that we have

made to fully implementing the women and peace and security agenda.

As we have consistently stated, South Africa is supportive of this global institution and a rules-based multilateral system, but we believe that the United Nations remains hamstrung by the fact that it continues to have structures that are undemocratic and anachronistic. We remain gravely concerned that 74 years after the founding of the United Nations, key decisions on peace and security are the de facto domain of only five countries. Twenty years of discussions on reform of the Security Council have yielded no movement towards a more representative and inclusive body.

We believe that the time has come for the broader membership to heed the overwhelming call for Africa to obtain at least two permanent seats, with all the prerogatives of permanent membership, as well as five non-permanent seats, as embodied in the Common African Position, adopted in the Ezulwini Consensus. In that regard, we must see an invigoration of the negotiations on reform at the intergovernmental negotiations, including by ensuring that we move to text-based negotiations.

Our continent Africa has reached an important milestone with the adoption and launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement. The agreement entered into force on 30 May, and we are confident that it will unleash Africa's economic potential and consolidate its position as a new frontier of economic growth and development. It is a flagship initiative of the AU Agenda 2063, and the trade opportunities it creates must be taken up by all member States and our partners. We are ready to engage in active deliberations on that bold step.

We wish to stress that Africa's development cannot be addressed without responding to illicit financial flows. We believe that those debilitate our efforts to generate sufficient domestic resources to support our development. We propose that we work together as the international community to establish an intergovernmental framework that would have a universal political mandate, which would serve as a basis to address those illicit flows, including speeding up the return of assets.

The international community stands at a unique crossroads where the shifting international order has the ability to shape international peace and security for

decades to come. It is therefore a great disappointment that we witnessed the demise of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in August. Furthermore, in the prevailing international climate, successes in the field of disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, are few and far between. The threats posed by those weapons are too great for the international community to ignore. We believe that only the complete, transparent, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of such weapons and their means of delivery can prevent their use in an escalating conflict.

We feel ashamed by the fact that for over 70 years, the people of Palestine have lived under occupation. In the past year, that occupation has worsened, with continued illegal settlement activity and further insecurity for the peoples of Palestine and Israel. As the international community, we must continue to urge for a negotiated settlement to that long-standing conflict.

The United Nations must remain seized by the issue of Western Sahara, for the benefit of its people and Africa's aspirations to a truly free Africa, with no country under colonial and imperial control.

We also reiterate our steadfast solidarity with the Government and people of Cuba, while condemning the continuation of unilateral sanctions against Cuba and Zimbabwe.

I wish to conclude by affirming that South Africa stands ready to work with all Member States to promote the United Nations and its objectives of promoting international peace and security, development and human rights enjoyed by all, so that finally we can reach a point when all our people enjoy freedom, development and democracy.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. C. Peter David, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labour of Grenada.

Mr. David (Grenada): I extend cordial greetings from the Government and the people of Grenada, on whose behalf I am always honoured to address this noble institution and its members.

I join those before me in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. I am confident in your stewardship and assure you of my delegation's cooperation and support. I also echo my colleagues in thanking the outgoing President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, Her

Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, for her able and energetic leadership.

I take this opportunity to thank and commend Secretary-General António Guterres for his leadership of the United Nations and for his interest in and understanding of the unique development challenges facing small island developing States (SIDS). I also applaud the Secretary-General's unrelenting efforts to address the scourge of climate change and the global poverty eradication agenda. I commend his unrelenting efforts in securing education for all, promoting total inclusion and leaving no one behind.

Allow me to congratulate fellow Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member State Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on being elected to a non-permanent seat on the Security Council. It is the smallest nation ever to do so.

Our Assembly is occurring in a global context with continued and increasing anxiety about economic, social and political inequality and marginalization. Grenada unwaveringly recommitments to the United Nations and its principles, as outlined in the Charter. Our commitment in national and international life to the norms of peace, equality, justice, human rights and multilateralism is clear. We are proud this week to have signed or acceded to three new treaties: the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Lest we forget, the *raison d'être* of this body is essentially to solve the world's problems through multilateral efforts. The issues that we now face, such as eradicating poverty, providing quality education and taking climate action, are problems that cannot be solved by individual Member States. Our efforts must be collective, focused and strategic if we are to achieve meaningful progress for the benefit of our peoples.

Small island developing States have had to navigate our development agenda in that much broader context, while at the same time facing challenges that are as natural as they are man-made. The phenomenon of climate change and the attendant exacerbating consequences of increased frequency and more intense natural disasters are real, existential threats, which we must confront daily.

In that regard, we again extend our most profound solidarity to the Government and the people of the Bahamas. Hurricane Dorian was indeed an unprecedented event and amounted to the total destruction of significant aspects of the Bahamian landscape. Hurricane Dorian has again brought into sharp focus the inadequacy of the per capita income classification as a barometer for accessing development resources for small islands developing States. Indeed, Hurricane Dorian has reminded us that the entire gross domestic product (GDP) of SIDS can be wiped out in a few hours.

The experience of the Bahamas contains many new lessons and points to many new imperatives in adaptation for those small vulnerable States. The cost of adaptation to that experience requires massive public expenditure for the virtual reconstruction of the entire infrastructure if we are to withstand the successive onslaught of hurricanes. The need to ensure the safety of life and limb also challenges us to implement new, robust building codes that will provide bunker safety housing, particularly for the most vulnerable.

The States members of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States are calling on all small island developing States to join us in creating a SIDS foundation, the purpose of which will be to mobilize the funding and other resources required to finance adaptation in a manner that does not impose fiscal stress on our fragile economies. With limited access to and ever-increasing competition for climate and development financing, those climate change and poverty challenges are further intensified.

Our foremost goal must be to aggressively pursue policies and strategies that will help us to mitigate the effects of some of those challenges, especially those over which we have little control, while at the same time, moving expeditiously to implement long-term plans that will help to sustain our societies. We therefore must focus on national and regional sustainable development plans and programmes, long-term low-carbon development strategies, low greenhouse gas emissions strategies and comprehensive disaster risk reduction and risk management strategies.

We are firm in the view that effective multilateralism, based on an inclusive approach that takes into account the needs of all countries is the only way that we can address global challenges like climate change and poverty reduction. It is clear that there is a

strong relationship between climate change and poverty, with the most vulnerable being those that are most negatively impacted, while also being the ones that have contributed the least to the problem. In that context, I wish to outline several of Grenada's key initiatives, plans and programmes that are geared to addressing climate change and poverty eradication and will also further the objective of sustainable development.

In Grenada's case, there are many accomplishments of which we can be proud, including the remarkable economic turnaround of the past five years. Our economy remains strong, growing by 5.2 per cent in 2018, with a further increase expected this year. In fact, average growth over the past five years has been 5 per cent. That was achieved through the collective effort of the Government and its social partners and a tightly managed homegrown structural adjustment programme, consistent with our growth and poverty eradication strategy. It has not been an easy few years, but through sound macroeconomic policies, fiscal responsibility legislation and other legal measures, we have seen tremendous progress. Public debt, for example, now stands at 59.5 per cent of our GDP, down from 108 per cent in 2013. The decision to enact into law a fiscal responsibility act, which would help us manage and control our spending in any given year, is crucial to our macroeconomic viability and sustainability.

It is worth highlighting that we have done all that while ensuring that social spending was expanded to take care of our most vulnerable citizens. Our achievements in Grenada are indeed commendable and we are justly proud, but we do recognize that we have much work to do, especially as it relates to elevating our citizens out of poverty. Always cognizant that the proven pathway to advancement is education, the Government is working daily to improve the quality of education delivered to our nation's students. Job security, compensation and enhanced opportunities for training are all among the incentives used to retain quality teachers in the educational system.

We are also working to revolutionize and improve students' educational outcomes through the widespread use of technology and innovation. Other key initiatives, such as the establishment of several skills training centres island-wide and programmes in entrepreneurship to help narrow the gap between education and employment, especially among our youth, will serve to further improve the education system, reduce unemployment and alleviate poverty.

We fully support the theme of this debate, "Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion". We therefore call on the United Nations to commit to multilateral action aimed at quality and affordable education for all.

As we attempt to create sustainable societies, we are confronted by certain global financial policies and actions that pose significant threats to our region's sustainable development. Correspondent banking and de-risking, blacklisting and middle-income status graduation are measures that negatively affect Caribbean economies. The unilateral and premature graduation of many small island developing States to middle-income status, without consideration of our region's specific vulnerabilities, has resulted in significant budgetary shortfalls, adversely affecting our economic and social development. Our region has inherent structural economic challenges that already restrict the pace of our development. We ask that those impediments to growth be considered when our matters arise for consideration.

The Caribbean Development Bank has pioneered the use of vulnerability indices in setting the terms of its financing. Likewise, we urge international partners to work towards an acceptable country vulnerability index that holistically assesses our countries' development and risks. Moreover, the withdrawal of correspondent banking services to CARICOM member States can be seen as an economic assault that would destabilize the financial sector of our already vulnerable economies. We wish to call on countries, development partners and corporations to collaborate to fill the need for policy coherence and to work towards developing a road map that addresses the problem. Our own Eastern Caribbean Central Bank is engaged in helping to address the problem, and we express our support for United Nations principles of corporate banking. Remittances contribute in real and significant terms to the GDP of small States. In fact, the World Bank has stated that any sudden stop to remittances to economies that rely on those flows could pose a significant threat to socioeconomic stability.

In addition to the threat of lost correspondent banking relationships, we also have to contend with the unilateral and often unfounded blacklisting of our institutions as money-launderers and our countries as tax havens. It pains us as policymakers to expend our limited resources to comply with international rules,

only to face arbitrary punishments when we are quite evidently doing our best. There are no easy answers to these challenges, but I urge our partners to desist from draconian approaches to these matters when dealing with vulnerable developing nations.

In Grenada, we are currently pushing forward with our National Sustainable Development Plan 2035, which will resolutely set us on an unprecedented long-term development path. The ability to successfully and fully enact an enduring strategy for development has been a shortcoming of successive Governments throughout the years. We are now working assiduously to correct that, given the adverse effects that this glaring gap has had on Government's ability to manage its macroeconomic affairs.

Through extensive consultations, Grenada is well on its way to realizing the implementation of the National Sustainable Development Plan, which envisions that the tri-island State of Grenada shall become a resilient and prosperous nation, with a conscious and caring citizenry, promoting human dignity and realizing its full potential through sustainable economic and social progress for all. The Plan, as envisioned and outlined, provides strategic direction and presents home-grown solutions that are geared to improving the way Grenadians live, work and interact with our natural environment, institutions and each other. The Plan, by the people and for the people, calls for constant and consistent stakeholder engagement and coordination. A dedicated entity, the Development and Planning Institute of Grenada, will coordinate the sustainable implementation of the Plan and serve as a strategic link between all relevant stakeholders to ensure that the preparation and implementation processes are conducted in a collaborative manner through a consultative process, with clearly identified roles and responsibilities. A more stable and stronger Grenada is well on its way as we attempt to build resilience at all levels.

However, despite the progress made to date at the national level, there are risks to be managed that are beyond our capacity and ability to adapt to. In that regard, international partnerships, as per the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, are the way to go. Our nationally determined contribution calls for financial injection of \$160 million over the next five years. We are indeed heartened by the indications of support received so far from the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environment Facility,

the Nationally Determined Contributions Partnership, bilateral partners and other agencies focusing on climate finance.

Our National Adaptation Plan calls for an additional \$240 million over the next five years and, again, we are grateful for the support received so far and are heartened by the indications of further support. In fact, I must emphasize that the financial requirements of the Partnership and the National Adaptation Plan would amount to 40 per cent of our annual GDP, and that this does not include any provision for the impact of stronger hurricanes, extended drought and heat waves, flash flooding or losses and damage, including from slow-onset events. The needs in that respect are greater than we can afford with our national resources, and we need the international community to come together and provide the support needed. The only hope we have now is in the collective strength of multilateralism.

The Global Commission on Adaptation reminded us just this week of the scale of the resources required to address the adaptation needs of developing countries. The report indicates that investing \$1.8 trillion globally in five areas of climate adaptation between 2020 and 2030 could yield \$7.1 trillion in net benefits. Mobilizing those resources will require a concerted multilateral effort. I therefore issue a call here today to the rest of the international community to step up and respond to the needs identified. I also call for a simplification of the process to access available financing, which regrettably, as it currently stands, serves as a barrier to aid to those most in need.

In the spirit of multilateralism and inclusion, Grenada has always supported and continues to support resolution 70/5, which calls for an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America on Cuba. We believe that recent measures aimed at restricting remittances, as well as banking transactions, only serve to weaken the economic stability of our sister nation, thereby severely affecting the socioeconomic conditions of the Cuban people. We call for an end to the embargo against the Cuban people and the immediate repeal of the Helms-Burton Act. We ask for continued solidarity with and support for the Government and the people of Cuba.

Grenada remains concerned by recent political and social developments in Venezuela. What we seek is to encourage meaningful dialogue based on the premise that the Venezuelan people, brothers and sisters who

disagree on form, can come together to safeguard the future of the people of Venezuela. In the meantime, Grenada believes in the art of diplomacy, the principle of respect for State sovereignty and the right of all people to self-determination. The onus is squarely on the Government and the opposition to ensure that Venezuelans do not lose hope. Grenada therefore supports all initiatives aimed at resolving the problem in Venezuela peacefully, including the CARICOM process agreed by member States of the region.

Grenada is committed to the maintenance of the Caribbean region as a zone of peace. In that regard, we are proud to be not only a party to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean but also, now, a signatory to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

The United Nations membership must make paragraph 3 of Article 1 of the Charter a major priority in the next few years. Our founders called on the Organization

“[t]o achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion”.

We must do all in our power to provide added economic opportunities for the developing world. I therefore call on the Economic and Social Council to actively pursue undertakings designed to create an encouraging atmosphere providing Member States with the opportunity to raise the standard of living of their people. In the current global environment, we must be conscious that inclusion in the process of the global economy is vital. We are now engaged in direct diplomatic initiatives to strengthen the links as a matter of core strategic interests with our African brothers and sisters. In that regard, we welcome and look forward to recent steps taken by our Caribbean Community and Africa to deepen ties and explore ways in which to increase cooperation.

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

Finally, I must recall Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations, which calls on the Organization to maintain international peace and security and, to that end, to take effective collective measures for

the prevention and removal of threats to peace. We must be relentless in our pursuit of the purposes of the Organization. Our challenge is to work towards the elimination of terrorist activities and armed conflicts around the world. Grenada therefore calls on all actors to work tirelessly to that end and for the peaceful resolution of all disputes so as to secure and maintain international peace and security by avoiding conflict at all costs. Our quest must be for economic opportunities for all States, and our goal should be the peaceful coexistence of all peoples of the international community. Indeed, if we can achieve that, we will be well on our way to transforming our world.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. John M. Silk, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Mr. Silk (Marshall Islands): I have the honour to bring the warm greetings of Yokwe on behalf of the people and Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

I congratulate the President on his election and I rest assured that he will continue the strong efforts of his predecessor.

I also want to express my deep condolences to the people of the Bahamas and all the victims of Hurricane Dorian. They should know that, as fellow islanders, the people of the Marshall Islands stand with them.

The United Nations must be the platform for the voices of the most vulnerable peoples and Governments of the world. Yet we are all at a time in global politics when countries are being driven to look inwards, at the very moment when we all need to be doing the opposite. We risk the tragedy of overlooking those most in need.

The Marshallese people know that from our own experience. Our history with the Organization extends to its foundation and Charter of the United Nations. As a former United Nations Trust Territory, we approached the United Nations twice — in 1954 and again in 1956 — to stop the testing of nuclear weapons on our shores, and twice the United Nations disregarded our petitions, in place of resolutions authorizing nuclear detonations. Twice our voices went unheard, and twice larger political concerns overruled the protection of our human rights. As a Human Rights Council special rapporteur affirmed in 2012, this is not just a gravely difficult legacy, but a contemporary reality that continues to impact our human rights.

I am drawing the attention of the Assembly directly to that chapter of the Marshall Islands' history to illustrate the global importance of human rights, because ours is far from the only moment at the United Nations when we, as Member States, have failed our solemn obligations to our peoples and to take meaningful and effective action to address the core human rights of those most in need, and when larger politics have so clouded our vision that the world has too often acted too little, too late or sometimes not at all.

We know that from our own perspective in the Pacific, but it is also a common cause embodied in the core human rights treaties and commitments that we all share. In the Marshall Islands, we have built up our own protection of human rights, not just by joining treaties but by working steadily to turn words into action. Yet we still have much to do to ensure a resilient future.

When I entered politics years ago, the Marshall Islands was in its youth as a newly independent nation. We were truly nation-building. But now, as an atoll small island developing State, a nation only one metre above sea level, with no higher ground, the climate crisis now forces us to engage in nation-saving. That is not academic — it is real; it is now; and it imperils our future, security and core human rights.

For those reasons, the Marshall Islands will stand in two weeks' time for election to the Human Rights Council. Our experience has taught us to be not only a bridge-builder and a careful listener, but also a nation unafraid to take a strong stand when it is needed, even if it is unpopular. I truly hope that we will be judged on the strength of our conviction, the merits of all that we have accomplished on our own human rights record and all that we have committed to pursuing, and not be judged on the size of our gross domestic product or the number of chocolates that we have handed out.

As the Marshall Islands, we are presenting to the General Assembly what we do have: ourselves, our stories, our independent voice and our passionate belief that everyone must be held to account.

The Pacific Islands region is a steward of global oceans and sustainable fisheries. My own country is more than 99 per cent ocean, and, as such, for some what is a distant and obscure policy issue is for us our livelihood and identity. We look forward to concluding negotiations next year on a robust new treaty for biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction under the Law of the Sea, which provides coherence among sectors.

As I reported to the Human Rights Council earlier this year, the members of our regional Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency have also recently issued a declaration to ensure that human rights are protected in our fisheries sector, including aboard foreign vessels that dominate our waters.

Fisheries in the Pacific are often a proxy for security and influence. As my President told the Group of Seven leaders last year, illegal fishing is not only an economic menace but also a threat to our sovereignty. We welcome current assistance and urge a more intensified focus on the part of our partners and the international community on combatting illegal fishing in our region. Not only does it benefit our own regional security, but it also helps to preserve global food security.

We welcome partner efforts to help us achieve a free, open, democratic and secure Indo-Pacific region. Our island nations worked hard to achieve independence, and maintaining our stability, sovereignty and security is a clear priority. Further, we welcome the recent issued made by the United States during the recent Pacific Islands Forum:

“The United States recognizes that addressing environmental degradation and climate change is a priority in the Pacific... due to the threat posed by sea-level rise and the region's vulnerability to natural disasters.”

I suggest that the significance of that statement is underrecognized and that it could spur a vital and much-needed dialogue on climate change with our region.

Our Pacific Islands Forum stands united in our leaders' adoption of the Boe Declaration as the defining regional security framework. The recent recorded vote this summer on General Assembly resolution 73/332, entitled “Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum”, was a sad moment for both the Pacific region and the United Nations. The Member State that called for that recorded vote seems to have no shame in publicly bullying the smallest and most vulnerable nations in the world. The wider implications of that should be of grave concern to any democratic nation.

Our health is vital. We face communicable diseases such as the ongoing nationwide dengue fever outbreak, which is worsened by climate impacts. We also face non-communicable diseases, including one of the world's highest incidence rates of diabetes.

We welcome the partnership with the World Health Organization and other organizations and call urgently for greater efforts to collaborate on island-tailored strategies. We have the political will at the highest levels, but we lack the capacity and resources needed to protect our population. In that regard, we welcome the ongoing collaboration with UNICEF and the World Bank to help us study, understand and address childhood stunting and the root causes of that problem, which has hindered the physical growth, education and well-being of generations of Marshallese children. Improving childhood development in the first 1,000 days of life will have a dramatic and lasting impact on our future generations.

The Pacific Islands region has made positive strides but still has substantial work ahead to more effectively address gender equality. This is not just a matter of policy tools and capacity but also of political will. Even with recent legal and legislative improvements in my nation, the rates of domestic violence remain unacceptably high. Our island region has the lowest rate of women in Parliament in the world. As the nation with the first woman leader in the independent Pacific, the Marshall Islands believes that it is important for UN-Women to continue to strengthen its focus in our region and collaborate to address the root causes of gender inequality, and to do so while working within our cultural contexts.

There was once a time when small island nations were not recognized within the United Nations. As the meeting yesterday on the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway made clear, island nations are now well recognized as global leaders and innovators within our own right. Yet we all still have much to do in turning words into action. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a groundbreaking achievement in their use of indicators to benchmark progress towards clear targets. However, our challenge is that our small island Government is simply overwhelmed by the sheer scale of the nearly 250 SDG statistical indicators at hand. Clearly, that structure was not designed to fit the structure and capacity of small island nations, and as a result, global participation is limited to a one-size-fits-all structure. We have therefore realized in the Marshall Islands that the SDGs are a springboard and a tool to get to island-tailored strategies. We want the United Nations to work for us, and not the other way around. More targeted assistance by the United Nations system,

including with regard to the statistical capacity of line ministries, is urgent.

We join our region in thanking the Secretary-General for his initiative in undertaking meaningful and effective United Nations system reform and his drive to succeed where others have fallen short. In particular, we emphasize the importance of the Secretary-General's advocacy in proposing to establish a new United Nations multi-country office in the North Pacific. Despite strong efforts, the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations Multi-Country Office in Fiji cannot effectively serve 10 diverse and remote nations from a single Office. Our northern subregion is missing out on existing assistance opportunities within the United Nations system because of those disconnections.

We are still facing challenges from the impacts of nuclear-weapons testing, and our experience should be a global lesson of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear detonation. We have been left with a devastating footprint on our health, well-being and environment and the rights of our population. That is a result of contamination that we did not cause and which we lack the capacity to fully understand, let alone address. Our recent establishment of a national nuclear commission, as well as the progress that it has made towards a work plan, are historic steps forward. But we cannot do it alone, and we call for the assistance of the Secretary-General to define a structured work plan by the United Nations system with a defined focal point within the management team at United Nations Headquarters. Accountability within the United Nations system is needed to help answer the joint call by the leaders of the Pacific Island Forum for unique and targeted assistance in addressing remediation.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands strongly affirms its close relationship with Taiwan. The lasting friendship between our free and democratic nations is truly unstoppable. Indeed, this past month our Parliament strengthened those ties through a unanimous resolution. Further, Taiwan should play a clear role within the United Nations system that includes meaningful participation in the relevant specialized agencies and mechanisms, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the World Health Assembly and the International Civil Aviation Organization. If we as a world and the United Nations are truly serious about leaving no one behind, we should recognize the participation and assistance of all relevant sources, and thus appropriately recognize

Taiwan's partnership and engagement with my own nation and others.

For those unfamiliar with the geography of atoll small nations like my own, coral atolls are formed by the sinking of extinct volcanoes, leaving us with thin, low-lying and narrow islands. That demands a perfect sea-level balance — one that is now upset by sea-level rise. Warming waters are leading to an increased and near-constant bleaching of coral, the survival of which, globally, is now at risk by mid-century. My nation is literally being eaten away. But we share the sentiment that we are not sinking, we are fighting. We are not helpless victims; rather, we are pushing forward our own policy tools to define the future. But will anyone respond to our dire need for assistance at scale?

When I was a young boy in the Marshall Islands, the unavoidable sound of ocean waves crashing upon our coral reefs was, to me, a natural symphony. But to my grandchildren, that same sound is rapidly becoming, to them, a threat of inundation. Do they not share my same right to live in their ancestral homes? In response, I can only quote our national Constitution, that

“All we have and are today as a people, we have received as a sacred heritage which we pledge ourselves to safeguard and maintain, valuing nothing more than our rightful home on the[se] islands.”

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Suzi Carla Barbosa, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Communities of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

Ms. Barbosa (Guinea-Bissau) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): At the outset, on behalf of my country and on my own behalf, I convey to His Excellency Ambassador Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session, our warmest congratulations on his election to this important position, which dignifies not only his country, Nigeria, but also the entire African continent. I therefore reaffirm Guinea-Bissau's unconditional support during his term.

I also thank the United Nations, particularly Secretary-General António Guterres, for the attention accorded to Guinea-Bissau and for the important contributions of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau to our country.

The United Nations system, founded and developed in the aftermath of major conflicts of the twentieth century, is once again taking on particular relevance with the rising threats posed by nationalist policies, which are opposed to multilateralism and the values of the Organization. I therefore commend everyone for the pertinence of the theme chosen for the debate during this session.

Indeed, the threats of climate change, terrorism, transnational organized crime and the armed conflicts that are ravaging many places throughout the world will be checked and eventually overcome only through the joint efforts of States within the framework of the United Nations. No national or special-group interests can be allowed to come before those of preserving our planet and combating organized crime.

I wish to convey to the Assembly the feeling of renewed hope pervading Bissau-Guinean society in this new cycle and reaffirm the political will and profound commitment of the authorities of my country to the peacebuilding and political stabilization process. We look forward to creating sustainable mechanisms for achieving the goals established in our national development plan, based on and sustained by the strategic and operational plan known as Terra Ranka, which has been submitted to our partners in a timely manner and which we hereby reaffirm.

Under the leadership of His Excellency Prime Minister Aristides Gomes, the Government of Guinea-Bissau has an ambitious governance programme that emphasizes the reduction of poverty, the promotion of quality education through youth entrepreneurship and the empowerment of women in order to ensure a more just and inclusive society. It is our responsibility as the Government to create the necessary conditions for harmonious and sustainable development.

In that regard, Guinea-Bissau fully subscribes to the political declaration of the high-level meeting on universal health coverage, entitled “Universal health coverage: moving together to build a healthier world”, which was adopted by the General Assembly earlier this week (resolution 74/2). It is important to note that, in 2014, our country adopted a policy that exempts pregnant women and children under five years of age from having to pay for health services. The measure reflects social justice and equity that our Government accepts as a duty and responsibility in the light of the precarious indicators associated with that segment of

the population. If the initiative is to be sustainable, however, we will require the unequivocal and urgent support of our regional and international partners.

The current Government, which is the result of the 10 March parliamentary elections, has engaged in inclusive dialogue and continuous political cooperation as priority instruments in efforts to consolidate political stabilization and create broad consensus around key governance issues. In addition to strengthening the democratic legitimacy of our political institutions, we intend to build the necessary foundations for a better-structured and more united society. We are pursuing that aspiration, based on political agreements defining the general outlines of legislative and governmental action, including issues related to structural reform of State institutions, constitutional revision and the rebuilding of the economic and social fabric.

That vision of compromise and sharing in the resolution of our key problems is demonstrated by the signing of agreements of parliamentary and governmental incidence by five of the seven political parties represented in Parliament. In addition to demonstrating the resolve of Bissau-Guineans to walk together for the sake of cohesion and stability, that understanding enabled the formation of a pluralistic Government, bringing together national competencies from various interests and political convictions. For the first time, we have achieved absolute gender parity across posts.

Such hopeful signs nevertheless do not negate our situation as an institutionally fragile post-conflict State with sparse financial resources, of which we suffer the grave political, economic, environmental and social consequences. Guinea-Bissau is facing a difficult and complex situation, with continuing and grave internal and external threats, and calls on the international community to play a central stabilizing role through international monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

As a Member of the Organization, Guinea-Bissau is firmly committed to the Charter of the United Nations and supports the multilateral systems and mechanisms that promote the cause of peace as a shared public asset. Our country, a member of the Group of Seven Plus, advocates the promotion of peace through the sharing of experiences among countries, based on national dialogue and reconciliation, as set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Organized crime networks continue to pose a grave threat and to undermine the enormous stabilization achieved through joint national efforts, supported by the entire international community. One example of such destabilization is the use of our territory for the transit of illicit drugs, which was recently reduced by record-breaking seizures in a major operation carried out by our judiciary police. That manifestation of our Government's political will and determination to combat that scourge has had a profound impact on the political structures that sustain those businesses. We are already seeing and feeling the effects of the attacks and intense attempts to compromise the governance process in order to reinstate instability, which favours the previous long-standing status quo.

That is certainly not a national phenomenon, and it is clear that organized crime exploits the fragility of our States with regard to entrenched local interests. In that regard, it is essential that we strengthen the mechanisms that our main partners use to monitor the political process in Guinea-Bissau.

Similarly, it is imperative that our national security and justice institutions enjoy the necessary attention and support from their subregional and international counterparts in order to strengthen their capabilities and adopt best practices to defend the universal rights of citizens, both individually and collectively. Ultimately, that is the perfect illustration of the importance of multilateralism, which greatly justifies and elevates the existence of the Organization.

Many have already cited the original historic reasons for the current composition of the Security Council, which no longer reflects our geopolitical reality. I therefore add my country's voice to the appeal to broaden that important part of the United Nations in order to strengthen its legitimacy and representation. From that perspective and in line with the position of the African Union, Guinea-Bissau advocates the designation of two permanent seats, with veto power, and five non-permanent seats in the Security Council to the African continent.

The Sahel region is a perfect illustration of the devastating danger that terrorism poses to the world. Therefore, from this rostrum, I appeal to the international community to create and put in place financing mechanisms to ensure the operational readiness of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel and to tackle the region's challenges,

which greatly surpass the logistical capabilities of its countries. More than just a regional threat, terrorism affects the whole continent and may adversely impact world peace.

We welcome and encourage the redoubled efforts of the United Nations, particularly those of the Secretary-General, for the vision and sensitivity with which it has addressed the issue of gender equality within the United Nations system. As a champion of gender equality, Guinea-Bissau welcomes the progress made and wishes to share with the General Assembly the historical adoption of the law of parity by the People's National Assembly in Guinea-Bissau in 2018, which established women's level of representation in elected positions at 36 per cent. As a result, Guinea-Bissau became part of a group of more than 80 countries that have adopted corrective and temporary measures to increase the participation of women in politics and decision-making.

I cannot but express our profound recognition and gratitude to all of our international partners, including the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, the European Union, the West African Economic and Monetary Union and the International Organization of la Francophonie, whose support has been key in monitoring and managing the political transition process, as well as in the legislative elections held in our country in March. We also extend our recognition and gratitude to all countries that, upon seeing the need of the brotherly people of our country, provided critical support and contributed significantly towards overcoming the crisis in Guinea-Bissau.

However, this election cycle will be complete only when presidential elections are held. These are scheduled for 24 November. We therefore reiterate our appeal for technical and financial assistance from the international community in order to ensure that this important event takes place without disruption.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the new global development paradigm to be established must be rooted in peoples' specific cultures and realities and draw inspiration from the lessons of the Millennium Development Goals. With respect to climate change, Guinea-Bissau, as a coastal country and archipelago, has a low-lying coastal area 5 meters below sea level, on average, which makes our country highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Despite the challenges that my country has faced in its holistic approach to international commitments, we are pleased and proud to inform the Assembly that approximately 27 per cent of our national territory consists of protected areas, thus broadly surpassing Goal 11 of the SDGs and making Guinea-Bissau a country of biodiversity, as the survival of our population greatly depends on such resources. Therefore, we are betting on green, inclusive growth that benefits the economy of biodiversity.

Our national efforts to build a resilient society based on our geographic reality were recently recognized by the United Nations Development Programme through the Equator Prize 2019, for an initiative developed by the national non-governmental organization Tiniguena in collaboration with the Government, which consists of using traditional knowledge to protect marine ecosystems and ensure sustainable livelihoods for autochthonous peoples of the Bijagós archipelago.

I conclude my remarks by reiterating our gratitude to the United Nations and recognizing the role that the Peacebuilding Commission has played in supporting the political stabilization and governance process in my country. Bissau-Guineans are determined to turn a new page and return to our history of honour and dignity, aware that, in this phase, we will need even more assistance and support from our international partners. Guinea-Bissau is mobilized to transform our territory into a space of peace and human security open to all peoples of the world who wish to build a more fraternal, safe, welcoming, and progressive society for all peoples and cultures.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Shaikh Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me pleasure, at the outset, to sincerely congratulate the President and his country, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, on his well-deserved election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. I reiterate my country's support and full confidence in his able leadership of the Assembly towards achieving the desired goals.

I also his predecessor, Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, for her valued efforts during her presidency of the Assembly at the last session.

I also express my deepest appreciation to Secretary-General António Guterres for his concrete efforts to solidify the foundations of security and stability and to attain the noble objectives of the Organization in all domains. In that respect, I commend the multiple and important initiatives launched by the Secretary-General, notably the initiative to combat violence based on religion, the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech and the initiative on protection of sacred sites throughout the world.

Under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain and with the support of the Prime Minister, His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, as well as the Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister, His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the robust and growing partnership between the Kingdom of Bahrain and the United Nations and its specialized agencies has produced successive accomplishments, illustrated by the initiatives and steps taken by the Kingdom of Bahrain towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, notably the signing of the Strategic Partnership Framework Agreement between Bahrain and the United Nations, which is the first of its kind in the region.

The Kingdom of Bahrain also has maintained its position in the very high human development category, as reflected in the report *Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update*. In May, the World Health Organization (WHO) honoured His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa and granted him the Global Leader in Health Care award, the first-ever such award in the history of the Organization, thereby confirming the high esteem of His Royal Highness and reflecting the international community's recognition of the role played by the Kingdom of Bahrain in achieving the goals set by WHO.

We were also immensely pleased by the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 73/329, which declared 5 April as the International Day of Conscience, on the initiative of His Royal Highness the Prime Minister.

The election of Ms. Fawzia Zainal as Speaker of the House of Representatives is one of the proudest achievements of Bahraini women in recent decades. She is the first woman to hold that high position in the country's history, following parliamentary elections

with a high turnout of 67 per cent. The turnout was the result of the reformed approach of His Majesty the King, which embodies the strength of democracy, the steadfastness of our popular will, the level of social awareness and the keen interest of our people to serve their national duties.

Those achievements were also coupled with a great emphasis on education. A few weeks ago, my country celebrated the centenary of its formal education system, becoming a high performing country in its pursuit to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, according to UNESCO's *Education for All Global Monitoring Report*.

In its development endeavours, the Kingdom of Bahrain is committed to promoting rights and freedoms and has maintained its advanced position in the area of combating trafficking in persons for the second time in a row. My country occupies a tier one ranking among the most successful countries in that regard, based on a report by the United States Department of State, thereby becoming the first country in the Middle East and North Africa to attain such status. My country has also been elected as a member of the Human Rights Council for the period 2019 to 2021, for the third time in its history.

The two main objectives on the international community's agenda and at the heart of our discussions today are the achievement of peace and the elimination of terrorism. We are all deeply convinced that what happens in any part of the world inevitably affects us all, as proven by the crises that have taken place in many countries, such as the Syrian Arab Republic, the Republic of Yemen and Libya. The instability afflicting those countries has led to a weakening or complete collapse of State institutions.

That instability has also exacerbated the problem of migrants and refugees and provided fertile ground conducive to the emergence of various terrorist groups that are supported by both States and non-State groups. Those terrorist groups pose a threat to the security of the region and the stability of its peoples, thereby making collective action an urgent necessity in order for peace to prevail. That can happen only by abiding by the Charter of the United Nations and its purposes of non-interference in the internal affairs of States, as well as a commitment to good neighbourliness, mutual respect, the peaceful settlement of crises and upholding United Nations resolutions in order to preserve the

sovereignty of States and their national institutions, as well as their unity and territorial integrity, and to safeguard the dignity and stability of their peoples. Most important among those resolutions are those related to the Palestinian question, which must be dealt with first and foremost as a political issue, one that is related to occupation, sovereignty, land and rights. It should not affect relations between peoples or provoke clashes among religions, nor should it impede positive and constructive interaction among them.

In order to achieve peace, the international community must fulfil its responsibilities by obliging Israel to abide by international resolutions. Israel must halt its policies of annexation and its unlawful confiscation of land, as well as its violations of international law and efforts to obstruct the realization of a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question. Such a solution would enable the creation of an independent Palestinian State within the borders of 4 June 1967 and with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the two-State solution stipulated in the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant international resolutions.

The Kingdom of Bahrain will spare no effort in striving to enable the peoples of the region, especially the brotherly Palestinian people, to grow, prosper and enjoy a better future across all spheres. In June, my country hosted a workshop on peace and prosperity in partnership with the friendly United States of America, representing a qualitative effort and an important initiative to promote development and provide a better life for the peoples of the region.

In view of the keen interests of the Kingdom of Bahrain to support security and stability, we wish to emphasize our solidarity with the continuous efforts being made by the sisterly Kingdom of Morocco to reach a political solution to the issue of the Moroccan Sahara, in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions and in the context of the Kingdom of Morocco's sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity. We commend the outstanding efforts by the Secretary-General to resolve that issue, as well as his efforts to establish security and stability in the Syrian Arab Republic, which culminated in the recent formation of the Constitutional Committee, which we hope will contribute to finding the desired political solution in Syria.

We also reiterate our support for the sisterly Republic of the Sudan in adopting measures with a

view to achieving development and prosperity and enhancing security and stability there. We welcome the formation of the Transitional Government, headed by His Excellency Mr. Abdalla Hamdok. We support the demands to remove the Sudan from the list of State sponsors of terrorism so that it can collaborate with economic institutions with a view to transcending this important and delicate phase in its history. This is about our vision of peace.

There is another challenge on which we focus, namely, terrorism. As the Assembly is aware, this threat has taken on unprecedented forms in the history of countries, putting our world into a difficult period of instability. That has been shown by the decades-long terrorism perpetrated by Iran. The Iranian regime and its terrorist Revolutionary Guard has a bleak record of violating international instruments and resolutions, whether it be through establishing and supporting terrorist militias, attempts to provoke chaos and sedition and interfere in the internal affairs of many States in the region — including the Kingdom of Bahrain — or its unjust occupation of the three Emirati islands of the United Arab Emirates, namely, Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, and the direct threats emanating from that ongoing occupation.

We wish to reiterate that, in collaboration with our brothers in the Arab coalition to support legitimacy in Yemen — under the leadership of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia — we will continue to pursue efforts to save Yemen and restore security and stability to the country. We urge all Yemeni national parties to unite their efforts with those of their legitimate Government in order to confront the Iranian-backed Houthi militias and all other terrorist groups, which threaten the security and stability of Yemen. That will allow for a peaceful resolution of the crisis, based on the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcomes of National Dialogue Conference and Security Council resolution 2216 (2015). That will also put an end to all forms of Iranian intervention, which are considered the main threat to the unity and territorial integrity of Yemen as well as its regional neighbourhood.

We would also like to commend the efforts of the Iraqi Government to confront the outlaw armed factions of the Iranian regime, which constitute a real threat not only to Iraq but also to the diplomatic missions in the country. They also constitute a threat

to neighbouring countries and make Iraq a springboard for their terrorist targets.

It is no longer possible to overlook the dangerous role played by Hizbullah terrorists in spreading extremism and terrorism, inciting hatred and serving the Iranian agenda designed to perpetuate tensions and crises in the region. We underscore the need to deter that terrorist party and eliminate its danger from our region.

Support for transnational terrorism from the Iranian regime created networks of terrorist organizations and extremist militias in numerous regions around the world, such as Syria, Yemen, North Africa, countries of the Sahel and the Sahara and South America, among others. That compels us to step up our efforts and enhance collective cooperation to eliminate them once and for all. In that context, we applaud once again the firm approach adopted by the friendly United States of America to counteract Iran and its proxies in the region by exerting maximum pressure and imposing severe sanctions on them. We reiterate our support for drying up the sources of terrorism and putting an end to the destructive policies of the Iranian regime.

International energy supplies and maritime navigation in the Arabian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz and the region as a whole face grave dangers due to the behaviour of the Iranian regime as it repeatedly targets commercial vessels in that region. For nearly 35 years, countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council have been drawing the attention of the international community to that threat. We appealed to the Security Council, which adopted resolution 552 (1984), on Iranian aggression against commercial vessels in the Arabian Gulf. However, Iranian terrorism continues unabated to this day, and in a more dangerous manner, posing a threat to a region of strategic importance for international peace and security and for the stability of the world economy.

We reiterate our condemnation of the abject terrorist aggression that targeted oil facilities in the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for which Iran is responsible. That aggression represented a grave threat to global oil supplies and the world's economy. We reaffirm our unwavering and total support for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which represents the main pillar of stability in the region in all its actions to preserve security and stability. We request the international community, notably the Security Council, to shoulder its responsibilities in maintaining international

peace and security and to take a firm stance against Iran's repetitive criminal acts. We welcome the joint communiqué issued by the United Kingdom, the French Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany holding Iran responsible for that attack and reflecting the need to review the agreement concerning the Iranian nuclear programme, as it does not serve the purposes of peace and security in the region.

Consistent with its sense of responsibility to establish stability in the region and the entire world, and in line with its historic role and commitment to joint action with its brothers, allies and international partners to address international and regional challenges, as well as combating terrorism and piracy in the Arabian Gulf, the Kingdom of Bahrain joined the International Maritime Security Construct at this critical and important period to safeguard the most important international strategic maritime lanes, which are vital for commerce and energy. In that vein, the Kingdom of Bahrain hosted an important international military meeting in July to discuss ways and means of intensifying international cooperation to enhance the security of the region. We are now preparing to host yet another international meeting in Manama next month on the safety of maritime and air navigation, in cooperation with the United States of America and Poland and with the participation of more than 60 countries. The meeting will be in follow-up to the international conference to support peace and security in the Middle East held in Warsaw last February.

The picture is now clear. Some priorities can no longer be delayed and must be addressed promptly. The two main objectives we seek to attain are achieving peace and eliminating terrorism. They require strong, collective work, support for all actions towards peace and a firm stand against countries that seek to perpetrate sabotage and use terrorism and violence to obstruct our Organization from achieving its desired goals.

The Kingdom of Bahrain is this year celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the accession to the throne of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa — an era that began with reforms and inclusive renaissance as well as pioneering achievements at all levels in a State of law and institutions built on the cultural heritage of a society of coexistence with solid foundations guaranteeing rights and freedoms while seeking to promote peace among peoples and cultures. We reaffirm that the Kingdom of Bahrain will persevere in its balanced foreign policy of cooperation and

interaction with all the countries of the world, based on an approach of collective action and joint defence with responsible States, respect for the principles on which the United Nations is founded, fruitful partnerships to achieve security and prosperity for all while living in

a sound environment — an environment of common interests that allows our countries and nations to enjoy lasting security, sustainable development, progress and prosperity.

The meeting rose at 3.35 p.m.