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Official Records

President: Mr. Muhammad-Bande (Nigeria)

The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Agenda item 19

Sustainable development

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

Draft resolution (A/74/L.2)

The President: Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting, held on 20 September, the General Assembly decided to allocate sub-item (a) of agenda item 19 also to the plenary meeting for the purpose of endorsing the draft political declaration of the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/74/L.2.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/74/L.2, entitled “Political declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly”.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/74/L.2

Draft resolution A/74/L.2 was adopted (resolution 74/4).

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of position, may I remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Nemroff (United States of America): My delegation wishes to thank the co-facilitators, the Ambassadors of the Bahamas and Sweden, for their leadership on this High-level Political Forum resolution (resolution 74/4). Today the United States of America is pleased to join the consensus on this important outcome document.

All countries have a role to play in achieving the 2030 vision. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development remains a common rallying point for the international community to share both the burdens and the opportunities inherent in addressing global development challenges. The United States will continue to play a leading role in sustainable development, not only as the world’s largest provider of official development assistance by volume but also as the largest contributor of funding to the United Nations system and the multilateral development banks. We want to emphasize that today’s global development challenges will require collective actions to create and foster an environment that prioritizes domestic resource mobilization, as well as the engagement of the private sector and other key non-governmental stakeholders, including civil society and faith-based organizations.

The United States itself is built on a system of individual liberties that give people the freedom to innovate and drive progress. For the United States, pro-

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growth policies have delivered robust economic growth, restored incentives and established a strong cycle of prosperity. In our foreign engagements, we understand that economic ties are most valuable when they are inclusive, multidirectional and rules-based. We also believe that investments in sustainable development will have the greatest impact when they promote and uphold internationally accepted best practices and standards, when they establish local markets and when they catalyse additional investments and action at the local level.

To meet the 2030 Agenda's ambition and achieve sustainable progress, countries will need to actively choose investments that adhere to the highest environmental and social standards, and which are financially viable. All our collective efforts across the Sustainable Development Goals should be grounded in the principles of good governance, transparency and sustainability, including debt sustainability, and also ensure that economic and social impacts are properly assessed and progress is localized. To fully realize the challenges and opportunities in the Agenda, the involvement of all stakeholders, including the private sector, is imperative. In some parts of the world and even in multilateral institutions, here in the United Nations system the participation of the private sector and non-governmental actors is threatened. We will not collectively meet the Goals of the 2030 Agenda without the full and unobstructed involvement of these important non-governmental stakeholders.

Lastly, we take this opportunity to make points of clarification on the negotiated text of the High-level Political Forum political declaration. The general statement on Second Committee agenda items we delivered at the Economic and Social Council on 8 November 2018 addressed our broader concerns on the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and the New Urban Agenda. With respect to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and climate change language in this document, the United States reaffirms its intention to withdraw from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change at the earliest opportunity. Therefore, the Paris Agreement and climate change language is without prejudice to United States positions. We affirm our support for promoting economic growth and improving energy security, while also protecting the environment.

Mrs. Bogyay (Hungary): Hungary is entirely committed to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was also underlined by His Excellency Mr. János Áder, President of Hungary, at the SDG summit during United Nations high-level week. In line with the Sustainable Development Goals, this year Hungary hosts four major international events in Budapest, namely, the International Telecommunication Union Telecom World conference, the Budapest Water Summit, the regional counter-terrorism conference and the World Science Forum.

The political declaration of the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development (resolution 74/4) is a crucial document in achieving our Goals. Therefore, Hungary supported the adoption of the declaration. However, the Government remains concerned about any references to the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, as well as migration in general, and would like to express reservations regarding paragraphs 21 and 27 of the political declaration. Hungary voted against the Global Compact for Migration at the General Assembly last December (see A/73/PV.60). The Hungarian Government can neither share the view that migration is the best solution for the labour market and the demographic problems of countries of destination, nor that it is the solution to the problems of countries of origin. Sustainable solutions can be found only if development aims are focused on creating livelihood opportunities for people in their home countries. The Hungarian Government is therefore focusing on development projects in the countries of origin that can contribute to establishing lasting solutions for those in need and improving living conditions. We put emphasis on building health care, sanitation, water management and educational infrastructure in developing countries.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position after the adoption of resolution 74/4.

I shall now give the floor to those speakers who wish to make statements after adoption.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): It is a pleasure for me to speak on behalf of the co-facilitators of this political declaration, namely, the Permanent Representative of the Bahamas, Ms. Sheila Carey, and myself, as the declaration, which was first adopted at the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) summit, has now also been endorsed by the General Assembly (resolution 74/4).

I wish to thank all delegations for their cooperation in the consultations and negotiations that we held. With their help and collaborative spirit, we accomplished the goal that we had set out to achieve — a concise, evidence-based and action-oriented political declaration, agreed by consensus. I want to leave members with three take-aways from the work on the political declaration.

First, members' collaboration shows us that multilateralism works. When the stakes are high, we can put our differences aside and focus on our common goal. The leaders at the SDG summit spoke with one voice — they agreed to keep the universal and indivisible 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development front and centre, and accelerate action so that we can reach the SDGs on time.

Secondly, the evidence of progress on the SDGs are presented to us in the *Global Sustainable Development Report* and SDG progress reports. They show us that we are moving too slowly. In some cases, we are moving backwards. However, the reports also tell us that we can still turn things around if we focus on the right things and work together.

Finally, as the political declaration has now been adopted, we enter the crucial decade of action and delivery. We should remind ourselves of the commitments we have made. The political declaration contains a 10-point plan of accelerated action to guide our implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I hope that political guidance will be useful not only to Governments but to all stakeholders who are working together to reach the 17 SDGs.

Next year we will celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, and we will have just one decade left to fulfil the 2030 Agenda. In the political declaration, we have asked the Secretary-General

“to engage Governments, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders in generating solutions and accelerating action to address systemic gaps in implementation, as we embark on a decisive decade for the 2030 Agenda”. (*resolution 74/4, para. 26*)

Let us use the coming year to show that we can bring implementation to the forefront. We have also pledged to carry out an ambitious and effective review of the High-level Political Forum during this session of the General Assembly. I hope that the positive

and collaborative spirit we experienced during the negotiations on the political declaration can carry over to the review process. The 2030 Agenda is our road map for saving the planet for future generations. The political declaration has sent an urgent message to the world that the time for action is now.

Mrs. Azucena (Philippines): The Philippines aligns itself with the statements made at the Sustainable Development Goals summit by the observer of the State of Palestine, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, by the representative of Thailand, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and by the representative of El Salvador, on behalf of the Like-Minded Group of Countries Supporters of Middle-Income Countries.

At the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015 (see A/70/PV.4), the Philippines, along with the 192 other States Members of the United Nations, committed to achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and their targets by 2030. To this day, our commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with the expressed linkage between the three dimensions of sustainable development — economic, social and environmental — and the urgent need to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions, remains resolute. The SDGs are in sync with the medium and long-term development plans of the Philippines and fully entrenched in them. Sustainability and inclusivity are both the goals and the principles that guide our development strategies.

We have also actively participated in the voluntary national review process in order to share our experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. We view the voluntary review process exercises as milestones in our work of achieving the SDGs, enabling us to track our progress and reassess our methods where necessary. As a pioneer country in this area, the Philippines presented its first review in July 2016. We focused on the lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals and identified ways to build on those gains as we entered the first phase of the SDGs.

At the High-level Political Forum conducted under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council earlier this year, we presented our second voluntary national review, where we emphasized a whole-of-Government

and whole-of-society approach to realizing the aspirations of the Filipino people for a life that has strong family and community ties and is comfortable, peaceful and secure. We outlined some of the country's achievements, such as near-universal primary-school enrolment, the promotion of employment that is inclusive, sustainable and equitable through our Green Jobs Act, the strengthened engagement of the private sector, strengthened capacity-building and partnerships for disaster preparedness, and ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law to address long-standing conflict in the southern Philippines.

The Philippines fully supports the ongoing reforms of the United Nations development system to make it more effective, efficient and transparent in supporting countries and their development priorities. We chaired the 2019 Economic and Social Council Operational Activities for Development segment, where we took cognizance of the ongoing efforts of the Secretary-General and acknowledged the progress achieved so far, while noting that much remains to be done.

As we move on to the next phase of the SDG implementation, I would like to echo the statement of the Philippines delegation in 2015 at the adoption of the SDGs, as this remains true today.

“The Philippines pledges to make the 2030 Agenda a reality and to leave no one behind. It is our sacred responsibility to our children and to future generations, and our solemn duty as Members of the United Nations.” (A/70/PV.12, p. 3).

Mr. De La Mora Salcedo (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico welcomes the political declaration adopted today in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals summit (resolution 74/4). When we designed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we recognized that each of its three dimensions — economic, social and environmental — was equally important. Today, on the eve of its final decade, no Member State has fully met the Sustainable Development Goals. We run the risk of failing to deliver on our commitments. It is therefore necessary to move from words and negotiations to action and partnerships. Mexico was pleased to be able to register nine Acceleration Actions at the summit, projects that put into practice Mexico's commitment to sustainability. Beyond aligning our national development plan with the 2030 Agenda, we

have identified areas that need targeted interventions to address socioeconomic lag.

I would like to highlight just a few of the Acceleration Actions led by the Office of the President of Mexico and that can be found on the United Nations interactive portal. First, Mexico firmly believes in revitalizing agriculture while respecting the environment, and we are therefore developing our *Escuelas del Campo* programme. In 65 municipalities in south-eastern Mexico we will work with civil society to train producers in environmentally related best practices. At the same time, these marginalized communities will be integrated into local and regional value chains without creating unsustainable land use.

Secondly, we want to enhance higher education's direct contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. By the end of next year, we will have installed 100 sustainable development laboratories in universities across the country, which will work directly with communities to identify, design and implement local economic development projects using cooperativism and the social economy.

Thirdly, leaving no one behind means precisely that — no one. For many years, women, but particularly those working in the home and in the countryside, have not had adequate access to social security. Mexico will consolidate its national care strategy with a specific focus on historically forgotten populations. Through welfare banking, we plan to increase the availability of financial tools by 40 per cent in five years, with particular emphasis on the south and south-east of the country.

Every day that passes leaves us less time to meet the goals of the 2030 Agenda. We therefore reject any attempts to renegotiate the objectives that we have collectively agreed on. That is also why we welcome the strategic alliances that we consider essential to fulfilling the Agenda. Mexico wants to deepen its collaboration on sustainable development with other countries, civil society, private initiatives, academia, indigenous peoples, migrant communities and young people. Yes, it is possible to achieve our targets, but only if we work together. That teamwork will ensure that no one is left behind. At the end of the review cycle of the 2030 Agenda during this session of the Assembly, I want to reaffirm Mexico's firm support for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. We will remain

a reliable and active partner in the review and follow-up processes.

Ms. Velichko (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Innovative approaches and enhanced international cooperation are essential to achieving sustainable development. It was that multilateral approach that led us to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development four years ago (see A/70/PV.4). Multilateral cooperation is not merely a possible option for achieving this but is crucial. If we are to advance sustainable development and mobilize our resources, we need more coordinated and decisive action. While it is very important to mobilize domestic resources and become economically self-reliant, creating a favourable international environment and ensuring broader access to financial resources and technological assistance remain critical. We believe that the private sector can provide financial resources and technology and that the United Nations should therefore deepen and scale up the partnerships needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Belarus continues to make steady progress towards achieving sustainable development based on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Our efforts are focused on achieving a sustainable balance between economic development and environmental protection and promoting the principles of the green economy, the introduction of the concept of smart cities and the development of precision farming. Belarus is firmly committed to transitioning to a low-carbon sustainable economy and is willing to increase its contribution to joint efforts to tackle that global challenge. We are unequivocally committed to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 by no less than 35 per cent compared to 1990, using only our own resources. Belarus is also considering more ambitious goals that it could achieve with the financial and technological assistance of more advanced countries.

The efforts to achieve the SDGs have become a uniting factor for all our partners — Government bodies, Parliament, civil society, business and academia. We held our first national forum on sustainable development with the participation of a wide range of national and international partners, as well as our first regional forum. At the beginning of 2020, we plan to hold the first Eurasian Economic Union forum on the SDGs. We see partnerships with all stakeholders at both the national and international levels as a key factor in accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for

Sustainable Development. With that in mind, Belarus is prioritizing the exchange of experience and joint efforts to achieve the SDGs, and we encourage the expansion of cooperation between the national institutions and mechanisms responsible for that area. We also believe that establishing similar international partnerships will facilitate the exchange of best practices on sustainable development and accelerate progress towards achieving the SDGs.

Mr. Rai (Nepal): I would like to commend you, Mr. President, for your able leadership in steering the work of the General Assembly.

Nepal welcomes the Assembly's adoption of the political declaration of the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development (resolution 74/4). Needless to say, the Forum is an important quadrennial occasion for comprehensively reviewing the progress that we have made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Our leaders returned home to convey loud and clear the message of the declaration that rapid change is possible and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) remain within reach if we embrace transformation and accelerate implementation.

What matters now is the timely and effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda. That requires a transformation from a business-as-usual approach to intensifying our efforts to take further action and increase partnerships. There are many challenges facing the world, from poverty and hunger to climate change and disasters. Such global problems require a global response, and a global response is possible only through strong multilateralism. Two of the central principles that make the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development so ambitious and transformative are those of leaving no one behind and reaching out to the furthest behind first.

Four years of implementation have shown that there are gaps in data, structures and financing. Some of those gaps are huge when it comes to countries in special situations, including the least developed countries, the landlocked least developed countries and the small island developing States (SIDS). As the midterm reviews of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 are fast approaching, the SDGs make it incumbent on us, as

the international community, to focus our priorities on the countries that are the most in need. In our journey towards achieving the SDGs, the upcoming decade must be one of both action and delivery. The only option we have for that is ensuring a strong multilateralism that can attract a global response.

Nepal, as a landlocked, mountainous and least developed country that has gone through political transformation, has now prioritized economic prosperity and sustainable development. That national ambition is captured in the Government's motto of "Happy Nepali and prosperous Nepal". While aligning with most of the SDGs, the Government of Nepal has adopted a fifteenth periodic plan, along with a 25-year long-term vision for the country, that is aimed at laying out a transformational development pathway and bringing about structural change in our economy.

Owing to its approximately 800-kilometre mountain system, Nepal lies in one of the world's most vulnerable areas to climate change. We attach great importance to sustainable and integrated mountain development. Keeping in mind the exigencies of the climate crisis, the Government of Nepal has decided to convene the Sagarmatha Dialogue, an annual global forum to exchange views on various subjects, including climate change.

Financing for sustainable development remains an important challenge. In Nepal's case alone, we will need about \$18 billion a year to achieve the SDGs by 2030. We will do our best to marshal whatever domestic resources we can. At the same time, we urge our development partners to meet their commitments as soon as possible. Nepal also organized an investment summit this year to encourage private-sector investment. It is evident that without greater cooperation and partnership with all our international partners in obtaining the necessary resources, technology and other support, achieving the SDGs will remain elusive.

In conclusion, I want to highlight the fact that we need more collaboration and partnerships, as is rightly emphasized in the political declaration. Nepal is ready to do all that it can within its ability to make its people prosperous and our planet sustainable.

Ms. Tesfamariam (Eritrea): Four years have elapsed since the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) began, and we have 11 years to make good on our pledges. Monitoring the progress that we are making and examining the challenges that

we face are critical if we are to take stock of how far we have travelled in realizing our sustainable development commitments. It is important to note the positive trends that many countries have registered in the reduction of extreme poverty and child mortality rates. The increase in the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting globally is equally noteworthy. However, progress remains uneven, and the speed and the scale do not match the commitments needed to meet the ambitious objectives of the SDGs by 2030.

Eritrea has been making modest strides towards the achievement of sustainable development in its three economic, social and environmental dimensions through our long-standing policy of achieving people-centred and balanced growth. The achievement of the SDGs is indeed a tall order for many countries, but more so for developing countries and those that have been affected by conflict. For a country such as Eritrea, which has been affected by conflict for more than three quarters of its existence as a nation, the recent peace in the region has opened up better opportunities and a promising future for recouping opportunities that had been lost. That positive trajectory will enable Eritrea and the rest of the region to focus on putting in place the necessary building blocks for regional development and integration. While the region moves towards integration, the task of providing for our peoples' basic needs — food, water, health care, education, transportation, electricity, capacity-building and youth employment and empowerment — cannot be deferred.

Eritrea has embarked on a dual programme of accelerating economic growth and working with its neighbours to achieve and sustain peace in the region. We will continue to take the actions needed to boost our mobilization of both human and financial domestic resources, which we see as drivers of sustained development. Yet the importance of scaling up global partnership and attracting substantial investments in diverse sectors of our economies cannot be overemphasized.

The successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development demands that we work together and show solidarity. Let us deliver on our commitments to getting our policies right and marshalling the resources we need to build a better future for all while leaving no one behind. It will require the full and effective participation of all stakeholders in the implementation of the SDGs. For its part, Eritrea will spare no effort to achieve an economically

prosperous middle-income country by 2030, reinforcing the foundation for a harmonious nation that fulfils the expectations and aspirations of its people.

Mr. Alshamsi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): Recent reports have shown that, despite the progress made in a number of areas in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, overall implementation at the global level has been slow. It is not an overstatement to say that we have gone off course. The world's first Sustainable Development Goals summit was therefore a timely opportunity to collectively discuss how to accelerate the implementation process.

The United Arab Emirates supports the pledge of the international community to launch a decade of action to achieve the 2030 Agenda. We have refocused our programmes for foreign assistance, valued at \$20 billion from 2016 to 2018, to provide direct support to implementing the SDGs. Our goal going forward is to enhance SDG compliance mechanisms and step up all sources of funding for achieving them.

Bridging gaps in the energy and technology sectors is essential to achieving progress towards eradicating poverty. The United Arab Emirates believes that it is high time for United Nations programmes to focus their efforts on those two sectors. In the same vein, the United Arab Emirates, through its partnerships on renewable energy, valued at \$1 billion, has seen for itself how public funding can pave the way for private funding.

As such, there are plenty of ways to create job opportunities. For example, we expect the efforts of the International Renewable Energy Agency to create approximately 11 million job opportunities in the renewable energy sector by 2030. Accordingly, we are all seeing the transformative potential of new sectors, such as renewable energy and digital technologies, in support of implementing the SDGs. The United Arab Emirates is committed to working closely with all partners to maximize such potential.

In conclusion, the world needs more SDG ambassadors and believers who will make sure that the SDGs are suitable for those who are in need. To reach that goal, the United Arab Emirates has placed the SDGs at the heart of Expo 2020, the next global exhibition, to be held in Dubai. We will incorporate the SDGs throughout Expo 2020 to make them part and parcel of the activities. We will also focus on inspiring

people to become ambassadors of positive change in their societies. Twenty-five million people are expected to participate from all over the world, and we hope that Expo will be the largest event held so far to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs. We also hope that it will be an opportunity to create partnerships among countries and participants with a view to implementing the common goals of the 2030 Agenda.

Ms. Juárez Argueta (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): We cannot not pass up this opportunity to congratulate ourselves on the adoption earlier of the political declaration of the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development in the General Assembly (resolution 74/4), as well as the underlying commitment demonstrated at the global level to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and each of its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We in Guatemala have made important strides in our development planning by adopting our national development plan — K'atún: Our Guatemala 2032 — in 2014 and integrating the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda into the national development plan in 2016, condensing them into 10 national priorities. Our second voluntary national review, which we presented this year, allowed us to look back on the first five years of our national development plan. The review, which was prepared through a much more participative process and with a broader scope, included working with public institutions, municipalities, development councils, international cooperation partners, the business sector and civil society. However, as the General Assembly reaffirmed today, our vision is to move towards a decade of action and results for sustainable development.

From our experience, we know that sustainable development requires a readjustment of institutions, public policies, programmes and budgets, which necessitates a considerable effort on the part of Governments in the implementation process. Providing capacity-building for local Governments and consolidating statistical systems and tools that support consistent and strategic decision-making will be key in that stage. It is therefore essential to strengthen the means of implementation, particularly financing for development in which private investment, trade, sustainable debt and technology transfers can complement initiatives with domestic resources and official development assistance. We know that strategic alliances are essential to complement Government efforts at all levels.

In Guatemala, we believe that the following are of the utmost importance: reducing poverty; ensuring social protection; guaranteeing access to health services; promoting food and nutritional security; providing access to quality, relevant and equitable education; offering decent and quality employment, especially for young people; and reducing inequalities to decrease gaps among indigenous populations, women and people with disabilities, as well as in rural areas of the country.

Similarly, as one of the most vulnerable countries to the effects of climate change worldwide, we underscore the need to integrate the principles of adaptation and mitigation at all levels of public policies. We also underscore the importance of continuing to strengthen our institutions, security and access to justice, which will enable us to count on solid and democratic institutions that are able to respond to the development needs of our citizens in order to foster peaceful and inclusive societies.

I reiterate my country's commitment to achieving our national priorities, and we call for integrated efforts in favour of multilateralism in order to better meet our challenges.

Mr. Kakanur (India): Four years ago, the global community took a pledge to leave no one behind and to make the world a more sustainable place. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provided the action plan to make that a reality. We are now entering the final decade of achieving the SDGs. Although we have made considerable progress in the first four-year cycle, challenges remain in the long road ahead.

The underlying principle of India's development agenda is "Through everyone's support, for everyone's development and towards everyone's trust". That slogan mirrors the essence of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A country's ability to achieve and sustain long-term economic growth is determined by its ability to increase productivity through the use of better technology, together with human and physical capital.

In India, the financial technology industry has contributed significantly to the rapid expansion of access to financial services and financial inclusion. A record 370 million marginalized people have been brought into the financial system in the past five years. The spread of mobile telephony and linking it with digital biometric cards and bank accounts has

enabled the Government to target subsidies and deliver e-governance services.

We achieved the target of 100 per cent village electrification in April 2018, and have now redoubled our efforts to achieve 100 per cent household electrification over the next few months. In September 2018, we launched the world's largest Government-funded health coverage scheme, which targets 100 million households and has the potential to provide free health services to a population of 500 million. The cashless and paperless health scheme provides coverage of up to \$7,000 per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization. We also plan to wipe out malnutrition from India by 2022 and are in the process of building 40 million affordable homes in the same time frame.

Through all those development initiatives, India has made significant progress in the eradication of absolute poverty. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), India lifted 271 million people out of poverty between 2006 and 2016, recording the fastest reduction in Multidimensional Poverty Index values during that period.

India is fully committed to fulfilling its nationally determined contributions well before the target date, protecting its rich environment and pursuing a path of sustainable, low-carbon development. Seventeen countries in the world comprise 70 per cent of the world's biodiversity, earning them the title of "megadiverse countries". India is one such country; it accounts for 7 to 8 per cent of the world's biodiversity but is still able to feed 17 per cent of the global population. We are of the view that it is possible to strike a healthy balance between development and conservation. The doubling of India's tiger population — from 1,411 in 2006 to 2,967 in 2019 — validates that view. Of the world's overall tiger population, 70 per cent survives in India today.

We have also pledged to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by pursuing a massive afforestation programme. We have also launched the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure — a global partnership where knowledge is generated and exchanged on different aspects of climate- and disaster-resilient infrastructure.

We have even been successful in monitoring the implementation of the SDGs. The responsibility for overseeing SDG implementation in India has been assigned to our national think tank — the National

Institution for Transforming India — which is chaired by our Prime Minister. In order to provide high-quality, reliable and timely data, we launched the SDG India Index, an online dashboard that monitors the implementation of the SDGs at the state level and provides appropriate incentives to the provinces in order to spark competition to enable them to perform better.

In the spirit of sharing experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, and to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, India presented its voluntary national review during the seventy-first session of the Assembly, and will present its second round at the 2020 High-level Political Forum.

Our goal is to ensure that the fruits of India's progress and development percolate down to each of its 1.3 billion citizens. India's progress in the implementation of the SDGs is crucial for the world, as the country is home to about 17 per cent of the global population. Despite still being a developing country, in 2017, in the spirit of South-South cooperation, India established the India-UNDP Partnership Fund to assist fellow developing countries to achieve their SDGs. A sum of \$176 million has been committed to the Fund over the coming decade in order to focus on development projects in least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

Mahatma Gandhi once said, “there are two days in the year that we cannot do anything — yesterday and tomorrow”. He meant specifically that we need to act today to address our development challenges.

Ms. Rosa Suazo (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to take this opportunity to make a brief statement following the adoption of the political declaration of the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly (resolution 74/4) in order to highlight the commitment of Honduras to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Four years after beginning the implementation of the Agenda, despite limited progress, it is evident that we need to redouble efforts to achieve the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As the declaration indicates, we need accelerated action and the strategic mobilization of the necessary resources if we are to leave no one behind.

In today's world, we must move from words to action. To that end, my country has been developing concrete strategies to achieve the 2030 Agenda. The first step was to incorporate the SDGs into our national planning system. We have informed the General Assembly about the progress made in that respect. Subsequently, we launched a national commission on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Through that commission, the Government of Honduras will lead the effective implementation, follow-up and monitoring of the SDGs in the country, with the participation of actors from the central Government, as well as local governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and academia. The 2030 Agenda is a commitment of all to all, and we must join forces in a concerted manner.

When we talk about the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, we must also talk about climate change. Sustainable development cannot be achieved unless measures are taken to mitigate the effects of climate change. If our efforts do not take climate change into account, it will roll back development gains of recent decades, thereby jeopardizing the internal stability of nations and world peace.

We in Honduras are promoting agricultural production systems adapted to climate change; agricultural research and innovation centres; and protected structures such as greenhouses, intelligent irrigation systems and water reservoirs. We are also leading reforestation campaigns that seek to motivate young people and children to conserve forests. Society as a whole must participate in efforts to achieve conditions of resilience, adaptation and mitigation.

Access to financing, the mobilization of resources from the private sector and international cooperation must be strengthened in order to build a system that allows for new modalities of access to funds — one with a gender approach that includes the most vulnerable sectors so that all members of society receive the true benefit of fair trade.

In conclusion, Honduras reiterates its firm conviction that the adoption of this declaration will give new impetus to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ms. Brink (Australia): The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) embody Australian values and our ambitions for our region, the Indo-Pacific — prosperity, stability and inclusiveness. We were pleased to join others in reaffirming our

commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the SDG summit and through this political declaration (resolution 74/4). We congratulate Ambassador Skoog and Ambassador Carey for their effective stewardship of the negotiations.

Australia is proud to be working with our international partners to advance the SDGs at home, in our own region and globally. We know that harnessing and developing the skills of women and girls to advance equality and empowerment is critical to achieving not only SDG 5, on gender equality, but all 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Last year, Australia launched its inaugural Women's Economic Security Statement initiative to boost economic opportunities for Australian women and realize its vision for a vibrant, safe and cohesive Australia. We are combating violence against women through our National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022. We are also developing our second national action plan on women and peace and security to guide long-term work on the meaningful participation of women and girls in peace and security processes.

The Pacific is Australia's home. It faces significant and unique challenges. That is why we are undertaking our Pacific Step-up, putting the region front and centre of our foreign policy. Australia is working in close consultation with its Pacific partners to tackle the region's long-term development challenges, including climate change. Together we are building climate and disaster resilience in the region, improving ocean health and tackling plastics pollution. We are also working together to assist communities in the region to address the underlying causes of gender inequality and reduce gender-based and family violence.

Australia is opening access to its labour markets for Pacific workers, which drives up remittances and supports skills development across the region. The Coral Sea Cable System links Australia with Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands to increase Internet access and connectivity with our neighbours. This is truly a transformative project. We are working across the multilateral system to ensure that the additional resources needed to meet the SDGs are flowing to our neighbourhood.

The 2030 Agenda is ambitious and as relevant as ever. We look forward to working with all partners to meet the challenge that we have set ourselves of transforming our world and leaving no one behind.

Mr. Do Rego (Benin) (*spoke in French*): It is a real pleasure for my country, Benin, to take this opportunity to address this plenary meeting, which reflects the General Assembly's ownership of the political declaration (resolution 74/4) adopted at the Sustainable Development Goals summit.

Four years into the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Benin, one of the key lessons learned is that integrating SDG initiatives into national planning frameworks is essential for the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which must focus on harmonizing the principles of prioritization, coordination and partnership.

Our national ownership of the SDGs led to Benin's selection of 49 priority targets and 168 monitoring indicators. That large number of targets involving all sectors of activity has led to more active and binding coordination, with better coordination of data management. The entire development planning framework has thus been aligned with those priority targets.

The ownership process continued with an assessment of the costs of achieving the priority targets of the SDGs — a significant \$74 billion. That assessment enabled the country to take stock of the real challenge of mobilizing the necessary resources and ensuring a sound macrobudgetary framework.

An analysis of the ripple effects and synergies between the priority targets of the SDGs led to the identification of nine operational starting points — social protection, agricultural production, education, health, drinking water, energy, infrastructure, cities and human settlements and the Earth. Major projects are being implemented in each of those areas, with tangible results in many places encouraging people to go even further. By way of illustration, I note the implementation of the social protection programme entitled "Insurance for Strengthening Human Capital" to help the most vulnerable within the sectors of agriculture, trade, transport, crafts, art and culture.

I also note the implementation of the school canteens project, with 51 per cent of primary schools enrolled in the National Integrated School Feeding Programme, which has made it possible not only to improve school performance and the health and nutritional status of students but also to develop local

agricultural production, which provides substantial income to farmers.

In addition, we are implementing the reform of the entire agricultural sector, with the establishment of agricultural development centres managed by the Territorial Agency for Agricultural Development, responsible for implementing national development programmes in different fields.

Also worth mentioning are the significant investments in the drinking water sector through the rehabilitation of boreholes and village water supply projects in order to reach the SDG target of ensuring drinking water for all by 2021, 10 years before the deadline.

In the energy sector, the commissioning of new 127 megawatts of electricity generation capacity for a forecast of 400 megawatts by 2021, with a 25 per cent renewable energy mix, has helped to reduce our energy dependence by half.

The implementation of an asphaltting programme in all major and secondary cities of Benin for urban sanitation purposes also contributes to improving the living conditions of our population.

Finally, sustainable solutions are being implemented in order to reduce and reverse the land degradation trend in the country. In that connection, more than 13,000 agricultural producers have been trained in sustainable land management and the rehabilitation of degraded soils to improve food security.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Government of my country, I reiterate our gratitude to the technical and financial partners for their continued support for the progress achieved in Benin. My country twice submitted voluntary national reviews in the framework of the High-level Political Forum in order to comply with the principles of the evaluation. Despite those annual evaluations, to which Member States must submit, and with regard to the 2018 report of the Secretary-General on the SDGs (E/2018/64), the pace of global process does not match that called for by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That assessment forces us to take immediate and intensified measures at all levels so as to effectively leave no one behind.

Mr. Al-Kuwari (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): The State of Qatar welcomes the adoption of the political declaration of the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices

of the General Assembly (resolution 74/4). We once again express our appreciation to the co-facilitators, the Permanent Representatives of the Bahamas and Sweden, for their tireless efforts to facilitate consultations on the political declaration in such an open and transparent manner.

By adopting this political declaration, we reaffirm our shared and ambitious commitment to achieve our common vision by 2030 and to leave no one behind. The State of Qatar attaches great importance to a number of critical issues addressed in the political declaration, inter alia, recognizing the special challenges facing the most vulnerable countries in seeking to achieve development, including the least developed countries and the small island developing States. Given that the State of Qatar is convinced of the necessity to pay maximum attention to responses to meet the needs and priorities of the least developed countries, we will host the fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in March 2021. We hope that the Conference will be an ideal time to provide positive momentum for the sustainable development of the least developed countries and an important contribution to the shared efforts to that end.

In the light of the dire need to address threats resulting from the effects of climate change and coordinate multilateral action in that regard, we welcome that the political declaration reiterates the need to prioritize and act urgently and globally to mitigate and adapt to climate change as one of the greatest challenges of our time. The State of Qatar was accordingly keen to play a leading role at the Climate Action Summit, held by the Secretary-General last month, through the leadership of Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, the French President and the Prime Minister of Jamaica, as co-leading countries of the climate finance and carbon pricing alliance.

His Royal Highness announced at the summit a \$100 million contribution to help least developed countries and small island developing States address climate change, as they are the countries most affected by its consequences. In line with the commitment of States underscored in the political declaration to support efforts by the Secretary-General to restructure the United Nations development system so as to enhance support to countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in 2018 the State of Qatar announced an unearmarked

multi-year contribution of \$500 million in core resources for United Nations system entities, including support for the Special Purpose Trust Fund under the Resident Coordinator system for the period 2019 to 2020 and earmarking \$20 million in multi-year funding support for the network of United Nations Development Programme accelerator laboratories to speed up the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Those measures make Qatar among the largest partners supporting the United Nations in various areas.

The political declaration recognizes the importance of achieving our vision of creating a world that will provide access to quality, equitable and inclusive education. This is in line with Qatar's view of the great importance of education as an enabling factor contributing to sustainable development, as well as its central role in achieving the SDGs. My country is similarly paying close attention to education, with our Education Above All Foundation realizing great achievements by providing quality education to 10 million children and young people around the world, in cooperation with international partners.

In conclusion, Qatar, which sees the political declaration as a solid basis for stepping up our ambition to achieve sustainable development and leave no one behind, will spare no effort to continue its commitment to actions based on the principle of partnership and cooperation on shared goals.

Mr. Cho Tae-yul (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to thank Ambassador Carey and Ambassador Skoog for their tireless efforts as co-facilitators of the political declaration that we have just adopted (resolution 74/4). I firmly believe that the declaration will guide us through the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.

It was four years ago that world leaders gathered here and adopted the most ambitious goals in history. They did so with a view to transforming the world for people and this planet. Their commitment, however, has not yet been fully translated into reality. Substantial progress has yet to be made in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Before it is too late, we must galvanize our political will to step up our efforts to fully implement them.

Today, drawing upon the experience of my own country, I would like to bring everyone's attention to the importance of inclusivity in promoting sustainable development. The Republic of Korea has often been

acclaimed as a success story of development, which demonstrates that transformational development is possible even in half a century. We also take pride in the fact that we have achieved democracy and economic development in tandem, made possible thanks to the Korean people's strong aspiration for a better life and relentless efforts to achieve it. However, too much focus on growth resulted in increasing inequality and exclusion in economic, social and environmental contexts. That inequality and exclusion undermined social cohesion and raised barriers to sustainable development.

As part of efforts to correct course, this past year my Government announced its vision and strategy for innovative and inclusive growth. Its ultimate goal is to build a society where equal opportunities as well as just and fair outcomes are ensured. Concrete policy actions that include targets and specific time frames for each of them have been put in place this year. The national budget has also been increased to implement the policy vision. Furthermore, my Government renewed its action plan for sustainable development, known as the K-SDGs. Diverse groups, including women, young people and people with disabilities, took part in setting goals and targets for the future. The action plan will serve as a comprehensive monitoring mechanism to ensure the inclusivity and sustainability of the country's economic development.

Governments alone cannot tackle challenges to sustainable development effectively. Partnerships with civil society and the private sector are essential, and a sense of global solidarity is a must. In order to support the implementation of the SDGs around the world, the Republic of Korea has steadily increased its official development assistance (ODA). We will continue to do so with a plan to more than double our ODA by 2030. In doing so, we will pay particular attention to ensuring that our support reaches those at risk of being left behind, thereby contributing to building peaceful, just and inclusive societies in our partner countries. We have clearly defined common goals but, to achieve them by the target year, we need to take actions with a sense of urgency that truly matches our ambition. The Republic of Korea will play its due part in this effort throughout the journey towards 2030.

Allow me to conclude my intervention on a personal note. This is the last meeting of the General Assembly that I attend, as I will leave New York in a matter of days after three years of my tour of duty, which conclude my 40-year-long diplomatic career.

It has been a great pleasure for me to work with the members of the General Assembly and other colleagues to promote sustainable peace and development around the world. Serving as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission in 2017 and as President of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services this year was a special honour and privilege for me in that regard. I am confident that the United Nations will build upon its past achievements and rise to new heights under your able leadership, Mr. President. I wish you all the best in your new endeavours as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session.

The President: I wish the representative of the Republic of Korea well in his future endeavours and acknowledge the great work he has done for the Organization.

Ms. Blais (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada joins other Member States in welcoming the adoption of the political declaration of the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly (resolution 74/4). We would like to thank Ambassador Carey of the Bahamas and Ambassador Skoog of Sweden and their staff for the excellent work done in co-facilitating the process.

(*spoke in English*)

The message that Canada heard loud and clear during our recent high-level week was that we need greater ambition if we are to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. Let us not forget that we recently had such ambition, as it was only four years ago that we created the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development: the blueprint for our people, prosperity and planet. But it will require more than simple ambition to achieve this comprehensive agenda; we also need partnerships that will see us work better together. Reducing poverty, ensuring economic security for all, empowering women and girls, tackling climate change, building peaceful and inclusive societies — those are ambitious targets, which absolutely no country can achieve by working in isolation. We need to work together. Working together also means involving women and girls, men and boys, all levels of Government, Parliaments, civil society and businesses to ensure that we are walking the talk.

Canada believes that our shared goal of leaving no one behind represents the best of multilateralism. It means ensuring that all people have the opportunity

to lead better lives. Our global goals will be met only if we hear and address the needs and priorities of the poorest and most marginalized among us. We must step up our efforts and meet those challenges together, while paying close attention to the specific needs of the least developed countries, small island developing States and conflict-affected regions. It was President Maamau of Kiribati who said during his address at this year's general debate,

“the real and true test of the success of the United Nations is to be measured not in the number of treaties concluded or resolutions adopted but rather in how much it improves the lives of the most vulnerable”. (*A/74/PV.6, p. 38*)

(*spoke in French*)

Canada knows that it will not be easy to ensure a decent standard of living for all, including the most vulnerable. Despite the fact that Canada has a high level of economic and social development, 3 million Canadians are still struggling to meet their basic needs. Indigenous peoples, women, the elderly, persons with disabilities and those newly arrived in Canada are more often the victims of poverty, discrimination and social exclusion.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada believes that one of our most critical tasks is to mobilize the necessary resources from the public, private and philanthropic sectors in order to achieve all the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. For that reason, Canada was pleased to partner with Ghana in co-facilitating the recent high-level dialogue on financing for development. Through that work, we have heard that the world has more than enough financial resources to make our Sustainable Development Goals a reality. The problems are rooted in coordination and connection. Canada believes that the United Nations, through its normative and convening roles, is uniquely positioned to be at the forefront of those efforts.

The 2030 Agenda is not an à la carte menu from which we can pick. It is a holistic approach to globalism and sustainability — one that we all depend on in order to survive. Only when we all commit to that together will we restore trust and rebuild hope.

Mr. Alnahdi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having organized the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) summit on 24 September. The summit

served to highlight the commitment and desire of the United Nations and its States Members to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and provided a suitable forum to discuss the most important achievements and challenges of the past four years.

Saudi Arabia recognizes the importance of the global challenges and issues we face in pursuing the SDGs. We need to adopt a comprehensive approach in order to address those challenges and issues through national, regional and international partnerships, with the participation of all stakeholders. Saudi Arabia also stresses the importance of leveraging all possible factors with a view to achieving the 2030 Agenda, most notably inclusiveness, the empowerment of women and young people and investing in human capital in order to ensure that all our achievements are sustained beyond 2030.

Financing for development is one of the most important factors in achieving the SDGs. That requires the development of financial and non-financial mechanisms and strategies to support implementation through leveraging domestic resources and involving the private sector, as well as the optimal channelling of official development assistance. As part of that global commitment and in line with our vision for 2030, which is based on three lines of action — a vital community, a prosperous economy and an ambitious nation — we are working hard to ensure that the Government works effectively with other sectors, such as the private sector and the not-for-profit sector, in order to achieve economic growth, social balance and environmental protection in a sustainable manner.

Saudi Arabia is a key partner in finding radical solutions to address development issues at the national, regional and international levels. We look forward to accelerating the implementation of the SDGs. Saudi Arabia stresses the importance of regional cooperation that enhances political, economic and social stability, in turn creating the necessary conditions for achieving the 2030 Agenda and implementing it at the global level. Through our chairmanship of the Group of Twenty Summit next year, Saudi Arabia will also ensure that priorities are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and complement them.

Mr. Duarte Lopes (Portugal): Portugal aligns itself with the statement delivered by Mr. Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice President-Designate

of the European Commission, during the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) summit.

At the outset of this complementary statement, I would like to sincerely thank our colleagues from the Bahamas and Sweden for having co-facilitated the negotiation of the political declaration we adopted today (resolution 74/4), one that is both concise and aspirational.

While on the subject of mentioning our colleagues, allow me to send my best wishes to Ambassador Cho Tae-yul of the Republic of Korea, who is coming to the end of his successful three-year mandate here in New York.

The fact that we all endorse this declaration means that we have been able to renew the global commitment to sustainable development. Progress has certainly been too slow in some areas. We must unquestionably step up our actions, but the SDG summit was an opportunity to recognize precisely that and show that we are ready to roll up our sleeves and ensure the faster implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda is to be implemented by all States, including both developed and developing nations alike, sharing a common responsibility to achieve the 17 SDGs and their respective targets.

Having presented its first national voluntary report, in 2017, Portugal remains fully committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda and to cooperating with other countries through partnerships in order to implement their own measures. A global manifestation of that engagement was evidenced by our successfully hosting the World Youth Conference in Lisbon last June. That meeting promoted dialogue between Governments and youth delegates from around the world, concluding with the adoption of the Lisboa+21 Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes. Moreover, with the implementation of SDG 14 especially in mind, Portugal will co-host with Kenya the second United Nations Ocean Conference in Lisbon next June.

In conclusion, the 2030 Agenda inspires us to achieve a better, safer and more prosperous and sustainable future. It is a vision to which we all aspire. Let us continue to strive towards its full implementation.

Mr. Naeemi (Afghanistan): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this meeting today on a very important topic under the auspices of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session,

namely, to discuss the important matter of accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is a great honour for me to share our achievements and challenges in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Together with our private sector, civil society and development partners, the Government of Afghanistan has been working to fulfil its commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the midst of conflict, fragility and poverty. The SDGs have provided us with a vision for a better future, and we are actively working to translate them into concrete actions and better outcomes for our people. Let me now highlight some of our key achievements in implementing the SDGs in our country.

To give the Agenda its required level of political attention, an executive committee was created to coordinate various agenda points on the SDGs at the highest policy level. The Ministry of Economy has been designated as the primary Government agency to lead and coordinate the technical work on the SDGs in Afghanistan — both through working groups and with each agency of the Government of Afghanistan.

Having set that direction, the Ministry of Economy analysed SDG stakeholders, carried out consultations and nationalized the most relevant SDG targets and indicators. The result was the adoption of the Afghanistan Sustainable Development Goals (A-SDGs) as set out in a national document. More recently, we aligned the A-SDGs with national development priorities. We are currently laying the groundwork for mainstreaming the A-SDG targets and indicators into national planning and budgeting processes.

While working across all the A-SDG custodian Government agencies, we have identified our A-SDG priority targets and focus areas to maximize impact through integrated planning and budgeting and to guide our development partners — donor agencies, multilateral organizations, non-governmental organizations, our private sector and civil society — to mainstream their programmes and projects into our A-SDG priorities during the next decade.

As development and security are interlinked, Afghanistan is still at the forefront of countering international terrorism. More than four decades of conflict have taken a heavy toll on our people, resources and infrastructure, and served as the primary obstacle to achieving sustainable development. We therefore

stress the need for sustained international assistance to achieve our SDG targets in a timely manner.

In conclusion, I would like to assure you, Mr. President, that Afghanistan is committed to leaving no one behind in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We will continue our efforts to implement our SDG targets in a feasible way. We hope that our international partners will help us in achieving them together.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the League of Arab States.

Mr. Alzabidy (League of Arab States) (*spoke in Arabic*): Four years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, today we have adopted the political declaration of the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly (resolution 74/4). This represents a positive step that the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations should use to devote concentrated efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda with resolve and seriousness. Critically, we will need to deal with those challenges throughout the next decade with resolve and seriousness as we implement this ambitious Agenda. We all face those challenges jointly. The universality of the Agenda and the similarity of the problems, regardless of their forms, compel us to join efforts to resolve them and achieve well-being for our peoples. In that respect, I will briefly share the vision of the League of Arab States in addressing the challenges we face in the next phase.

Eradicating poverty by 2030 remains the main challenge ahead of us. It requires mobilizing all national, regional and international efforts to address it as a step towards achieving sustainable development and meeting our commitment to leave no one behind. Development is a human right for everyone, and it should be enjoyed by all, including women, youth and marginalized people, as well as the most vulnerable groups, including children, people with disabilities and elderly people. That requires the provision of effective financial tools to bridge the financial gap. The League of Arab States calls on the international community to fulfil its commitments under Goal 17 of the SDGs, particularly when it comes to the mobilization of financial resources to support the least developed countries and middle-income countries. That also includes the crucial and vital role of official

development assistance as a key source of financing for developing countries.

Our modern world, specifically the Arab region, is faced with grave political and security challenges that hamper the implementation of sustainable development. At their core lies the challenge faced by peoples and States under occupation and conflict. There is no doubt that the Israeli occupation causes huge development challenges in both occupied Palestine and other Arab territories under occupation. Those peoples and States require special assistance and support to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those related to the sustainability of natural resources.

Allow me to mention here the long-term repercussions of mass forced displacement as a result of wars, terrorism, conflicts and occupation on sustainable development, especially in the Arab region. We must take into consideration the increasing impact of the influx of refugees on infrastructure in host countries, notably in the health, education, housing, energy and water sectors. In that context, it is important to intensify efforts and cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States in enhancing humanitarian efforts, supporting financing for development and providing the necessary funding for national development response plans, strengthening the capacities of host countries to address the repercussions of the crisis and ensuring that efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals are not hampered.

In conclusion, the League of Arab States reiterates its commitment and that of its member States to enhancing cooperation with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Secretariat to continue the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets — to the benefit of both our organizations and to achieve the sustainable development to which we all aspire.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Mr. O'Connor (International Union for Conservation of Nature): The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) welcomes the political declaration of the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly (resolution 74/4). The IUCN is encouraged at seeing the strong reference therein to conserving and sustainably using our planet's marine and terrestrial resources and to halting

ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss. We were also encouraged to see the prominent featuring of nature-based solutions for climate change during the Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit. We know that conserving, restoring and sustainably managing the world's ecosystems — its forests, mangroves, peatlands, grasslands, coral reefs, drylands — can help countries and communities to adapt to climate change and build their resilience, as well as providing important mitigation benefits.

We now need to build on the momentum generated by the summits held in September and prepare diligently for 2020, which promises to be a watershed year for biodiversity and nature conservation. Important biodiversity-related targets in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are supposed to have been achieved by 2020. Even if they are, and the likelihood of their all being reached looks slim, much work remains going forward to restore our planet's ecosystems to robust health and halt the rapid loss of biodiversity documented by the recent report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

Next year gives us a tremendous opportunity to scale up ambition in four ways: first, by ensuring that enhanced nationally determined contributions to tackle climate change incorporate ambitious and quantified targets for deploying nature-based solutions; secondly, by ensuring that the back-to-back United Nations Ocean Conference and the IUCN World Conservation Congress — the Lisbon-Marseille axis — provide concrete and ambitious outcomes to advance ocean health and to scale up action on nature conservation more broadly; thirdly, by crafting a strong political declaration to be adopted by world leaders at next year's leaders' summit on biodiversity, one at least as ambitious as the recent Metz Charter on Biodiversity; and, fourthly, by adopting a post-2020 global biodiversity framework with verifiable science-based targets and an ambitious financing strategy at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held later next year in Kunming.

We look forward to working with all Member States to ensure that 2020 is truly a watershed year for both biodiversity and climate change, as these two global challenges are inextricably linked to one another, as well as to the present and future well-being of human beings and societies.

The President: We have heard the last speaker on this item.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Ambassador Sheila Carey of the Bahamas and Ambassador Olof Skoog of Sweden, co-facilitators of the informal consultations, who demonstrated great ability and patience in their conduct of the discussion and complex negotiations on resolution 74/4. I also thank Member States for their valuable contributions to reaching an agreement on the resolution.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 19.

Agenda item 14 (continued)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Draft resolution (A/74/L.1)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Liberia to introduce draft resolution A/74/L.1.

Mr. Kemayah (Liberia): Permit me to take this opportunity to reiterate our congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly. We would like to commend you for the able manner in which you continue to steer the affairs of the Assembly and further reassure you of our delegation's commitment to fully supporting your leadership.

It is my great privilege to introduce to the General Assembly, on behalf of the main sponsors and co-sponsors, draft resolution A/74/L.1, entitled "Proclamation of 28 September as the International Day for Universal Access to Information".

Access to information is very essential for the democratic functioning of a society and shaping our political, social and economic perspectives. It is also vital for the sustainable development of countries. Recognized by the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and in the Sustainable Development Goals under Goal 16.10.2, access to information serves as an enabler of all other Sustainable Development Goals, whether ending poverty in all its forms everywhere; ensuring healthy lives and well-being; ensuring equitable education, gender equality and women's empowerment; youth

empowerment; promoting peaceful and inclusive societies; or reducing inequalities within and among countries. None of these Sustainable Development Goals can be achieved without access to information. The progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals cannot be measured without access to information.

Liberia, as a country that has experienced conflict and major public health crises, such as the Ebola pandemic, appreciates the value of access to information in combating problems of this scale. We know first-hand what a lack of information can mean for a society — the difference between life and death.

The draft resolution we are introducing today draws on resolution 38 C/70, which was adopted unanimously by the member States of UNESCO at its General Conference in Paris in 2015 and which proclaimed 28 September as the International Day for Universal Access to Information. Since the adoption of the UNESCO resolution, several countries and civil society organizations celebrate the day annually, raising awareness on the importance of access to information.

The adoption today of draft resolution A/74/L.1 for the proclamation of 28 September as the International Day for Universal Access to Information by the General Assembly will create the biggest global platform for Governments, civil society organizations, citizens and development partners to reflect on the importance of access to information, identify challenges and design new and innovative ways to promote the advancement of access to information as a tangible tool for development and the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The draft resolution we humbly introduce today is the result of the dedicated work of many Member States, small and large, from different regions of the world. Such broad and diverse ownership demonstrates the truly global nature of this draft resolution on access to information. The adoption by consensus of draft resolution A/74/L.1 by the General Assembly today, Tuesday, 15 October, will send a clear and important message globally that we are committed to enhancing access to information and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

We reaffirm the unflinching practical commitment of His Excellency Mr. George Manneh Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia, and the Government of Liberia to promoting access to information, advancing

press freedom and freedom of expression and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. We commend the delegations of Sierra Leone and Costa Rica and the many co-sponsors for their unwavering support to our leadership on this noteworthy endeavour and, more important, for joining us in this initiative. We appeal to those Member States that have not yet done so to kindly do so and support the draft resolution. We also thank the many countries from different regions, international partners and civil society organizations, including, but not limited to, UNESCO, the African Platform on Access to Information, the Press Union of Liberia and all other media institutions around the world that have championed initiatives that promote access to information worldwide over the years.

The action that we take today will serve to reaffirm our collective resolve as the world body — the United Nations — to work together to enhance access to information and promote democracy and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Together we must prioritize enhancing access to information as a pivotal and tangible tool to ensure the achievement of, and assess progress on, the Sustainable Development Goals.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/74/L.1, entitled

“Proclamation of 28 September as the International Day for Universal Access to Information”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. De Miranda (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/74/L.1: Armenia, Benin, the Central African Republic, Colombia, Comoros, Côte d’Ivoire, Cuba, Eswatini, Greece, Grenada, Guinea, Ireland, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Norway, Paraguay, the Philippines, Senegal, Serbia, Tunisia, Uganda and Uruguay.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/74/L.1?

Draft resolution A/74/L.1 was adopted (resolution 74/5).

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 14.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.