



General Assembly

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54th plenary meeting
 Wednesday, 22 January 2020, 10 a.m.
 New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Muhammad-Bande (Nigeria)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 110 (continued)

Agenda item 139 (continued)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

Letter dated 16 January 2020 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly (A/74/642/Add.3)

Letter dated 17 January 2020 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly (A/74/642/Add.4)

Letter dated 20 January 2020 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly (A/74/642/Add.5)

The President: Before proceeding to the item on our agenda, and in keeping with established practice, I would like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to documents A/74/642/Add.3, A/74/642/Add.4 and A/74/642/Add.5, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communication contained in document A/74/642/Add.2, Lesotho, Yemen and Tonga, respectively, have made the payment necessary to reduce their arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes due note of the information contained in those documents?

It was so decided.

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/74/1)

The President: As stated in my letter dated 6 January 2020, the Secretary-General will brief the Assembly on his priorities for 2020, after which the formal meeting will be suspended to hold an informal meeting for a question and answer period. Thereafter, the formal meeting will resume for delegations to deliver statements under agenda item 110. After his departure, the Secretary-General's seat at the podium will be occupied by his representative. If I hear no objection, we shall proceed accordingly.

It was so decided.

The President: I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres.

The Secretary-General: I wish everyone present a happy new year.

The year 2020 marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations. I draw tremendous strength from all that we represent and all that we have achieved together. But anniversaries are not about celebrating the past; they are about looking ahead. We must cast our eyes to the future we hope for and we must do so without illusion. Today I want to speak to the General Assembly in stark and simple terms about the challenges we face.

I see four horsemen in our midst — four looming threats that endanger twenty-first century progress and imperil twenty-first century possibilities. The

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first horseman comes in the form of the highest global geostrategic tensions we have witnessed in years. Devastating conflicts continue to cause widespread misery, terrorist attacks take a merciless toll, the nuclear menace is growing, and more people have been forced from their homes by war and persecution than at any time since the Second World War. Tensions over trade and technology remain unresolved, and the risk of a great fracture is real.

Secondly, we face an existential climate crisis. Rising temperatures continue to melt records, and the past decade was the hottest ever documented. Scientists tell us that our ocean temperatures are now rising at the equivalent of five Hiroshima bombs a second. One million species are in near-term danger of extinction. While our planet is burning, too many decision-makers continue to fiddle, as we saw at the twenty-fifth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Our world is edging closer to the point of no return.

The third horseman is deep and growing global mistrust. Disquiet and discontent are churning societies from north to south. Each situation is unique, but everywhere frustration is filling the streets. More and more people are convinced that globalization is not working for them. As our own reports revealed just yesterday, two out of every three people live in countries where inequality has grown. Confidence in political establishments is going down, young people are rising up, and women are rightly demanding equality and freedom from violence and discrimination. At the same time, fears and anxieties are spreading, hostility against refugees and migrants is building, and hatred is growing.

The fourth threat is the dark side of the digital world. Technological advances are moving faster than our ability to respond or even comprehend them. Despite enormous benefits, new technologies are being abused to commit crimes, incite hate, fake information, oppress and exploit people and invade privacy. We are not prepared for the profound impact of the fourth industrial revolution on labour markets and the very structure of societies. Artificial intelligence is generating breathtaking capacities but also alarming possibilities. Lethal autonomous weapons, machines with the power to kill on their own without human judgment or accountability, are bringing us into unacceptable moral and political territory.

The four horsemen — epic geopolitical tensions, the climate crisis, global mistrust and the downsides of technology — can jeopardize every aspect of our shared future. That is why commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary with nice speeches will not do. We must address these four twenty-first century challenges with four twenty-first century solutions. Let me take each in turn.

The first challenge is the peace and security dimension. There are some signs of hope. Last year, conflict was prevented in the wake of several critical elections — from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Madagascar, from Mali to Maldives and beyond. Despite hostilities in Yemen, the fragile ceasefire in Al-Hudaydah is holding. The Constitutional Committee in Syria has taken form, even if it is still facing meaningful obstacles. A peace agreement in the Central African Republic is being implemented. And the recent Berlin Conference on Libya brought key players around the peace table at a critical moment. They committed to “refraining from interference in the armed conflict or in the internal affairs of Libya” and urging “all international actors to do the same”.

All such efforts require patience and persistence, but they are essential and save lives. As we look ahead, we have our work cut out for us. We see Gordian knots across the world — from the Gulf to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and from the Sahel and Lake Chad to Venezuela. Security Council resolutions are being ignored, outside interference is fuelling fires and we are at risk of losing pillars of the international disarmament and arms-control achievements without viable alternatives.

Yes, the United Nations continues to deliver life-saving aid to millions of people in desperate need. But temporary relief is no substitute for permanent solutions. Prevention must orient all we do as we engage across the peace continuum. We must strengthen our mediation capacity and our tools for sustaining peace, leading to long-term development. Our Action for Peacekeeping initiative is enhancing performance and safety. We are becoming more effective in the protection of civilians and we have more female peacekeepers than ever before. The twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security is also an opportunity to further match words with deeds.

At the same time, we know peacekeeping is not enough where there is no peace to keep. We need to create the conditions for effective peace enforcement and counter-terrorism operations by our regional partners, as envisaged in Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, and with predictable financing. That is especially true in Africa, from the Sahel to Lake Chad. And we must focus on the roots of crisis and upheaval, combating the drivers of violence and extremism — from exclusion to economic despair and from violent misogyny to governance failures.

Last year, I launched first-of-their-kind action plans to combat hate speech and safeguard religious sites. This year, I will convene a conference on the role of education in tackling hate speech. We must also continue to advance the agenda for disarmament. I call on all State Parties to work together at the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to ensure that the NPT remains able to fulfil its fundamental goals — preventing nuclear war and facilitating the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The second horseman is the threat of climate catastrophe. We must respond with the promise of climate action. We are at war with nature, and nature is fighting back hard. One cannot look at the recent fires in Australia, at people fleeing their homes and wildlife consumed by the flames, without profound sadness at today's plight and fear for what the future may bring. Meanwhile, according to the World Health Organization, air pollution and climate change, together, are killing 7 million people every year.

Gradual approaches are no longer enough. At the next climate conference — the 2020 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow — Governments must deliver the transformational change that our world needs and which people demand, with much more ambition when it comes to mitigation, adaptation and financing efforts. Every city, region, bank, pension fund and industry must completely reimagine how they operate if we are to keep temperature rise to 1.5°C.

The scientific community is clear that we need to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions by 45 per cent from 2010 levels by 2030, and reach net-zero emissions by 2050. The main obligation rests on the main emitters. The countries that contributed most to this crisis must lead the way. If they dither, we are doomed.

But I still believe the climate battle is a battle we can win. People get it, technology is on our side, and scientists tell us it is not too late. Economists and asset managers tell us climate-smart investments are the key to competing and winning in the twenty-first century. All the tools and knowledge to move from the grey economy to the green economy are already available. Let us therefore embrace transformation, let us build on the results of September's Climate Action Summit, and let us make the commitments needed to make Glasgow a success.

Together with Glasgow, we have two other opportunities to act decisively this year. The first is the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, to be held in Lisbon in June. The world's oceans are under assault from pollution, overfishing and much else. Plastic waste is tainting not only the fish we eat, but also the water we drink and the air we breathe. We must use the Lisbon conference to protect the oceans from further abuse and recognize their fundamental role in the health of people and the planet. For example, thanks to the success of several national initiatives, it is time for a global ban on single-use plastics.

The second opportunity is the meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in Kunming in October. The rate of species loss is exponentially higher than at any time in the past 10 million years. We must make the most of the Kunming conference to adopt a post-2020 global biodiversity framework. Living in harmony with nature is more important than ever, and everything is interlinked.

To help vanquish the third horseman — global mistrust — we must ensure that globalization is fair. We have a plan: it is called the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and all Governments pledged to make it a reality. The good news is that I hear tremendous enthusiasm for the Sustainable Development Goals wherever I go — from political leaders at the national and local levels, to entrepreneurs, investors, civil society and so many others. We see concrete progress — from reducing child mortality to expanding education and from improving access to family planning to increasing access to the Internet.

But what we see is not enough. Indeed, we are off track. If we stay the present course, half a billion people will still be living in extreme poverty by 2030, and the

gender gap in economic participation would have to wait more than 250 years. That is unacceptable.

For all those reasons, we are launching a decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The decade of action is central to achieving fair globalization, boosting economic growth and preventing conflict. We will leverage the reformed United Nations development system to engage partners from the local to the global, mobilize a movement for the Sustainable Development Goals, unlock financing and generate ambition, innovation and solutions in order to deliver for everyone, everywhere.

Throughout the decade of action, we must invest in the eradication of poverty, in social protection, in health and fighting pandemics, in education, energy, water and sanitation, in sustainable transport and infrastructure and in internet access. We must improve governance, tackle illicit financial flows, stamp out corruption and develop effective, fair and common-sense taxation systems. We must build economies for the future and ensure decent work for all, especially young people.

We must also put a special focus on women and girls because that benefits us all. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is an opportunity to rethink economic, political and social systems from an equality perspective. It is time to drive women's equal participation in decision-making and end all forms of violence against women and girls. We must dismantle obstacles to women's inclusion and participation in the economy, including through valuing unpaid care work. And we must listen and learn from so many women around the world who have been driving solutions.

I will convene an annual platform for driving the decade of action. The first such action forum, to be held in September, will highlight progress and set the trajectory for success. Let us therefore make the 2020s the decade of action and let us make 2020 the year of urgency. And, as we do so, let us spare no effort to rebuild trust.

I make a special appeal to all Member States — to listen to people, open new channels for all to be heard and find common ground, respect freedom of peaceful assembly and expression, and protect civic space and freedom of the press — and let us harness the ideas and energy and sense of hope of young people, in particular young women, demanding change and constructive solutions.

(spoke in French)

Fourthly, in order to protect ourselves from the dark side of the digital world, we must put technology to work in the service of good. I see several avenues for action, starting with the global labour market. By 2030, automation will destroy tens of millions of jobs.

We need to completely rethink our education systems. It is not just a question of learning, but of learning how to learn for the rest of our lives. We need to invent new social safety nets and rethink the very notion of work, taking into account a new life-long balance between work, leisure and other activities. We also need to create order in the lawless space that cyberspace has become. Terrorists, white supremacists and hatemongers exploit the Internet and social media. Bots spread disinformation, fuel polarization and undermine democracies. Next year, cybercrime will cost \$6 trillion. Cyberspace is in danger of being divided in two. We must fight digital fragmentation by encouraging global cooperation. In that regard, the United Nations is a tailor-made platform, as it enables Governments, businesses, civil society and others to come together to develop new standards and protocols, define red lines and establish flexible and responsive rules.

In some cases, it may be necessary to take legally binding measures. In others, we may call for voluntary cooperation and the sharing of best practices. For example, it will be necessary to support existing processes and institutions, such as the Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security and the Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the context of international security, created within the framework of the General Assembly.

There seems to be consensus that the Internet Governance Forum should be strengthened to serve as a meeting point where effective digital policies are proposed and discussed. As a follow-up to the report of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation, *The Age of Digital Interdependence*, I will soon present a plan of action for digital cooperation that touches upon Internet connectivity, human rights, trust and security in the era of digital interdependence.

At the same time, we must work together to ensure that artificial intelligence is a force that serves humankind. Despite the important milestone achieved this year in the Convention on Certain Conventional

Weapons, we continue to move towards a world of killing machines that are beyond the oversight or control of the human being. My appeal to all Member States is as simple as it is direct — to ban autonomous lethal weapons now.

Those are the four major threats that I believe loom large over the coming year and the four major solutions that we need. The protection and promotion of human rights must be at the heart of our collective action in this regard. I am extremely concerned about the erosion of human rights around the world. As I have stressed on many occasions, the Charter obliges us to place people and human rights at the heart of our commitment. That is why I will be launching a new call to action for human rights and dignity next month in Geneva. To tackle all the challenges of this new era, we must continue to give the United Nations the means to do so. That is why, since I took office and with the support of Member States, I have undertaken far-reaching reforms that emphasize flexibility, transparency and accountability.

In 2020, we will continue to build on the progress we have made. Indeed, we are already starting the year with a major achievement. On 1 January, for the first time in the Organization's history and two years ahead of schedule, we achieved gender parity in the highest full-time posts, namely, the Assistant-Secretaries-General and Under-Secretaries-General. It is my intention not to stop there, but to bolster inclusiveness and parity at all levels of the Organization. I ask the States Members of the United Nations to help me eliminate some of the outdated regulations and obscure procedures that stand in the way.

I am equally determined to make 2020 a year of real progress towards a more equitable geographical distribution and regional diversity of staff. We have launched a Secretariat-wide strategy in this regard. But, as Members know, in order to achieve the objectives of parity and diversity, vacant posts must be filled — and in order to do so, resources are needed.

I am also firmly resolved to further develop our efforts to prevent and end sexual harassment. The specialized investigations team of the Office of Internal Oversight Services is fully operational. A new policy on sexual harassment is being integrated into the various regulatory frameworks of the United Nations system. A centralized background check database has been deployed to prevent those guilty of harassment

or sexual exploitation from returning discreetly to the United Nations system.

Our strategy to combat sexual exploitation and abuse is also being implemented. It includes enhanced support for victims. More broadly, I am committed to ensuring that the Organization leads the way in ensuring that all those who work in the United Nations are respected, have a voice and are empowered to give their best. We are moving forward on our new Disability Inclusion Strategy, and I am fully committed to ensuring equality and non-discrimination for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex personnel in the United Nations system and in our peacekeeping operations.

The coming year will be crucial for our shared future. I want the men and women of the world to be part of it. Too often, Governments and international institutions like ours are seen as places to talk, not to listen. I want the United Nations to listen. In our seventy-fifth anniversary year, I want to give as many people as possible the opportunity to have a conversation with the United Nations where they can share their hopes and fears, learn from their experiences and generate new ideas about the future we want and the United Nations we need. We are launching surveys and exchanges around the world to do just that, and we are giving priority to the voices of young people. Together, we must listen, and together, we must act. On this seventy-fifth anniversary, let us take the tough and necessary decisions to ensure a peaceful future for all.

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

As mentioned earlier, I will now suspend the meeting for an informal meeting for a question-and-answer segment. The formal meeting will then resume for delegations to deliver statements under agenda item 110.

The meeting was suspended at 10.30 a.m. and resumed at 12.40 p.m.

Mr. Richardson (Saint Lucia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/74/1). We wish to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this important meeting. We also thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report, which reflects the advances made during the previous year. We remain ever mindful of the continued challenges faced

by the international community, addressed through the myriad agenda items before the five principal organs of the United Nations.

We welcome and reaffirm our support for the Secretary-General's work on reforming the United Nations system and for the priorities that he has outlined. We recognize that many of the global challenges faced by the peoples of our planet cannot be successfully addressed by any single country or group of countries but must be tackled collectively by all States and relevant actors within the international community. Such cooperative action, with accountability for the implementation of the agreed mandates, is the very essence of the United Nations we want. That is uppermost in the collective consciousness of CARICOM member States as we approach the seminal seventy-fifth anniversary of the institution and as we devise strategies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for our region.

One of the critical issues identified in the Secretary-General's report is that of climate change and the existential challenges that it creates for many across the globe. In that connection, attention must be paid to the alarming warning contained in the report that

“[t]he world is far off track to reach the Paris Agreement targets, careening towards an increase of 3-5°C in global temperatures compared with pre-industrial levels, which is potentially catastrophic for any development gains achieved thus far” (*A/74/1, para. 50*).

That rate of increase would surely be catastrophic to millions around the world in developing and developed countries alike.

CARICOM is extremely supportive of the continued and consistent calls by the Secretary-General for concerted global action to reverse the changing climatic conditions as a matter of urgency. The report's sobering assessment clearly sets out the magnitude of the climate crisis in pointing out that

“[c]limate change-related disasters affect an average of 350 million people every year, and every day global warming is reversing hard-won development gains and exacerbating poverty”. (*A/74/1, para. 2*)

It is therefore evident that global challenges to achieving the SDGs are not unrelated to the effects of climate change, as witnessed by massive floods in Asia, contrasting droughts in Africa and more

powerful hurricanes and typhoons in the Caribbean and the Pacific, as well as the overall changing climatic conditions, affecting the livelihoods of people across the globe.

CARICOM States have consistently joined with other small island developing States (SIDS) in meeting with the full force and determination that our nations can muster in order to tackle the challenges to sustainability amid the climate crisis and to pledge our continued support for a meaningful global partnership to combat the effects of such devastating climatic conditions in their broadest dimensions. To that end, most recently, at the fortieth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM, held in Saint Lucia last July, the Heads of Government reiterated their strong commitment to the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, with particular emphasis on Goal 14, regarding the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources.

To advance the aims of the 2030 Agenda, CARICOM has taken note of the continued reforms under way within the United Nations system, as reported in the Secretary-General's report, in order to meet current and emerging global challenges through major institutional reforms of the Organization, designed to strengthen the United Nations system through new management practices and new capacities. CARICOM recognizes that such reforms are critical to the full and effective implementation of the global development mandates adopted by Member States, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the New Urban Agenda. Equally urgent are the mandates contained in the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 and the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024.

CARICOM notes the fact that the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism is omitted from the list of mandates contained in the Secretary-General's report. CARICOM wishes to emphasize that this core issue of decolonization remains the unfinished business of the United Nations in the Caribbean and other regions of the world, under Chapter 11 of the

Charter of the United Nations, and efforts to implement the contemporary decolonization mandate must be stepped up.

Steps such as the Katowice rulebook for implementing the Paris Agreement on Climate Change to assist Member States in reporting and verifying emissions reductions is an important example of the kind of institutional support necessary to advance progress on United Nations mandates. The online Sendai Framework monitor, which allows Member States to track progress towards achieving the Sendai Framework targets for disaster risk reduction, is another positive sign. Such initiatives are essential if such mandates are to be effectively carried out. In moving forward, the implementation role of the United Nations system through similar institutional approaches remains a critical component for progress.

CARICOM takes note of the mandate given by Member States to reposition the United Nations development system to enhance support for the 2030 Agenda, as well as the prioritization of institutional partnerships with key development actors. In that connection, CARICOM looks forward to further strengthening its collaboration with the United Nations system around identified development issues, including sustainable development, climate change, security, human development, health care, education, non-communicable diseases, electoral management, crime and security, statistics, and agriculture and food security, among other areas. Such cooperation is consistent with the collaborative platform within the relevant resolutions on cooperation between CARICOM and the United Nations.

CARICOM member States regard a strong United Nations as vital to upholding such principles, reflected as they are in the United Nations Charter itself, which governs relations among States. These are principles that we regard as sacrosanct. It is within that context, therefore, that we have carefully reviewed the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, and we stand ready to work collaboratively with all Member States and all United Nations bodies in order to achieve the goals that we have collectively set for the future.

Mr. Kpayedo (Togo) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of African States. This statement is aligned with the remarks to be

made by the Permanent Representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China (see A/74/PV.55).

The African Group congratulates the Secretary-General on the work he has done and the progress made to date and takes note of his priorities for 2020. The Group also takes notes of the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, contained in document A/74/1, and reiterates its support for the various reforms and innovative initiatives undertaken by the Organization under his leadership.

We note in the report that, despite some progress, we still face many challenges, as demonstrated by the international situation, which is strongly marked by growing insecurity, the rise in extremism, global inequalities and other development-related challenges. That situation raises the question as to the role of the United Nations as the main guarantor of multilateralism. The African Group would like to highlight several issues that are of particular importance to African countries. We hope that, together, we can take concrete and ambitious measures to address them collectively.

First, the African Group wishes to reiterate its commitment to strengthening multilateralism, which is the only way to resolve the problems related to our collective global challenges. We welcome the ongoing reforms of the Organization to make it more suited to the current and increasingly complex challenges, which include climate change, armed conflicts, violent extremism, terrorism, global inequalities, economic stagnation and resource scarcity and degradation. For the African Group, the United Nations is the only and best-placed organization to deal with all such scourges, which continue to threaten the modest achievements in fostering development and stability and undermine our capacity to make further progress in the future. Tackling those challenges requires ensuring the meaningful participation and contribution of all with a view to forging a genuine partnership.

Secondly, sustainable development is an absolute priority for the African Group. Sustainable development is the only way to address poverty, underdevelopment and environmental degradation, as well as insecurity. The year 2020 is key to starting the decade of action before we reach the 2030 deadline. The African Group is pleased to note that the reform announced by the Secretary-General is becoming a reality, particularly with regard to the United Nations development system reform, which will be critical to accelerating efforts

towards the implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We note that, regarding the development pillar, the repositioning of the United Nations development system is moving forward thanks to the establishment of a new generation of country teams and resident coordinators, which can facilitate the implementation of the SDGs. Decentralization is increasingly seen at the level of the management pillar through the creation of new management structures, while the prevention approach is gaining ground in terms of conflict resolution within the peace and security pillar. The African Group agrees that such reforms can succeed only if we, Member States, commit to cooperating and to acting together through effective collaboration, as the Secretary-General rightly highlighted in his report. He can count on the support of the African Group in implementing such reforms.

Thirdly, the African Group is deeply concerned about the impact of climate change on African countries despite the continent's small contribution to that phenomenon. African countries continue to face significant and disproportionate impacts from climate change, particularly desertification, drought, agricultural uncertainty and a higher incidence of extreme weather events. In addition, climate change contributes to conflict and insecurity and threatens the ability of African countries to pursue sustainable development and to eradicate poverty.

We call on the Secretary-General to make climate action one of his top priorities. We look forward to the establishment of effective follow-up mechanisms following the initiatives launched at the Climate Action Summit, particularly those that benefit Africa. The biodiversity summit and the United Nations oceans conference that will take place in 2020 are key dates, where we can capitalize on efforts made and further raise our ambitions.

Fourthly, the African Group welcomes the fact that approximately \$109 million of the budget has been allocated to activities in Africa. We believe that efforts to enhance the partnership framework between the United Nations and the African Union deserve to be supported and strengthened. That is why we welcome the alignment of global economic policies and financial systems with Africa's main development programmes.

In that regard, the African Group would like to recall the roles of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the Office of the Special Adviser on

Africa. The Group believes that those two institutions can play a stronger and more effective role in better monitoring the commitments to Africa's development by the United Nations system and development partners.

In conclusion, the Group reiterates its support to the Secretary-General for the successful follow-up of the reforms he has undertaken. We express our fervent wish that even more productive cooperation between the United Nations and Africa becomes a reality.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and my own country, Norway. We welcome the new format of today's debate. It is positive in terms of both efficiency and the relevance of our discussions.

I also wish to convey our gratitude to the Secretary-General for outlining and engaging with Member States on priorities for 2020. He can count on the full support of the Nordic countries. I would also like to thank him for summarizing the vast range of activities and challenges in the report on the work of the Organization (A/74/1). It is a solid demonstration of the continued relevance and far-reaching work of the United Nations.

As Nordic countries, we firmly believe that we have everything to gain from a rules-based international order where international law, including human rights law, is upheld. Such an order has the United Nations at its core. We will continue to play our part. The Secretary-General has outlined what is at stake if we do not. Without effective multilateralism, we will not achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development or solve challenges such as climate change, marine pollution, loss of biodiversity, irregular migration and new security threats. That is why the Nordic countries are unwavering in their support to the United Nations. We see that as an investment in the United Nations and in multilateralism.

We remain concerned that last year, the United Nations faced a severe liquidity crisis. It affected the Organization's daily operations negatively and has been a source of serious concern for United Nations staff and Member States. That underlines the importance of countries meeting their financial obligations. We encourage all to pay in full, on time and without conditions.

The Nordic countries are steadfast supporters of the Secretary-General's leadership on United Nations

reform and we welcome the focus on that aspect in the report. As we enter the decade of action, we need strong and efficient United Nations country teams to assist countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda. We know that real impact will require a culture of change at all levels. We have agreed on ambitious reforms. We now need to see their implementation at the country level. We must hear from stakeholders about what has worked and what has not and learn from their experiences, particularly with regard to how the reforms have strengthened linkages between peacebuilding, humanitarian and development efforts, as we move forward.

Along with highlighting the importance of the normative role of the United Nations and of leaving no one behind, United Nations engagement should contribute to reducing inequalities and promoting human rights and international norms and standards. Gender equality and the full enjoyment of human rights by women and girls has a multiplier effect towards achieving sustained and inclusive growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development. On that note, we also commend the Secretary-General's efforts towards, and commitment to, gender equality in the United Nations system.

For 2020 and beyond, we could not agree more with the sentiments expressed by the Secretary-General with regard to breaking silos and bringing the pillars of the United Nations work together. For my part, as President of the Economic and Social Council, I have been actively engaged with other bodies, from the Security Council to the Peace Building Commission and the Human Rights Council. Regular interaction between the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Economic and Social Council is also increasingly important now more than ever with new common mandates from the General Assembly, such as the Youth Plenary and the meeting on least developed countries.

I highly value our joint effort to implement the decade of action and delivery. We know that progress on achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development rests in no small part on our ability to mobilize resources. That is why financing for development is front and centre in the presidency of the Economic and Social Council. More also needs to be

done for the United Nations to work better with civil society and the business sector. Those relationships will be vital to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The Nordic countries strongly support the Secretary-General's emphasis on prevention, mediation and peacemaking. We stress that United Nations peacekeeping must remain an adequate and relevant instrument in the maintenance of international peace and security. Efforts must be made to implement the Action for Peacekeeping initiative on the ground. We look forward to the upcoming review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture and hope that it will contribute to further strengthening the United Nations role and capacities in preventing conflict and in building and sustaining peace.

For the Nordic countries, it is indisputable that United Nations system-wide coherence must prioritize human rights. In that respect, we echo the concerns of the Secretary-General that there are

“worrying trends of shrinking democratic and civic space, often affecting human rights defenders, health workers and journalists first” (A/74/1, para. 4).

There are clear links between lack of respect for human rights and other challenges facing the international community. If we fail in our obligation to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, we are unlikely to succeed in our efforts to promote sustainable development and peace. We would like to see a greater focus on that aspect in 2020.

The Secretary-General convened us last year to deliver plans, not speeches, for concrete climate action. Those plans now need to be realized. We urge the Secretary-General to keep political pressure on us all ahead of the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We have touched on only a few issues today, but there are so many others covered in the report and by the Secretary-General this morning. As we celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations this year, members may rest assured that the Nordic countries stand ready to be consistent partners for a strong United Nations and to support the Secretary-General in all areas and efforts.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.