



General Assembly

Seventy-fourth session

57th plenary meeting
Friday, 31 January 2020, 11 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Muhammad-Bande (Nigeria)

The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said of the Sultanate of Oman

The President: It is my sad duty to pay tribute to the memory of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said of the Sultanate of Oman, who passed away on 10 January. On behalf of the General Assembly, I request the representative of Oman to convey our condolences to the Government and the people of Oman and to the bereaved family of His Majesty.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I extend my deepest condolences to the family of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, as well as the Government and the people of Oman, at this difficult time. I convey my sympathies to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik.

Sultan Qaboos will be remembered for his fundamental role in the modernization and industrialization of the Sultanate of Oman. His Majesty's foresight extended to what certainly affected every facet of the life of Oman, particularly education. Recognizing that education has the potential to lift the whole of society, Sultan Qaboos created top quality schools and universities, which enabled young people to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to contribute to the development of Omani society.

His Majesty was a progressive leader on climate action, establishing the Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation in 1991. As we begin the decade of action for the delivery of sustainable development with a focus on nature, I hope that all

Member States will honour the Sultan by emulating his efforts to promote the protection of our planet.

We will remember Sultan Qaboos as a noble advocate for tolerance and peace. His promotion of religious tolerance ensured that communities in Oman coexist in peace and harmony. Sultan Qaboos demonstrated courage and statesmanship throughout his engagement with leaders in the Middle East and prioritized peace above all.

As we commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, Sultan Qaboos will be remembered as a peacemaker committed to the founding ideals of this Organization. May His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said rest in peace.

I now invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

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

The Secretary-General: Let me begin by extending my profound condolences to the royal family, the Government and the people of Oman on the passing of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said.

Sultan Qaboos led Oman for nearly half a century and transformed it into the remarkable country that it is today. Throughout his reign, His Majesty earned the respect of his people and those far beyond. He

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prioritized cooperation and multilateralism and led Oman to join the United Nations, the League of Arab States and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

With leadership and commitment, His Majesty worked to shape Oman as an active and responsible member of the international family. Under his watch, Oman remained largely immune from the tensions and troubles of the region. Indeed, His Majesty was well regarded for spreading messages of peace, understanding and coexistence far beyond his country's borders. Oman has consistently played a critical role in ensuring lines of communication among disputing parties.

Within his beloved country, His Majesty's vision for Oman saw levels of education for women and men rise exponentially, with a manifold increase in schools, hospitals, roads and much other infrastructure. Today, we remember and pay homage to the many roads that he built — the road of dialogue, the road of understanding, the road of peace.

I extend my best wishes to Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, who, while grieving the death of his cousin, has taken over the leadership of Oman. I have every hope that Oman's enduring contributions to regional and international diplomacy will continue, building on the legacy of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos.

The United Nations remains steadfast in supporting Oman's continued efforts to promote peace and stability in the region. In this difficult time, I once again offer my deepest condolences on this heavy loss to the people of Oman, the region and far beyond.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Togo, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Kpayedo (Togo) (spoke in French): At the outset, the Group of African States would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this 57th plenary meeting of the General Assembly, which enables us to pay a heartfelt and well-deserved tribute to the Sultan of Oman, His Majesty Qaboos Bin Said, who passed away on 10 January.

At this time of great sadness for the people of Oman, who mourn their great sovereign and for whom this date will be forever marked indelibly, the African Group, through my words, would like to share their grief and pay tribute to the memory of the renowned departed, who was not only a guardian of the modern

history of Oman but also an exemplary figure on the international stage.

Sultan Qaboos was an enlightened, visionary leader, deeply committed to the prosperity of his country and the well-being of his people. Those traits enabled him to successfully set his country on the path of development and progress. Oman's achievements on all fronts over the past half-century speak for themselves in that regard, as the recent Human Development Report, issued in 2019, rightly notes, ranking Oman among the countries with the highest standard of living in the Middle East.

Oman's great openness to the world is also to be credited to Sultan Qaboos, who, understanding early on that friendship and cooperation among peoples and nations were the key path to their development, made his country, which is on the edge of the Arabian peninsula, a bridge between the Arab, Western and African worlds.

For its part, Africa is grateful to him in many respects, since it was under his reign that links between Oman and most African countries were forged and strengthened over time thanks to his strong policy of openness. As a symbol of that special relationship between Oman and Africa under the leadership of the Sultan, we recall the international conferences between Oman and the countries of the Horn of Africa, the fifth of which was held in 2016. Also to his credit, it should be recalled that Oman funded the construction of a number of schools, hospitals and cultural centres in various parts of Africa during his reign.

The great builder of a stable, modern and prosperous country, the Sultan was also a major architect of peace among nations, a role that he played well through his commitment to neutrality in world affairs. He fostered dialogue and openness, cardinal values that guided his action throughout his life and made him a mediator who was listened to and respected, not only in the Near and Middle East, but in other parts of the world.

All those actions earned him international recognition, such as the International Peace Award in 1998, the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding in 2004 and the Peace Prize of the Russian International Association in 2007. In other words, the illustrious departed was a leading figure on the international scene who has left behind an immeasurable legacy that deserves to be perpetuated.

The African Group would like here to solemnly convey its deepest condolences to the Government of Oman and to the family of the sovereign, and its deepest sympathy to the brotherly people of Oman in their grief. May they find the strength to endure the great emptiness that he leaves behind and may the thousand lights of his memory continue to illuminate all those who knew and loved him.

May the Almighty and Merciful receive him in His kingdom and grant him peace and eternal rest.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Brunei Darussalam, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Ms. Sulaiman (Brunei Darussalam): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Group of Asia-Pacific States to pay tribute to and honour the memory of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said of the Sultanate of Oman at this gathering of the General Assembly. We would like to extend our heartfelt condolences to the Government and the people of the Sultanate of Oman on the passing of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos.

His Majesty's reign spanned almost five decades, making him the longest-serving Arab leader. In that time, he led his country with great wisdom and vision. His Majesty guided Oman through difficult challenges and laid the foundations for the modernization of the country, developing its infrastructure, education and health-care systems and institutional frameworks. His lifelong devotion and efforts brought about remarkable social and economic progress that transformed the Sultanate into one of the most stable and prosperous countries in the Middle East, while preserving Oman's rich national heritage and culture.

In the international arena, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos was well respected for his enduring advocacy for peace, cooperation and mutual understanding. He steered Oman along a path of neutrality and non-alignment as a friend to all and enemy to none. His foreign policies cemented the Sultanate's role as a trusted mediator and bridge-builder in the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The loss of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos is felt not only by the people of Oman, but across the region and world at large. Once again, on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group, we offer our deepest sympathies to the members of the royal family, the Government and the people of

the Sultanate of Oman, as we mourn the passing of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos.

May Allah bless the soul of the late Sultan and receive him among His most loved ones.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): I am taking the floor on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

It is with profound sadness that we learned of the passing of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said of the Sultanate of Oman. Today we pay tribute to a man of integrity, vision and wisdom who devoted his entire life to serving his country and his people, and whose leadership brought peace and prosperity to the Sultanate of Oman. A strong proponent of education, science and modernization, his resolute efforts paved the way for the well-being and development of current and future generations of Omanis.

Sultan Qaboos Bin Said's lifelong contributions to international affairs and support for dialogue processes within the region and beyond were critical to building trust and averting crisis in times of turmoil. He described his foreign policy as

“defined with clarity, a hand building from within, and a hand offered in goodness, giving, continued participation in the world's events and development”.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said will be remembered as a great leader and genuine statesman. On behalf of the members of the Group of Eastern European States, I express our deepest condolences to the royal family, the Government and people of the Sultanate of Oman.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Jamaica, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Ms. Bailey (Jamaica): I have the honour, on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States to pay tribute to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, who passed away on 10 January. It was with sadness that we received the news of the passing of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said. The region has lost a leader who is revered as the father of the Omani renaissance and who upheld a policy of peaceful coexistence with

all nations. He leaves a profound legacy, not only in Oman but across the region.

When his Majesty ascended to the throne in 1970, Oman was isolated from much of the world and almost totally lacking in modern infrastructure and services. Life expectancy was around 50 years and there were just over six miles of paved roads, three public schools and minimal medical care. Today, highways, public utilities, high-speed Internet and world-class sports and cultural centres attest to the success of his modernization programme. Life expectancy exceeds 77 years and literacy is estimated at 96 per cent of the adult population.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos advocated greater gender equality by appointing women to positions of power and created employment opportunities for all, including equal pay for equal work, in both the private and public sectors. Beyond all that, the most enduring legacy of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos will likely be his foreign policy. Oman practices a policy of moderation and dialogue in international affairs and the Sultanate has persistently pursued a path of independence and non-alignment. As such, in an area wracked by warfare and division, there are no Omani boots on the ground outside the borders of the Sultanate.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, I express our deepest condolences to the Government and the people of Oman. May His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said rest in peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Denmark, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Hermann (Denmark): It is an honour and privilege to pay tribute to and commemorate His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, Sultan of Oman, on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

It with great sadness that on 11 January, we learned about the death of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. I would like to express our deepest condolences and sympathies to his family, the Government of Oman and the Omani people for this great loss. During almost 50 years of leadership, His Majesty transformed the Sultanate of Oman into a modern, prosperous nation through investments in human development and the standard of living of the Omani people. His Majesty's approach

to building bridges with external partners shaped a foreign policy focused on fostering peace and stability, as well as promoting the voice of reason throughout the region. His passing is a loss not only to the Sultanate of Oman, but also to the region and beyond.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the newly appointed Sultan of Oman, His Majesty Haitham Bin Tarik, and extend our warmest and best wishes to him moving forward.

On behalf of the Group of Western European and other States, please allow me to salute the memory of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said. His loss will be mourned for years to come.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Ms. Norman-Chalet (United States of America): It is an honour to join with so many others today in paying tribute to one of the world's great leaders of the past 50 years, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said. He will be missed not only by the people of Oman, but also by his friends and admirers the world over, including in the United States.

When the Sultan ascended the throne of Oman in July 1970, his country, the region and the world were very different places than they are now. His reign spanned nine United States Presidents, multiple regional crises and global technological changes that no one could have imagined. Through those changes, both welcome and challenging, the hallmarks of his reign were wisdom and vision.

Relying on those virtues, he steered Oman toward stability and prosperity, ensuring a brighter, more hopeful future for his people. President Trump captured that sentiment in his condolence statement, noting that,

“[a]s the longest-serving leader in the Middle East, Sultan Qaboos brought peace and prosperity to his country and was a friend to all”.

The Sultan's steadfast leadership was characterized by sincerity, generosity, tolerance and a deep love for his country. The United States thanks him in particular for having helped to secure the safe passage of United States Embassy personnel from Yemen during the onset of the conflict there.

Sultan Qaboos was the embodiment of a modern statesman, demonstrating unflagging commitment to

dialogue and to promoting peaceful engagement across the troubled region in which Oman and its neighbours exist. He recognized the need to listen to all voices, and he carried the message of diplomatic dialogue to any who would listen. He was frequently the means by which countries that would not talk to each other could talk. The world must always be grateful for the Sultan's leadership in that regard.

But he was not just an international leader. He was also a great Omani leader who loved his country and his people and who worked every day to ensure they had the resources needed to flourish. When the Sultan ascended the throne, Oman was wracked with conflict and suffering economically. Sultan Qaboos re-established order and undertook one of the most impressive development campaigns in recent memory, building schools, hospitals and modern infrastructure — the foundations for even greater future prosperity.

The execution of his vision was so successful that, in 2010, the United Nations Development Programme ranked Oman as the most improved nation in the world in terms of development during the preceding 40 years. Success of that nature is not possible without capable, wise, and visionary leadership — the kind of leadership modelled by Sultan Qaboos, to which each of us in this Hall should aspire.

The United States mourns with the people of Oman, many of whom have lost the only leader they ever knew, and we honour the Sultan's legacy, remaining committed to our strong partnership and friendship with Oman.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

Mr. Sharif (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

Today, we share in the deep sorrow of the Government and the people of the Sultanate of Oman following the passing of His Majesty late Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, who brought a renaissance to his sisterly country. This leader has been recognized for his wisdom, his faithfulness and his honourable historic positions in service of his country and his nation until the last day of his life. In losing him, the Arab and Islamic nations and even all humankind, as well as all who love Oman and its people, have lost a symbol of faithfulness and wisdom and a loving man.

The deceased was an exceptional leader and a wise man in the largest sense of the word, and he was also a man of principle, ideals and great historical significance.

We express our sincere condolences on the loss of a wise Arab leader whose name was associated with the revival of his people. He established a modern State and good governance, promoting the national Omani identity while addressing conflicts facing the country. He opened the doors of Oman to the outside world, which brought modernism, progress and openness to his country. Consequently, he nurtured generations of Omani men and women who are educated and competent and have a sense of leadership. The Sultanate of Oman and the Arab nation have lost a man of peace and wisdom whose name is imprinted in our hearts and those of the Omani people, the region and the world.

When we talk about His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, we talk about a homeland embodied in a man who was more than just a passing ruler in history. He was the man who launched one of the most important renaissance periods in the Arab Gulf region during the twentieth century and the first two decades of the current century. This leader brought modernism and development to the Sultanate of Oman. He also sought human development and construction, ensuring that the Sultanate became a byword for progress, development and prosperity during his reign.

Sultan Qaboos attached great importance to the development of political structures in the Sultanate, enabling its citizens to take part in managing the country's affairs. During his reign, the Sultanate was characterized by political stability, security and social development, as well as educational progress and great economic recovery. All this, along with prosperity and the development of its people, is positively reflected in the Sultanate.

Sultan Qaboos paid great attention to the participation of women in the glorious renaissance of his country and provided them with education, training and employment. He supported their role and status in society and stressed the need for them to participate in the various fields of development. He enacted rules and laws that ensure the rights of women and promote their expertise and skills in order to build Oman and uplift its significance. He also devoted 17 October of every year to Omani women in order to highlight their achievements in the service of their society during

the previous year, while demonstrating their role and stature.

In paying tribute to the memory of Sultan Qaboos, we should recall his great and crucial role in strengthening the pillars of the League of Arab States. Until the end of his days, he sought to bring Arab brothers closer together. He also took part in mediation among the States of the region in order to resolve their various crises. Sultan Qaboos has left us after having laid down the essential bases for the renaissance of the Sultanate while ensuring its prosperity and stability. The Sultan's legacy and that of his likes do not end with their death. Their wisdom, views and contributions will remain guiding values. The late Sultan Qaboos will always be in the hearts of his people because of his great achievements and the political approach that he established.

As we pay tribute to the deceased, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, who constitutes a loss for the Arab nation, we congratulate His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, the Sultan of Oman, asking God Almighty to make him successful in the fulfilment of his predecessor's march as he continues to build a safe and prosperous Oman, while working to promote the foundations of Arab unity and contributing to the achievement of peace and prosperity in the region. We also wish the dear Omani people further progress and prosperity under his wise leadership.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Oman.

Mr. Al Hassan (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman, I would like at the outset to express our most sincere thanks and gratitude for the generous statements delivered in tribute to the memory of the deceased, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, may God rest his soul in peace.

Omanis received with great sorrow and deep regret the news of the passing of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, who was called to God's side on Friday, 10 January 2020. Today, we gather in this prestigious international Organization to pay tribute to the memory of the leader of Oman and the founder of its modern renaissance — a leader who spent 50 years of giving, sacrifice and tireless work to build Oman and raise bridges of cooperation with all States and all peoples. Indeed, Sultan Qaboos spent 50 years in building as he lived among his people while undertaking annual

tours across the four corners of the country, from north to south and from east to west, meeting his people and listening to their demands and needs, which were directly addressed on the ground. He loved his people and they loved him in return. They were united behind him, free of divisions and discord.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has left us, but he has bequeathed an eternal legacy to his compatriots. His name will forever be etched in their hearts because of what he achieved for them, namely, sustainable development focused on the Omani people. It is an honour for me to quote his successor, His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, in his first address after taking office:

“No speech can do justice to the late Sultan Qaboos Bin Said or list all his accomplishments and what he built for his country. He founded a modern State acknowledged by all. He established a renaissance based on a solid foundation underpinned by laws and legislations that have preserved Oman and will ensure its prosperous future. He also built a comprehensive infrastructure and laid the foundation for a social and economic system based on justice, sustainable development, increased production and the diversification of sources of income, leading to further improvement in the living standards of Omani citizens. Furthermore, he established stable and sustainable mechanisms to ensure the availability of education in all specialties.”

In the life of peoples and nations, there are always historic leaders who, with great wisdom and continuous sacrifices, shoulder the responsibility of advancing their countries through critical phases of their histories. There is no doubt that His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said is among those eminent historic leaders. We pray to God Almighty to have mercy upon him and to give him his merited place in paradise as a reward for his accomplishments on behalf of his people, nation and the world and for the legacy he has bequeathed to his homeland, which will forever be etched in history and alive in the memories of future generations of Omanis.

The date of 23 July 1970 marked the beginning of a new era for Oman. The Sultanate will continue its blessed renaissance under His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, may God preserve and protect him, who has stressed that the Sultanate will indeed pursue the same approach and policies instituted by the late Sultan Qaboos Bin Said. The Sultanate will continue to play

its role as an active Member of the United Nations. Our country, the Sultanate of Oman, will remain a historical citadel, a country of security and safety and a beacon of peace. It will keep to the right path of supporting security and stability, while maintaining a foreign policy based on mutual respect, good-neighbourly relations, non-interference in the domestic affairs of other States and cooperation, leading to the good and the righteous.

In conclusion, I reiterate my thanks to the General Assembly for holding this meeting to pay tribute to the memory of the Sultan of Oman. We stress our support for the Organization in the maintenance of international peace and security. We also reiterate our trust in Secretary-General António Guterres and his unwavering efforts to advance the Organization and its institutions in order to meet the aspirations of all Member States and the peoples of the world.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.