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Note by the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to circulate, pursuant to decision 74/562 of 22 July 2020, the present compilation document of the statements delivered by Heads of State or other dignitaries by means of pre-recorded statements during the general debate and submitted to the President no later than the day on which the pre-recorded statement is played in the Assembly Hall.

The statements contained in the present document were delivered on the afternoon of Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 13th meeting of the General Assembly (see A/75/PV.13). Document A/75/592 and its addenda 1 through 11 contain the statements delivered in the 4th through the 15th meetings of the General Assembly (A/75/PV.4-A/75/PV.15).

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Saint Kitts and Nevis (see also A/75/PV.13, annex I)**Address by Mr. Timothy S. Harris, Prime Minister and Minister for Sustainable Development, National Security, People Empowerment and Constituency Empowerment of Saint Kitts and Nevis**

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 13th meeting of the General Assembly

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General, Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen a pleasant good afternoon.

Mr. President let me on behalf of the Government and people of St. Kitts and Nevis congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. Our virtual convocation this year — the 75th anniversary of the United Nations — is testimony to the truly unusual times in which we live.

I must also seize the opportunity to pay tribute to the Secretary General, Mr. Antonio Guterres for his leadership during this difficult period of COVID-19 pandemic. The theme of this debate is rather fitting for such a time like this! We must have faith in multilateralism and international cooperation if we are to achieve the sustainable development goals by 2030 and the stronger, safer future, we all want to see.

Seventy-five years ago at the twilight of the Second World War, the world came together at another inflection point and pledged that, “We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equality of rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.”

Seventy-five years after, these objectives are still relevant and laudable. They remain a work in progress. This moment of global reckoning, a moment in which approximately 1 million of our brothers, sisters, friends, colleagues, neighbours and parents have perished to a punishing pandemic, demands a renewal of purpose and promise. That purpose must be fidelity to multilateralism and faith in international cooperation if we are to breathe new life into the United Nations charter while also achieving the sustainable development goals, halting climate change and pivoting to the stronger and safer future we all want to see — guided by the significant lessons of the distant and recent past.

Mr. President,

The year 2020 has taught us as a people, nation and indeed an interconnected world that the time for mutual reliance is upon us and that we need each other now more than ever if we are to rebuild and strengthen the socio-economic foundations laid bare from this two-fanged crisis. The time is now. We must show up! We must speak up! We must Share! We must Listen! We must Act and surely, we must Lead!

Mr. President,

Multilateral Action

We are living in unprecedented times. The novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, has gripped the world like we have never seen before, destabilizing economies, overwhelming many healthcare sectors and causing incalculable pain and suffering on millions of people worldwide.

We commend the international community that has bound together in global solidarity to defeat the pandemic. I congratulate the World Health Organisation for its stewardship of the global response to fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. We as CARICOM states reaffirm our support for the WHO framework "Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A). This global collaborative framework provides a solid global response to defeat the pandemic by the rapid development, scale up and equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics under pinned by the strengthening of our health systems. Instead of nationalism we need global cooperation in the fight to defeat COVID-19.

We commend the all of society approach that has worked so very well in the context of St Kitts and Nevis. Every stakeholder group has played their role in combating COVID-19 here. The World needs all Nations large and small to work together for mutual success.

St. Kitts and Nevis and COVID-19 Pandemic

St. Kitts and Nevis has been successful in containing the spread of the COVID-19 within its borders. Our twin island Federation has been fortunate to record a low infection rate, with zero deaths and have an R-value below 1. We have a success story to tell the World.

The implementation of a national response mechanism, comprising of the establishment of a national emergency coordination committee, closure of our borders to nonessential travel, the imposition of restrictions on the physical movement of people within our borders, as well as the promotion of protective wear and a robust public awareness campaign all played an exceptional role in our considerable success.

COVID-19 reminds us that our fight to eliminate non communicable diseases must be stepped up. People living with NCDs are at higher risk of contracting COVID-19 and are amongst the most affected by the disease. Climate Change, NCDs and COVID-19 are inter-linked symptoms that something is awry with planet earth.

Mr. President,

Economic impact

The novel coronavirus disease has disrupted international travel and tourism, global supply chains, industrial and commercial operations and created widespread unemployment. This unprecedented situation will inevitably stymie our chances of achieving the sustainable development goals.

Financing for Development

Multilateral assistance is essential for countries such as ours when faced with global challenges. Our fiscal resources are limited and have been severely tested in this particular instance. Now, the call for concessional financing is louder and stronger than ever before. Advanced countries and the international financial institutions

must respond positively to the call for concessional resources if we are to reshape our economies for a post-COVID-19 world, and return to the path to sustainable growth and development.

Given our economic and environmental vulnerabilities as a small island developing state, we are likely to be confronted with the multiplier effect of the pandemic, particularly as we brace for the most intense segment of the Hurricane Season.

Climate Change

Mr. President,

St Kitts and Nevis is the smallest independent nation in the western hemisphere and the impact of climate change weighs heavily on our daily lives. At this point in time, we are in the most active part of the hurricane season at the mercy of mother nature and for this reason climate change will always be high on our agenda. Climate change for us is not something to be postponed for tomorrow. It must be addressed like yesterday. We must regain the momentum and continue our work to consolidate the gains made.

High-level Summit on Biodiversity

Mr. President,

Earlier this month the UN warned that countries are set to miss critical targets to preserve and protect earth's biodiversity. This requires immediate and drastic action.

We are therefore pleased to advocate for Sustainable Development Goal 15, which calls for us to protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. I look forward to joining my SIDS colleagues at the High-level Summit on Biodiversity to champion the cause for us to protect our biodiversity not just on land but on our high seas.

For St Kitts and Nevis, the ocean is our lifeblood. Let us protect it, to preserve a stronger and safer future.

Food Security

The Food Systems Summit to be held next year is timely, since our current inadequacies, as exposed by the pandemic, demand a vigorous examination of our strategies for food production and nutrition security. I am particularly encouraged by the positive response of Kittitians and Nevisians in answering the call of my Government to strengthen our food security by scaling up our investments in agriculture and fisheries.

25th Anniversary of Fourth World Conference on Women

Mr. President,

As we continue to hail the contribution of women to the socio economic landscape of our country and the world at large, we are pleased to join in the commemoration of the 25th Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women next week. Earlier this year, we commenced our examination of the national implementation of the Beijing Declaration. The findings revealed that our Federation has much to celebrate regarding the advancement of women over the past 25 years; but there is still much ground yet to be covered, and many trails yet to be blazed.

Through the implementation of our National Gender Policy and other legislation and focused attention on Beijing Declaration's 12th Action Point — The Girl Child, we will continue to prioritise our pursuit of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Global Health Partnerships

Mr. President,

St Kitts and Nevis once again renews its call for Taiwan's inclusion in this international fraternity of Nations. The Republic of China (Taiwan) remains a valuable partner for peace, prosperity and development with the fullest respect for international law. Taiwan has stayed true to its longstanding traditions and has remained a true partner in its fight against COVID-19. We have seen first-hand Taiwan's exemplary management of the pandemic within its own borders and we have been impressed by its willingness to help vulnerable states around the world. Taiwan has assisted many states in combatting this unprecedented health pandemic by sending more than 51 Million surgical masks as well as other medical equipment to more than 80 countries. In our view, the international community has been deprived of the gift of true partnership offered by the 23.5 million people of Taiwan. My hope is that Taiwan can be included in the UN system, particularly the WHO — its meetings, mechanisms and activities thereby improving the global response and resources available to address transboundary crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The exclusion of Taiwan — its experience, expertise and resources, leaves a partial vacuum in the global response to COVID-19. The World Health Organisation can only benefit from the inclusion of such a worthy member. Equally, the existence of the antiquated embargo against Cuba flies against the spirit of global partnerships which we desire in the future. At this time more than ever vulnerable Nations must be free to access Cuba's expertise in health, and a myriad of other areas of global concern.

Mr. President,

Conclusion

This has been a very difficult year of, but it also must be the year we can recommit to the United Nations and its ideals. We must through comprehensive reforms make the UN system fit for purpose. We will have to look beyond antiquated frameworks and look to new socio-economic models and rely on global cooperation to build a better world. Global threats to people and the planet are multiplying and the United Nations, in its 75th year, must be resilient and innovative to help in this crisis and future crises. Strengthening global solidarity and cooperation is paramount for the U.N. The UN creates the perfect environment to marry collective action and solidarity with multilateralism. We welcome the UN 2020 future possibilities report which provides a good guide on how governments can make certain changes to their economies now. However, there must be much more dialogue and commitment if we are to experience real change.

The gravity of the pandemic has been laid out in several United Nations resolutions on COVID-19 and while we take action on them all in the General Assembly Hall, let us remember and commit to what they all about, while remembering at the same time that we all rise on the same tide!

I thank you.

Saint Lucia (see also A/75/PV.13, annex II)

Address by Mr. Allen Michael Chastanet, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 13th meeting of the General Assembly

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It seems rarely a year goes by where the international order is not declared in crisis. These calls have swelled to a justifiable new crescendo this year with the multilateral order experiencing perhaps its gravest crisis since its origins seventy-five years ago.

Today, we leaders assemble through extraordinary means under extraordinary circumstances, with the legitimate question of whether this Assembly, has seen its best days or if by reason of the strength of our actions and convictions, we may endure to overcome today's incredible challenges.

Mr. President,

Saint Lucia looks forward to your wise and capable stewardship during this unprecedented 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly. We thank Professor Muhammed-Bande for his very able and astute leadership over the course of the last year. More than ever the world needs effective leadership and Saint Lucia is committed to working with the United Nations toward our common goals.

This year, possibly more than any point in our modern history, this Assembly is beset by global risks and threats that force us to consider deeply, the future we want and the United Nations we all need. This year's theme calls for the reaffirmation of our collective commitment to multilateralism, for us to continue to confront COVID-19 through effective multilateral action.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its dire consequences on world economies, financial markets and social and humanitarian destabilisation, have been emphasized by every leader who has come before me. However, it is worth restating that our current crisis demands urgent action.

Small Island Developing States, like Saint Lucia, have always been inherently susceptible to environmental, economic and financial shocks. Our unique circumstances and consequent vulnerabilities have left us exposed to the ravages of the twin crises of the pandemic and climate change. Every day, as leaders of SIDS, we struggle to safeguard our people from the pervasive erosion of our hard-fought developmental gains.

As the global community contends with the devastating impact of the pandemic, we must be honest with ourselves and acknowledge that the current challenges of SIDS is a symptom of a broader problem: the failure of our international institutions to keep pace with, and adapt to, the practical reality faced by SIDS.

We must acknowledge that the global economic architecture, created post Second World War, never considered Small Island Developing States. And despite the empathy and the understanding of the technocrats at the International Monetary

Fund, the World Bank and our own Caribbean Development Bank, as well as other IFIs, they remain constrained by their own inflexible governance structures.

For decades now, SIDS have been extremely vocal in highlighting the fact that this system has produced some of the most incredible paradoxes for our nations. They include the fact that:

- SIDS are the most indebted, yet we are the least likely to get debt relief or concessional financing.
- SIDS are the smallest producers of global goods and services, yet we are the most restricted by the rules of international trade.
- SIDS are the lowest contributors to terrorist financing or banking impropriety, yet we are the most constrained; placed on grey lists and black lists posted all over the world, undermining our reputations.
- SIDS are the smallest emitters of carbon, yet we are the most affected by climate change.

Mr. President, let me point out that all of these paradoxes are man made. As I have often said the solution to many of these problems simply requires the stroke of a pen. Our aspirations to build back better and advance our work to continue implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, are extremely bleak within the current international context. For years we have argued our case: the financial crisis, climate change, and the latest pandemic have provided the empirical evidence that reaffirmed the vulnerabilities of SIDS and inadequacy of the solutions in the current global architecture.

In recent years SIDS, backed by academic research have advocated for the establishment and use of a vulnerability index, already developed by the Commonwealth in 1989, as a more accurate determinant of eligibility for concessional development assistance. Yet nothing has changed. Our wealth is still being determined by per capita GDP, though we know now categorially that this is not an accurate measure. At meeting upon meeting, all we receive are platitudes and more talk. Meanwhile, the storms and hurricanes, the crises and the pandemics, keep coming regardless.

We are disproportionately asked to carry the burden of major shocks which are caused by actions outside of our control. With every additional shock we become more indebted and dependent and it will soon become impossible for us to survive within these fixed rules that are created without taking into account our exceptional circumstances. Unfortunately, the same obtains with the issue of Climate Change. For the SIDS, the Paris Agreement, though well intended, has just not delivered.

We understand that the world is changing and as noble of an ideal of eliminating poverty is, we must have greater aspirations of at least a minimum standard of living for all. I have said before and it is worth repeating: if a family is struggling to survive, if a mother does not know where her children's next meal is coming from, if parents don't have a means to put a roof over their family's head, how are they going to participate, or even care about the SDG Goals?

We cannot continue to attend meetings to discuss solutions within the current framework. We must first agree that the global economic development architecture has to change. New forms of measurement and criteria must be adopted that are going to allow SIDS the opportunity to help ourselves.

All we are asking for is a fair chance.

Unless, the “new normal” was always just a cliché? Or does it actually mean something? If we agree and accept that there is a new normal, then the criteria used before cannot apply. We are at a crossroads, a pivotal moment for a meaningful course correction. We must choose the difficult and uncomfortable road to finally re-engineer the international system, to enable and ensure fair, inclusive and relevant policies and solutions for all; or we will continue down the path which inevitably leads to the demise of SIDS.

Mr. President,

There is much that must be done to meet the test of this moment. Seventy-five years ago, it was not beyond human ingenuity to overcome the great challenges of the time to give birth to multilateralism. To come together to solve problems and advance a common prosperity. The leaders of the day understood that humanity could not survive the course it was on, and so it built this united assembly, our United Nations — to allow us to strive to collaborate rather than divide, to resolve conflicts, enforce international rules of behaviour and build habits of cooperation that would grow stronger over time. Underpinning all of this were the key values of tolerance and mutual respect.

The United Nations and the other multilateral processes and institutions born of that time, have over the decades made a difference in the world. From brokering peace, to educating children and eradicating disease, while weathering crises from within and without. But it is the considered view of my delegation that international institutions require profound structural shifts. Our collective commitment to multilateralism has to not only advocate for multilateral rules, but vigorously pursue change where change is needed. Or, as we have done in my island, challenged ourselves to build a new Saint Lucia, we must equally rise to the challenge and build a new world economic order, which addresses the SIDS and regains the confidence of nation’s in multilateralism.

Mr. President,

As we chart a new path forward as a global community it would be prudent to take with us the lessons learned when multilateralism and diplomacy have delivered a proven record of service to our people. Such cooperation and success cannot be taken for granted, particularly in our current difficult global context. Critical to these successes was the equal commitment of resources, a time when we were our brother and sister’s keeper. I take this opportunity to applaud the United Nations Development System for their active response to the pandemic, for listening to the specific needs of states and mobilising resources where possible. The support of the UN system is critical for the effective implementation of not only the SDGs but the Samoa Pathway.

I also wish to offer sincere gratitude and commendation to the countries who stepped up to the challenge, in the truest spirit of solidarity to assist states like my own, to cushion the pandemic’s blow to our socio-economic landscape. This support has been immeasurable. Some of the countries who offered support and continue to do so, themselves are grappling with a multilateral order that systematically stymies their development prospects. It is time to lift the economic embargo on the government and people of Cuba. Not only has it affected the people of Cuba but it has also affected the entire Caribbean region.

It is time to, once again, give states like Taiwan recognition so that they can meaningfully engage in global processes and share their best practices. Even as China and Taiwan have their own differences and while this is being addressed, Climate Change and the COVID-19 pandemic are stark reminders that Taiwan should not be left out of the discussions. Taiwan has its own elections, its own currency, controls its own airspace and has its own military force. A population of almost 24 million people is too many to be left off the table.

As we mark 75 years, the continued exclusion of Taiwan, calls into question the very principles the UN was established on. We must also recognize that as the world grapples with the COVID-19 pandemic Taiwan has demonstrated impressive leadership, not just by their own success with managing the spread, but by coming to the aid of nations such as Saint Lucia and many other countries to provide medical resources and technical advice. The pandemic which has touched every country is a potent reminder of the interconnectedness of human societies and more reason why in building our new world economic order, we must leave no one behind, no people, no country should be allowed to fall through the cracks.

Saint Lucia would never have done as well as we did with managing the pandemic without friends like the people of Taiwan and Cuba. As I speak today Saint Lucia has only recorded 27 cases with no deaths. We have reopened our country to visitors and we have learnt to co-exist with COVID-19. I am equally proud of the success record that many SIDS have had. Like many other nations we are thankful that despite their own difficulties Taiwan and Cuba have reached out to help the world.

Mr. President,

The Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States, emphasized in his remarks at the commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations, that we SIDS do not have the luxury to retreat from loss and damage. Science projects that if left unchecked, the impacts of climate change will see SIDS begin to disappear within a generation. Whole nation states wiped off the face of the earth. As our chair affirmed, the plight of SIDS is the plight of the United Nations; the loss of any of our island states would signal a failure of the United Nations. No name plate in the General Assembly Hall should have to be turned off indefinitely, simply because we refused to collectively respond to the glaring warning signs.

Mr. President, in this 75th year of the United Nations, I wish to acknowledge the presence on the United Nations Security Council of St Vincent and the Grenadines — the smallest country to ever take up a seat on the council. As a strong and capable voice in one of the most powerful and influential global bodies; we applaud our island neighbour, for their continued advancement of multilateralism, small island state exceptionalism, and staunch advocacy of the fundamental principles of this organisation.

I also wish to note that we are also marking the 15th anniversary of the World Summit where leaders supported the early reform of the Security Council. Due to the pandemic discussions on this issue have not taken place and Saint Lucia joins other countries in encouraging text-based negotiations so the reform efforts will be expedited.

Mr. President,

The founding of the United Nations itself is a testament to human progress. Our predecessors chose the hope of unity over the ease of division and made a promise to future generations that the dignity and equality of all human beings would be our common cause. The Charter of the United Nations points the way with its vision of people and countries living as good neighbours, upholding universal values and recognising our common future. The 75 year old principles of working together must endure, but the specifics must take account of our rapidly changing world. The question remains whether we possess the wisdom and the courage, as nation states and members of this international community to squarely meet those challenges; whether the United Nations can meet the tests of our time.

We need to rise to that challenge now. Time is against us.

Saint Lucia and Small Island Developing States stand ready to join forces and commit to building a new world economic order. So, let's make it happen.

Thank you.

Trinidad and Tobago (see also A/75/PV.13, annex III)**Address by Mr. Keith Rowley, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago**

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 13th meeting of the General Assembly

Mr. President,

It is an honour to address this august Assembly of States, on this milestone, the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. Allow me at the outset, to extend congratulations to you, Mr. President, on behalf of the Government and People of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, on your election as President for this Session. You have the full support of Trinidad and Tobago, as we acknowledge the enormity of your undertaking, especially as we continue to grapple with a global pandemic which has affected us all.

I also wish to express our deepest gratitude to your predecessor, His Excellency Professor Tijani Muhammad-Bande for his astute leadership in the 74th session and for successfully guiding the work of the session during the challenging onset of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus pandemic.

Mr. President,

Seventy-five years ago, in the aftermath of the Second World War, the United Nations was created, with the primary objective of saving “succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which had twice in our lifetime brought untold sorrow to mankind.” Undoubtedly, the desire to create the political, social and economic conditions for lasting peace remains as fervent today as it was during the organisation’s genesis in San Francisco. The 75th anniversary of the United Nations presents an ideal opportunity for reflection and introspection on whether we have embraced the opportunities to re-engineer and reinvigorate the mechanisms of multilateralism, to engender the peace, which has so far remained elusive, to advance social progress and to chart the way forward to attain sustainable development, which would benefit all of humanity.

Mr President,

Trinidad and Tobago joined this family of nations in 1962, the year we attained our independence. As a Small Island Developing State, we continue to embrace the principle of collective security enshrined in the Charter as a major safeguard for Small States, where the rule of law, in the absence of military and economic power, sustains their strength and sovereignty. As we mark this 75th anniversary of the United Nations, all States, small and large, can be reasonably proud of some of our achievements under the umbrella of this revered organisation, such as the creation of a roadmap for global sustainable development, advances in the development of international law and the promotion of gender equality.

Throughout the 75 years of the existence of the United Nations, the common thread in the tapestry of our collective action is the recognition that global challenges can best be overcome through the practice of multilateralism based on mutual respect and trust. Now more than ever is the time to demonstrate that true spirit of global partnership and a reaffirmation of the rules-based commitments.

Mr. President,

It is in this context, that I congratulate you on the aptly chosen theme for this 75th session and I welcome the opportunity to address this Assembly and share our perspectives on “The future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism-confronting COVID-19 through effective multilateral action.” Small nations like ours as well as big nations anticipate and even depend on us all sharing and caring for each other.

Mr. President,

Like many other Small Island Developing States (SIDS) around the world contending with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Trinidad and Tobago has had to walk a thin line between saving lives and preserving livelihoods, with limited resources. As a Government, we took the decision to close our borders in March this year, to temporarily halt the conduct of non-essential services and to implement physical distancing requirements, all in an effort to prevent the importation and spread of the virus. Subsequently, additional measures were implemented to the approach to safeguarding the population. Relevant adjustments were also made to address the impending economic consequences to protect the most vulnerable in our society, who would have temporarily lost the wherewithal to support themselves. Our experience thus far bears eloquent testimony of the need for Small Island Developing States to be supported by an enabling international economic environment through business activity and financing, international trade, as well as technical cooperation and, most importantly, multilateralism.

Mr. President,

I take the opportunity to convey my condolences to and express my solidarity with all Member States and all the families of those who have lost loved ones due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. While we mourn the loss of the hundreds of thousands of persons worldwide, to COVID-19, we are greatly concerned with the alarming rate at which the disease continues to affect millions across the globe.

Mr. President,

Trinidad and Tobago commends the leadership role demonstrated by the World Health Organization (WHO) in spearheading the efforts to treat with this plague. We also wish to salute and commend the health care and other frontline workers around the world who continue to work tirelessly, sometimes at significant personal sacrifice, to ensure that those affected by the pandemic receive the best available care.

Mr. President,

The COVID-19 pandemic presents an existential threat of unmatched proportions to human health and safety around the world. It has overwhelmed health sectors, disturbed global trade and food supply chains, crushed the travel and leisure industry as well as disrupt the basic livelihoods of people around the world. Alarmingly the pandemic has intensified the vulnerabilities of small economies and has rendered us more susceptible to exogenous shocks. Further, COVID-19 has threatened to reverse the gains, which our societies have achieved towards attaining our sustainable development goal (SDG) targets.

Our prospects for achieving sustainable development hinge heavily on the safety and security of our people. The global pandemic has unfortunately exacerbated the threats posed by the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, piracy,

trafficking in persons and cybercrimes. Given our ardent desire to free our society from the effects of the prevalence of unregulated small arms and light weapons, Trinidad and Tobago remains fully committed to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) which we view as indispensable in addressing the menace of the illicit arms trade.

As one of the most multi-ethnic and diverse societies in the world, Trinidad and Tobago is cognisant of the value of diversity, mutual respect and the right to live in freedom without fear of persecution. Regrettably, some parts of the world are still afflicted by the absence of tolerance for human rights, dignity and diversity, which has engendered war crimes, crimes of aggression, crimes of genocide and crimes against humanity. Trinidad and Tobago in this regard attaches great importance and remains unwavering in its support of the mandate of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which was established to hold those who commit such heinous crimes accountable under international law and to act as a deterrent to would-be perpetrators. We therefore continue to urge those States, which have not yet done so, to support the ICC.

Mr. President,

The first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Eric Williams, declared, “The future of our nation is in our children’s school bags”. That declaration remains valid to this day and in our country, it is universally accepted that education is the key to success. It is therefore in our best interest to ensure that our nation’s children have both the opportunity and the necessary tools to fulfill their highest potential.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains attentive to the needs of all our children, with special emphasis on those who are most affected by this pandemic, such as those living in extreme poverty, those suffering from mental health ailments, those with special needs and those who have lost loved ones. As we navigate through these challenging times, we remain committed to ensuring that no child is left behind in our campaign to “build back better”.

Mr. President,

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated my Government’s thrust towards a digital transformation of the public sector. As we adjust to the new normal, we have quickly adapted to utilising remote platforms for conducting business instead of the traditional in-person meetings. We are optimistic that our greater reliance on digital platforms will result in opportunities for our young people in fields related to cyber technology and cyber security.

Mr. President,

It is widely acknowledged that climate change is a threat to our very existence. We are also cognisant that this pernicious threat does not recognise geographical boundaries and will disproportionately impact developing countries, particularly Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs). As a Small Island Developing State, Trinidad and Tobago remains at high risk of being affected by the harmful effects of climate change which have already been manifested in coastal erosion resulting from the rise in sea level. In this regard, our country continues to place emphasis on multi-pronged approaches for future adaptation to and mitigation of climate change, within the constraints of our limited financial capability. We therefore remain committed to achieving our sustainable development through a combination of collaborative approaches and improved partnerships with stakeholders.

Mr. President,

The COVID-19 pandemic coupled with the significant decreases in energy prices has precipitated the acceleration of our efforts aimed at the diversification of our economy. In this respect, we have allocated resources and increased investment in the agricultural and tourism sectors as we recognise the need to build resilience in these areas through incentives, policies, programmes and public private partnerships. Additionally, engendering investment in agriculture will inevitably lead to a reduction in the demand for certain imported foods, preservation of our limited financial resources and the achievement of a more food-secure nation. We will also continue to encourage the participation of women in agri-business, agriculture and tourism as we remain seized of the fact that women not only undertake the role of ensuring that their families receive the nutrition they need to be healthy but are sometimes the breadwinners.

In this regard, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), has cautioned that a debt crisis is looming for the economies of the Latin American and Caribbean subregion, which will compound their high debt to GDP and debt service ratios. Despite the middle and upper-income status of many economies in the region, a strong case exists that these countries are deserving of special consideration for debt relief. We strongly urge the international community to assist with the financial support needed by developing countries, including middle-income countries like Trinidad and Tobago, to meet their development commitments.

The promotion of gender equity and equality is a priority in our National Development Strategy. As a country, we have also remained unwavering in our commitment to the effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and have submitted our country's progress report this year on the twenty-fifth (25th) anniversary of the Declaration. In recognition of the phenomenal contribution of women to peace and development, we are particularly proud to highlight the tenth anniversary of the introduction and main sponsorship by Trinidad and Tobago of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on 'Women, Disarmament, Nonproliferation and Arms Control.'

Mr. President,

The marine environment and its resources remain critical to the livelihood of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and to our sustainable development. Governance of our oceans continues to be a priority. Unfortunately, as a result of the global pandemic, the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Conference on an International Legally Binding Instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, had to be postponed. Given the critical stage of the negotiations, Trinidad and Tobago remains hopeful for its early resumption, the successful completion of which would redound to the benefit of all humankind.

Mr. President,

Trinidad and Tobago continues to support the reform of the Security Council. We are firm in our view that this will improve significantly the global ability to effectively respond to the various security and other challenges, which currently confront the international community. While we acknowledge that in its seventy-five-year history the United Nations has succeeded in preventing another global war, peace remains out of reach in some parts of the world. In order to be effective, we believe

that the United Nations must adapt to the ever-changing geopolitical environment and that the Security Council ought to reflect the diversity that characterises and truly represents the United Nations.

As we begin the Decade of Action and Delivery to implement the Sustainable Development Goals it is important to ensure that no country is left behind. It is on this note that we maintain that the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba, undermines the country's potential to achieve sustainable development. To this end, Trinidad and Tobago reiterates its call for the unconditional lifting of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. We have noted that despite the blockade, the Government of Cuba has demonstrated the true spirit of multilateralism by providing health care personnel to assist countries in different regions of the world in their fight against COVID-19. We commend and thank the Government and People of Cuba for this humanitarian gesture.

In furtherance of this same spirit we ask the Member nations of the UN to continue to support the CARICOM initiatives, encouraged by Norway and Barbados, to bring all elements in Venezuela to accept dialogue and human rights as their guiding lights as we look forward to fair and peaceful elections there in the near future and trust that a satisfactory outcome would lead to a resumption of normalcy in our Caribbean shores as we all aspire together to achieve together in this region.

Mr. President,

As the United Nations commemorates its 75th anniversary, it is indeed opportune to reaffirm its founders' guiding vision as enshrined in the Charter and to rededicate ourselves to be steadfast in our joint pursuit of the goals of upholding Human Rights, Development, Peace and Security. However, as we assess the performance and impact of the United Nations and the road we have travelled, we must also look ahead to the next phase in the life of our organization, given the many challenges which confront our global community. I am confident that by working together we can achieve success.

Mr President,

Members all, I thank you.

Bahamas (see also A/75/PV.13, annex IV)

Address by Mr. Hubert Alexander Minnis, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 13th meeting of the General Assembly

Colleague Heads of State and Government;

UN Secretary-General, His Excellency Antonio Guterres;

President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Volkan Bazkir;

Excellencies:

Good Afternoon.

Mr. President:

Permit me at the outset to congratulate you on your election as President of the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, and to assure you of the unwavering support of the Government of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas during your tenure.

I also wish to thank your predecessor, His Excellency Tiiyani Muhammad-Bande, for his stellar efforts in guiding the work of the 74th Session of the General Assembly.

Mr. President:

I address this Assembly at a time when the world is still reeling from the seismic level shocks that the COVID-19 pandemic has unleashed on the global community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered an unprecedented crisis that has halted global economic activity and threatened global public health and social well-being.

The more than twenty-seven million confirmed COVID-19 cases across the globe continue to increase as we speak.

On behalf of the Government and people of The Bahamas, I express solidarity with Member States who are fighting COVID-19 and extend our sincere condolences for the loss of life.

Mr. President:

When I addressed the Assembly last year, in the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian, I implored world leaders to treat the global climate emergency as the greatest challenge facing humanity.

Little did we know that just a few months later, an even greater challenge would emerge, forcing the world to come to a grinding halt, at a proportion not witnessed since the Second World War.

Hence, the theme for the 75th Session, The future we want, the United Nations we need reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism — confronting COVID-19 through effective multilateral action, is relevant and applicable to our current reality.

Mr. President:

Tourism serves as the main economic earner for The Bahamas.

Like other countries, we had to temporarily close our borders and regulate the movement of people to limit the spread of COVID-19. Our priority was, and will always be, to protect lives and ensure the safety of those within our borders. The temporary closure of our borders caused one of the largest declines in visitor numbers since the advent of modern tourism in The Bahamas.

The slowdown in economic activity in some areas of the private sector caused an unprecedented increase in unemployment prompting the activation of an Unemployment Benefits Programme and Self-Employed Assistance Programme, as well as other social safety programmes, including the National Food Distribution Program, the largest feeding program in our nation's history.

Mr. President:

Small island developing countries like The Bahamas always appear to be operating in a vicious recovery mode cycle, having to deal with successive exogenous shocks and climatic events.

The Bahamas experienced major hurricanes in 2015, 2016, 2017, and in September 2018, Hurricane Dorian, the largest Atlantic storm in recorded history.

UN initial assessments valued the loss and damage incurred at \$3.4 billion. Infrastructure and housing projects are ongoing, while we grapple the impact of COVID19, we continue to reach out to international partners for the much-needed assistance to restore and rebuild those islands.

A Donors Conference coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme was held in Nassau on 13 January 2020, for which I wish to express the heartfelt appreciation of my Government for all of the pledges of financial resources and assistance made at this conference. My government looks forward to the full realization the pledges made as they are essential to our ongoing recovery efforts.”=

Mr. President:

The economies of small island developing states, including those of the Caribbean Community, are under constant assault from various external shocks beyond their control.

This group of countries is among the most disaster-prone areas in the world. Pandemics, hurricanes, or climatic events, do not discriminate between low-income countries, middle-income countries, and developed economies.

Hence the compelling question remains, as to why middle-income countries are still being assessed by international financial institutions using outdated methodologies that give no consideration to a country's level of exposure, vulnerability and ability to recover from exogenous shocks.

It is to be noted that ECLAC's review of the COVID-19 impact estimates that developmental achievements in the Caribbean and Latin America have been reversed by at least a decade.

World Bank projections point to at least 100 million people falling into extreme poverty.

I therefore reiterate the call for the institutionalization of a vulnerability index in the decision-making processes of the international financial institutions and international donor community.

I also echo the call of the Region for the capitalization of a Caribbean Resilience Fund.

The decision of the G20 group to suspend debt service payments for the least developed countries is commendable, and I offer that this concession should be extended to other economic groupings as well.

Mr. President:

Given the immeasurable stress and strain placed on global health care systems and supply chains, I commend the Secretary-General for his continuous efforts to combat the pandemic.

Mr. President:

While we remain cautiously optimistic for a viable COVID-19 vaccine in the not too distant future, we note the collaborative efforts of the COVAX facility to secure arrangements for developing countries.

Developing countries should be able to access vaccines via a transparent procurement process at affordable market rates.

We salute the doctors, nurses, other healthcare workers and all on the frontline, who have sacrificed their own health in order to assist tens of millions of people around the world.

They are the real heroes, to whom the global community owes immense gratitude.

Mr. President:

As we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, we should not allow the pandemic to dampen our spirits and detract from the commemoration of this august institution and its extensive list of achievements and milestones.

Multilateralism has been, and continues to be, the most effective conduit through which small island states can have their voices heard and their policy requirements advanced.

Mr. President:

Globally, we continue to see unprecedented climatic and environmental challenges. Worldwide, there has been a decline of 85 per cent of the area of viable wetlands.

Scientific reviews reveal that sixty per cent of the ocean area is impacted by adverse human activity including overfishing, pollution and acidification from chemicals.

The Bahamas continues to play its role in the preservation of a healthy marine and land environment which includes the expansion of marine protected areas and heritage sites.

We therefore welcome the scheduling of a Biodiversity Summit on 30 September.

We will continue to remain actively engaged in the negotiations towards an international treaty to sustainably use and conserve marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

In this context, I am pleased to inform that the Bahamas will seek to renew its membership on the Council of the International Maritime Organization, and we count on the invaluable support of member states for our re-election.

Mr. President:

The COVID-19 pandemic has spurred the accelerated utilization of and access to information communication technology especially for young people and economically challenged communities.

This trend must continue in a post COVID-19 environment, as well as promotion of STEM careers for young people as education has the potential to act as the great equalizer.

Mr. President:

The Bahamas is carefully formulating the gradual re-opening of the country to visitors. We hope to welcome some tourists this year.

However, as we adjust to this new normal, we acknowledge that no country can survive this pandemic alone.

Mr. President:

We also take this occasion to reiterate our support for an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.

Accordingly, The Bahamas will join the international community by voting in favor of the General Assembly's annual resolution on this agenda item.

Mr. President:

Please be assured of The Bahamas' unwavering commitment to the United Nations and our pledge to adhere always, to the UN Charter of principles on which the organization was founded.

I thank you.

Sudan (see also A/75/PV.13, annex V)

Address by Mr. Abdalla Adam Hamdok, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Sudan

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 13th meeting of the General Assembly

[Original: Arabic]

In the name of God, the most merciful,
Your Majesties and Excellencies Heads of State and Government,
Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Ladies and gentlemen,
May the peace, mercy and blessings of God Almighty be upon you.

It is my pleasure to address you today, over a year since the glorious December revolution, for which the young women and men of the Sudan paid the price with their precious blood. The revolution represented a sincere expression of the people and their aspirations to freedom, peace and justice.

It is our great hope that the work of this session will be successful. I am also pleased to extend my sincere congratulations to you, Mr. Volkan Bozkir, on your election as President of the General Assembly, and wish you success. I must also express my appreciation for the great efforts made by your predecessor, Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, the outgoing President of the General Assembly, for his tireless efforts during the seventy-fourth session.

The deliberations of the current session are taking place at a most critical time. The world is facing a strange, mysterious enemy that spreads rapidly and ferociously, leaving devastation in its wake, surpassing all geographical boundaries without distinction between rich and poor countries. It has left the world with no choice but to choose solidarity as a means of response.

Therefore, from this rostrum we call for enhanced cooperation and strengthened collective action mechanisms so that, together, we may face the challenges posed by the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. We must strive to achieve this session's theme: "The future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism — confronting COVID-19 through effective multilateral action".

In that connection, we would like to state our support and appreciation for the World Health Organization and commend the role it has played in combating the pandemic from the outset. We also commend the technical support it has provided to affected countries. We also wish to thank all the countries and organizations that supported us in this area.

The Sudan is currently experiencing exceptional circumstances due to the impact of unprecedented torrential rain and floods, which have exacerbated the challenges we already face. The flooding of the Nile has led to severe loss of human life and property throughout the areas adjacent to it. Great damage has also been

caused by the rain and floods in other vast areas, including the partial or total collapse of tens of thousands of homes. I would like, in that regard, to pay tribute to all our friendly and brotherly countries that have demonstrated their solidarity by providing generous support in response to that catastrophe.

As the Assembly is aware, the Sudan is undergoing a transitional phase following a glorious popular revolution against injustice, tyranny and socioeconomic decline. The transitional Government is addressing the broad aspirations of the Sudanese people and trying its utmost to tackle the new challenges most important of which is establishing peace and economic reform.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further complicated the situation for the transitional Government, which inherited a crippled economy and weak and devastated service sectors, particularly the health sector, which has been neglected for decades.

It is important to preserve the values of multilateralism and international cooperation that underpin the Charter of the United Nations and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That is essential in order to reinforce the three pillars of the United Nations: security, development and human rights.

Moreover, global issues such as climate change, geopolitical tensions and humanitarian crises in their various forms mean that we must reach understandings that respect the values and interests of people. This calls for our shared interest and action through multilateralism and diplomacy, especially at a time when the political, social and economic landscapes and relations among countries are being impacted by technological progress and information acceleration.

The adoption of the Constitutional Declaration on 17 August 2019 constituted the second stage of the victory of the revolution, making peace and putting an end to the war the top priority of the transitional Government. That was the basis upon which the Juba process was launched. It was not simply a negotiation between two warring parties, as it had been in the past, but rather a process of dialogue between the partners of a revolution in order to achieve peace and the cessation of war, as well as to address all the root causes of the conflict. The Juba peace agreement will be signed on 3 October.

Regarding the humanitarian situation, we express our thanks and appreciation to the United Nations and its humanitarian agencies, all international organizations and the donor community for their support to the revolution Government in its efforts to address the issues of displaced persons, refugees and repatriated citizens by providing food and health care.

In that context, we wish to note that the revolution Government hastened to remove all restrictions and obstacles that were hindering the delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need in conflict areas. Within that framework, as part of its national plan to improve humanitarian action and ensure that the needs of its population are met, the State is adopting projects to find sustainable solutions to improve the living conditions of displaced persons, in accordance with the provisions of international instruments and laws governing humanitarian work

Our country is now working closely with UNAMID on its exit strategy on 31 December in line with Security Council resolution 2525 (2020). The latest step taken on the transfer of tasks was the implementation of phase one of the national

plan for the protection of civilians, which has been circulated as an official Security Council document since 21 May. We also submitted our first progress report on its implementation until 15 August. We will continue to implement our national plan in order to fully assume all tasks relating to the protection of civilians before 31 December, after which the Sudan will be hosting the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS).

On the economic front, the economic situation continues increasingly to weigh on the citizens and is a result of economic distortions caused by the defunct regime. Furthermore, the profound reforms that we set out to implement, which are aimed at remedying the structural defect in the Sudanese economy, have indirectly increased the cost of living. These reforms are painful and arduous, but they are necessary in the long term. In order to mitigate their effects, we have started implementing a social programme to support families and provide direct financial aid to the poorest families with the aim of mitigating the effects of these reforms. This programme is also aimed at supporting production by providing direct support to agricultural and labour groups that are productive in rural and urban areas. The Government also supports establishing cooperative projects and implementing a commodity programme, which are projects aimed at providing basic commodities to citizens.

My country's Government attaches great importance to the issue of the rule of law at the national and international levels and is making continuous efforts to address national laws with a view to developing them and ensuring their consistency with international standards and conventions. These efforts are also consistent with multiple initiatives undertaken locally by relevant authorities in the areas of building and strengthening national capacities and empowering the competent bodies to fulfil their responsibilities and tasks in accordance with the constitution and related laws. The process of achieving the rule of law at the national level is the responsibility of States and Governments.

The Constitutional Declaration has given special attention to human rights issues, as a whole chapter has been devoted to freedoms and rights. In implementing the Declaration, the transitional Government has taken a number of positive steps to address the distortions that were attached to this issue throughout the period of the previous totalitarian rule. First among these steps is the repeal of a number of laws that restrict freedoms; promote the role of women in society; protect their rights; allow freedom of opinion, expression and peaceful assembly; and combat impunity. The transitional Government has also been eager to strengthen cooperation with the international community. In this context, an agreement was signed to open the regional office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in September 2019. The office has been operational in the Sudan since January.

Regarding efforts to reintegrate the Sudan into the international system, we take this opportunity to express our high appreciation for the initiative of Germany, with the participation of a number of countries, to establish the Group of Friends of the Sudan. Success in the formation of the Group and the regularity of its meetings represent momentum towards the reintegration of the Sudan into the international system after isolation that lasted 30 years. This was exemplified by the success of the Sudan Partnership Conference in Berlin on 25 June, with the participation of more than 50 countries and regional and international organizations.

The Sudan continues to actively contribute to supporting the stability of the political and security situations in the countries of the African continent, especially

the countries of the region, through its active membership in regional organizations such as the African Union, IGAD, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Sahel and the Sahara. On this occasion, I would like to express our appreciation to the great positive role that the African Union has played in confronting the coronavirus pandemic in Africa.

I also stress that the Sudan, during its presidency of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, has strived to achieve goals consistent with the strategic goals of IGAD. The decision of the sixteenth IGAD Ordinary Summit in November 2019 to agree on the Sudan's presidency of the organization was an affirmation of Sudan's strong return to the region. The Sudan has laid down a vision for its presidency related to peace, security, regional integration, empowering women and youth and revitalizing the organization. IGAD held a number of summits, including one to support the peace process in the sisterly Republic of South Sudan and another to address the coronavirus pandemic.

The Sudan expresses its solidarity with the victims of terrorism around the world and with all countries that have suffered from terrorist attacks. We have renewed our rejection and condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations through our cooperation, accession and effective contribution to the international and bilateral efforts against terrorism and its financing. We are committed to implementing the relevant international resolutions issued by the Security Council.

The Sudan, despite the change caused by the blood of its martyrs after decades of oppression, injustice and backwardness, and despite the achievements made during the brief span of its glorious revolution, the transitional period still faces a number of daunting challenges that must be overcome with the continued support of the international community and friends in order to complete the implementation of the Government's plans. The aim is to address the economic hardship that the country is going through, foremost among which by the waiving of the Sudan's debts and the granting of soft loans, as well as the commitment of friends to fulfilling their pledges announced during the Sudan Partnership Conference in Berlin. Before all that, the name of the Sudan must be removed from the list of countries sponsoring terrorism, so that our country can return fully to the international community after a forced interruption of three decades. In that context, I wish to commend the recent steps taken by the US administration and the US Congress to support the transitional Government, including the determination to accelerate steps to drop the Sudan from the list of terrorist countries.

In conclusion, I want to confirm our determination to complete our construction projects, reform our internal institutions and strengthen our external relations so that the Sudan can become an active member in its region. We want to participate with the international community in creating the future we want and in occupying our rightful place in order to contribute to strengthening the role of the United Nations. A few days ago, we celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary. We want it to be the Organization we need with a view to achieving cooperation, pluralism and collective work as a successful approach to meeting the challenges that threaten the peoples of the world.

Vanuatu (see also A/75/PV.13, annex VI)

Address by Mr. Bob Loughman, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 13th meeting of the General Assembly

Mr. President;

Excellencies, Heads of State and Governments; Mr. Secretary-General;

Distinguished Delegates;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Introduction

I have the great honour to deliver this address on behalf of the government and people of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Mr President,

At the outset, let me sincerely congratulate you on assuming the presidency of this 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly. Your Excellency, I assure you of Vanuatu's committed support during your tenure, and have every confidence that your presidency will successfully guide us in our collective pursuit of the future we want, and rally the spirit of cooperation essential for the United Nations we need.

I would also like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to His Excellency Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, the outgoing President of the 74th Session on his outstanding stewardship of this august body during such a challenging time.

Global Challenges

Mr. President,

Usually, we would be gathered in the iconic General Assembly Hall to share our thoughts on the state of the world we share. The corridors, meeting rooms and side events would be abuzz with activity as leaders and delegates come together. In this time of uncertainty and peril, when we could most benefit from such gatherings, we cannot do so.

Delivering our national address via video link may be emblematic of this extraordinary time, but it's also a sign of our resolve to adapt and make use of what is available. So, even though for the moment we are not all able to travel or be together in person, we can continue to find ways to harness our collective commitments with the vision of ending the pandemic and resetting our planet on a sustainable and peaceful footing.

For so many of our people around the world, 2020 has been a year of unparalleled challenge. COVID-19 has unleashed a complex web of health, economic and social issues that have sorely tested government, business and community systems. The pandemic has exposed existing vulnerabilities and alerted to us the threats of new ones. We have seen it exacerbate the already unacceptably high rates of global inequality and poverty that we face.

We have seen how it has most severely impacted the most vulnerable in our communities, especially women and girls, people with disabilities, and those with chronic health conditions.

We must unite to defeat the scourge of this disease. As governments we need to be able to continue to reach out to help families that have been split up or kept apart, alleviate the consequences of job losses and business closures and continue to provide health care under the enormous strains of pandemic management, all while dealing with drastically plummeting revenue sources.

Mr. President,

COVID-19 has also shone a new light on existing global challenges and conflicts, including the escalating threat of arms race and terrorism; continuous human rights abuses; climate change; the displacement of people; the scourge of non-communicable disease, and the disruptions of the technological revolution that is redefining the future of work. Around the world we see the fallout from the pandemic is deepening community divisions, escalating geopolitical tensions, changing trade relations and threatening peace.

It is most worrisome that these complex global challenges are compounding at a time when our multilateral environment is under its most severe pressures to date. Make no mistake, we need inclusive multilateralism. The global solidarity and concerted international cooperation we forge today will make us stronger to tackle these challenges together. This time of crisis has heightened our mutual responsibility to strengthen people's faith in multilateral cooperation and international institutions. The United Nations, with its universal membership, plays a central role in addressing our shared challenges. We should be focusing our efforts on strengthening it, not weakening it. United Nations can be compared to a big boat with individual nations occupying individual cabins in that big boat.

Domestic Development and Challenges

Mr. President,

As a small open island economy located in the South Pacific, we in Vanuatu know too well the importance of global solidarity. We know from experience that we are always better off when we are working together, than in isolation.

Thankfully, there are still no confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 in Vanuatu. Early border closures gave us this precious window to prepare our health responses, but have also come with serious economic and social costs. On top of that, in April, our country was hit by yet another severe, category five tropical cyclone. The severity of this compound disaster has already left enduring scars on families, communities and the nation. Limited resources are strained further by the ongoing recovery efforts from previous disasters. Ever looming is the threat of future disasters and extreme weather events, which are being fuelled and exacerbated by climate change. Even so, our experience assures us that by working together, we can and we will recover, we will build back better and emerge stronger and more resilient.

It was in this spirit that we came together as a nation in July to celebrate our 40th anniversary of political independence. We will come together again in December to mark our graduation from Least Developed Country status. Amidst the uncertainty and chaos, this is a special year for us. We especially view our graduation as a success story. We have and always will warmly embrace the solidarity of the

LDC group, and the support afforded to it. But in our 40th year as an independent country we are ready for the next phase of our development journey. We are ready to make that step despite the catastrophe that has been unleashed by the pandemic and cyclone, and which will reverberate for many years to come.

We are proud of our achievements, as we are mindful that we still have a long way to go to achieve our sustainable development goals. We would rather build on our efforts and those of our development partners and graduate now, with an extended smooth transition period than risk slipping back into the LDC category or halt graduation entirely. It is for that reason that we are seeking the support of bilateral, regional and multilateral development and trading partners to provide full support to the implementation of the smooth transition strategy prepared by Vanuatu, in particular, the priority specific measures that requires targeted support for an extended transitional period of five years; specific international support measures related to trade, aid for trade and participation in international forums.

If we are not careful, the events of this year and the continuing fracturing of multilateralism may dilute our global development aspirations. We all triumphantly signed up to only five years ago under the 2030 Agenda and the 17 sustainable development goals. More than ever we must return to these collective commitments and redouble our implementation efforts. In Vanuatu we have already contextualized these global goals into our national aspirations, articulated in Vanuatu 2030 — The People's Plan. This year we have sought to ensure that our National Recovery Strategy not only responds to the immediate social, economic and environmental needs associated with COVID-19 and Cyclone Harold, but that it empowers us to build back better and continue to advance our development aspirations. We must keep moving forward and not just revert back to how it was before. The increasing frequency of extreme weather events and other disasters means recovery has become the new normal.

Building back better will only be possible if we have the right architecture in place. For us and other small island developing states especially, our biggest threats are global — most notably climate change and the management of our oceans. Therefore our solutions too must be global, and that means it is imperative that the necessary international architecture is in place. With the resources to address our complex challenges becoming scarcer, vulnerable countries such as LDCs and SIDS especially face a daunting future. Put simply, we need a fully functional, working United Nations. We need the UN agencies to be working in solid partnerships with Member States, and with other multilateral organizations. We know there are problems, but we need to find ways to fix these, and not create even greater problems by continuing the trends that are undermining multilateralism and international cooperation.

Building back better also means we can no longer just accept business as usual so I would like to suggest some areas that we, as the United Nations, should focus on to forge a new path to a collectively brighter future.

First, COVID-19 has resulted in mounting debts in countries that can least afford to service them. It is essential that the multilateral financial institutions provide debt forgiveness and relief. This should be accompanied with tailored concessional finance packages and grants. These measures should ensure there is adequate fiscal space for countries to weather not only the current crisis, but also to finance the implementation of their sustainable development priorities. I acknowledge that

some great work has already gone ahead in this area, however, I believe more needs to be done.

Second, climate financing needs to increase to ensure the recapitalization of financial instruments such as the Green Climate Fund. Again, we call for the processes to access these funds to be simplified and made easier to access in order to allow small island developing states like Vanuatu implement their climate change mitigation and adaptation priorities reflected on various frameworks of implementation including the National Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Thirdly, the UN needs to find ways to address the de-risking measures adopted by large international banks that have prevented small island developing states especially to set up corresponding banking relationships with our domestic banks.

Finally, it is imperative that we ensure every country can get timely, fair and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, which means working cooperatively and not competitively. The UN must especially ensure that all of the most vulnerable countries in the world get access. Until we have the medical breakthrough that we all pray for, we must unite in our efforts to mitigate the drastic impacts that this crisis is having on our people.

Human Rights and Decolonisation

Mr. President,

As we look ahead to the future we want, we must picture a world of freedom; one that is free from persecution and human rights abuses. This year, as my country celebrates our 40th anniversary of independence, we are reminded of our strong cultural connection with the Umaenupne and Umaeneag islands, commonly referred to in English as Matthew and Hunter Islands. Although they were integral parts of Vanuatu during its colonial period, France has regrettably and unlawfully claimed them as its own. Beyond representing the failure to complete the decolonization of Vanuatu, France's actions have impeded the ability of the ni-Vanuatu people to perform their traditional, cultural and religious practices on the islands. This is of particular concern because maintaining our people's cultural heritage is of the greatest importance to the ni-Vanuatu people, who have endured a long and unfortunate history of colonial exploitation. Although all ni-Vanuatu consider Umaenupne and Umaeneag to be sacred, they have particularly great significance for those who come from the islands of Tanna, Futuna and Aneityum. For countless generations, the indigenous people of those islands have performed sacred rituals on them. To this day, Umaenupne and Umaeneag continue to maintain a central place in the religious observance of their people. I look forward to their return to the islands, as facilitated by the former UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples.

Furthermore, we are also mindful that some territories continue their struggle for freedom.

In our region, New Caledonia will soon face another referendum on the question of independence. It is important that this remains free, fair and transparent and continues under the supervision of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

We know there are widespread human rights violations happening all around us, and yet it seems the world is taking a selective approach to addressing these. In our region, the indigenous people of West Papua continue to suffer from human

rights abuses. Last year, leaders from the Pacific Islands Forum respectfully called on the Indonesian Government to allow the United Nations Office of the Human Rights Commissioner to visit West Papua Province. To date there has been little progress on this front. I therefore call on the Indonesian Government to please heed the previous call of Pacific leaders.

Conclusion

Mr. President,

The theme of this 75th General Assembly calls on us, the Member States of the United Nations, to come together to frame the future we want. For Vanuatu, this extraordinarily difficult year has been the backdrop to the start of the next phase of nation building, marked by our independence celebrations and culminating with our LDC graduation in a few months. We hope that by sharing our experiences we can contribute to global learning as we navigate the current crisis and work together in the pursuit of sustained peace and sustainable development. As we emerge from the grip of COVID-19, we should continue to align our national and global recovery to existing commitments to reorient growth models to the ones that are more sustainable and greener in nature.

More than ever multilateralism must be defended and respond to the evolving needs of our times. The UN Charter remains our moral compass and continues to remind us of our common duties to serve humanity.

I thank you Mr President and God bless you all.

Cabo Verde (see also A/75/PV.13, annex VII)

Address by Mr. José Ulisses Correia e Silva, Prime Minister and Minister for Reform of the Republic of Cabo Verde

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 13th meeting of the General Assembly

[Original: Portuguese; English translation provided by the delegation]

Mr. President of the General Assembly,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The General Debate for this 75th session is held in a context marked by the global health, economic and social crisis.

On this occasion, I would like to send a greeting of friendship and solidarity from the people of Cabo Verde to all the peoples of the United Nations, deploring the loss of human life that resulted from the coronavirus pandemic and encouraging a resilience that will lead us to better days.

For the past 75 years, our tradition is to annually hold the debate of UN General Assembly in New York. This is the meeting of the world and the great gathering of its peoples.

The general debate of this 75th session attempts to use a digital platform for the same purpose. We do it without the usual warmth of the hugs and handshakes in the corridors, halls and receptions without the face-to-face interaction of live diplomacy, which is the most effective one.

I would like to pay special regards to the outgoing President of the General Assembly, Professor Tijjani Muhammad-Bande of Nigeria. I congratulate him for having successfully accomplished a mandate and demonstrated leadership and adaptability in the difficult context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I would like to welcome the new President of the General Assembly, Mr. Volkan Bozkir of Turkey, and wish him every success in his presidency.

I would like to congratulate the Secretary-General, António Guterres, on his tireless stewardship a leadership that has given face and voice to the most anguish of peoples in these moments of great uncertainty while at the same time striving to build global solidarity that responds effectively to the impacts of COVID 19 on the lives of people, countries and the world.

Mr. President,

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global threat. Humanity is confronting its greatest challenge in more than a century.

The impact of the pandemic has profoundly human and humanitarian dimensions. It affects people, their lives, their health, their families, their livelihood, their employment, their social inclusion and protection, their mobility, their leisure and their psychological and mental stability.

The pandemic has further exacerbated inequalities between developed and developing countries.

Few countries in the world have enough savings to accommodate the extraordinary costs imposed by the global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and, at the same time, to recover and relaunch their respective economies.

In developed countries, such as those of the European Union, a financial package of €750 billion was needed to support member states. The financial stimuli of the richest countries exceed hundreds of billion dollars. And what about Africa? And small island developing states Are they able to bear the costs and the recovery and relaunch based on their savings alone? Of course not!

We are facing internal struggles in each country and at the same time a global struggle, which requires global collaborative solutions.

Nobody wins with Africa more impoverished, with an increase of humanitarian and security crises. Everyone wins if African countries have the necessary resources to overcome the serious health, economic and social crisis caused by COVID-19, and enter a new era of structural transformations that positively impact their economies and their Human Development Indexes.

It is in this context access to a vaccine should be equitable and universal and external debt should be forgiven. These must be the subject of a Global Responsibility Pact in order not to leave anyone behind.

External debt forgiveness is essential. It is necessary not only to deal with the economic contraction and macroeconomic imbalances caused by the coronavirus crisis, but as a turning point to boost the sustainable development of African countries in the framework of strong commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

A differentiated approach must be given towards to Small Island Developing States (SIDS), taking into account their great vulnerabilities to external economic and environmental shocks as well as their great dependence on tourism, a sector devastated by the global pandemic.

Many of the SIDS have historically performed well in reforms and policies aimed at increasing resilience and reducing vulnerabilities, but these need time to be effective. Past efforts cannot be in vain. That is why it makes perfect sense to focus on debt cancellation or relief initiatives leading to not just the recovery of economies but the pursuit of sustainable development.

For SIDS, the response of the international community cannot and should not be an eligibility problem based on per capita GDP. Instead, global efforts should focus on the evidence that reforms are helping nations to make progress in achieving the SDGs.

In Cabo Verde, our priority has been to apply the resources released from external debt service to finance the Strategic Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030. In doing so, we emphasize: (1) human capital development; (2) health security and public health; (3) digital transformation; (4) energy transition; (5) water strategy for agriculture associated with renewable energies; (6) blue economy; and (7) sustainable tourism.

They are drivers of the SDGs to make Cabo Verde a country that is more resilient and less vulnerable to external shocks... eliminating extreme poverty... improve household income... and creating decent job opportunities for young people within a more diverse economy.

These priorities are achievable with the shortening of public investment cycles, the attraction of national and foreign private investments, public-private partnerships, and cooperation for development. All of this is possible within an environment of political and social stability, low reputational risks, and a business friendly mindset. In short, building an institutional framework of trust.

Mr. President,

Today, once again, with the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of Multilateralism is clear. Everyone loses when economies are disrupted and when borders are closed. Some may lose more than others, but our world and its peoples are far worse off.

The devastating potential of climate change knows no borders, either. And everyone loses, especially the generations of the 21st century and generations to come.

Poverty, hunger, insecurity, instability and violent extremism, such as terrorism and organized crime, have impacts and implications that extend well beyond a nation's borders.

We live today in the context of a serious pandemic. But it must not confine the ambition of Agenda 2030.

The Decade of Action initiative launched by the Secretary General could not be more timely. We must speed up and make the implementation of Agenda 2030 more urgent so we can better respond, recover, and rebuild. Cabo Verde firmly supports this initiative.

The pathway to the future we want is full of uncertainty, but the continuing mandate of the United Nations will serve as a beacon to light the way.

We have an opportunity to build a better and more sustainable world in the post-pandemic era, one that is... defined by the advent of peace and the reduction of conflict... more secure... no longer proliferating nuclear weapons... more focused on human rights... driven by sustainable and human development... and energized by greater cooperation in matters of security, economics, knowledge, science and technology, with benefits for all.

Political leaders have an increased responsibility and none, from any country, should be absent from the commitment to millions of young people who legitimately care about their future and that of their children and grandchildren to come.

The United Nations we need must unite nations in building the future we want. This can only be achieved by reaffirming the undeniable importance of Multilateralism.

Seventy-five years later, everyone agrees that it is necessary to reform the Organization, namely: the composition and functioning of the Security Council... the revitalization of the General Assembly... the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council... and the alignment of working methods and cooperation among these main bodies.

There is an urgency to carry out these reforms, both in relation to peacebuilding and in relation to the promotion of development. And that depends on us, the United Nations, the leaders of the peoples of the United Nations.

Thank you very much.

Madagascar (see also A/75/PV.13, annex VIII)**Address by Mr. Christian Ntsay, Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Republic of Madagascar**

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 13th meeting of the General Assembly

[Original: French]

Mister President,

Excellencies Ladies and Gentlemen, Heads of State and Heads of Government,

Mr. Secretary General,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Madagascar feels honoured at this moment when I take the floor to address our august Assembly, on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Andry RAJOELINA, President of the Republic of Madagascar, on behalf of the Malagasy People and on my personal behalf, on the occasion of this 75th General Assembly of our United Nations, during which we also celebrate its 75th Anniversary jubilee.

Mr. President,

I express my sincere congratulations on your election and wish you every success in leading this very special session, given the highly symbolic nature of the celebratory anniversary, as I said earlier, and the exceptional situation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which the whole world is currently experiencing and fighting.

I also reaffirm our support for our Secretary-General in succeeding in carrying out his important mission in the service of the Member States.

Excellencies Ladies and Gentlemen,

Given the seriousness of the global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and its incomparable impact on all humankind, which, among other things, has led to almost 1 million deaths worldwide, including 216 in my country, I would like to convey from this rostrum a message of solidarity, compassion and encouragement to all the nations and peoples of the world.

Indeed, we are celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations in exceptional circumstances, separated from one another by distance, and we should see the manifestation of the world's vulnerability as an opportunity to come closer together in our common faith in our collective future based on the human values of shared peace and prosperity, which inspire the Organization.

In the context of the uncertainty enshrouding our shared planet, where it is undeniable that individual pursuits and gains have hit a wall with regard to common sense and effectiveness, we should become aware of what is most important in the shared values of the Organization, such as unity, solidarity among peoples and cooperation among nations.

We should therefore reaffirm both our commitment to what brings us together and our rejection of what divides us. We could overcome the COVID-19 pandemic

through solidarity and cooperation. Therein lies the vision and true and beneficial message that we could provide and receive from multilateralism.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As at the very beginning of its 75-year history, the immediate challenges facing the United Nations remain immense, as we celebrate its milestone anniversary.

COVID-19, a shared threat, does not discriminate according to age, gender, religion or race.

The profound economic imbalances and social inequalities that we have continued to fight within the Organization have been aggravated by the health crisis.

The situation with regard to peace, international security and human rights has further deteriorated in some parts of the world.

Several national elections have had to be postponed because of the destabilization of democracy.

The economic crisis is widespread and the resulting social vulnerability has been significantly accentuated for millions of our peoples.

The unforeseen outbreak and virulence of COVID-19 has shed light on our collective shortcomings to deal with a common threat. That brings us back to the obvious need to rethink the scope and reach of the multilateralism that we are promoting so that all countries of the world can enjoy a shared source of resiliency with the appropriate tools for dealing with myriad crises like COVID-19 and avoid undoing decades of collective work within our Organization and various regional communities.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Madagascar has addressed the pandemic to the best of its ability and with all means available in terms of awareness raising and taking action in order to optimally safeguard its population and strengthen national resilience in responding to the COVID-19 crisis.

Since the official March announcement of the COVID-19 pandemic in Madagascar, our country has very quickly implemented a multisectoral response strategy to better meet the challenges and their social, economic and environmental repercussions.

The national response was based on the following three main goals: first, to contain the spread of COVID-19 to contain the pandemic; secondly, assist vulnerable populations and effectively meet their basic needs; and, lastly, safeguard and stimulate the economy, while maintaining human capital and facilitating recovery.

In that regard, our major efforts were focused on establishing and strengthening governance in combating the pandemic, shoring up measures related to social protection and supporting economic resilience.

The response was rapidly rolled out with the adoption of major measures, such as the establishment of the Operational Command Centre at the national and regional levels and the deployment of multiple forms of social assistance to support families affected by the health crisis and vulnerable families.

Furthermore, the State has decided to help the private sector to safeguard jobs and the means of production through unprecedented tax cuts to support the various

affected sectors so that they can better cope with the consequences of the health crisis through a range of various kinds of assistance, such as the provision of seeds and agricultural inputs to farmers and food packs to affected workers; ordering more than 5 million masks from free-enterprise and small private companies; the launch of a major public investment project for infrastructure; and supporting research and innovation in producing Covid-Organics (CVO), as an modified traditional remedy to effectively combat COVID-19.

Indeed, Madagascar has stood out with the development of CVO, which is the result of important research carried out by the Malagasy Institute of Applied Research (IMRA) — a logical consequence Madagascar's recognized status as a sanctuary of world biodiversity with an extremely varied and rich traditional pharmacopoeia.

With its preventive and curative qualities, CVO undoubtedly enabled Madagascar to avert a human tragedy, as opposed to what tragically unfolded in many countries around the world with the spread of COVID-19, as Madagascar implemented the wide-scale distribution of the treatment in tandem with other multiple health-care and social measures.

During this ordeal, Madagascar did not struggle alone but benefited from the precious and substantial support of the international community and scientists from all walks of life, and I would like to express to all of them here, without exception, the deep gratitude of the Government and the people of Madagascar.

Finally, on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Andry Rajoelina, President of the Republic, I pay tribute, in particular to the entire medical corps in Madagascar, the defence and security forces, all the volunteers and all those involved in providing essential public and private services for their sacrifice and tireless service in caring for and treating the sick and protecting our fellow citizens and their property, while sometimes risking their own lives. Our findings show that the spread of COVID-19 is under control in Madagascar, as the recovery rate of confirmed cases is 93 per cent, with a 1.2 per cent mortality rate. May the entire Malagasy people also be warmly thanked for their conscientiousness and understanding throughout this difficult ordeal and sacrifice combined with patriotism that they have shown during this dark page of the history of the country and all other nations of the world.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Madagascar believes that we must urgently make up for the time that the world has lost with regard to collective and synergistic deliberations and actions to deal with the effects of COVID-19.

In that regard, it has become imperative to: develop and promote a new concept involving new innovative response instruments fostering global, regional and local initiatives to come up with medical solutions, in particular treatments and vaccines; strengthen international cooperation in the area of health care to enhance the comparative advantages of every country in the multiplicity of models adapted to the level of technology and innovation of the countries concerned and advocate universal access to innovative practices and scientific data; and establish mechanisms for financing health-care systems.

Given the global health challenge posed by COVID-19, those proposals could be realized only through unprecedented cooperation among nations, the scientific and medical research community, the pharmaceutical industry and multilateral partners.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Madagascar intends to catch up in terms of its development. Within that framework, large-scale priority measures are being taken in several areas, such as strengthening the fight against corruption, particularly at the level of public administration. As guarantors of good governance, the security and justice sectors are also being strengthened. Despite the impact of COVID-19 on our country's resources, respect for the rule of law and the advancement of a responsible democracy are providing us with the momentum to hold senatorial elections in December 2020 as senators' terms will end in January 2021.

Economic development and social progress remains our country's the number-one priority, as only shared prosperity can beneficially effect the social welfare of our people and ensure a better future for our children.

Today, the international community stands together with us as a partner in our many initiatives to meet the important development challenges facing Madagascar. I take this opportunity to thank our partners for their full commitment to Madagascar and its people.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the limits of multilateralism in terms of cooperation in the area of public health, which, as I mentioned earlier, must be imperatively rectified in a number of various and important spheres so that achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda is not entirely jeopardized by the pandemic's effects. In the light of our shared challenges, Madagascar calls for a new universal multilateral initiative through the adoption of a post-COVID-19 global agenda under the auspices of the United Nations.

Such an initiative, which could have a specific timeline, would be geared towards better delegating and coordinating all our multilateral commitments and actions to counter the major socioeconomic risks posed by the current health crisis, particularly on the most vulnerable economies.

Such an approach, which we hope will be more focused and dynamic, will enable us together to regain confidence in ourselves and breathe new life into the ideals of solidarity and multilateralism that bring us together within the Organization.

Today more than ever, it is the responsibility of every Member State of the Organization to adhere to the ideals of the Charter on which the UN was founded and strengthen its standing as the ideal framework for international cooperation to resolve major global problems, such as COVID-19. That is the basic condition necessary for successfully building the United Nations that we need in order to achieve the future we all want.

I wish every success to the work of the seventy-fifth session, and thank you for your attention.

Syria (see also A/75/PV.13, annex IX)

Statement by Mr. Walid Al-Moualem, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 13th meeting of the General Assembly

[Original: Arabic; English translation provided by the delegation]

The United Nations was born after the Second World War out of a global consensus on the need to maintain international peace and security and to promote friendly relations between nations. These relations were to be based on respect for equality and the right of people to self-determination, without resort to force or the threat of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any nation and in any manner inconsistent with United Nations principles. But where are we in all of this? Do these principles and values truly govern today's international relations? Or have they become mere talking points for political and media consumption?

If we are honest with ourselves, we must admit that the answer is clear. We are straying further every day from the principles and values that underpin the United Nations and international norms. This is because some governments have illegally imposed their own agendas on other nations and have used the United Nations for the sole purpose of furthering those agendas.

Paradoxically, the main theme for this year's General Debate is "The future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism — confronting COVID-19 through effective multilateral action". But quite frankly the situation today does not bode well for the future we want, nor does it reflect the United Nations we need. We want a secure and prosperous future, free from terrorism, occupation, and inhumane sanctions. We want a future that respects international law and promotes dialogue and understanding between nations. We need a United Nations that upholds the principles and purposes of its Charter and unequivocally stands against wars and warmongers. We need a United Nations that supports its members while avoiding politicization, illegal interference, and attempts to destroy nations and communities. This is what we have wanted all along. This is what we need today more than ever before. This is more true as we confront COVID-19, which has posed global humanitarian and socioeconomic challenges that have spared no nation. It has created exceptional conditions to the extent that we are forced to address each other today remotely and through pre-recorded statements. The important question is: will this new reality compel some to put aside their narrow interests and return to the right path?

Today's imperative is that we combat this pandemic together through multilateral joint action, with deeds and not with words alone, to build a more equal world, better equipped to withstand crises and achieve real sustainable development for all.

This is what we hope and work towards. Unfortunately, the reality on the ground is the complete opposite. Political agendas continue to take precedence over humanitarian agendas. As the COVID-19 pandemic rages across the world, unilateral coercive measures imposed on Syrian people and other peoples are being

renewed instead of lifted. New measures, such as the so called “Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act,” are being added under false pretexts. “The Caesar Syria Civilian Suffocation Act” would have been a more fitting name. When the delivery of life-saving medications and medical equipment is blocked in the middle of a pandemic, does that really protect civilians or does it deprive them of treatment? When efforts to rebuild Syria after the destruction brought by terrorists are obstructed, does that really serve Syrians or does it reduce employment, worsen living conditions, and prevent the return of refugees and IDPs? When wheat fields are burned down, oil fields are looted, and the energy sector is targeted, does that really protect civilians or does it deny them access to food, heating, gas, and electricity?

I could go on, but I think it’s clear that the real purpose of the Act is to put pressure on Syrians, their livelihoods, and their daily lives. It is an inhumane attempt to suffocate Syrians, just like George Floyd and others were cruelly suffocated in the United States, and just like Israel suffocates Palestinians on a daily basis. Though the tactics may differ, the essence is the same.

Unilateral coercive measures imposed by some countries clearly violate international law. The humanitarian exemptions they repeatedly invoke do not exist on the ground. These are false claims intended to cover their inhumanity and save face. We call on all affected countries and those that reject such measures to close ranks against them and alleviate their impact on our peoples. This should happen through cooperation, coordination, and concrete political, economic, and commercial means.

Mr. President,

We all keep repeating in our statements that terrorism is a constant danger to stability and prosperity across the world and one of the main threats to international peace and security. Unfortunately, some, if not many, do not act on these statements. All relevant Security Council resolutions have yet to find their way from the UN archives to implementation. Our joint actions haven’t risen to meet the threat posed by terrorism. To the contrary, there are those who invest in, support, and fuel terrorism, moving terrorists from one region to another and from one country to another, all in the service of their suspicious agendas.

Of course, when it comes to sponsors and financiers of terrorism, the current Turkish regime reigns supreme. The Turkish regime is one of the main sponsors of terror in Syria and the region. It has facilitated the passage of tens of thousands of foreign terrorists into Syria and continues to provide all forms of support to Al-Nusra Front and its affiliated terrorist groups that have massacred Syrians. It carries out a ‘Turkification’ and forced displacement policies in the territories it occupies in Syria. And in what can only be considered a collective punishment against a million civilians that have rejected the Turkish occupation in Hasakah and a dozen other towns, the Turkish regime has deliberately and repeatedly cut the city’s water supply, endangering the lives of civilians, especially in the COVID-19 pandemic. In legal terms, this amounts to a war crime and a crime against humanity. By the way, this is the same criminal behavior that terrorists exhibited when they cut the water supply to millions of civilians in Damascus in 2017. Then, just like today, the self-styled human rights defenders did not even lift a finger.

To make matters worse, the Turkish regime has failed to commit to the Astana outcomes and the Sochi agreements on Idlib. It has moved terrorists and mercenaries — referred to by some as “moderate opposition” — from Syria to Libya.

It has violated Iraq's sovereignty, used refugees as bargaining chips against Europe, and laid claim by force to energy resources in the Mediterranean. The current Turkish regime has become a rogue and outlaw regime under international law. Its policies and actions, which threaten the security and stability of the whole region, must be stopped.

Mr. President,

The continued illegitimate presence of American and Turkish forces on Syrian soil meets all the legal conditions of an occupation. The Syrian Arab Republic will spare no effort to end this occupation by all means possible under international law. The actions of these forces, taken directly or through their terrorist agents, secessionist militias, or manufactured and illegitimate entities, are null and void, with no legal effect. They are a flagrant violation of Syria's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. In this regard, we condemn once again all the crimes of the so-called Global Coalition committed since the start of its illegal intervention against Syrians in the Jazira region. These include syphoning the oil, preventing farmers from selling wheat to the Syrian state, attacking towns and Syrian army checkpoints, and destroying houses and infrastructure.

I also condemn the actions of the so-called SDF. These secessionist militias are plotting against Syria's unity and its people and looting its resources. They detain and kill civilians that oppose them in northeast Syria and assassinate regional figures. My message to them is simple: stand with your country and learn from history before it's too late.

His Excellency President Bashar Al-Assad, president of the Syrian Arab Republic, made our position clear on all of the above, when speaking before the elected members of Parliament:

"In the middle of global convulsions and in the throes of chaos, obfuscation, and lies, we will not lose focus. We will not miss the target. Just as our enemies' policy is one of supporting terrorism, our policy is to decimate terrorism and liberate remaining territories to restore our territorial integrity and protect our people. Timing will depend on the readiness of our armed forces to march into battle. When the battle starts, we will not distinguish between homegrown terrorists and foreign ones. We will not differentiate between terrorists and occupying forces. We will not make a distinction between Zionists, Turks, and Americans. On our territory, they are all enemies."

In this regard, I pay tribute to the Syrian Arab Army for their sacrifices. It was in large part thanks to them that we have been exceptionally successful in our war on terrorism. I would also like to thank our allies and friends for their valuable support and assistance in this noble fight.

Mr. President,

The Syrian government has always engaged in the political process. We have participated openly in talks in Geneva, consultations in Moscow, and meetings in Astana. We have dealt positively with the outcomes of the Syrian National Dialogue Congress in Sochi, including the formation of a committee to discuss the constitution. We have had serious and constructive conversations with the Special Envoy for Syria, in the leadup to the formation and convening of the Constitutional Committee in

Geneva. We hope that the committee will succeed. Success, however, is only possible if there is no external interference whatsoever in its work and by any party. Since the committee was formed and started its work, it has become the Master of Itself. It is up to the committee to decide its methods of work and its recommendations. The whole process from A to Z must be exclusively Syrian-led and Syrian-owned. Syrians have the sole right of determining the future of their country.

Mr. President,

Israel persists in its systematic and grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the Syrian Golan, occupied since 1967. These include settlement construction, racial discrimination, arbitrary detention, torture, and looting of the Golan's natural resources. Over the past few years, Israel has also supported terrorists and launched repeated attacks on Syrian territories. It is worth noting that, as these violations continue, the so-called international community has remained silent. Some have even supported Israel and perpetuated the occupation. This is yet another sign of the hypocrisy of these countries who only champion human rights when it suits them politically.

That being said, it is delusional to think that the difficult situation we face in Syria could change the fact that the Golan has and always will be part of Syria, and we will not rest until recover it fully, up to the borders of 4 June 1967. This issue is not subject to any bargaining, blackmailing, or statute of limitations. No illegal Israeli action and no US decision will change anything at all. They are null and void and carry no legal effect under international law and relevant UN resolutions, notably Security Council resolution 497 (1981).

Mr. President,

As a matter of principle, Syria reiterates our steadfast support for the right of the Palestinian people to establish their own independent state, with Jerusalem as its capital, along the lines of 4 June 1967. Refugees must be guaranteed the right to return to their homeland in keeping with international law and relevant UN resolutions. We condemn the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories. We hold countries supporting Israel responsible for the implications of these crimes. Any decisions, steps, or deals that run counter to relevant UN resolutions and violate Palestinian rights are untenable and void in form and in substance.

Mr. President,

Syria renews its support for the Islamic Republic of Iran against the US policy aimed at undermining the nuclear agreement and destabilizing the region. Such policy reflects the US administration's disregard for international law and their obligations under international agreements. Syria also condemns the unjust economic embargos on Cuba and Venezuela. We stress that the sovereign rights of these nations must be respected, and we reject any form of interference in their internal affairs.

Thank you.

Singapore (see also A/75/PV.13, annex X)

Statement by Mr. Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 13th meeting of the General Assembly

Mr President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

This is the first time in the UN General Assembly's 75-year history that world leaders are not gathering in person. The decision to proceed with the High Level Week largely virtually is testament to our commitment to multilateralism and the UN.

I would like to congratulate His Excellency Volkan Bozkir on his election as President of the 75th session of the General Assembly. I would also thank His Excellency Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, President of the 74th session, for steering the UN through this very challenging period.

COVID-19 has become the defining crisis of our time. The global death toll continues to rise, and the global economy, trade, and travel have all been severely disrupted. Millions of jobs and hundreds of thousands of lives have been lost.

The world is facing a period of prolonged turmoil. The multilateral system is confronted by nationalism, xenophobia, the rejection of free trade and global economic integration, and the bifurcation of technology and supply chains. But these threats are not new. COVID-19 has in fact accelerated and intensified these pre-existing trends. Protectionism and unilateral action will ultimately be self-defeating.

First, modern supply chains are very complex. It is extremely difficult to completely onshore all production of key items since the materials and expertise from elsewhere will always be needed at multiple steps of the process. Many countries experienced disruptions to the flow of essential goods during the lockdowns. Supply chains based on "just-in-time" efficiency are now being reviewed on the basis of "just-in-case".

Second, bifurcation shrinks the global pool of knowledge and reduces opportunities for the sharing of the benefits of research and innovation. It is because countries were open to sharing scientific knowledge that we were able to produce test kits quickly during this pandemic in the early phase. As my Prime Minister said at the Global Vaccine Summit last June, what we need now is vaccine multilateralism. We need greater international cooperation to ensure equitable and universal access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Third, breaching contractual obligations for the export of critical goods and movement of people erodes trust between nations.

Our path to the post-COVID-19 "new normal" will not be linear. At each stage of the way, all countries need to balance the public health concerns with economic and social concerns, and make trade-offs based on their unique national circumstances. Continued international cooperation is key to overcoming the devastating impact of the pandemic and to rebuilding. We need to build greater trust, and we need to learn from one another. We also need to cooperate to establish safe protocols in order to re-start travel again.

Importance of Multilateralism

The pandemic has not changed Singapore's fundamental belief in the necessity of multilateralism. Small countries make up over half of the membership at the UN. It is essential to have a system where small sovereign states have an equal voice and disputes can be settled peacefully, in accordance with international law and agreed rules. This is why Singapore worked with a cross-regional group of countries to establish the Forum of Small States back in 1992. The Forum of Small States has always been a champion of the UN and for a rules-based multilateral system. You can count on the Forum of Small States to continue speaking up for a stronger UN and for greater multilateralism.

But the multilateral system does not only advance the interests of just small states. Large nations also benefit from acting through multilateral institutions because they gain political legitimacy. We all benefit from a more peaceful, stable and prosperous global environment. Multilateral institutions provide an avenue for countries to pool our ideas and to work together to deal with the common challenges facing humanity, including COVID-19 now, and are also essential for us to advance our shared interests.

The current system is not perfect. Much more has to be done to strengthen and reform the rules-based multilateral system. It needs to be fit for purpose, and be able to adapt to the changing realities of today.

Overcoming and Recovering from COVID-19

There are several short- and medium-term challenges that we need to overcome. First, we need to defeat COVID-19 together. We need to understand that none of us, in nations large or small, will be safe until all of us are safe together. And what we need now is more global cooperation, not less. We have to ensure that medical supplies and scientific collaboration can continue to flow across borders, and we need to intensify our exchange of information and infection protocols, if we hope to resume some semblance of a "normal" life, including the resumption of international travel, and to do all this safely.

In this context, the pursuit of vaccine multilateralism is critical to ensure universal and equitable access to a COVID-19 vaccine, and to maximise the global health impact of an eventual vaccine. Singapore and Switzerland have been working with thirteen other like-minded partners as Friends of the COVID 19 Vaccine Global Access Facility. COVAX, for short. The COVAX Facility seeks to reduce risk and facilitate equitable access to vaccines by all nations.

We continue to support the World Health Organisation's (WHO) efforts in formulating responses to COVID-19 and to facilitating vaccine development. Post-pandemic, it may be necessary to review how the WHO processes can be improved further, but for now, we should focus on the immediate priority of overcoming the pandemic.

Second, we need to work together to rebuild our communities and institutions. In the immediate term, we need to help those who have lost their family members, lost livelihoods and had their education interrupted. We should also consider ways to tackle the inequalities which COVID-19 has exposed and in some cases exacerbated. We need to build more equitable societies.

Ensuring an open trading system is key to rebuilding efforts. No country can be completely self-sufficient. It is in the interest of all countries that we uphold and strengthen supply chain connectivity. In fact, seeking more markets and diversifying our sources of supply will build resilience. This is why Singapore issued a Joint

Ministerial Statement affirming supply chain connectivity with Australia, Canada, Chile, New Zealand, Brunei and Myanmar, and at the UN, spearheaded the Joint Statement on Open Markets, Flow of Essential Goods and Supply Chain Connectivity which, I am glad to report, had 175 co-sponsors.

It is hard to over-emphasise that the open, rules-based multilateral trading system is a foundation for sustainable global recovery. The system has allowed countries to trade in goods and services in mutually beneficial ways. It has raised hundreds of millions of people from poverty. In the aftermath of COVID-19, we should look at ways to support and strengthen this system to make it work better for the future. We also need to rebuild safe and reliable transport networks to facilitate the resumption of people mobility.

Third, as we rebuild, we must continue the important work of increasing resilience to meet the challenges posed by the digital revolution, by cybersecurity threats, by climate change, and transboundary pollution.

I shall focus today on the challenges posed specifically by the digital revolution and climate change. We must harness new digital technology for the benefit of all our societies whilst mitigating the possible negative impact. COVID-19 has accelerated the deployment of artificial intelligence, robotics, digital payments, e-government services, and remote work.

At the national level, we need to ensure digital inclusion, especially for communities such as older persons, people with disabilities and the financially disadvantaged. We have a responsibility to help our people to upskill and re-skill to be equipped for jobs of the future. We also have to help our businesses leverage digital tools to grow, become more efficient, more competitive and to find new customers.

At the international level, governments, businesses, and individuals need to be able to transact and transfer data securely across borders. It is thus critical to collectively develop a trusted, open, and inclusive cyberspace underpinned by international law and norms of responsible State behaviour. This is why Singapore strongly supports the UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation. We will also continue to work with the UN Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security and the Open-Ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of ICTs in the Context of International Security, the OEWG, for short.

On climate change, the Paris Agreement established a very important global consensus for action on climate change. We must not lose sight of our goal to preserve this planet for future generations. COVID-19 showed how inextricably linked our well-being is to the health of our one and only planet and for the environment that envelopes us. It is irrefutable that respect for biodiversity and wildlife is essential for humankind's own health and our existence. Countries should therefore align recovery efforts with longterm climate goals.

Climate change presents a clear and present danger for Singapore and indeed, for all other small island nations. Although our impact on global emissions is small, we are especially vulnerable, and that is why Singapore takes our climate action obligations so seriously. We submitted our enhanced 2030 Nationally Determined Contribution to the Paris Agreement and Long-Term Low-Emissions Development Strategy for 2050 and beyond to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in March 2020, even in the midst of tackling this current pandemic.

The Post-COVID Multilateral System

Countries cannot hope to go back to the way things were before COVID 19 came upon us, and neither can the multilateral system. We must adapt and we must reinforce our international institutions so that they remain open, inclusive, transparent, and fit for purpose.

The role of the UN, in particular, is crucial. It is indispensable as a universal platform for cooperation, based on the principles of equality, mutual respect, mutual benefit and international law. But the UN itself must adapt and reform in order to respond effectively to contemporary and future challenges if it is to remain relevant for the next 75 years.

The UN Secretary-General has already initiated some of this essential work. But the reform of the UN should not only be geared towards meeting new challenges, but also on promoting the forging of consensus amongst Member States on emerging issues. There needs to be continued emphasis on longstanding issues like support for Small Island Developing States and the Least Developed Countries.

We need to concurrently revitalise the General Assembly and make a genuine attempt to reform the Security Council. International governance, now more than ever before, needs to be more representative, more inclusive, and more open. We need to take into account a wide spectrum of views and do more to acknowledge the rich diversity of our global community. The UN and the Secretary-General's ability to take on current and future challenges also depends on the political and financial commitment from member states. It is thus essential that we continue to support.

Likewise, other multilateral institutions, such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), need to be reformed as well. The WTO is the neutral arbiter for international trade disputes with the mandate to monitor and enforce internationally agreed trade laws. Singapore, as a strong supporter of a rules based multilateral trading system, believes in the value of the WTO, and this has brought decades of prosperity to all of us. However, the WTO's rules were designed for an agricultural and manufacturing-based world economy, and today are in urgent need of reform. The world needs appropriate rules for services, especially digital services and intellectual property, in preparation for this digital age that is unfolding in front of us.

Singapore is committed to working with others to keep the WTO relevant and well-functioning. For instance, we worked with 22 other like-minded countries to establish the Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement to keep the WTO's arbitration mechanism functioning.

We expect the World Intellectual Property Organisation's role to grow as the world moves progressively online, into cyberspace, and new value is created.

We must seize the opportunity of the UN's 75th anniversary and that presented by the current COVID-19 pandemic to reinvigorate the rules-based multilateral system. We have a chance to collectively recreate the conditions for inclusive economic growth envisioned in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We need to strengthen our collective ability to respond to future shocks, and COVID-19 has been a clear and present example of that shock, and we need to be able to respond through the multilateral system.

This current crisis has brought into sharp relief our common humanity. We must not leave anyone behind or alone.

Thank you very much.

Senegal (see also A/75/PV.13, annex XI)

Statement by Mr. Amadou Ba, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad of the Republic of Senegal

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 13th meeting of the General Assembly

[Original: French]

Mr. President of the General Assembly,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Heads of State and Government and Heads of Delegation,

Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations,

At the start of my remarks, on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Macky SALL, President of the Senegalese Republic and People, I would like to extend my warm congratulations to the Republic of Turkey, for the decision to elect Ambassador Volkan BOZKIR to lead the work of the 75th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

He has Senegal's support and cooperation and I wish him every success in his august duties in the service of the Member States.

I also thank his predecessor, Professor Tijjani MUHAMMAD-BANDE, for his outstanding work in a most difficult context, marked by an unprecedented health crisis of Covid-19.

To the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, I reiterate Senegal's support for his continued efforts to reform the United Nations system, as the bedrock of more inclusive multilateralism.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Although we had planned to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the UN in grandiose fashion, we find ourselves in a virtual environment, physically separated from one another because of the pandemic.

To paraphrase President Macky Sall, the infinitesimally small got the better of us. It is an unprecedented even in the Organization's 75-year existence!

Accordingly, the theme chosen, entitled "The future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism — confronting COVID-19 through effective multilateral action", could not be more timely, as it calls on us to take a clearer look at our shared challenges.

Even more so than a progress report, the commemoration of the anniversary provides a meaningful opportunity to critically examine the Organization's 75-year history, including its achievements, as well as its limitations, which hinder achieving current objectives.

With that in mind, I will address three major topics. First, I will speak about the imperative of finding a collective and united response to the global health emergency brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Secondly, given the uncertainty of the situation, I will discuss the need for the United Nations, whose mission is universal, to remain focused on its major priorities through its three main pillars of peace and security, sustainable development — in particular the climate emergency — and the promotion and protection of human rights.

Lastly, I am going to share some lessons learned from Senegal's experience as a developing country, particularly in the context of its pandemic response strategy.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The year 2020 will undoubtedly be remembered as a dark time, indelibly marked by the pandemic, whose devastating effects on every aspect of our lives have demonstrated — as if there were any need by now to demonstrate — our collective vulnerability.

At this time, I pay tribute to the memory of the hundreds of thousands of COVID-19 victims and wish the millions of patients sick with the disease a speedy recovery.

Let us commend all actors who have taken up against this collective threat, in particular the health-care personnel, to whom I express my admiration and firm support.

To the international organizations, in particular the World Health Organization, which is responsible for coordinating the global response to this threat, I reiterate Senegal's support.

Accordingly, my delegation calls for the effective implementation of the resolution adopted by consensus by the seventy-third World Health Assembly, particularly with a view to ensuring rapid, affordable, safe and quality access to essential health-care services and technologies, such as diagnostic tests, medicines and vaccines.

We firmly believe that any potential vaccine or treatment developed in the fight against COVID-19 should be considered a global public good and made available to all countries.

In addition, we must work together to ensure the availability of and access to essential health-care services, in particular quality primary care, which is key to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially Sustainable Development Goal 3.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The devastating impact of the crisis on our economies is indisputable! The collapse of economic growth and consequent dearth of sources of foreign exchange and shock to commodity prices, well as the decline in exports, investments and migrant remittances, have put the world economy in an crisis situation the likes of which have not been seen since the 1930s.

Although it had initiated sustained growth dynamics, Africa, like the rest of the world, is suffering the full impact of the far-reaching crisis.

Therefore, in order to ensure a proper recovery of our economies and ensure global sociopolitical stability, we will need to further focus on international solidarity and cooperation.

That is why His Excellency Mr. Macky Sall has called for the cancellation of public debt and the restructuring of private debt, as well as on developed countries to honour their commitments to official development assistance.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the efforts made by the members of the G-20, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in support of the Debt Service Suspension Initiative.

What Africa truly requires is not a debt moratorium, but rather debt cancellation in order to foster economic and social resilience, as well as build effective health-care systems.

In that regard, the Secretary-General's call for a large-scale multilateral response to marshal financial resources of at least 10 per cent of the world's GDP deserves our full support, as it shows us the way to effectively address global challenges.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

During its 75-years existence, the United Nations — the quintessential symbol of multilateralism — has made great strides in promoting international peace and security, mutual understanding among peoples, sustainable development and respect for human dignity.

This is evidenced by the many peace operations throughout the world, decolonization and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as the support and assistance that the UN provides to all people in need in the world, regardless of their origins or background.

Undeniably, the Organization has contributed greatly to the realization of our shared goal of bringing about a world free from the scourge of war, poverty and exclusion.

We stand in need today of reinvigorated multilateralism and a reformed and effective universal Organization, as collective answers to our existential questions, so that no one is left behind.

Together, we can face the multiple challenges of terrorism, violent extremism, armed conflict, financing for development, illicit financial flows, migration, poverty, exclusion, public health and climate change.

In that regard, it is legitimate to ask why Africa remains the only continent that does not have a permanent seat on the Security Council, which devotes a large part of its agenda to the continent?

By hosting the ministerial meeting of the African Union Committee of Ten Heads of State and Government, entrusted with representing Africa's voice on the reform of the Security Council, Senegal reaffirmed its commitment to the issue which, more than a moral imperative, is a way to revive the founding spirit of the Charter and its ideals.

Admittedly, Africa continues to face political and security challenges, which hinder sustainable development efforts.

In the Sahel, for example, terrorism and violent extremism have found fertile ground, with their resultant death toll, destruction of infrastructure and looting, thereby maintaining an environment of fear. All of that is against the backdrop of political and institutional instability, poverty, exclusion, porous borders and illiteracy, among others.

That state of affairs, however, should not obscure the other Africa, which is entrepreneurial, innovates, invents, succeeds and is admirably dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic in the face of the most alarmist forecasts.

The youth of the continent — 60 per cent of the population is under 24 years of age — and its immense natural resources and vitality all represent tremendous potential in terms of economic and social transformation. The time has therefore come to seriously look at Africa in this light.

As President Macky Sall recently recalled

“For a world economy that is running out of steam, building Africa represents a source of opportunities and investments”.

Therefore, the decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals, which we have just launched, is a fresh opportunity for us to work towards a revitalized post-COVID-19 recovery and the full implementation of 2030 Agenda.

Furthermore, in implementing the Declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, which Senegal fully endorses, we must renew our commitment to the agenda for UN reform in order to restore multilateralism to its rightful place with the United Nations at its centre.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The determination with which we are combating the COVID-19 pandemic must also inspire us to fight effectively against climate change and safeguard biodiversity.

Indeed, there is no need to recall that climate change is having a devastating effect on populations, particularly in that it increases poverty, rural exodus, social exclusion and intercommunal tensions over natural resources.

For example, like several countries in the Sahel region, Senegal recently recorded the equivalent of a month’s amount of rain in one day, which upended the lives of thousands of people.

If we want to avoid the apocalypse for future generations, we have no alternative but to implement the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement. In particular, developed countries must honour their financial commitments, including the Green Climate Fund.

Equally of concern is the challenge concerning the loss of biodiversity. As His Excellency Mr. Macky Sall noted,

“The loss of biodiversity is a global emergency that is of concern to all of us [as part of the same ecosystem]”.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In order to address the COVID-19 pandemic, Senegal has launched the Economic and Social Resiliency Programme with funding in the amount of 1,000 billion CFA francs, or \$1.6 billion.

Supported through the financing of partners and donors, the Programme has made it possible to meet emergency and material health-care needs, assist households and the diaspora population, support the private sector, including through tax incentives, and ensure an adequate supply of fuel.

The Programme, which incorporates the SDGs, prioritizes health and pharmaceutical sovereignty, the resilience of populations and macroeconomic and financial stability.

Within that framework, on the instructions of the Head of State, the Government has launched a 500 billion CFA franc investment plan for the period from 2020 to 2024 to ensure the health-care system's resiliency and sustainability.

As a result of those efforts, Senegal was ranked second in the Global Response Index with regard to its response to the pandemic.

In that regard, the 2019-2023 Adjusted and Accelerated Priority Action Plan of the Plan for an Emerging Senegal Plan has been revised upwards from \$4,098 to \$14,712 billion, contributing to a sum of more than \$26 billion in total investments.

The crucial issue of climate change has been prioritized within that framework, particularly through the implementation of the Green Emerging Senegal Plan.

In that regard, an investment programme is dedicating 50 billion CFA francs, or approximately \$90 million, to the sustainable reforestation of the national territory, the establishment of a national forest research institute and the Senegalese Forest Protection Agency in order to strengthen current policies in that area.

Concerning foreign policy, in remaining faithful to its principles under the leadership of its Head of State, Senegal continues to advocate good neighbourliness, regional integration, the promotion of peace and human rights, and international cooperation and solidarity.

Accordingly, I renew my country's continued commitment to a definitive return to peace and stability in Mali.

That is the entire motivation behind the efforts of His Excellency President Macky Sall, particularly within the framework of ECOWAS, with a view to supporting Malian stakeholders to come together in the best interests of Mali for the benefit of Malians and our entire subregion.

Senegal is pursuing those efforts within MINUSMA — a valuable contribution illustrating my country's commitment to peacekeeping, with a view to promoting peace, security and stability throughout the world.

It is that same faith in human solidarity and justice that is driving Senegal in its role as Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

In that regard, we urge the international community to step up efforts to realize the right of the Palestinian people to an independent and viable State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, coexisting in peace and security with the State of Israel, with both living within secure and internationally recognized borders.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would be remiss if I failed to mention that the future we want continues to depend on lessons learned, particularly those relating to the health crisis. Despite our resilience, the pandemic has called into question doing business as usual, forcing us to break with past practices.

As we are all in the same boat facing the same vulnerabilities, Senegal is convinced that there is no alternative to working collectively and in solidarity.

Therefore, the sustainable development that we aspire to for ourselves and future generations must be centred on our shared humanity in harmony with the laws of nature.

That is what underpins the new world order advocated by President Macky Sall. It is an order based on justice, the rule of law and fair and equitable governance in full cooperation, solidarity and mutual respect — that is to say inclusive multilateralism, which will be quintessentially embodied by a reformed and effective United Nations.

I thank you for your kind attention.

Liechtenstein (see also A/75/PV.13, annex XII)

**Statement by Ms. Katrin Eggenberger, Minister for Foreign Affairs,
Justice and Culture of the Principality of Liechtenstein**

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 13th meeting of the General Assembly

Mr. President

It is an honor to address this Assembly today. We all wish we could be in New York now — and benefit from the unique opportunity that High-Level week offers to engage with colleagues, to present our initiatives, to exchange views. Given the challenging circumstances, there can be no question that the decision to hold this meeting in virtual format this year is right. My delegation in New York was among those who presented the very first General Assembly resolution adopted after the lockdown, supported by an unprecedented number of cosponsors. The central message of that resolution was solidarity in the time of the pandemic. Today, I want to offer a message of solidarity to the city of New York which was hit very hard by the pandemic, has shown remarkable resilience and has been an outstanding host for us throughout.

Mr. President

The ongoing pandemic is a difficult and humbling experience for all of us. The temptation to wish for the quickest possible return to status quo ante is very strong and is understandable. But the sober reality is that there is no way of going back to where we were. The pandemic has changed our reality and living conditions globally in a fundamental manner and had a profound impact. Most importantly perhaps, it has exacerbated the existing inequalities, both within and among nations. Health care, education and stability in income are the most obvious areas in this respect. And those who were at a disadvantage before the pandemic have often been hit the hardest and suffered additional setbacks. Overcoming the crisis is therefore an enormous challenge — but also a unique opportunity. Only in creating better living conditions for more people will we be able to be better prepared and to enhance our collective resilience. The Decade for Action takes on additional significance in this respect, as the 2030 Agenda provides us with the perfect framework for building back better. Had we done better in achieving the goals reflected in the 2030 Agenda — from gender equality to health care, from inequality to climate change — we would have been much better prepared to fight the pandemic effectively and in a spirit of genuine solidarity. Focusing on the 2030 Agenda must therefore be on the very top of our agenda for this session and beyond.

Mr. President

Even before the pandemic started the Secretary-General identified erosion of trust in institutions and the rule of law as a major risk for peaceful societies. I shared his concern then, and our recent experience strengthens our belief in the need for strong and accountable institutions which has been a common theme in the analytical reporting on the impact of the pandemic. Only where high levels of trust in institutions exist, can the response to the pandemic be coordinated, unified and effective. Lack of access to the relevant institutions, inequality in treatment and corruption fundamentally undermine such trust and must be important entry points for our collective response. We will continue giving the highest priority to challenges

to the rule of law and the implementation of SDG 16. The upcoming Special Session of this Assembly on corruption becomes even more relevant against the background of the pandemic. More broadly though, the fight for the rule of law at the international level remains a central task for us.

Mr. President

The United Nations itself is one of the finest triumphs of the rule of law. 75 years ago, States embraced a set of common rules, reflected in the provisions of the UN Charter, and agreed to solve conflicts jointly and peacefully, to subject the use of force to very tight and strict rules and to embrace the primacy of international law. More than ever today, we are conscious of the central importance of this message and realize to what extent we can benefit from the effort to build back better after the Second World War. But more than ever, also, are we confronted with the reality that there is a trend among some of our partners to question the centrality of the rule of law and indeed the need to tackle threats to international peace and to our planet collectively. We hope that this gathering, held in an imperfect format, will result in a resounding collective and unequivocal commitment to multilateralism and to the rule of law. Adhering to the rules that we have agreed on, the respect for international law, is of central importance for small States, who make up the majority of the membership in this house. We defined the strengthening of international law as one of our priorities when we joined the United Nations 30 years ago. Liechtenstein will continue to stand up for the rule of law and for multilateralism. In particular we will continue promoting the respect for the rules that govern the use of force between States — the Charter provisions are clear in this respect, but they are increasingly diluted in practice, in particular through the manner in which the rules concerning self-defense are interpreted. This is particularly dangerous in an era of increased militarization and of cyberwarfare. We are working with our partners to help develop a clear understanding how international law applies to the cybersphere.

Mr. President

Enforcement has often been a weak spot even in the proudest achievements of treaty-making. For decades, we have had high and universal human rights standards, first reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For way too many around the globe, however, these standards are in stark contrast with the often cruel reality of their daily lives. A decisive step forward in the enforcement of international law was the creation of the International Criminal Court: It was set up to ensure that the crimes considered to be the most serious under international law do not go unpunished. Ensuring accountability was a task assigned first and foremost to the national justice systems who have the responsibility to investigate and prosecute. Only where States fail to fulfil their obligations does the ICC have a role, as a court of last resort. The international criminal justice project, with the ICC at its heart, has been remarkably successful. Almost two thirds of the UN membership have joined its founding treaty, and innovative accountability mechanisms such as the accountability mechanism for Syria (IIIM) have been created in support of accountability efforts. And nevertheless, the Court is under relentless attack: Staff members have been subjected to unprecedented measures simply for doing the work they are mandated to do. The Court as an institution is under constant political attack. We, together with many of our friends, have consistently rejected such measures that are both unacceptable and a dangerous precedent. For the majority of us who support the ICC this is a moment to come together, to forge a clear way ahead, to express unequivocal support for the Court, find practical ways to assist it and to remain faithful to the Rome Statute.

Mr. President

If the ICC is of crucial importance to enforce respect for international law, that same can be said of the Security Council. Sadly, the Council is failing in this task on a regular basis. Time and again, it proves unable to enforce respect for international humanitarian law, to prevent mass atrocities and to see to it that the law governing the use of force is observed. The Council continues to apply an outdated notion of security which hampers the relevance of its work — and it is paralysed in near permanent political standoffs. In this scenario, the veto power of the five Permanent Members has a pervasive pernicious effect. For multilateralism to be operational, we need to be able to take action also where the Council finds itself in a deadlock — in this Assembly. Where the action of the General Assembly has been limited in the past, it was by choice, not by law. As a function of the Security Council's failures to deliver, often due to the veto power, the responsibility of the General Assembly to step up and address these matters increases. We therefore believe that the General Assembly should meet and discuss every instance of a veto cast in the Security Council.

Mr. President

The pandemic is the defining challenge our time — in addressing its various dimensions, climate change and its manifold devastating effects have to be at the very center of our response. Enormous work has been done to design solutions that help us fight climate change. The Paris agreement was reached after painstaking and arduous negotiations. Hailed as a breakthrough by most, it was received with skepticism by others who criticized its largely voluntary nature. Today it seems that the Paris agreement is not sufficient to save the planet from ourselves. Too many States, in particular some with vast impact on our collective CO2 outputs, have not taken commitments sufficient to change course. We are far off the trajectory charted in Paris and in fact on track to reach unsustainable levels of global warming even earlier than projected. There is hope that we have not run out of time yet. But we are certainly doing so quickly. The effort necessary now must include not only the Governments assembled here, but also the private sector, civil society and in particular the voices of young people who are rightfully asking to be part of the decision-making that will have a profound impact on their lives.

Mr. President

The inequality gap is one of the biggest challenges in achieving the SDG's. This gap has widened dramatically and rapidly as a result of the pandemic, with devastating effect, both individually and collectively. Forced labor, as the most prevalent expression of modern slavery and human trafficking, has been the focus of our SDG work for a number of years now. Together with our partners — both Governments and private sector partners — we have set up the FAST initiative to help fight what is both a global human rights crisis and massively undermines the 2030 Agenda. Modern slavery and human trafficking make up one of the most profitable organized crime models. FAST stands for Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking and identifies tools for financial institutions to play an effective part in fighting these crimes — in the areas of compliance, responsible investment and financial innovation. The pandemic has made this work only more relevant. We are fully committed to continuing our work to implement FAST, both within in the UN system and beyond.

Mr. President

We are celebrating this year the 30th anniversary of our membership in the United Nations. Joining this organization was an essential step for our sovereignty, for a more assertive and independent foreign policy. The UN membership has solid support in our population, but also comes with expectations that we must work hard to meet. During the pandemic, people all over the world have instinctively looked for the United Nations to offer solutions and show a way forward. Not all these expectations have been met, while the specialized agencies in particular have done tremendous work. We will continue our political investment in the United Nations. We will continue being a voice that promotes the rule of law. And we will do our part to ensure that the intergovernmental bodies are also fit for the upcoming challenges. One element the pandemic has impressively underlined is the need for this Assembly to fully function at all times, in particular in times of crisis. We commend the effort and good will of all during these unprecedented restrictions for our core multilateral forum. But we have a collective duty to prepare better for the next time. The inclusive and universal nature of the General Assembly is too important for it to fall into paralysis when it is most needed. We therefore undertake, together with many partners, to equip the General Assembly with all the tools necessary so it can implement its mandate even in the most difficult of circumstances, including through voted decisions. This Assembly is as strong as we want it to be, and should be as strong as we need it to be to justify the trust put into the United Nations by the peoples it was created to serve. Liechtenstein is fully committed to earning and increasing that trust, and to working together with all interested States represented in this historical hall.

Thank you.

Austria (see also A/75/PV.13, annex XIII)

Statement by Mr. Alexander Schallenberg, Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of Austria

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 13th meeting of the General Assembly

Mr. President! Excellencies! Ladies and Gentlemen,

75 years ago, the world cautiously rose from the horrors and the destruction of the Second World War. Humanity had experienced the darkest abyss of racial hate, cruelty and violence. And Austria is fully aware of its own responsibilities in this regard.

But after the devastation and suffering there was also hope. Nations came together to break the endless circle of violence and despair which marked human history for centuries. The vision of a world at peace received its institutional form.

Since its creation, the United Nations has worked for the progress of humanity. It has made our planet safer by setting and improving global standards on human rights, rule of law, accountability, conflict prevention, peacekeeping and disarmament.

Since joining the UN in 1955 Austria is proud and honoured to contribute in all these areas. Whether in 60 years of Peacekeeping, or as a member — and current president — of the Human Rights Council. Austria will continue to do its part and is ready assume further responsibilities. For this particular reason, we are a candidate for the UN Security Council 2027-2028 and hope for your support.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

As any organization, the UN is not free of faults. The United Nations are often side-lined from solving conflicts. And the Security Council all too often fails to achieve consensus on how to bring peace to the world's worst crises. But overall — if we compare today's standards with those 75 years ago, for example on children's education, women's rights, child mortality, access to clean drinking water or extreme poverty and hunger, the UN can really be proud of its achievements.

However, we continue to face numerous threats, some of which would have been familiar to those meeting in 1945:

- dozens of armed conflicts,
- nearly 80 million forcibly displaced persons, as well as
- terrorism, political repression and extreme poverty.

There are also new and emerging threats:

- Cyber warfare and the risk of failing technological governance,
- bioterrorism,
- new geopolitical tensions due to an increasingly polycentric global system
- and climate change as the potential future super-crisis.

At present, one threat, however, towers over all of them: the spread of COVID-19. It affects everyone, everywhere at the same time. The pandemic changes the way we live and the way we work.

Just look at this General Debate. I would have preferred to speak to you in the General Assembly Hall instead of from Austria. But at least I have the honour to address you today from the UN headquarter in Vienna. And I would have preferred to meet personally with colleagues from around the world rather than via video or telephone. The pandemic deprives us of one of the most essential tools of international relations: enriching personal encounters amongst colleagues. Thus, we have to undertake even more efforts to keep the lines of communication open!

Mr President,

COVID-19 has taught us the hard way that much we take for granted is more vulnerable than we believe.

- Instead of enjoying the liberty of freely moving between continents and within Europe, the pandemic forces us to grapple with travel restrictions. And we have seen only the tip of the iceberg of the pandemic's social and economic impact. A lot of the progress on reaching the Sustainable Development Goals, which has been achieved over the past decades is endangered today.
- Nearly 24 million children and young people will drop out or not have access to school next year due to the pandemic.
- COVID-19 has triggered the most severe recession in almost a century. We see record negative numbers in economic growth, unemployment and inequality. And in international relations, the pandemic fuels the fire of existing geopolitical conflicts, while casting a shadow onto other security threats.

As Secretary-General António Guterres said “the warning lights are flashing”. And indeed: Geopolitical trends that were present before the pandemic have gained further momentum:

- Re-emerging nationalism, protectionism and populism,
- decreasing trust in the international system and
- increasing dissemination of misinformation and “alternative facts”.

The pandemic has proven again that false information can spread faster than the virus. It travels at the speed of thought. At a time when evidenced based decision-making is crucial, we witness an erosion of trust in experts, science and technology.

What is more: An increasing number of people see the pandemic as a clear indication that the world as a whole is developing in the wrong direction. Instinctively, they reject the advances in technology in the medical field, science, communication and business.

Technological progress has jumped ahead, but it has left parts of the population behind. This growing tension between new technologies and society is a challenge for politics on the national as well as on the international level. New technologies seem partially to overburden our societies. Buzzwords such as human downgrading, cyber crime, trade in data and protection of personal data and privacy come to mind.

This list would, however, be incomplete without a warning of autonomous weapons systems — machines with the power to decide, who lives and who dies. This is not science fiction, it is fast becoming a reality — a reality that the Secretary-General has rightly called both “politically unacceptable and morally repugnant”.

We have to act now, before the survival of civilians in a conflict zone is determined by an algorithm and before all constraints laid down in international humanitarian law become redundant and decisions are taken by killer-robots without any human control or ethical concerns.

Austria will organize an international conference in Vienna next year to address this urgent issue. COVID-19 permitting, I invite all of you to participate!

Our call for a new digital humanism needs one further reflection: Today is the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

My speech would not be complete without a strong appeal to get rid of these weapons once and for all. They pose an existential threat to life on this planet and cause tremendous human suffering.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While the fight against COVID-19 has overshadowed everything else, the conflicts and crises around the world have not simply disappeared. Wars and humanitarian crises are not afraid of a virus! On the contrary, many of them were even aggravated by the pandemic.

We must ensure that these crises are not obscured by the shadows of COVID-19.

- Yemen is still ravaged by the worst humanitarian crisis of our time.
- Libya still suffers under a protracted conflict and the manifest disregard for the UN arms embargo.
- The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran hangs by a thread, which has led to a spiral of toughening positions.

Furthermore, new crises have been unfolding in the midst of the pandemic.

- Lebanon continues on a dangerous downward slide.
- The Eastern Mediterranean has seen a sharp increase in tensions due to illegal activity by Turkey that could destabilize the whole region.
- And in Belarus, the leadership has to finally accept that the genie of change is out of the bottle and cannot be forced back.

We all need to stay alert and not let the headline-grabbing virus distract us. No one should believe that our focus on fighting COVID-19 constitutes a “carte blanche” for breaching international law or for a military adventure.

However, there were also rare positive signs coming from a region usually lacking in good news. Austria very much welcomes the announcement of normalisation of relations between Israel and the Emirates and Bahrain. We hope these relations will flourish and serve as examples to other countries.

Mr. President,

Austria joined the United Nations 65 years ago, and in November 1956, in the first speech delivered on behalf of my country, Foreign Minister Leopold Figl said:

“Today the world looks to this community of nations, in which all its hopes are placed. Will it justify the confidence of the peoples of the earth and assure and preserve peace and order, bread and work?”

In order to justify this confidence placed in us, it is not enough to meet once a year and lament the crisis of multilateralism. And it is not enough to pay lip-service to international cooperation and the need to implement rules.

Let’s be honest: When the virus struck, even the most ardent multilateralists focused on keeping their public safe, closing borders, hoarding masks and equipment. And even the toughest my-state first unilateralists looked for international cooperation to secure medical supplies and assistance to overcome the social and economic crisis.

So, why don’t we use this pandemic as a game-changer and simply do away with the unnecessary dispute between multilateralists and unilateralists? Let’s change that game, set and match!

A testing ground for this new approach could be the cooperation on COVID-19 prevention and effective treatment. Newly developed vaccines must be a global public good, accessible to all at a reasonable price!

Yes, as politicians, it is our duty to protect our own citizens. But, the virus does not distinguish between unilateralists and multilateralists. With COVID-19 no one is safe, until everyone is safe. We, therefore, have to avoid all forms of “vaccine nationalism”. Developing a vaccine should not become a new race to the moon.

I am encouraged by initiatives like the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator and its COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility. And I greatly value the indispensable role of the World Health Organisation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The pandemic has exposed the vulnerabilities of our societies and the fragility of humankind. And we all know that the next global disaster is lurking just around the corner, waiting to hit us. Be it climate change, nuclear disasters or cyber crime.

Our success or failure in taking decisions here at the United Nations does not take place in a vacuum. It reaches deep into our societies and the everyday lives of our citizens. This global crisis has brought home to us one clear lesson: We will succeed or fail together.

We, the “people of the United Nations” need each other — and we need a strong and functioning multilateral system. Today and in the next 75 years to come.

Thank you for your attention!

Belarus (see also A/75/PV.13, annex XIV)

Statement by Mr. Vladimir Makei, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 13th meeting of the General Assembly

[Original: Russian]

Mr. President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

For good reason, this is the first time that the high week of the General Assembly's commemorative session is being held in such an unusual format.

Naturally, no speaker can ignore the topic of the coronavirus pandemic.

The pandemic has affected us all. Moreover, the problem will remain with us, at least for the near future.

Leading experts and analysts are actively talking about its global consequences and impact on world politics and economy.

Many assessments speak of "paradigm shifts" and "tectonic changes".

Perhaps. Time will tell.

Unfortunately, the pandemic has made it clear that the "international community" that we all talk about so often has, in fact, failed to live up to our expectations at the peak of the crisis.

The logic that it is easier to cope with the challenge going it alone has obviously prevailed.

Virtually everybody returned in droves to their apartments in their countries of origin, closed their borders and stopped contacts with the outside world!

In responding to the challenge, Belarus did not follow what it considered to be a dubious path. We did not close down or isolate ourselves.

We immediately asked ourselves the question: why have we been promoting globalization and opening ourselves up to one another for the past decades?

We initially believed and continue to believe in the success of collective efforts. We relied and continue to rely on the potential of the "international community."

Unfortunately, it has not been without exploitation, whereby some countries have begun to accuse others of allegedly doing the wrong thing in the fight against the pandemic.

That is for the simple reason that the "international community" has not developed a common approach. It is therefore probably not about the pandemic but about something else.

In the current situation, the specific national context became the determining factor in the fight against the coronavirus.

In Belarus, we chose our own approach.

It was based on two components to optimally preserve the viability of the State, primarily its economy, and ensure the maximum protection of the population.

Our approach, as the situation in Belarus has shown, paid off. And the situation concerning the spread of the coronavirus disease in the world today fully confirms this.

There will be many more assessments and conclusions, but today we can already say with certainty that the outbreak of the coronavirus disease, on the one hand, revealed the urgent need for a “strong” State and, on the other, clearly showed how interconnected the world is.

No country can make real progress in addressing a global issue if others are left behind or on the sidelines.

Together we must turn the crisis into an opportunity to improve the world. We must learn to work together.

The pandemic has temporarily overshadowed other world problems and conflicts, including those in the area of security, which, unfortunately, are not decreasing.

In that regard, during the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations (UN) the end of the Second World War, as a founding member of the United Nations, the Republic of Belarus appeals to Member States, particularly the members of the Security Council, to take special responsibility for the Organization’s operations and the implementation of its tasks.

In this context, I would also like to recall one of the outstanding historical figures of the United Nations — Nobel Peace Prize laureate and former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, whose 115th birthday was commemorated this year. He is considered one of the inspirations and tireless promoters of the concept of preventive diplomacy. Dag Hammarskjöld, who died on a crisis management mission in a hotspot, believed that only mutually respectful dialogue and honest negotiations among parties to a potential conflict in its early stages could prevent a war from igniting.

This is what the world lacks now.

We have forgotten what dialogue is, and, even if we do remember, we have forgotten how to use it.

I must note that for several years Belarus has been actively calling for the resumption of a broad dialogue on international security, aimed at overcoming the current contradictions in relations among States. Such dialogue would enable a return to building a just and effective global order based on multilateralism.

Accordingly, Belarus advocates and supports pragmatic initiatives within the UN in order to fully realize the potential of the Organization to maintain international peace and security.

This year once again, in the General Assembly and the First Committee, we will propose a draft resolution on banning new weapons of mass destruction, which traditionally enjoys the universal support of virtually every Member States of the Organization. We call on all States to co-sponsor and support the draft resolution.

In referring once again to the anniversary of the end of the Second World War, I would like to stress our deep conviction as one of the countries that suffered the greatest losses in it.

The tragic lesson of the twentieth century's worst catastrophe must remain a key component of "herd immunity" to the emergence of new global and regional confrontations.

As the Charter of the United Nations states, our Organization was founded precisely to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

Cooperation based on the principles of the Charter is the only alternative to "natural selection" and "survival of the fittest".

Given the modern technology and information capabilities available now not only to States, but also non-State actors, we must be fully aware of the risks caused by political, economic and military confrontation, irresponsible competition and the provocation of undesirable countries.

And there is one more important point.

We regretfully note the growing attempts by some countries to abuse the UN as a tribunal, including the Security Council, to satisfy their narrow political ambitions.

I am referring to, among other things, the focused attention of certain Western countries on the situation in Belarus, which currently is difficult owing to circumstances imposed on us, from, above all, the outside.

Let me remind everyone that the people made their decision during the presidential elections in Belarus in August, which was to choose in favour of a stable and prosperous State, peace, good neighbourliness and sustainable development.

However, instead of respecting that choice, we see aspirations to influence the situation in the country.

Since the failed attempt to impose a "colour revolution" on us, we have experienced external interference aimed at undermining the State system.

Individual statements, bordering on cynicism, by some of our Western neighbours about their alleged concern for Belarus' sovereignty and welfare are in fact nothing more than attempts to plunge the country into chaos and anarchy, which will set Belarus back in its development by many years.

We urge our partners to show wisdom, restraint and impartiality.

Interference in our internal affairs or sanctions or other restrictive measures against Belarus will have the opposite effect and will harm absolutely everyone. We have already experienced this in the past.

The future of the Republic of Belarus will be decided by its own people, as it has been repeatedly demonstrated throughout our country's history. It will be decided not at the barricades, but through civilized dialogue, including through the process of constitutional reform, which has already begun in the country.

I would like to stress once again that we firmly reject the practice of any unilateral coercive measures in international relations.

A vivid example of such actions has been the decades-long trade, financial and economic blockade on Cuba by its northern neighbour — the United States.

The maintenance of these “suffocating” instruments of pressure on sovereign States — without even considering the situation caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic — poses a specific threat fraught with lasting repercussions. Trade wars and arbitrary financial and economic sanctions as an instrument of political pressure must stop.

Another critical issue is the “health” of the global economy, which is now in serious trouble. The pandemic threatens to undo all that has been achieved since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The urgent need to change approaches to socioeconomic development in the post-pandemic era is becoming increasingly clear. Belarus supports proposals to increase investment in health care, infrastructure and education, providing broad access to digital technologies and ensuring the proper management of natural resources.

We share in endorsing approaches to boost economic recovery by rethinking the economic model in terms of promoting the “green economy”.

For its part, Belarus continues to move consistently towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, based on the 2030 Agenda. The country’s efforts are aimed at achieving a balance between economic development and the protection of the environment, while promoting the principles of the green economy, implementing the “smart city” concept and developing precision agriculture. Such work is carried out with the involvement of all stakeholders within the country and in close cooperation with international partners.

We see partnering with all stakeholders at both national and international levels as one of the key factors to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. As a middle-income country, Belarus believes that a separate UN strategy to promote sustainable development — in line with similar documents for other groups of developing countries — is necessary for the successful achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals for that category of States.

In conclusion, I would like to note a very simple but important life lesson: “Every cloud has a silver lining”. We have born witness to transformational events.

Indeed, 2020 has been a special year for the world, forcing us to a restructure the life of humankind. A new history is being written before our eyes — the world will no longer be the same as it was before. As we learn our lessons, we must not carry past mistakes into the future. We must build a new world — friendly to people, free from wars and conflicts, stable, predictable and prosperous. A world that will arm itself with the benefits of technological progress and use them for development, not destruction.

These days one hears a lot of criticism of the UN. Sometimes it is justified, sometimes it is not.

The Republic of Belarus emphatically shares the following message: the Organization must keep pace with the times.

We need an effective and efficient UN Security Council that will put an end to numerous wars and armed conflicts, including taking into account the need to preserve territorial integrity and comply with international law.

We want to see a more active General Assembly — making timely important decisions on the entire spectrum of pressing world problems.

We are all interested in seeing the Economic and Social Council, like the entire UN development system, provide more effective assistance to States in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Renewed with time, the Organization will remain needed by all people on the planet.

The Republic of Belarus is a signatory country to the UN Charter, assuming responsibility for promoting the implementation of the main goals of the Organization. Our country will continue to work for the preservation and development of the creative and unifying principle of the UN.
