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General debate

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 morning of Tuesday, 29 September 2020, at the 14th meeting of the General Assembly (see A/75/PV.14). 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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Iceland (see also A/75/PV.14, annex I)

Statement by Mr. Gudlaugur Thór Thórdarson, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development Cooperation of the Republic of Iceland

Delivered on Tuesday, 29 September 2020, at the 14th meeting of the General Assembly

Mr President, Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen,

Let me start by thanking the UN Secretary-General, for his leadership in these difficult times. I also express gratitude to the dedicated staff of this organization, often working in very challenging circumstances, for their commitment and courage.

The international community comes together for the 75th anniversary of the United Nations under exceptional circumstances — amid a global crisis.

Iceland is fully committed to support the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have contributed to the Global Humanitarian Response Plan, to the UN Response and Recovery Fund and to several other initiatives, including the development, distribution, and fair and equal access to a possible vaccine for every country.

This crisis will have long-term implications for our economies and societies, pushing millions of peoples further behind, not least the most vulnerable. We must, therefore, redouble our collective efforts and pursue the Sustainable Development Goals with vigour.

Mr. President,

The pandemic has revealed that our fate is interlinked with the successes and failures of others. This very same revelation brought the founders of this great organisation together in 1945, after having lived through the horrors of two world wars. They understood then, as we must now, that we are stronger together than apart.

This notion is evident to a small state like Iceland, but larger states also gain from a well-functioning international rules-based order: peace, prosperity and partnerships for our people and planet. For the gravest challenges we face today can only be addressed collectively.

The current situation provides us with a perspective. Even if we still have a long way to go, we have witnessed significant achievements over the past 75 years. States have gained their independence, women have gained agency, more parents see their children grow up to become healthy adults, and millions have risen from poverty. Wild polio has recently been eradicated in Africa, a welcome sign of hope in the context of today's challenges. By most measures, we have been living in times of unprecedented prosperity, something we now know, should not be taken for granted.

It is critical that we fight to maintain and improve the multilateral system and oppose/question those who seek to undermine it. We must ensure that our institutions, actions and tools are fit for purpose — so that the system can continue to serve all of us. The Secretary-General's ongoing reform agenda has our full support.

Mr. President,

The greatest challenge of our time can only be addressed through joint efforts. Climate action needs to be at the heart of our efforts as we build back better and

greener after the pandemic. The Paris Agreement is the global baseline, and Iceland is fully committed to its implementation. To build back greener, we need to make full use of science, innovation, and positive financial stimulus for the full participation of the private sector.

Iceland's new climate action plan, released earlier this summer, goes even further than was agreed in Paris. Our goal is to achieve 35 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and full carbon neutrality by 2040.

Sustainable management of natural resources and the use of renewable energy will be instrumental if we are to combat climate change. That includes the sustainable use of our oceans, a major carbon sink, continuously threatened by climate change, pollution, and mismanagement. Here, international law, namely the Law of the Sea, provides the foundation for action that should be based firmly in science. Iceland will continue to share its expertise in these fields through our development cooperation, public-private partnerships and our capacity-building programs, run under the auspices of UNESCO.

Mr. President,

As we embark on a Decade of Action, we need to be firmly focused on advancing gender equality — not only as a fundamental human right — but also as critical for accelerated progress so that individuals and nations can prosper and reach their full potential. The slow progress on Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality is therefore deeply worrying, not least as we risk losing a generation or more of gains due to the current crisis.

We must act now to ensure the full and equal participation of women in economic and political life, access to education, essential health services, and fight against sexual and gender-based violence. Iceland is therefore committed to contributing in a meaningful way as a co-leader of the Generation Equality Action Coalition on gender-based violence.

Mr. President,

Growing nationalism, racism, religious intolerance, and homophobia will continue to undermine human rights and fundamental freedoms if we do not fight to reverse this trend. It is of major concern when the most powerful are ambivalent, even hostile, to the enjoyment of universal human rights by all. UN Member States must speak up and act when human rights are set aside or violated, and not hesitate to use the legal, economic, and political tools we have at our disposal.

In the past year, I have had the honour to meet many brave women and men who risk their life and freedom to call out their governments for violation of human rights and fundamental freedom. It is our duty to support and protect these human rights defenders and allow their voices to be heard. We must also protect media freedom, which has come under grave threat in too many countries around the world. Human rights underpin democratic and prosperous societies — which in turn are the fundamental basis for international stability and peace.

As a member of the UN Human Rights Council in 2018 and 2019, Iceland made an effort to demonstrate that all nations, also the smallest among us, can use their voice effectively to speak out for those suppressed or silenced. The experience was both encouraging and empowering, since most UN Member States belong to that group of smaller or mid-size countries.

The Human Rights Council is not without faults and shortcomings. We have been critical of the Council's membership, and the apparent desire by those with

less than stellar human rights records to consistently undermine the integrity of the Council. We have also pushed for reform of the council and its working methods.

Member States serving on the Council should never lose sight of its main mission and purpose — to protect and promote universal human rights. They should call out violators and hold them accountable and be open to constructive criticism and cooperation, rather than seek refuge behind rhetoric of politicization.

With this in mind, and on the basis of the experience of our recent membership of the Human Rights Council, Iceland has decided to run for a seat on the Council for the term 2025-2027.

Mr President,

Let me thank the Secretary-General for his leadership in calling for a global ceasefire; a call which all nations should support, not least those that hold power to influence the situation on the ground.

The ongoing efforts to find political and peaceful solutions to the crisis in Syria, Yemen, and Libya must continue with full backing of those involved. The Middle East Peace Process also needs to be reinvigorated as the current stagnation on both sides only serves to deepen existing disagreements, moving us further away from the two-state solution.

Closer to my own place of home, in Europe, the persistent unlawful violation by Russia of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and Georgia continues to undermine peace and stability, and recent developments in Belarus give cause for major concern.

The Security Council carries special responsibilities for the maintenance of international peace and security on behalf of the wider UN membership. The Council, not least some of its permanent members, need to act in accordance with the UN charter, instead of being motivated by narrow political gains in a zero-sum game, undermining the credibility of this vital body.

Mr President,

“The UN was not created to take mankind into paradise but rather to save humanity from hell”, former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld famously once said.

As we celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations, we should be mindful that this organization has been a catalyst for human development and progress. And it is the most significant peace project of our times.

The UN remains the only international body equipped to bring together different nationalities, political ideologies, and religions, for the common good.

It’s shortcomings can neither serve as an excuse for disengagement nor for the promotion of national interests above the pursuit of our common wellbeing and prosperity.

Too many seek to apply the principles and values of the UN Charter selectively, tilting the balance between rights and responsibilities — in international trade, rule of law, human rights, disarmament and in preventing conflicts and atrocities.

Our organisations and institutions should never serve or shelter those who seek to undermine the basic principles of the international rule-based order, which we have all subscribed to, including the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

It remains, that what we see is our own making. That is why, we need to use the current crisis and the 75th anniversary to reinvigorate our cooperation, build trust and make our institutions more effective and resilient, for today and tomorrow.

We should reconfirm our commitment to the principles of the UN Charter, international law, and the liberal international order.

We should stand up for these principles when they are being pushed aside. We should make our institutions more open, transparent, and inclusive. We should reform, not rewrite or retreat.

For only together we can build the future we want, and the UN we need.

San Marino (see also A/75/PV.14, annex II)

**Statement by Mr. Luca Beccari, Minister for Foreign Affairs,
International Economic Cooperation and Telecommunications of
the Republic of San Marino**

Delivered on Tuesday, 29 September 2020, at the 14th meeting of the General Assembly

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of San Marino, I would like to congratulate H.E. Volkan Bozkir on his election as President of the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly and to wish him a fruitful work.

The Republic of San Marino supports the priorities of your programme mentioned in your inaugural address and ensures you, Mr. President, full cooperation in all works of the General Assembly. I would like to express my country's gratitude to the outgoing President, H.E. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, for the important work carried out during the 74th Session. I would also like to extend my special thanks to the Secretary-General, H.E. António Guterres, for his energy and determination in leading the United Nations in this very difficult and challenging time.

Mr. President,

I am grateful for the theme chosen for this Session: "The future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism — confronting COVID-19 through effective multilateral action". This theme gives Member States the opportunity to constructively contribute to the work of the General Assembly. The COVID-19 pandemic is probably one of the most arduous challenges in the history of the United Nations. Surely, it is the most violent blow that my country had to endure — and is still enduring — in a long time. One which we will not forget. San Marino was among those countries more severely affected by the pandemic. While the virus has not caused deaths in the last months in my country, this is no reason for celebrations. San Marino remains one of the countries which suffered the highest rates of infections in the world, with dramatic consequences on our community.

The immense effort needed to contrast the health emergency and the global economic contraction resulted in an unprecedented structural challenge for my country. If we will succeed in re-establishing previous levels of wealth and health it will only be through international solidarity and tremendous efforts of our people

Unfortunately, we are not alone.

The coronavirus is continuing to spread across the world, hitting one country after the other, infecting millions of people, taking hundreds of thousands of lives. Moreover, COVID-19 is causing a widespread fear about our future. The pandemic is not only a health crisis, but also a humanitarian and security crisis, which has accentuated pre-existing structural problems within and among nations. The coronavirus assailed communities around the world and drove the global economy into a downturn whose long-term effects cannot yet be fully assessed. The human impacts of lockdowns and suspensions of social and economic activities are and will

be disproportionately felt by the most vulnerable countries and groups, including indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, women and children. Inadequate health systems; gaps in social protection; structural inequalities; environmental degradation; the climate crisis: the pandemic is showing us the fragility of our world. The United Nations not only leads on the response to the health crisis, but is also expanding the means for lifesaving humanitarian assistance and establishing instruments for rapid responses to the socio-economic impact.

In this respect, San Marino welcomed the Strategic preparedness and response Plan to address immediate health needs, which has been produced by WHO, the Global Humanitarian Response Plan to ease the impacts in over 63 highly vulnerable countries, and the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund, for the socio-economic response and recovery in middle- and lower-income countries. The Republic of San Marino supported the UN Secretary-General's call for a global cease-fire, issued on 23 March, which urges warring parties in all corners of the world to pull back from hostilities. Moreover, my Country joined the Secretary General's global call emphasizing the need for an end to all violence against women everywhere, including in the home.

Mr. President,

San Marino co-sponsored the GA resolution Global Solidarity to Fight COVID-19, by which the United Nations General Assembly, the universal body of nations, sent a strong message of unity, solidarity and international cooperation. We also supported through a co-sponsorship the resolution named International Cooperation to ensure global access to medicines, vaccines and medical equipment to face COVID-19, which highlights the importance of international cooperation and underscores that equitable access to health products is a global priority. During the last months we also joined several collective declarations. In Response to the UN Secretary-General's Call on Countries to Prioritize Children's Education, Food, Health and Safety amid the COVID-19 Pandemic, we co-signed the joint declaration Protect our children, by which we stated that it is vital to work together to prevent and mitigate the risks all children face. We need to ensure for all children access to inclusive and quality education, nutrition and health care, as well as strengthen social protection systems. We must prevent and combat all forms of violence, including domestic violence, abuse and sexual exploitation of children online and offline, cyberbullying, and bridge the digital divide. Being part of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, San Marino welcomed the positive results in our common cause of ending and preventing grave violations against children in armed conflict. In this regard, I would like to thank Ms. Virginia Gamba and her staff, who, with great dedication, have finalized a terrific number of action plans and commitments also in the last year. But despite the successful results, we have to recognize that great concerns remain.

The number of verified violations against children is still very worrying and education, which should be one of our priorities, is still under attack. We are particularly worried about the impact of the COVID-19 on vulnerable groups such as children in armed conflicts.

San Marino joined the collective declaration regarding the impact of COVID 19 on older persons. We believe it is important to promote and respect the dignity and rights of older people and to mitigate the negative impacts during and after the COVID-19 pandemic on their health, lives, rights and wellbeing. Moreover, we

recognize important contributions that older persons make to our societies, and call for their participation in the responses to the pandemic. My Country also co-sponsored the joint declaration Disability-inclusive response to COVID-19 — Towards a better future for all. During the pandemic, persons with disabilities have experienced greater attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers and discrimination, exclusion from accessing health-care services and information, as well as faced serious disruption to their employment, education, and access to social protection and other support services. The global response and recovery should be disability-inclusive, it should protect the rights and needs of persons with disabilities and place them at the center of all our efforts, as envisaged in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In this regard, I'm pleased to say that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights included the COVID-19 guidance on triage of the Bioethics Committee of the Republic of San Marino among the so-called "promising practices".

Mr. President,

Along with this pandemic, we have to draw our attention to the challenge of the misinformation and disinformation pandemic. The spread of the "infodemic" can put our health at risk, it can increase the risk of conflicts, violence, human rights violations and mass atrocities. The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated the crucial need for access to free, reliable, trustworthy, factual, clear and science-based information. States, regional organizations, the UN system and other stakeholders such as media workers, social media platforms and NGOs have a clear role and responsibility in helping people to deal with the "infodemic". My Country attaches great importance to the fight against disinformation. For this reason, we organized in 2019, in San Marino, a High-Level Conference on the Dangers of Disinformation. For the same reason, we joined this year the Cross-Regional Statement on "Infodemic" in the Context of COVID-19 supporting the United Nations Communications Response initiative and the "Verified" campaign announced by the UN Secretary General in April.

Mr. President,

The effects of climate change, including increasingly frequent and severe weather phenomena, floods and droughts, diminishing fresh water resources, desertification, land degradation and sea-level rise, are threatening entire populations, depriving them of their livelihoods.

These effects of climate change can lead inter alia to food insecurity, large-scale displacement, and social tensions, exacerbating, prolonging or contributing to the risk of future conflicts. Although greenhouse gas emissions are projected to drop by 6 per cent in 2020, and air quality has improved as a result of travel bans and the economic slowdown resulting from the pandemic, global community is far off track to meet either the 1.5 or 2°C targets called for in the Paris Agreement. The decade 2010 to 2019 was the warmest decade ever. Governments and private sector must accelerate the transitions to climate relationship with the environment and we make transformational changes in our economies.

The reduction of food loss and waste underpins the achievement of sustainable development in its three dimensions — economic, social and environmental. Food-related sustainable practices and innovative solutions are instrumental to a number of major and delicate issues, such as poverty alleviation, hunger eradication and human

health. San Marino deems crucial to curb food loss and waste, through more sustainable production and consumption practices. In order to achieve this, we must recognise collectively the relevance of these issues, emphasising the need for immediate and effective action. This is why, together with the Principality of Andorra, San Marino in 2019 sponsored the Resolution which designates 29 September as the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste.

Today we celebrate for the first time this anniversary and I would like to take this opportunity to urge you all to join us — if you have not done so already — in aimed at raising awareness of the importance of reducing food loss and waste and the contribution of these actions to sustainable development.

Mr. President,

75 years after its foundation, the United Nations is facing the most difficult challenge of its history. We must stop this pandemic and we will succeed only if we work together, because this is a collective effort that requires a renewed and stronger multilateral cooperation.

In this context, we need to accelerate the pace and scale of our actions, if we want to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. San Marino strongly supports the decade of action launched by the Secretary General at the beginning of this year. We believe that, while the crisis is endangering progress towards the SDGs, it also offers a unique opportunity for pursuing a transformative recovery from COVID-19, which leads us to build more inclusive societies based on sustainable development where no one is left behind. Our response to the pandemic must be based on a new social contract that respects the rights and freedoms of all and provides equal opportunities for all. Recent developments in the global political landscape have created obstacles to the development of multilateralism and are putting it at risk. The challenges posed today by protectionism and isolationism must and can be countered by international cooperation and the rules of international law, which have guided Member States for decades. It is essential to preserve the values of multilateralism and international cooperation, which underpin the United Nations Charter and Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development in order to promote and support peace and security, development and human rights. San Marino is among the strongest advocates for the rules-based multilateralism.

In conclusion, Mr. President,

Today more than ever, we believe it is fundamental to reaffirm our commitment to the values and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, signed in San Francisco 75 years ago.

A stronger multilateralism is essential if we want to build fair, just and peaceful societies, where young people can live in dignity, women can have the same opportunities as men, and where all minorities and vulnerable groups are protected.

Thank you

United Arab Emirates (see also A/75/PV.14, annex III)**Statement by His Highness Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan,
Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the
United Arab Emirates**

Delivered on Tuesday, 29 September 2020, at the 14th meeting of the General Assembly

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

Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to thank His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande for his distinguished leadership of the previous session, and we look forward to working with the Office of the President of the General Assembly of this session.

Coinciding with the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, the world is witnessing a critical turning point following the spread of the Coronavirus. While we celebrate the achievements that we have made since the foundation of the United Nations, we must reflect on the nature of the challenges we face. Today, some conflicts are becoming dangerously regionalized. There is also the growing influence of extremist groups. Threats of cyberwar are rising and the use of sophisticated weapons to attack strategic areas is increasing.

Despite these mounting global threats, the UAE believes that we can transform unprecedented challenges into great opportunities by uniting our efforts and building international institutions capable of coping with current and emerging challenges. These past months have proven that confronting international threats requires taking collective action and wise leadership to forge a coordinated international response to address the implications of these threats.

One starting point should be continuing to focus on solving existing political crises and preventing new conflicts from emerging, especially during the spread of the pandemic. My country will continue to work with regional and international partners to restore security and stability while ensuring that affected countries take the lead in developing solutions that meet the legitimate aspirations of their peoples.

Mr. President,

Solving crises, especially in our Arab region, requires taking a unified international position. A position that rejects the violation of the sovereignty of states and interference in their internal affairs. A position that seeks UN led political solutions and addresses threats posed by terrorist groups such as the Houthis, Da'esh, al-Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood. In this context, the United Arab Emirates reiterates its support for the Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire.

In this context, we must stress the importance of upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations that continue to be the core of the UAE's foreign policy, particularly in our pursuit of restoring stability in our region. We have repeatedly warned against the expansionist ambitions of some states in the region, and we have consistently called upon the international community to end the interference in the internal affairs of states and to hold accountable those who finance it.

These warnings stemmed from our reality and experience. The tensions in Yemen, Syria, Libya, Iraq and other states are all related to blatant interference in Arab affairs made by states that incite strife and discord, or that have historical delusions of restoring their domination and colonial rule over the Arab region and the Horn of Africa. The result has been brutal wars. In this context, we recall our firm position of rejecting regional interference in Arab affairs, and request full respect for sovereignty, which is fully consistent with international law and international norms.

Although illegal interference has destabilized Yemen's security for years, we strongly believe that stability in Yemen can be restored, especially within the current environment that could lead to a complete ceasefire and a permanent political solution under the auspices of the United Nations. In this regard, we affirm that the decision to pursue a political process in Yemen is a Yemeni decision. My country also commends the tremendous efforts made by the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. We reiterate the UAE's support for the Riyadh Agreement and our call for a united Yemeni position in order to reach a sustainable solution.

In a similar context, my country expresses its deep concern regarding Turkey's military interference in Libya, which is an alarming part of the regional interference in Arab affairs that has exacerbated the humanitarian crisis, undermined efforts to reach a peaceful solution, and destabilized the entire region. Therefore, my country supports the repeated calls for an immediate ceasefire in Libya and calls upon all parties to commit to a political process under the auspices of the United Nations and to build on the outcomes of the Berlin Conference. Since the outbreak of the conflict in Libya, my country has called for a peaceful political solution to the crisis in order to achieve lasting security and stability.

Likewise, my country calls for stopping all foreign interference in Syrian affairs and warns of the serious implications for Syria's unity and for Arab security. We also reiterate that a political process is the only way to end the Syrian crisis and protect the security of its people.

We also express our concern regarding the vulnerability of conflict areas to the Coronavirus pandemic, as these areas are the least prepared to address this danger.

Mr. President,

Maintaining the progress achieved against Da'esh in Syria and Iraq requires continuing the efforts to rebuild liberated areas, strengthen the rule of law in these areas, and protect communities against extremism and terrorism. Support and economic assistance should also be provided to Sudan. It is also important to prevent any interference in Sudan's internal affairs and to stop extremist groups from exploiting the situation and threaten the security of the Sudan and its neighboring states.

The call for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the borders of 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital in line with the relevant international resolutions and the Arab and international consensus will remain a firm demand. My country has made persistent efforts using all available diplomatic channels to affirm our total rejection of the annexation of Palestinian territory, and we have warned of its impact on all parties and on the security of the region.

With the signing of a historic peace accord with Israel, supported by American efforts, my country was able to freeze the annexation decision and opened broad prospects to achieve a comprehensive peace in the region. We hope this peace accord will provide the opportunity for the Palestinians and the Israelis to re-engage in

negotiations to achieve peace. Our position towards supporting the Palestinian people and achieving the two-state solution is firm.

We will work to ensure that the peace accord will open new intellectual horizons in the region and create a prosperous path for future generations who deserve a stable region and a better reality than wars and poverty.

My country will also continue to call for peaceful settlement of disputes. In this context, we reiterate the UAE's firm position and its legitimate right of sovereignty over its three islands: Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa, which are occupied by Iran in flagrant violation of international law and the UN Charter, and in total disregard of all historical records that clearly affirm the UAE's ownership of these islands and that these islands have been under Arab rule since ancient times. Therefore, the UAE will not give up its demand that Iran return these islands to their rightful owners. My country has called on Iran to peacefully resolve this issue through direct negotiations, or through the International Court of Justice. However, Iran has not answered these calls.

We look forward to seeing Iran respect the principles of good-neighborliness and abide by Security Council resolutions by stopping the development of its ballistic missile programs and ceasing the arming of terrorist groups. In this context, my country is particularly concerned that the restrictions imposed on Iran under the nuclear agreement are soon due to expire. Since the nuclear agreement did not achieve its desired outcome, we hope that this experience will be useful in achieving a more comprehensive agreement that addresses the concerns of states in the region and that makes them key partners in drafting the terms of the agreement.

Mr. President,

We must continue focusing on coordinating our action to provide humanitarian and economic assistance to the states affected by conflicts or by other issues such as climate change and the pandemic. My country has been at the forefront of the countries responding to the impacts of the pandemic by providing assistance, supporting international institutions, and sending aid to communities around the world. During these critical times, states must set their differences aside and focus on strengthening their cooperation to develop and provide access to vaccines and treatment for all peoples. We also encourage starting planning now for the recovery phase and for revitalizing the global economy. We must ensure that supply chains will not be interrupted, as they are a key element in achieving global food security.

Mr. President,

My country adopted an effective, scientific program to contain the Novel Coronavirus Pandemic. We have committed to applying strict preventive measures to stop the spread of the virus, we have conducted the largest possible number of tests, and we have shared the results with our partners. The advanced digital infrastructure in the UAE facilitated the resumption of work and remote study to maintain the safety of our people. In addition to providing a local economic aid package, we were able to strengthen the capacity of our health system, support international research on the pandemic, and prepare for potential future pandemics.

Future preparedness is not new to my country, which has followed this approach since its establishment. Today, we look forward to the fiftieth anniversary of our union with confidence and optimism. Our efforts have culminated in the creation of a sustainable economy and other significant achievements, including

the launching of a probe to Mars this year. The UAE will continue to encourage innovation, technology, and bridging knowledge gaps between peoples. The UAE will also continue to advocate the empowerment of youth and women and providing them with equal opportunities. Additionally, we need to continue building peaceful and secure communities by strengthening coexistence and dialogue among religions and cultures.

Since its establishment, my country has been committed to international law, the UN Charter, and UN resolutions. In addressing the serious challenges in our region, my country has further embraced multilateralism as a tool to reduce escalation, resolve crises, and develop lasting and comprehensive political solutions. In this context, we are pleased to announce our candidature for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 2022-2023. My country will follow the same steps and principles upon which it was founded to maintain international peace and security in cooperation with the members of the Council.

We recognize the significant responsibility associated with membership on the Security Council and the extensive challenges the Council faces, and we affirm that the UAE will work towards solving the important issues confronting states with resolve and determination. In doing so, we will be guided by our understanding of these crises, our experiences in the Arab region, and our close relationships with Member States. My country will continue its call for involving regional organizations in finding permanent solutions for crises, and we count on your support to achieve these goals.

We look forward to continuing work with all partners to achieve our shared vision of creating a peaceful and prosperous world —a world capable of meeting these challenges.

Thank you.

Germany (see also A/75/PV.14, annex IV)

**Statement by Mr. Heiko Maas, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs
of the Federal Republic of Germany**

Delivered on Tuesday, 29 September 2020, at the 14th meeting of the General Assembly

Mr President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

“The survivors were immune, the others dead.”

This is the rather pithy description of the end of the Spanish flu one hundred years ago by a German medical historian.

So pithy in fact that we recoil when we consider the pandemic that has a firm grip on our world today.

Thirty million people have already been infected by coronavirus.

Almost one million people have died.

And its longer-term impacts — hunger, poverty, displacement and conflicts — are beginning to reach us only now.

And yet 2020 isn't 1920.

History doesn't repeat itself — at least, if we don't allow it to.

We have a choice, ladies and gentlemen, and few things illustrate this more clearly than the experiences that we have made during the COVID-19 pandemic.

On the one hand, they show that a lack of transparency, coupled with disinformation and conspiracy theories, can kill.

On the other, they point to a path out of the crisis.

It is the path of reason that is founded on scientific expertise.

The path of cooperation that is based on common rules.

Rules all of us have to abide by. And that is why I'm speaking to you today from quarantine at my home, having come into contact a few days ago with someone who tested positive for the virus.

And I hope that the technology works and that you can understand what I'm saying nonetheless.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As long as the virus is out there, it can affect each and every one of us.

That is why only when we get the pandemic under control throughout the world will we be able to overcome it in the long term.

Those affected by it must be at the centre of all of our efforts. And the search for vaccines and medicines must not be a competition or a beauty contest.

This is why Germany has set aside more than three billion euro this year for global crisis management — with a particular focus on the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

And, as the biggest exporter of pharmaceutical products, we have expressed a clear commitment to distributing potential vaccines and medicines against COVID-19 in a fair way — as a global public good.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This crisis also shows that international cooperation is neither an ideology nor an end in itself.

On the contrary, it delivers results.

Far beyond the actual pandemic.

Such as in Ukraine, where the negotiations between Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany have helped to bring about the longest ceasefire since the beginning of the conflict.

Hundreds of thousands of people in the east of the country are currently no longer living under the permanent spectre of war. This is grounds for hope for a genuinely permanent solution to the conflict.

We will take this hope as the basis for intensive engagement in the Normandy format in the coming months, including at high-ranking political level.

In Libya, too, we are focusing on cooperation with the United Nations in order to implement the decisions of the January Berlin Conference to the letter.

The rapprochement between the government in Tripoli and the forces in the east of the country that has taken place in recent weeks is a major step forward. However, forces outside the country must also fall into line at long last in order to achieve a solution. They must cease sending weapons and mercenaries, thus exacerbating the conflict.

This is what we will aim to achieve when António Guterres and I gather together the supporters of the Berlin Process once again in early October in order to make them honour their commitments.

The latest developments in relations between Israel and the Arab countries in the Gulf are likewise grounds for hope — this is also the result of courageous cooperation.

I have been in close dialogue with my counterparts from Jordan, Egypt and France in recent weeks, and we agreed that this new dynamic should be seized by the parties for fresh, credible negotiations on a two-state solution that alone holds the promise of lasting peace. For this, both sides must make compromises and refrain from violence, but also from unilateral steps such as annexation and settlement construction. Wherever we Europeans are able to support this — politically or economically — we will do so.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite all the progress made in recent weeks, we're still a very long way from a new global attitude. The Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire, which was adopted in the Security Council under Germany's Presidency in July, is falling on deaf ears in many places.

This is not only a problem as far as credibility of the Security Council is concerned.

It is, first and foremost, a disaster for millions of people in war and crisis areas who are utterly defenceless in the face of the pandemic.

We need still greater efforts in the fight against violence and terrorism in the Sahel, and above all closer dialogue between the countries of the region, regional organisations and the international community.

This is what the Sahel Alliance, the Partnership for Security and Stability in the Sahel and the International Coalition for the Sahel are seeking to achieve.

And we're supporting the efforts made by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to help Mali return to a constitutional order as swiftly as possible — as peace, stability and development are what the people there are calling for.

Furthermore, ladies and gentlemen, a new, international effort is also needed in order to bring peace to Syria at long last.

A nationwide ceasefire and a comprehensive, genuine constitutional process, as envisaged by Resolution 2254 (2015), are prerequisites before we can talk about reconstruction of the country.

And until that time, we stand firmly by the side of the Syrian people — with humanitarian assistance, which must continue to be provided across borders.

There's another thing that is necessary for lasting peace, namely justice.

This is why we will continue to ensure that those responsible for the worst crimes against humanity — for murder, torture and rape — are held to account before German courts and why we will support the UN mechanisms for investigating these crimes with all our might.

This is by no means just about Syria, however. Those who don't clearly distinguish between perpetrators and victims, who blur the line between right and wrong, shake the very foundations of our rules-based order. Such people jeopardise our peaceful coexistence itself.

This applies to those who stand in the way of the work of institutions such as the International Criminal Court.

This applies to those who block the Security Council with one veto after another and who prevent its urgently needed reform with constantly new delay tactics.

And this especially applies to those who contravene international law, although, as permanent members of the Security Council, they bear particular responsibility for upholding it.

This isn't the first time that we have been confronted by a violation of an existential principle of international cooperation, namely the banning of chemical weapons.

A violation of this — as we have been able to prove together with our partners in the poisoning of Alexei Navalny — is a problem for the entire international community.

I call on Russia to do more to investigate this case. A case such as this must have consequences. The EU therefore reserves the right to impose sanctions.

And we're grateful to our partners around the world for their unequivocal support.

We need this same determination, this same will to cooperate also with respect to other existential issues facing humanity.

Here, once again, we have a choice.

We can continue to watch as our forests burn — and yet still deny the existence of human-induced climate change.

Or we can listen to the voice of scientists and treat climate change as what it is, namely the biggest threat to security, prosperity and development on our planet.

This is also why we have firmly enshrined the issue of climate and security on the Security Council's agenda in recent months.

And we're delighted that Norway, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico and others will continue to work on this when they are members of the Security Council next year.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We can continue to violate arms control treaties — thereby destroying trust that has been built up over many decades.

Or we can put nuclear disarmament and non proliferation back on the international agenda — as we have done in recent months, not least with a view to the upcoming Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Europe's efforts to promote the nuclear agreement with Iran must also be seen in this context.

Yes, we share the concerns about the end of the arms embargo as long as Iran threatens Israel and destabilises the entire region from Lebanon to Syria to Yemen.

However, the destruction of the JCPOA doesn't get us any closer to an arms embargo. On the contrary, at best, the JCPOA's demise brings Iran closer to getting the atomic bomb.

And this is why we, as JCPOA participants, continue to stand by its full applicability and call on Iran to likewise fully comply with the agreement.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We can watch human rights being hollowed out and trampled underfoot, even though all of us have committed to uphold them.

Or we can stand by the side of those who are suppressed, abused and persecuted — such as the peaceful protesters in Belarus.

We have called on Lukashenko time and again to support a national dialogue, mediated by the OSCE. However, he has rejected all offers and is continuing to tread the path of violence and suppression.

And this must also have consequences if we are serious about our values and our international agreements. We're discussing this in the European Union.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Courageous decisions are needed especially in times of crisis.

Seventy-five years ago — following the devastation of the Second World War that was unleashed by Germany — the international community decided:

To oppose war and to promote international cooperation.

And to oppose the law of the strong and to promote the strength of the law.

And so the United Nations was born. Thirty years ago — after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain — this decision was underpinned by the Charter of Paris. The Charter proclaimed that the “era of confrontation and division of Europe” had ended and that a “new era of democracy, peace and unity” had begun.

Today, in the midst of the pandemic, it is our generation that faces a choice.

Either we go it alone, without taking others into consideration, and throw this multilateral legacy to the winds.

Or we renew this legacy and show that the right response to the crises of our age is “more solidarity” — “more cooperation” and “more justice”.

Germany is prepared to do just this.

Together with you — as genuinely united nations.

Thank you very much — and stay healthy!

Belize (see also A/75/PV.14, annex V)

Statement by Mr. Wilfred Peter Elrington, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration of Belize

Delivered on Tuesday, 29 September 2020, at the 14th meeting of the General Assembly

Excellency,

I begin my intervention by paying tribute to the men and women worldwide who have been selflessly holding the line of defense against COVID-19 to care and protect our loved ones, risking their own lives in so doing. I also honor the memory of the many who have died to date and who are dying even as we speak, unfortunate victims of this insidious virus.

In Belize, we are working assiduously to contain its spread. Indeed we have closed borders, imposed curfews, mandated the use of masks and social distancing, quarantined infected persons and searched out and tested persons who have come in contact with persons known to have been carrying the virus.

While a health calamity has been avoided thus far we are suffering the worse economic shock in the history of our country.

Belize is a tourism dependent, export oriented country. Invariably, therefore, when the travel and tourism industry shutdown and the market for agro products is depressed, our economy flounders. To date 73 per cent of workers in our tourism sector, which is the most labour intensive sector in our economy, have lost their jobs. Seemingly simultaneously, my country is now beset with both a health crisis and an economic crisis. In order to deal with the health crisis, government established a bipartisan National Oversight Committee (NOC) with broad supervisory responsibility for Belize's COVID-19 response and recovery initiatives, including initiatives to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on society and economy.

The NOC was chaired by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. It has representation from the churches, private sector, civil society and trade unions. Government also established a COVID-19 Task Force, chaired by the Chief Executive Officer in the Ministry of Human Development and Social Transformation. Frontline agencies and other social partners are included on the Task Force. This Task Force manages the day to day public health response and communications. Regrettably, in June 2020, the Leader of the Opposition resigned from the NOC.

My government took immediate steps to shore up health facilities, and, at the same time, put in place measures to ease the economic blow to Belizeans including through the introduction of a \$10-million programme of food assistance and a US\$24.5m programme for unemployment relief.

In terms of economic stimulus, the Government has launched programmes to animate the most impacted sectors of the economy including the extension of \$7.25-million line of credit to micro, small and medium enterprises; and provision of wage subsidies to promote employee retention, and provision of a \$5-million Special Line of Credit for Tourism Stakeholders. We have also launched an Economic Recovery Strategy which rests on 5 pillars namely: Supporting Business Recovery, Creating a Business Climate for Growth, Improving Government Efficiency, Strengthening of Productive Sectors and Agriculture, and Growing our Emerging Economy.

But all those efforts and initiative are puny in comparison to the magnitude of the impact of the pandemic. Economic growth is expected to contract by some 20 to 25 per cent, which is as much as three times the global average. And, we are still notsure that we have seen the worse of this pandemic.

It is worthy of note that, pre-COVID-19 Belize was contending with economic decline caused by ongoing climate impacts such as a prolonged drought and its impact on primary sector output, along with continued challenges caused by sargassum inundation on our marine spaces. Then on September 4, Hurricane Nana struck us inflicting another blow to our beleaguered agricultural sector.

Truly we are presently caught in the cross hairs of two grave crises with hardly more than our own limited natural resources and our determination to survive to bolster our position.

Regretfully, the international response to the COVID pandemic, not unlike its response to the climate catastrophe, continues to be tepid with the weaker nations and peoples having to bear the brunt of the ravages of the global missteps.

Blame is superceding coordination and cooperation; platitudes supercede support for the vulnerable. These two crises lay bare the systemic ineptitude of the global financial and economic institutions and the inequity of their rules and decision making procedures. While the rich and the powerful nations are fixated on the preservation of their competitive advantage, they are seemingly heedless of the failures of those institutions and the suffering of the people whose needs they are ostensibly designed to cater to.

The consequences of global missteps are particularly evident in small island developing states worldwide.

And even though we are the least culpable for these missteps, we are the most affected by their consequences. We are forced to pay in the debilitating debt we must absorb because of an antiquated notion that development is measured by income per capita with no regard for our endemic vulnerability. We pay in the lost decades of development and development potential as temperatures rise and so too the seas around us. And now in the face of the pandemic, the main global policy options being paraded before us would have us pay for our recovery. This, Mr. President, is the gravest of social injustices that the United Nations cannot afford to perpetuate.

Simply put, none of us have the luxury of time to repeat the follies of the past in the false hope that they will produce different results. The bushfires on the West Coast of the United States, the hyperactive Atlantic hurricane season, drought in Central America, the flooding of Africa and this global pandemic are stark reminders that we are fast approaching the limits of planetary sustainability for human survival. Science gives us a decade, if that much, to course correct. The stakes could not be higher — they include all that the United Nations in its seventy five years has worked towards including the vaunted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Paris Agreement. Multilateralism is on the frontline.

To us in Belize, the next steps for the United Nations are manifest.

The pandemic has emphasized our interconnectivity and our collective vulnerability. It is imperative that the international community come together and rally behind the vision of the Charter to advance the dignity of all human beings in larger freedom.

The pandemic has also revealed the entrenched duality between the haves and the have nots. The international community must therefore elevate the protection of the most vulnerable as its highest priority.

The pandemic has provided a preview of the risks we are all exposed to if we continue business as usual. We must therefore as nations rise up in unison to the challenge to reset the global trajectory for planet and people, in line with what we have already agreed to do under our multilateral agenda: eradicate poverty, secure our climate future, and ensure human rights and justice for all.

On behalf of Belize and the small island developing states we represent I wish to put forward a five point action agenda for the United Nations.

First, let us get the recovery right.

The tragedy of COVID-19 is symptomatic of the tragedy of the commons. We are pushing our planetary boundaries beyond what is sustainable for humanity, threatening our own health as much as that of the earth. This is occurring on land and in the ocean. Our recovery from COVID-19 is an opportunity to accelerate our recovery from the unsustainable use of planetary resources and build our resilience to future shocks.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations has championed six climate-related actions to shape the recovery and the work ahead.

At the core, these principles are about people. They are about promoting job security, and healthy environments. They are about sustaining growth and transitioning to a climate resilient environmentally sensitive global economy.

These principles if operationalized, will take us well beyond recovery and set us on a pathway that will jumpstart our climate rescue and safeguard our children's future.

That future depends on holding global warming to well below 1.5 C.

Therefore as a second challenge, we must keep pressure on major emitters to increase their climate ambition and accelerate climate action for 1.5C.

2020 is the deadline to bring forward new climate plans with strengthened targets for climate action and a strategy to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. But we are yet to see the level of ambition needed to bend the emissions curve and close the mitigation gap for 1.5. Belize commends China for its announcement to pursue a path of carbon neutrality by 2060 and looks forward to its forthcoming climate plans. It is imperative that those with historic responsibility to now walk the walk. Belize urges the United Kingdom as the incoming President of the twenty-sixth climate change conference, the European Union, and the United States of America to put their best plans forward before we close out the year.

As Belize stated in the Placencia Ambition Forum, small island developing states resolve to deliver their own ambitious climate plans and indeed we have been the trailblazers. Belize too will be coming forward with its climate plan. Our nationally determined contribution will feature our commitment to enhance nature based solutions amid the growing global awareness of the potential of ecosystems to contribute to raising climate ambition and foster sustainable development.

Nature based solutions rely on the viability of ecosystems and the biodiversity they support. It is for this reason that the United Nations must as a third challenge address the urgency of protecting biodiversity.

Biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation like climate change are occurring at unprecedented rates. This acceleration has resulted in and will continue to precipitate irreversible harm to the earth systems. If we fail to stop and reverse this trend, the damage to global economic, social and political resilience and stability will be significant and will render achieving the SDGs impossible.

In recognition of this crisis, Belize has joined the Leader's Pledge for Nature which sets out urgent actions to be taken within the next decade to "put nature and biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030".

As a part of that pledge, we are committed to finalizing as a matter of priority the high seas treaty on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity. While the high seas covers nearly two-thirds (64%) of the world's ocean, only around one percent of those waters are protected today. Such a vast area of the planet warrants protection to conserve biodiversity and maintain a healthy ocean.

I invite all to join the Leader's Pledge, and endorse its actions as a part of our global commitment to the UN Decade for Action on Sustainable Development.

As is evident from the foregoing actions, our objective whether it is in recovering better, increasing climate ambition, or reversing biodiversity loss, is to safeguard the sustainable development agenda.

COVID-19 has changed the script on the Decade of Action on Sustainable Development. Just like a hurricane, this pandemic has been cataclysmic. Years of hard-earned development gains have vanished. Worse yet, for countries like my own, we are concerned that the global policy responses and the paucity in action on persistent challenges from climate to biodiversity will entrench poverty. In no uncertain terms, we face a development emergency.

Just as we must be sure to match our stimulus to our climate goals, we must do the same for our development goals. The integrated nature of our actions cannot be underestimated. For this reason, Belize in its capacity as the Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States has advocated that we use the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development together with the SAMOA Pathway and other internationally agreed development goals to chart our way forward out of the challenges we face. We need no reinvention. What we need is implementation and with that a renewed commitment to resuscitate our collective development goals. But because the pandemic has thrown some of us further afield from the SDG track, we also need to lend a hand to those whose legs have been completely cut from under them.

The fourth challenge I put to the United Nations is to give credence to the principle of leaving no one behind.

Small island developing states like Belize are engaging in a debt-fueled recovery to salvage any chance for our sustainable development because we do not qualify for concessionary finance. The denial of access to that finance amounts to a breach of the international commitment to support the special case of SIDS.

Per capita income can no longer define whether SIDS can access finance. It is high time that we finally replace the perverse income-based criteria with a robust vulnerability based criteria that looks at levels of poverty, indebtedness, and exposure to natural disasters and external shocks. AOSIS has called upon the Secretary-General to finally deliver a multi-dimensional vulnerability index which is some twenty-five years overdue.

As we have stated in the forum for Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond, traditional development tools have proven to be ineffective and COVID-19 continues to prove that point. New development tools need to be created or existing ones adapted. Inclusive and tailored measures for SIDS with a focus on debt relief, cancellation and restructuring are urgently needed.

My country as Chair of the AOSIS therefore calls for a SIDS Compact for Access to Finance with specific policy options that would address:

~ liquidity, solvency and enable a green, resilient recovery for SIDS ~ efficient access to finance as well as increased mobilization and expanded provision of concessionary and grant based finance

~ innovative sources of finance and facilitated private sector engagement for SIDS; and

~ Increased access to climate finance to address imminent needs of SIDS for adaptation and to address loss and damage as a result of irreversible impacts of climate change

This SIDS Compact is for all small island developing states, no matter where we fall on the anachronistic development chain. Any barrier that results in exclusions must be eliminated. In that connection Belize adds its voice once more to the overwhelming call and respectfully demand the complete rejection of unilateral coercive measures that have been imposed on our sister island, Cuba. Despite Cuba's hardships, its historic humanitarian commitment and ethos of service and solidarity were again demonstrated by its deployment of the medical personnel of the Henry Reeve Brigade in many countries, including Belize, to our assist in our efforts to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

We stand by the conviction that we are sovereign equals, and that all peoples without discrimination, without exception, must benefit from the promise of the Charter, to the rights therein including the right to self-determination.

This right to self determination is also applicable to the people of the Republic of China (Taiwan) and their continued exclusion from the UN and its institutions is contrary to the goals of the organisation. Belize calls for the full participation of Taiwan in the UN system. It is manifest that they possess the capacity so to do as exemplified in their successful and effective approach to COVID-19 and their outreach to allied and other countries.

Belize would also wish to reiterate its solidarity with the Palestinian people, who continue to suffer under illegal occupation; we fully support their aspirations for an independent state, within its 1967 borders, with all attendant rights. We urge Israel to continue to work towards the realisation of the dream for a two state solution.

This brings me finally to the fifth challenge — reform.

Mr President,

Since the reckoning of the Millennium Development Goals, one narrative has been clear and unchanged. While there has been progress, that progress has been uneven. I do not expect any difference will come with the Sustainable Development Goals if we continue without purposeful reform of our institutions to level the multilateral playing field.

As the 2008 financial crisis and the emerging trend of responses to the COVID 19 crisis portend, our contemporary multilateral institutions including the

global financial institutions embody a systemic bias for those with more power. This has resulted in the forging of global policies that succumb to the pressure of power politics, and a further marginalization of already vulnerable groups.

Disappointingly so, the members of the AOSIS have seen this time and again as we have tirelessly advocated for collective and ambitious climate action with an urgency of now and all we have to show for it is incremental progress.

This has led many of our small island developing states to ponder whether indeed we will be seated in this General Assembly to celebrate the UN's centenary. As President Kabua of the Marshall Islands recently stated: "In the face of the planet's existential challenge, the United Nations members must contemplate the future that inaction will bring — one in which the ranks of this noble institution may be diminished."

Systemic change is needed. Multilateral systems and institutions must be reformed to be more inclusive and to advance a vision of shared responsibility and shared prosperity. The voices of the marginalized must be centralized. The policy of exclusion and exceptionalism that has been the bane of multilateralism must be replaced with a policy of inclusion.

Mr. President,

Belize continues to pursue its peaceful and just settlement of the Guatemala Claim to our country by participating fully in the legal process at the International Court of Justice.

2020 is humanity's defining moment.

We have witnessed the rampant injustices that people even in the greatest of nations amongst us continue to suffer.

We have had to come to terms with the fallacies of our institutions and their winner take all policies.

But all is not doom and gloom.

We have learned from the sacrifice of our frontline workers, our heroes, that in the end what matters is compassion, and the selfless task of looking out for one another.

Multilateralism is on the frontline but I am confident that we will arise from this dark moment stronger and more resilient as nations unite.

Romania (see also A/75/PV.14, annex VI)

Statement by Mr. Bogdan Lucian Aurescu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania

Delivered on Tuesday, 29 September 2020, at the 14th meeting of the General Assembly

[Original: English and French]

Mr. President of the General Assembly,

Mr. Secretary General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We celebrate 75 years since the establishment of the United Nations and the adoption of its Charter as a codification of multilateralism. We all acknowledge the UN's vital contribution to the development of our societies, as well as its galvanizing role by fostering dialogue, cooperation and shared responsibility, on the basis of the universal values and principles enshrined in the UN Charter. These principles are just as relevant today as they were 75 years ago.

Romania remains a firm supporter of the multilateral rules-based international order, with the UN at its core. Romania is committed to cooperate for a safer future for all, by promoting sustainable development, respect for human rights, peace and security. This is the future we want!

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated, once more, that global challenges require common action, solidarity and cooperation. We must show commitment to "a quantum leap in collective engagement", as mentioned by the Secretary-General. Multilateralism is also essential in harnessing opportunities to build back better and greener, towards inclusive and sustainable economies, and societies where „no one is left behind". In order to achieve that, we must continue reforming the UN, to make it more effective, efficient and fit for its purpose. That is the United Nations we need!

Your Excellencies,

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on all areas of our lives. The UN's comprehensive response to this crisis highlights the interdependence of the economic, humanitarian, security and human rights pillars. Nonetheless, it has revealed the imperative need to deal with them in a holistic way.

The pandemic has prompted increasing divisions across the world, as well as attempts to weaken democracy. However, this period has facilitated the spread of disinformation and misleading information, which can be possible vectors for the spread of violence and extremism.

It is therefore the pivotal moment to transform this crisis into a new opportunity and to revitalize the security and peace agenda, with a strong emphasis on conflict prevention and the consolidation of peace processes. Our efforts in the context of peace operations must continue with ever greater efficiency. We also support greater integration of the principle of the responsibility to protect into actions and projects focused on prevention.

Romania traditionally contributes to world peace and security. We have participated in UN peace operations around the world, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to South Sudan, Mali and Kosovo, and we will continue to play our role.

We are convinced that cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations is an essential instrument in consolidating security and development in the world. We are always concerned about the multitude of unresolved conflicts in the Black Sea region, which affect stability and cooperation in our neighbourhood. We continue to promote cooperation between the United Nations and various organizations in our region, including as the current Chairman of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

We support regional and international efforts to combat terrorism, in accordance with human rights and humanitarian law, as well as the forthcoming review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Romania remains firmly committed to maintaining a rules-based international order and consolidating the global architecture for arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament, while taking into account the security context. As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the entry into force of the NPT (Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons) in 2020, Romania encourages all parties to take a forward-looking approach, doing everything possible to achieve compromise to strengthen the integrity of the NPT in all its pillars.

Ladies and gentlemen,

While hunger, youth unemployment and gender inequality are on the rise, more action is needed in order to fully implement the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. In line with the Secretary General's call, we have the responsibility to address these challenges globally and locally. We have to set adequate policies, budgets, institutions and regulatory frameworks. We also need to involve and listen to our fellow citizens, in order to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. In Romania, a dedicated strategic document launched in 2018 — The 2030 Reviewed National Strategy — guides our action over the next 12 years in order to meet the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

During the Decade of Action for the SDGs, we must also work together to protect our planet and ecosystems. We need to resort to a rational use of planetary resources when pursuing economic growth, in full respect for biodiversity. The Biodiversity Summit offers a unique opportunity to show ambition and accelerate action on biodiversity for sustainable development.

Firm action is also needed in order to tackle the climate and environmental emergencies. From rising sea levels to catastrophic weather events, we can no longer afford to ignore the risks of climate change. We all have a duty to the future generations to turn Glasgow COP26 into a success and to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement.

The EU Green Deal is a token of our commitment in that regard and an example of good practice, but we, the European states and institutions, cannot succeed by ourselves. We must all do our part to achieve a just, clean, secure and climate-sound future.

Romania's objective by 2050 is to create a framework where the economic, social and environmental policies are interconnected and designed to ensure: sustainable development, high living standards and the quality of the environment.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The future we want is one in which human rights are promoted, protected and fulfilled. We must ensure inclusivity and accountability and harness the youth and civil society's engagement.

The leaving no one behind principle should also be valid for human rights, taking into account that the overwhelming majority of the SDGs are anchored in human rights instruments.

The COVID-19 pandemic is also taking its toll on human rights, deepening pre existing inequalities and enhancing vulnerabilities. We must ensure that a comprehensive and consistent approach to human rights is at the core of all efforts for economic recovery.

Gender equality is central to all the Sustainable Development Goals. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and its Platform for Action. Together, they define the most comprehensive and transformative global agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment. The future Generation Equality Forum should achieve tangible results on gender equality. We must stand together for women's rights! Gender equality and women's rights are essential to recovering faster and better from this pandemic.

Digital Technology is central to almost every aspect of the response to the pandemic and a prerequisite for the achievement of the SDGs. The development and use of Digital technologies, including Artificial Intelligence, based on ethical principles, must be human-centred. The promotion and protection of human rights, democracy, good governance, accountability and the rule of law must be provided offline and online. Thus we need a universal political commitment to digital security. The UN should galvanize the digital cooperation at global level and contribute to mobilizing all actors to ensure open, secure and affordable access to digital infrastructure for all.

The digital sector in Romania amounts to 6 per cent of the GDP and is an important driver of growth and innovation. We see digitalization as an opportunity for everyone and a key component of our economic development. Romania's digital transformation aims to make our country less bureaucratic, more resilient, and more attractive for foreign investment. It also has the potential to turn Romania into a regional innovation hub.

The COVID-19 crisis has proven that disinformation and hostile actions in the information environment are threatening both international and human security, and they have to be effectively addressed. This crisis demonstrated the crucial need for access to reliable, accurate and science-based information. Thus, it has confirmed the role of free, independent, accountable and pluralistic media in strengthening transparency, accountability and trust.

The future we want is also a future of solidarity, in line with 2030 Agenda and the principle of leaving no one behind. One of the main lessons we have learned during the past months is the crucial need for effective and innovative multilateral cooperation. We have also learned that the rules-based international order — on which multilateralism relies on — must be upheld and strengthened, in order to effectively address these challenges.

Now, more than ever, we have acknowledged that health represents an investment in the future and is key to sustainable development. Our intensified

efforts to achieving the SDGs will contribute largely to mitigate the negative effects of the COVID-19 crisis.

Romania has therefore become part of “The Coronavirus Global Response” pledging initiative. At the same time, we have re-oriented several projects this year towards responding to health emergencies, particularly in our Eastern Neighbourhood and in Sub-Saharan Africa. Romania has redirected more than half of its budget for international development cooperation to respond to COVID-19. We contribute to consolidating the institutional capacity of health systems, ensuring food security and sustainable water management, as well as countering fake news in the COVID-19 context.

Romania has included the refugees in the national public health coverage and is ensuring their access to all the necessary medical facilities. All persons who have received the refugee status or another form of international protection have been granted continued access to the national territory. This process continued even during the state of emergency caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, and these persons are included in the prevention programmes against COVID-19.

Romania pays particular attention to youth, especially as far as education and professional training are concerned. As such, we have more than doubled the number of scholarships offered to foreign citizens for the 2020-2021 academic year, with particular attention to Africa. We believe that by ensuring the continuity in youth training, we contribute to the materialization of the “build back better” principle.

In its current capacity as Presidency of the Community of Democracies, Romania has actively promoted the role of youth in democratic processes. The Bucharest Declaration, adopted at the 20th anniversary of the Community of Democracies hosted by my country in June this year, clearly states that

“democracies are best equipped to mobilize and ensure that all elements of society work together, adapt to new circumstances, and maximize inclusive joint efforts, including full and meaningful participation of youth in decision-making”.

Following, the CoD Youth Forum organized by Romania this July has confirmed that as democracies need to work together to deliver the best results, youth involvement is essential for our common future and for the welfare of our societies.

Excellencies,

In conclusion, the UN we need must ensure effective multilateralism and mobilize all stakeholders, governments, financial and business sectors, academia and civil society. In order to find sustainable solutions to current global challenges, we must hear all voices in our society, women and girls, youth and children, as well as people in vulnerable situations.

The future we want must meet our aspirations to peace, freedom and justice, equality and prosperity, good health and a clean environment — a future in which human rights, democracy and the rule of law provide us with an adequate framework to achieve our aspirations.

I take this opportunity to mention that Romania itself is celebrating 65 years since joining the UN. In this context, I would like to reaffirm our commitment to the universal values of our Organization and our resolve to continue to contribute to achieve its noble objectives.

Mr. President of the General Assembly,

I congratulate you on the important responsibilities you have assumed and assure you of Romania's full support and cooperation during the 75th session of the General Assembly.

Thank you for your attention !

Eritrea (see also A/75/PV.14, annex VII)

Statement by Mr. Osman Saleh Mohammed, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea

Delivered on Tuesday, 29 September 2020, at the 14th meeting of the General Assembly

Your Excellency Ambassador Volkan Bozkir

President of the General Assembly;

Your Excellency Mr. Antonio Guterres

UN Secretary General;

Honourable Participants,

I have the honour to deliver this speech on behalf of the President of the State of Eritrea, H.E. Mr. Isaias Afwerki.

The UN General Assembly is taking place this year at a critical juncture when the world is at a cross-roads on account of the vicious COVID-19 global pandemic that has inculcated an immense loss of life so far.

As it may be recalled, I had underlined the following salient points in my message to the UN General Assembly last year.

In as far as global trends is concerned, I had stated, and I quote, “the world is on the cusp of a new world order. All vital parameters indicate that the unipolar world order has come to an end or is in its twilight years. The economic power balance is inexorably changing, with a spike in attendant intense rivalries and upheavals”.

In regard to Africa, my remarks were, and I quote, “Africa’s lot over the past quarter of a century has been onerous. Africa’s resources were plundered wantonly. Despite hollow phrases of ‘conflict prevention’ and ‘conflict resolution’, wars and upheavals continue to increase and fester. Almost 1 billion Africans remain marginalized through the collusion of external predators, their local surrogates and corrupt special-interest entities. This tragic reality requires utmost and urgent attention for effective remedies”.

In terms of the situation in our neighbourhood — namely the Horn of Africa and Red Sea Region — the salient points underlined in my message of last year were:

“The two regions have been immensely and inordinately afflicted in the past 25 years by externally instigated, intractable, internecine ethnic and clan conflicts, as well as discord and wars among neighbouring countries. This grim reality is in stark contrast to the promising events and hopes engendered in the early 1990s for regional integration. Here again, a large part of the blame falls on corrupt local actors.”

Distinguished Participants,

As we mull over current realities this year, what are the new, promising, tidings that we can invoke apart from the earnest pleas and petitions for higher efficacy that are emphasized solemnly almost every year.

Alas, what is new in our world this year is the depressing calamity; the huge loss of life that COVID-19 has and continues to incur globally.

And albeit its agonizing dimensions, the Pandemic has starkly exposed the structural flaws and deficiencies of the prevailing, precarious, economic and security “global order”. It has debunked the spurious explanations and narratives peddled in the past to embellish and rationalize a largely dysfunctional global order. Indeed, in a rather perverted sense, the Pandemic constitutes a wake-up call; a costly reminder for us to mend our ways.

Distinguished Participants,

The pursuit and ideals of enduring global peace, stability and prosperity are squarely predicated, and can only flourish, on the edifice of a robust global organization that can measure up to all these challenges. This indelible fact is more evident than ever before. In the event, allow me to renew our call for the strengthening and revamping of the marginalized UN system whose authority and efficacy have been corroded in the past decades.

I thank you

Myanmar (see also A/75/PV.14, annex VIII)

Statement by Mr. U Kyaw Tint Swe, Union Minister of the Office of the State Counsellor of the Union of Myanmar

Delivered on Tuesday, 29 September 2020, at the 14th meeting of the General Assembly

Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by extending my warm congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkir on his election as President of the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

As we speak today, the entire world is waging war against our common enemy, the COVID-19 global pandemic. This global pandemic has forced all of us to reassess our way of life as individuals and as communities and to reconsider our standard modes of operation. This 75th General Assembly is being held virtually. It is indeed humbling that an invisible virus has taken nearly one million lives, disrupted economies, livelihoods, and torn asunder the social fabric of peoples all over the world.

This global pandemic also lends itself as a test of the state of multilateralism. To overcome this pandemic an unprecedented scale of global cooperation is required. Therefore, it is only apt that this year's theme is "The Future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism — Confronting COVID-19 through effective multilateral action".

Role of Multilateralism and the United Nations we want

Mr. President,

In a time of the greatest need for global cooperation, multilateralism has been placed itself under strain by the rise of unilateralism and protectionism. This has in some respects been worsened in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak by rising geopolitical rivalry and competition. This creates uncertainty. It is now, more than ever, that we need to strengthen rules-based multilateralism, to collectively overcome the exceptional challenges we face, and to mitigate their impact on weaker nations and vulnerable peoples. Failure to do so would impact the social stability of countries and place added burdens on the United Nations.

Despite the worrisome trend of statements that undermine multilateralism, we fail to see an alternative to the United Nations. Indeed, we are not looking for one. The UN represents our joint efforts to improve the situation of hundreds of millions of human beings around the world through the promotion of peace and stability, sustainable development, a culture of justice, legality, and rule of law. Through effective multilateral actions, lives can be saved, health improved, and security experienced by many more.

This said, we need to work together to develop the United Nations into an organization that we all want. It must be an organization that nations can turn to in times of need. It must remain a true beacon of hope for developing countries.

In the area of human rights promotion and protection, the United Nations should ensure that its mandate holders adhere strictly to the principles of independence, impartiality and integrity in the exercise of their duties. It must avoid double standards scrupulously, in particular towards Member States that have to bear troublesome legacies, very often as a result of a colonial past. Equality of states must be respected, regardless of the extent of their material wealth and political influence.

Myanmar and COVID-19

Mr. President,

The COVID-19 global pandemic has overwhelmed even resource-rich countries. It represents a formidable task for a developing country like Myanmar. Myanmar has taken a Whole-of-Nation approach in mobilizing the strength of its people through volunteerism and sharing spirit in the fight against the pandemic.

These measures proved successful in coping with the first wave of the virus but at present we are facing the challenge of a second wave. The Government has been making parallel efforts both in protecting public health and mitigating the economic impact by implementing its COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan (CERP). Despite the risk of virus import, we are bringing back all our citizens and migrant workers who are facing difficulties in foreign countries where they have no access to social protection.

Pursuing the principle of “Leaving no one behind”, Myanmar’s response to the pandemic covers all vulnerable segments, especially IDPs, persons with disabilities, and low-income workers. To that end, the Government adopted an Action Plan for the control of COVID-19 at IDP camps that includes measures to raise awareness of the guidelines for pandemic prevention and to establish necessary measures to prevent and control the pandemic among internally displaced persons. To date those have been no serious outbreaks in any camp.

Pandemic and Conflict

Mr. President,

Terrorism remains a global and transnational threat. In the interest of sustainable peace and stability, we need to continue to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. This is an absolute need that must not be allowed to be obfuscated by spurious issues. Conflict and insecurity negatively affect peace. Paving the road for sustainable development often requires a deep understanding of root causes and unconventional threats. We welcome the Secretary General’s global ceasefire appeal which will contribute to peace and stability in conflict areas and encourage solidarity to overcome our common enemy, COVID-19. In response to this appeal, Tatmadaw, Myanmar’s Armed Forces declared a ceasefire from 10 May to 31 August 2020. It also announced that the ceasefire will be applied in all areas except where terrorist groups have taken position. This ceasefire has been extended to 30 September 2020.

The Government has also invited all ethnic armed organizations to work together for the prevention of the spread of COVID-19 in those areas which are not yet under total Government control. This kind of cooperation contributes to confidence-building between state institutions and the ethnic armed organizations. Despite the temporary disruption of commercial flights to Rakhine State, the Government continues to ensure health and humanitarian assistance to all affected communities without discrimination.

Mr. President

It has been a little over four years since the peaceful transfer of State responsibilities to the first elected civilian Government. This has ended over five decades of absolute military rule but it is only the beginning of our people's long journey towards a fully democratic Myanmar. We are treading carefully towards a different direction than known the past half a century. In just over a month from now, the people of Myanmar will go to the polls again. We have successfully put in place a political system that relies on ballots instead of bullets.

Every country undergoing democratic transition passes through difficult times. Myanmar is no exception. We are still struggling with numerous challenges including continued ethnic armed conflicts, old and new complex issues in Rakhine State, and, on top of it all, the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the past four years, our Government has made an all-out effort within the space permitted by the 2008 Constitution to fulfill our people's dream of their inherent right to live in peace and security, with fundamental freedoms, and assured fruits of development. The people of Myanmar have started to enjoy the freedom of democratic rights but it is only when the existing 2008 Constitution can be revised, that we will be able to ensure the full democratic rights of our people. Although it is not possible to meet all the high expectations of all the people in such a short time, there are visible improvements in many areas including health, education, infrastructure, socio-economic development, and good governance.

Peace Process

Mr. President,

In a multi-ethnic country like Myanmar, making unity out of diversity is a great challenge. The Government is striving for sustainable peace, genuine national reconciliation and all-round development.

It is the aim of the NLD Government to hold political negotiations with all ethnic nationalities that we might bring the seven-decade history of internal strife to a conclusion and achieve durable peace. To that end, the Government has successfully convened four sessions of the Union Peace Conference, also known as the 21st Century Panlong Conference. As a result, the third part of the Union Accord, which includes basic guiding federal principles for the future of the Union, has been signed by the participating delegations. These principles will define the path that will be followed, regardless of which Government might be at the helm, towards the building of a Democratic Federal Union.

Rakhine State

Mr. President,

When the NLD civilian Government took office in March 2016, it identified key priorities to be addressed. These included the complex situation of Rakhine State. Colonial cross-border migration and cycles of inter-communal violence have sowed deep-rooted mutual mistrust and fear between the different communities in Rakhine State.

Acknowledging that a holistic and comprehensive approach was needed to ensure sustainable peace, in Rakhine State, the Central Committee for the Implementation of Peace, Stability, and Development in Rakhine State was established in May 2016. This effort was supplemented by the creation of the Advisory Commission under the

late Dr. Kofi Annan, one time Secretary General of the UN, who has left us a legacy of 88 recommendations towards finding sustainable solutions to the demanding issues in Rakhine State.

Despite the multiple challenges, the Government is committed to lay down a sustainable foundation for peace, stability, and development for all persons in Rakhine State. A ministerial level committee was set up to implement the recommendations of the Advisory Commission. This committee has selected five priority areas: issues of citizenship, freedom of movement, closure of IDP camps, education, and health care services. Its activities continue to the present day within the limitations of the COVID pandemic and the on-going internal armed conflict ignited by the Arakan Army (AA) in Rakhine State.

Developments in Rakhine State

Mr. President,

The Government shares the concern of the international community over the situation in Rakhine, in particular the suffering of all communities affected by armed conflicts. To resolve the issue, our Government focused on the following areas: humanitarian situation, repatriation, resettlement, reconciliation, and development.

Humanitarian Situation

Despite the challenges posed by the internal armed conflicts in Rakhine State, the Government has scaled up its efforts to grant humanitarian access to International Organizations including the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), to provide food and emergency items to affected persons in Rakhine and Chin States. The Government and the ICRC drew up an action plan to prevent and control the spread of COVID-19 in Rakhine State, including in new and old Internally Displaced People's camps. The WFP has resumed regular distribution of food supplies and other activities such as nutrition interventions for vulnerable communities in Rakhine State. The people have benefitted from the generous support of the UN Country Team and other development partners in these efforts.

Bilateral Repatriation Process

Our commitment to receive verified returnees in a voluntary, safe, and dignified manner under the bilateral agreement reached with Bangladesh in November 2017, remains steadfast. We invite the Government of Bangladesh to show its genuine political will to cooperate, by strictly adhering to the terms of the signed agreements. Bilateral cooperation is the only way that can effectively resolve the repatriation issue between Myanmar and Bangladesh. May I say this — Should Bangladesh commit itself to the bilateral process it will find Myanmar a willing partner. Pressure tactics will be futile. Myanmar does not react well to pressure. Myanmar's policy is to maintain friendly relations with all its five neighbours. We want to be good neighbours with Bangladesh, bound in a zero tolerance policy towards terrorism, not merely in words but in deeds. By so doing we will be upholding the national interests not just of our two countries but the region as a whole. Both the terrorist group ARSA and the terrorist insurgent group AA have used Bangladeshi territory as a sanctuary. Efforts to prevent ARSA and its supporters in the camps of Cox's Bazar from hampering the bilateral repatriation process, through threats, violence or other illegal conduct also need to be strengthened as such activities pose a risk to both Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Although bilateral repatriation has not yet started, more than 350 displaced persons from Cox's Bazar camps have returned to Rakhine State on their own volition through unofficial channels.

Resettlement

Myanmar is engaging with different actors in its efforts to create a conducive environment in Rakhine State for the prospective returnees from Bangladesh. In this regard, we have extended our trilateral agreement with the UNDP and UNHCR till June 2021 to facilitate the implementation of our bilateral agreements with Bangladesh.

UNDP and UNHCR teams have worked independently to assess immediate needs in over 120 villages. The Government has approved 75 'Quick Impact Projects' (QIPs), as termed by the UN, relating to community infrastructure, skills training, and income-generation. With the advent of the pandemic, their efforts are now naturally focussed on raising awareness of COVID-19 prevention within the communities.

The Government is also working with ASEAN's Coordinating Center for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre). At the time of repatriation, the ASEAN assessment team will be in the field to assess the process. This should enhance the trust and confidence of the returnees. In July this year, Myanmar and ASEAN identified and endorsed four joint projects: 1) improving access to information to facilitate the repatriation process; 2) capacity-building for the verification process at the reception centers; 3) provision of agriculture equipment; and 4) livelihood-recovery programme.

Accountability and Reconciliation

Mr. President,

We share the concern over the allegations of human rights violations in Rakhine State and take them seriously. During the public hearing before the International Court of Justice in December 2019, the State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi reaffirmed that if war crimes or human rights violations have been committed, they will be investigated and prosecuted by Myanmar's criminal justice system. This is our right, our obligation and our commitment, and it is important for vital domestic processes linked to constitutional reform and peace in Myanmar.

In pursuit of accountability, the Government established the Independent Commission of Enquiry (ICoE) in July 2018, which submitted its final report to the President in January 2020. Based on these findings, the Union Attorney General is conducting ongoing investigations of allegations against civilian perpetrators.

Furthermore, the Office of the Judge Advocate General (JAG) announced on 15 September 2020 that a third court-martial concerning alleged human rights violations in Rakhine in 2017 will start before the end of 2020. It concerns the villages of Chut Pyin and Maung Nu. The State Counsellor mentioned in her statement before the International Court of Justice in December 2019 that events in these two villages were among the 12 most serious incidents in Rakhine in 2016-2017. The ICoE final report identified them as the gravest on its list of 12-13 incidents. This is also alleged by United Nations and civil society reports. It is therefore significant that there will be a court-martial for these incidents as it confirms Myanmar has the will to ensure accountability for the most serious allegations.

Earlier, the two court-martials concerning Inn Din and Gutarpyin saw the conviction of 13 officers and soldiers, for crimes in two villages on the list of

12 serious incidents mentioned by the State Counsellor. Let me repeat her statement of regret at the early release of those convicted in the Inn Din case. I am confident that in subsequent cases there will be no such premature release of convicted persons. With a third court-martial, we could see within the next several months an increase in the total number of officers and soldiers convicted for Rakhine 2017 crimes. In this century, there are very few countries that hold their own officers and soldiers accountable for international crimes even in conflict which has seen a much higher number of deaths than the internal armed conflict in Rakhine.

It is noteworthy that the Judge Advocate General of Myanmar will not stop with the third case. In his announcement on 15 September 2020, he also stated that an investigation of possible wider patterns of violations in the region of northern Rakhine in 2016-2017 has started. Such alleged regional patterns of conduct could include, for example,

“inadequate distinction between civilians and ARSA fighters, disproportionate use of force, [...] failure to prevent plundering or property destruction, or acts of forcible displacement of civilians”.

These possible patterns of conduct across northern Rakhine in 2016-2017 are now subject to the new, regional investigation, based on the three above-mentioned cases, the ICoE final report, and other information. This represents highly significant progress in the domestic accountability process.

A country should be given time, space and respect for its domestic accountability processes. Independent experts have pointed out to the risks of “demonization and one-sidedness” in the way some international actors swiftly reject any step Myanmar takes towards domestic accountability. One international lawyer politely asked whether such automatic rejection of domestic justice steps is “indicative of objectivity, lack of bias, and concern to nourish domestic justice efforts”, or is it perhaps exactly the opposite? Demonization not only undermines our investigators and prosecutors. As the State Counsellor observed before the International Court of Justice last December:

“Feeding the flames of an extreme polarisation in the context of Rakhine [...] can harm the values of peace and harmony in Myanmar. Aggravating the wounds of conflict can undermine unity in Rakhine. Hate narratives are not simply confined to hate speech — language that contributes to extreme polarisation also amounts to hate narratives”.

Issuance of three Presidential Directives

Mr. President,

In April this year, the Presidential Office issued a directive to Government officials to act in compliance of its treaty obligations under the Genocide Convention. Another directive was also issued to prohibit officials from destroying or removing any evidence of possible crimes relating to the above-mentioned criminal investigations. A third directive was issued to all Government officials to denounce and prevent all forms of hate speech and to participate in and support anti-hate speech activities. Anti-hate speech awareness campaigns are being implemented nationwide. In May this year, anti-hate speech activities led by civil society organisations, women and youth were carried out simultaneously in all townships in Rakhine State. More activities will take place in the coming months. The Election Commission and the

Ministry of Information are working together with UNDP and UNESCO in an anti-hate speech programme.

Social Cohesion

Mr. President,

Myanmar has expended sustained efforts to foster social cohesion among the communities residing in Rakhine State to bring about reconciliation. It is our sincere hope that these social cohesion activities will bring the communities together and rebuild trust and confidence. Despite persistent opposition to the Government's effort to achieve social harmony and reconciliation in Rakhine State from some actors both outside and inside the country, we are determined to persevere.

Together with our civil society partners, various activities have taken place to promote mutual understanding and respect among the communities. So far, 203 community dialogues have been conducted, while respecting social distancing rules and other necessary precautions linked to the COVID pandemic. The success of these community dialogues and activities augurs well for reconciliation and peace in Rakhine State.

Four youth camps have been held. Over 265 campaign activities to raise awareness of COVID-19 prevention measures have taken place in Rakhine State. Other activities in Rakhine include 17 anti-hate speech events, 3 gender-based violence awareness events, 5 community environmental campaigns, and 10 anti-drug campaigns. In addition, 28 training sessions on social cohesion, civic education, social mobilization, conflict analysis, managing rumours and hate messages, have been organized. Furthermore, 155 vocational training programmes have been conducted whereby the communities were involved in producing facemasks and hand sanitizers. These activities created jobs for more than 5,000 people in Rakhine State. It has been said, "Nothing brings people together more than a World Cup". In that spirit, we are pleased that 3 sports tournaments have taken place.

All communities in Rakhine State have participated in vocational training programmes offered by the UN such as tailoring, mechanics and livestock breeding. All communities also participated in "cash for work" infrastructure development projects, such as improvement of village roads, water ponds and school renovation.

Addressing sexual violence

Myanmar has signed a Joint Communiqué with the UN on the prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence in December 2018. A National Committee was established and has developed an Action Plan to identify priority implementation areas such as the issuance of clear directives by the military, investigation of alleged violations, prosecution of perpetrators, capacity-building of law enforcement officers, legal reform measures, and strengthening of service delivery for survivors. Furthermore, the Government is drafting a law on the "Prevention and Protection of Violence against Women" to reinforce the protection of women from all forms of violence including domestic and sexual violence.

Prevention of Grave Violations against Children

The Government has established the National Committee on the Prevention of Grave Violations against Children in Armed Conflict and formulated the National Action Plan for protecting children in armed conflicts from injury, death, and sexual violence. This Action Plan was approved by the President's Office in August this

year, and in line with the work plan, the military will issue necessary directives, and set up a complaints mechanism, and a monitoring and evaluation committee. Myanmar is cooperating with UNICEF to conduct awareness-raising activities. In June this year, the UN delisted Myanmar's army from the list of countries that recruit child soldiers for combat purposes.

Development

To tackle poverty in Rakhine State, a Rakhine State Investment Fair was held in February 2019. This event is expected to generate job opportunities, income, and long-term development. Other development projects are being considered but these initiatives have been put on hold due to the armed conflicts and the pandemic.

Conclusion

Mr. President,

Myanmar reaffirms its commitment to continue to work constructively with the United Nations in line with our national priorities and needs, particularly in our endeavors to achieve the goals set out in the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan.

In our democratic journey, we have achieved much progress but it is far from over. Our progress is due to the resilience of our people and their strong will to build prosperity and well being for all in Myanmar. We are nurturing and building a new nation together. We would like to thank our friends far and near who have offered us their understanding and support during difficult times. We sincerely value their friendship.

This brings me to my conclusion. In May 2019, the UN released its strategy and plan of action against hate speech. This must be lauded as there is a dire need to address hate speech domestically. But we should also be aware of the international dimension, as referred to earlier. Demonization may be the oldest propaganda technique. It seeks to inspire ill-feeling towards the designated enemy, the 'other', to rally allies to impose an arbitrary agenda that is removed from basic norms of justice. It is of the utmost importance that those entrusted with UN human rights mandates observe the highest standards of quality control and integrity, and that they do not cut corners to please any constituency. Grave accusations have been made against Myanmar. Such accusations have not been subjected to due process, including judicial probing of real evidence, yet the verdict of 'guilty' seems to have been passed by some in the international community. Demonizing fellow Member States of the United Nations, by using inadequately quality-controlled information, fosters ill-feeling between countries and peoples, which is the harbinger of hatred and conflict. This would weaken the principal objectives of peace on which the United Nations Charter is based.

We ask only for fair treatment from the international community. It is our appeal to the Member States to examine the negative narratives on Myanmar carefully and impartially, before drawing their independent conclusions. We would appreciate it if the international community continues to extend its support and understanding to our efforts towards the achievement of sustainable peace and national reconciliation, genuine democracy, and inclusive development for all peoples in Myanmar.

I thank you, Mr. President.

Maldives (see also A/75/PV.14, annex IX)

Statement by Mr. Abdulla Shahid, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Maldives

Delivered on Tuesday, 29 September 2020, at the 14th meeting of the General Assembly

His Excellency Abdulla Shahid, Minister of Foreign Affairs at the
General Debate of the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Bismilliah ah Rahmaan ah raheem

Mr President, Mr Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Congratulations Mr President, on your election as the President of the seventy-fifth session of the UN General Assembly. A distinguished person of your wisdom and caliber at the helm of this assembly brings comfort, during these extraordinary times we face.

I also wish to express our heartfelt appreciation to the outgoing President for his excellent stewardship of our work through unforeseen challenges.

Mr. Secretary-General, my country applauds your sincere and hard work during these tiring times.

“A handful though we are, we dedicate ourselves to the principles of this world body and declare our faith in the support of the Charter of the United Nations”.

Mr President,

These were among the first words that the first Permanent Representative of the Maldives to the United Nations Mr Ahmed Hilmy Didi spoke at this chamber, 55 years ago. 55 years ago, we declared our firm conviction that “the UN is the chief architect” of peace. 55 years later, our conviction remains stronger than ever.

Today, as we grapple with one of the greatest global challenges in recent history, deliberating “the future we want, the United Nations we need” and “reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism” not only seems opportune but a necessity.

The stark and tragic images of the Covid19 pandemic still remain etched in our minds. Healthcare workers treating patients on makeshift beds. Undertakers struggling to bury the dead. Empty roads, empty schools, empty airports. And the eerie silence blanketing it all...

In the Maldives — a vibrant and thriving nation — our lives, came to a standstill, almost overnight. With no tourists, revenue declined, and debt increased. The economy is set to contract — for the first time in a decade.

Responding quickly to the Covid19 health impacts was our first priority. We immediately declared a National Health Emergency. President Solih established the National Emergency Operations Center, and chaired the Committee’s meetings himself. We boosted testing capacity, established Covid treatment facilities, mobilised and trained healthcare workers. The dedication of our frontline workers in ensuring effective provision of quality healthcare, and uninterrupted services has been extraordinary.

Our second priority was to minimise shock to the economy, and support households and businesses. Income support, stimulus packages, debt moratorium, and tax reliefs programs have been initiated; Social security including universal health insurance, single parent support and elderly pensions, have continued despite many logistical and financial challenges.

A National Taskforce on Response and Recovery has been constituted, and it has prioritised building resilience into our post Covid action plan. The aim is to ensure that the development gains we have made over the past decades are not eroded; to ensure that development projects promised and planned go forward without delay; and to ensure that our commitment to the 2030 Agenda, ensuring that no one is left behind, does not remain unfulfilled.

Mr President,

There are many lessons that can already be learnt from Covid19.

First, the asymmetries in the international system have been laid bare like never before — whether it be the unevenness of the impacts, the digital divide, the deep shocks due to disruptions in supply chains — no country has been spared from the impacts. But not every country has been affected in equal measure. In countries like mine, where tourism contributions both directly and indirectly account for 75% of GDP, the loss has been immeasurable.

Second, the toll that debt burdens have on the economies of Small Island Developing States like the Maldives is clearer now. We appreciate the G20's debt service suspension initiative. But there is little difference between 31 December and 1 January, apart from the change in year. Economies will still be in recovery, and hurting. So, we request the G20 to extend their initiative until the end of 2021.

But, debt suspension is only half the story for SIDS. We need structural change, innovative facilities, and better and greater access to concessional financing. We need a proper assessment of our vulnerabilities that will shape the way for better-targeted approaches in SIDS.

Third, the pandemic has also highlighted the importance of global cooperation. In the Maldives, without the support of our friends, our bilateral and multilateral partners, we would not be able to continue weathering this storm. As we work towards finding a vaccine, our hope is that every person who needs it will have access to it. That we will work together to ensure equitable access.

I thank all our partners who have generously extended financial, material and technical support during this crisis, even when they themselves are going through challenging times. One such example is India. The recent budget support of 250 million US dollars, was the single largest financial assistance from a donor during this pandemic.

Mr President,

The Covid pandemic has given us the opportunity to recalibrate our approach to development, and focus on building a more resilient world — one that delivers for planet, people, and prosperity.

For countries like mine — climate change remains a significant threat — but also a threat that is difficult to overcome on our own. The number of islands that require emergency shore protection, flood or disaster relief are rising each year. The

frequency, and severity of the events are pushing towards the limits of adaptation. There is also an increasing trend on the slow-onset events such as sea level rise. For the Maldives, the impacts of climate change are no longer the future. For us, it is our lived reality.

But climate change does not discriminate. It does not recognise borders. Big or small, rich or poor, every nation is facing the impacts, although at different scales and magnitudes. Climate change is a risk multiplier. It continues to be a threat to international security.

Our hope is in realising the lofty ambitions of the Paris Agreement. What we need is stronger NDCs by all countries. We will most certainly submit ours! We need actual realisation of pledges made, including financial commitments. We need easier, and faster access to finance. Climate financing has to be new, additional and predictable in nature, and rolled out now, to achieve the target we set in 2015. Adaptation is no longer something to plan for, in the future. It is our every day.

As we rebuild our economies after COVID-19, it must not be business as usual. We have to use this as an opportunity to build back greener. In doing so, no country should be left alone. This is another opportunity to reduce emissions to keep global temperature rise below 1.5° Celsius. Let us make the road to Glasgow, one that is paved with meaningful action that includes all.

Meaningful action is also required towards the protection of our ocean. Millions of people rely on the ocean and its bounty, for their survival. For Maldivians, as custodians of over 90,000 square kilometers of the Indian Ocean, it is part of our identity, our way of life, our economy.

This is why protecting the ocean from the harmful impacts of marine plastic pollution is crucial for us, and many other countries like us. President Solih announced here at the GA last year, our pledge to phase out single use plastics by 2023. We continue to work with like-minded countries for an effective international framework to this end. We have committed to the protection of 20 per cent of our own waters and are also committed to working with the Global Ocean Alliance towards achieving the global target of protecting 30 per cent of the ocean in the coming years.

Friends, it is our shared responsibility to preserve, and sustainably use, the ocean and all of its bounty. Let us not fail. Not on our watch!

Mr President,

Ensuring human rights is fundamental to a progressive society, and sustainable development. The promotion and protection of human rights is a cornerstone of President Solih's administration from its inception.

Of the core human rights Conventions, Maldives has ratified seven, and withdrawn several of the reservations to CEDAW. We will also ratify the Convention on Enforced Disappearances in the coming months. The Child Rights Protection Act, and the Juvenile Justice Act are recent examples of our efforts to align our legal instruments with international obligations.

We have also ratified the Third Optional Protocol to CRC, and signed the Declaration under Article 22 of the Convention Against Torture, allowing for enhanced access to justice.

We firmly believe that a rights-based approach prioritises the empowerment of all segments of society — especially women and youth. For the first time, the

Government is working on a draft Youth Bill that will identify and ensure the rights of young people, including their participation in decision-making. A multi-dimensional, holistic approach that includes leadership, political participation, gender equality, counter-radicalisation, health and wellbeing, guides our youth policies.

Mainstreaming gender equality in society, and in public life, is an ongoing process — a process that no country has completed. As we move towards marking the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, every effort must be made to reaching the vision of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In the Maldives, several steps have been taken in the right direction. For example, recent amendments brought to Local Councils Act allocated a third of all local council seats to women, ensuring their participation in the decentralised governance system. I am also proud to announce that we have achieved gender parity among Heads of Missions of the Maldives Foreign Service.

It is because of the importance the Maldives places on the promotion and protection of human rights that the Government has taken the decision to present its candidature for the Human Rights Council for the term 2023-2025. We believe that domestic and global efforts to promote and protect human rights go hand-in-hand. And as a Small, Island State, we wish to share the unique experiences of our efforts to align our laws, and cultivate a culture of respect for human rights.

Mr President,

Terrorism remains one of the most complex and challenging global issues of our time — one that requires cooperation, coordination, and also consensus. We have to work together to address the root causes of terrorism and violent extremism, especially in light of advances in social media and digital technology.

The global community also has to work together to ensure the rights of the Palestinian people. For decades, Palestinians have cried out for dignity, respect, and statehood — to no avail. We reiterate our call for a two State solution on the basis of the pre1967 borders with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine.

The Rohingya people continue to endure extreme deprivation and hardships. We will not standby and stand witness to genocide. We will do all we can to challenge the mistreatment, displacement and wanton killing of the Rohingya people. We will continue to advocate on their behalf, including at the International Court of Justice.

Mr President,

As the UN celebrates 75 years in existence, there is much to celebrate, and be thankful for. The UN helped shape an international order following years of warfare, and strife. The UN gave the world a platform to share its problems and prepare solutions. The UN gave countries like mine — the smallest of the smallest — an equal voice, a place at the table, the ability to contribute, and to make a difference. It remains the best hope for the security of small States like mine.

Yes, we all agree that the UN needs reform, to come to terms with the current membership and the current times. But we cannot dispute that the UN is still necessary. The UN still presents the best hope for humanity, the best opportunity for cooperation, the best platform for dialogue, the best check against rising tide of ultra-nationalism, and xenophobia.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We must once again come together, determined to uphold peace, preserve fundamental human rights, human dignity, and the worth of every person, and every nation large and small.

We must once again, commit to practise tolerance, promote dialogue over war, and employ global cooperation for the advancement of all people.

We must once again, come together, resolute in our commitment to the principles of the UN, to revive the true spirit of multilateralism, to herald in a truly just and happier world.

Mr President, “A handful though we are” — the Maldives stands ready to do our part — just as we did 55 years ago!

I thank you.

Montenegro (see also A/75/PV.14, annex X)

Statement by Mr. Srđan Darmanović, Minister for Foreign Affairs and European Integration of Montenegro

Delivered on Tuesday, 29 September 2020, at the 14th meeting of the General Assembly

Mr. President,
Secretary General,
Excellences,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address you today on behalf of Montenegro and to reaffirm our strong, unequivocal support and commitment to the mission of the World Organization, 75 years long.

We welcome the election of Volkan Bozkir as President of the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly and wish him success in performing this duty. We assure him of the full support of the Montenegrin delegation along the way.

We also owe a debt of gratitude to his predecessor, Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, for his leadership and for ensuring smooth functioning and fulfilment of the United Nations General Assembly mandate.

Mr. Chairman,

The topic of this year's debate faithfully depicts one of the key challenges international community is facing, upon which we must work together in order to devise an effective and a comprehensive response. 75 years have passed since the founding of the World Organization, which today is more needed and relevant than ever before. In the conditions of various threats to international peace and security, changed and fragmented geopolitical realities, as well as unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is necessary to preserve and nurture unity and multilateralism, as the only possible modality of action and addressing global issues and challenges that overcome national borders. Indeed, today and in the future, we need the United Nations that stands behind what is written in the founding document and that inherits the highest civilizational values (on which the universality and timeless character of the Organization rests) — precisely those that brought us together in San Francisco in 1945.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The COVID-19 pandemic and its multiple, devastating consequences on the lives of people around the world, loudly warn and remind us of the importance of international cooperation and solidarity in the process of creating global solutions to the issues that affect us all — no matter how big or small we are. I firmly believe that we can draw something good out of every difficulty, and in this case particular, I am certain that is the need for stronger joint action, based on trust, common values and interests, which must have no alternative in the period to come.

At a time when we are witnessing a negative trend of strengthening unilateralism and protectionism, and increasing deviation from multilateralism, Montenegro has no dilemma. Even more motivated, we remain committed to multilateralism based on

universal values and principles, with a World Organization in its centre, capable of providing an adequate response to global crises, challenges and threats.

It is in this context we welcome the principal role of Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who has effectively and responsibly coordinated a comprehensive response of the United Nations since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, in cooperation with all the interested stakeholders.

The response and recovery mechanisms created by the UN have made it possible to raise the necessary funds to provide assistance to the most vulnerable areas and countries, while his reviews of the pandemic impact on the economy, global conflicts, population, especially women and children, and regions and countries most affected by poverty and conflicts, continue to guide the activities of the UN system in order to effectively address the crisis and remedy its consequences.

Increasingly frequent regional and local, but also international conflicts, with historical, political and economic causes and consequences, threaten to destabilize the international order and the world as we know it. The United Nations must act as a defender of peace and stability., keep pace with the new realities and go through the path of adaptation in order to be able to perform their role even more efficiently.. Along that line, Montenegro strongly supports the necessary reforms of the United Nations system, including a comprehensive reform of the Security Council and the revitalization of the General Assembly, with the aim of building a more efficient, transparent, democratic and accountable United Nations, in which all parts of the world would be represented evenly.

Montenegro is recognized as a pillar of peace and stability, a country of interethnic and interfaith harmony, committed to building partnerships and friendly relations not only with its closest neighbours, but also with the wider community. Multilateralism is one of our key foreign policy priorities, which is confirmed by our continuous aspiration to be part of societies that inherit the values and principles of togetherness and solidarity.

Therefore, in the world of increasing geostrategic competitions, growing intensity and complexity of crises, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, we must emphasize the importance of promoting peace and security. We strongly support the Secretary General's call for a global ceasefire during the current pandemic, in order to give diplomacy a chance and create conditions for delivering humanitarian aid and support to the most vulnerable population.

Responding after the outbreak of a conflict or crisis is often not enough, or it is not timely enough. We have to invest more attention to prevention — prevention of conflict, radicalization and violent extremism. In order to achieve such a thing, it is necessary to work on building unbiased and more inclusive societies that would offer equal opportunities for all, and to protect marginalized and most vulnerable groups, primarily women and youth. Montenegro strongly supports the implementation of two agendas — on women, peace and security, as well as on youth, peace and security, which we demonstrate continuously, with a large number of activities undertaken and implemented at the national level.

We face serious challenges to international security and stability, caused by a number of factors, such as the expiration of some of the most important agreements on limiting and controlling conventional and weapons of mass destruction, the return of Cold War tensions — now further complicated by the lack of constructive dialogue

between key actors. Montenegro fully supports the implementation of relevant international instruments in the field of disarmament and arms control, as well as the Secretary General's Agenda for Disarmament. We emphasize the importance of universalization of the most important documents in this area, in order to preserve international peace, security and stability, and to create preconditions and conditions for a world without weapons of mass destruction.

At a time of growing challenges to human rights, democracy and the rule of law, Montenegro will continue to promote and support the integration of human rights and gender perspectives into all aspects of the functioning of the United Nations, and strive to preserve the universality of the international human rights law, as well as the independency of the UN human rights system as a whole. Montenegro is committed to bringing the agendas of Geneva and New York closer, and creating a better synergy between the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly and the Security Council.

We remain strongly committed to improving national human rights policies and frameworks. We have demonstrated this through excellent cooperation with key United Nations mechanisms, special procedures and treaty bodies, as well as with the Human Rights Council. I believe that the results achieved, as well as our continued strong commitment to further improving the position of women and girls, protection of the rights of children, the elderly, people with disabilities and LGBTI people, protection of media freedoms, civil society action, anti-discrimination on any grounds, impunity, as well as for unhindered access to international legal and human rights protection mechanisms, strongly recommended us for membership in the Human Rights Council (2022-2024) in the 2021 elections.

When we talk about sustainable development goals, five years after their adoption, we can see that progress has been made in some areas. However, there are many clear indications that we need to do much more than it has been the case so far, that is, to redouble our efforts and move from words to actions. The ongoing COVID -9 pandemic is a serious challenge and will undoubtedly affect the dynamics in achieving the set goals. The pandemic has slowed down our economies and taken us steps back. While the international community is assessing its consequences, it is also an opportunity to draw on good lessons and practices, in order to respond more effectively to possible challenges in the future.

I wish to emphasize that Montenegro is one of the first countries to fully translate the goals and tasks of sustainable development into the National Strategy for Sustainable Development until 2030. Three years after the adoption of this document, we are recording positive trends on the way to achieving the set goals. However, at the same time, we are aware that these dynamics need to be stronger and that we still have a lot of work to do to reduce the risk of poverty and achieve a balanced development of all our regions, which we will work on with dedication.

As a member of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Montenegro actively participates in its work, strongly emphasizing the importance of cooperation, solidarity and multilateralism as the best solution to the current crisis, and better recovery in the times to come. I believe that we will continue at this pace, and that we will work dedicatedly to mobilize the widest possible range of partners in order to address the multiple consequences of the COVID-19 crisis on countries, communities and people.

The current pandemic has also confirmed that full implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement are key to preparing the world for future systemic shocks. In the coming period, we must use the Decade for Action in order to achieve the set goals by 2030. In addition, efforts to achieve universal health coverage and ensure access to a quality, affordable, inclusive and resilient health system must be intensified, with the World Health Organization at the forefront.

In order to build more inclusive, greener and sustainable economies, we need to focus policy solutions on those models of economic recovery that have the greatest potential for transformation and sustainable development. Acknowledging the significant economic and social potential of digitalization, Montenegro supported the Global Declaration on the Digital Response to COVID-19, as well as the Secretary General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, which represents an important milestone on the road to exploiting the potential of digital technologies.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Montenegro, as an independent state, a multi-ethnic and multiconfessional democracy, remains on the course set in 2006, when we restored our independence — and that is a Euro-Atlantic future and the nurturing of good neighbourly relations and multilateralism. We are on our way to the European community, affirming the capacities of the Montenegrin society and its institutions to successfully create all the necessary preconditions for such a thing. We firmly believe that our, but also the future of the entire Western Balkans region, is in Europe, and that only by consolidating such a position can we be responsible partners to the international community.

We are resolutely and continuously adopting and implementing reforms in various spheres, all with the aim of improving the quality of life of our citizens. As a country of rule of law and intensive economic growth, which is an example of the peaceful coexistence of different nations and religions under one roof, in harmony and tolerance, strongly committed to respecting human rights and freedoms and preserving the uniqueness of all of its peoples, we believe that only with a responsible and mature policy of tolerance and solidarity, we can be a credible factor in regional and international relations.

Montenegro will remain committed to this path and will continue to actively and wholeheartedly contribute to the achievement of the goals of the United Nations.

Thank you for your attention.

Mauritania (see also A/75/PV.14, annex XI)

Statement by Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Mauritanians Abroad of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania

Delivered on Tuesday, 29 September 2020, at the 14th meeting of the General Assembly

[Original: Arabic]

In the name of God the Merciful and the Compassionate,
May God bless the most honourable of Messengers,
Mr. President,
Your Majesties,
Excellencies,
Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to warmly congratulate His Excellency Ambassador Volkan Bozkır, Permanent Representative of the sisterly Republic of Turkey, on assuming the presidency of the United Nations General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session. I wish him every success in his new tasks.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, Permanent Representative of our sisterly State of Nigeria, for the high skill and professionalism with which he steered the previous session of the United Nations General Assembly.

In this regard, I would like to pay tribute to His Excellency the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for his continued great efforts and endeavours to reform and lead the Organization in the service of international peace and security.

This session is being held in extremely complex global circumstances due to the health crisis caused by the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has cast its shadow on various aspects of life in all countries of the world. Its tragic repercussions and challenges have caused the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people in various countries and have totally paralysed the global economic system.

This crisis has also exposed the weaknesses of current measures, which means that we all must unite our efforts to contain and mitigate its economic impact, in particular on developing countries, whose economic systems have been severely affected by the crisis.

We in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania have taken the measures necessary to reduce the spread and effect of the virus and to particularly protect the poorest in society. The most important of these measures is to monitor local markets and replenish them with the basic needs to prevent price hikes, ensure the availability of basic medicines at fixed prices and provide assistance to thousands of vulnerable and poor families hard hit by the economic recession.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had negative repercussions on our national economy and the economies of our African neighbours. It has caused a decline in gross domestic product. That has led to a decrease in tax revenue, increased spending and budget deficit. We therefore reiterate our call from this rostrum to eliminate the external debt of African countries in order to enable them to cope with the pandemic and its social and economic consequences.

This year, we celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of our prestigious Organization. Let us also take this opportunity to consider ways to improve its performance as we seek to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and overcome major global challenges in the areas of the environment, climate, health, education, security, stability and development.

In that regard, His Excellency the President of the Republic, Mr. Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani, has announced an economic programme focused on the following: fostering the infrastructure to support growth; promoting capacity-building in social sectors to stimulate demand; upgrading and supporting the productive sectors to achieve self-sufficiency in food production; supporting the entire private sector; combating desertification and drought; and increasing employment opportunities. The programme will enable us to ensure that our economy supports public policy, with a strategy of accelerated growth and common prosperity that is more inclusive and environmentally friendly, in order to make greater progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

We have exerted great efforts to implement projects and programmes aimed at combating various forms of injustice, marginalization and vulnerabilities by securing universal access to basic services and supporting the health and educational systems. That is in addition to strengthening national unity, fostering social cohesion, calming the political arena, building a State of law, protecting freedoms and establishing the rules of good governance.

We also continue to work to develop the educational system so as to instil in our generations the principles of freedom, tolerance and openness, based on our cultural and civilizational constants. The goal is to raise the quality of our education and develop its scientific and professional aspects as required by the national economy.

With regard to the fight against poverty, we have also focused on addressing social disparities and marginalization while supporting the most vulnerable and fostering social solidarity. We established the Agency for National Solidarity and the Fight against Exclusion and have launched a series of ambitious projects aimed at improving employment and livelihoods, improving purchasing power and facilitating access to basic services, such as electricity, drinking water, health and education.

In addition, programmes have been developed to train young people and help them to enter the labour market, thereby contributing to the development of the national economy. Considerable efforts have been made to help women play their role by participating fully in political life and public affairs.

In order to achieve sustainable development, we focus on an independent judiciary, the protection of human rights, promoting democracy and individual and collective freedoms, freedom of the press, the transparency of political institutions, ensuring that the Parliament plays its role in oversight and accountability, securing transparency as a comprehensive approach in managing public affairs and the development of legal and regulatory mechanisms to eliminate corruption and bribery.

There can be no development without security and vice versa. The Islamic Republic of Mauritania has been keen to develop an effective strategy to combat terrorism and various forms of extremism with a comprehensive approach that takes the ideological, security, economic and social dimensions into account. When we chaired the work of the Group of Five for the Sahel, we, along with our regional and international partners, engaged in intense consultations to develop a road map that would neutralize terrorism and dry up its sources of funding. In that regard, our country took part in various meetings and hosted two summits that enabled us to make progress in the fight against violent extremism in the Sahel region. That fight must be fully respectful of human rights.

For decades, the countries of the Maghreb have endured the consequences of the dispute in Western Sahara. Mauritania maintains its consistent and unbiased position. We have excellent relations with all parties concerned and support the efforts of the United Nations and all relevant Security Council resolutions aimed at finding a sustainable and acceptable solution for all parties.

With regard to the crisis in Mali, we have successfully exerted mediation efforts to enable President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta to travel abroad for treatment. We also called on the parties to the crisis to push forward an agreement on outstanding issues in order to return to constitutional status. I take this opportunity to applaud the efforts of the current Malian authorities and the Economic Community of West African States to resolve the crisis at the earliest and ensure a return to constitutional life in the country.

We also stress that we remain on the side of just causes in all international forums. We reiterate our firm commitment to the right of the Palestinian people to dignity and sovereignty within the framework of an independent and viable State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and relevant international resolutions. We also reiterate our condemnation of the ongoing human rights violations by Israel in Palestine and the remaining Arab territories.

In Libya, we also support international efforts to bring peace to that brotherly country and ensure its unity and sovereignty.

With regard to the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, we stress the need to seriously pursue a political solution to preserve the unity of that brotherly Arab country, its independence, its people's dignity and its right to a secure and peaceful life.

With respect to Yemen, we stress our support for legitimacy and call for a peaceful solution in accordance with relevant Arab initiatives and international resolutions. At the same time, we condemn the terrorist attacks on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which target its national security.

May peace and God's mercy and blessings be upon you.

Oman (see also A/75/PV.14, annex XII)

**Statement by Mr. Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Albusaidi,
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman**

Delivered on Tuesday, 29 September 2020, at the 14th meeting of the General Assembly

[Original: Arabic]

In the name of God the Merciful and the Compassionate,
Your Excellency, President Volkan Bozkir,

It is our pleasure at the outset to congratulate you and your friendly country, the Republic of Turkey, on your election as the President of the United Nations General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session. We trust that your skill and wisdom will enable you to efficiently guide the work of our Assembly.

It is also our pleasure to express our thanks and appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande of the friendly Republic of Nigeria, for his efforts while presiding over the previous session.

The United Nations marks its seventy-fifth anniversary this year. We take this opportunity to express our thanks and deep appreciation to the United Nations and to His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres and his team in this international Organization. We thank them for their tireless efforts to maintain international peace and security. We emphasize that the Sultanate of Oman stands ready to continue the current cooperation between us and with all the Member States to achieve the noble objectives of the United Nations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has imposed major changes on our daily lives. Despite the challenges, we must adapt to the new way of life and remain optimistic about the future. We need to envisage the best ways to cooperate in order to achieve the common goals of our peoples and States. In that context, the international community has a humanitarian duty to ensure the fair distribution of resources to curb the spread of the pandemic, in particular the rollout of vaccines in the least developed regions, where medical facilities and capabilities are limited.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused profound economic challenges. We therefore call upon donor nations and institutions to do their utmost to facilitate the process of debt restructuring, while paying special attention to helping the most affected countries in a way that accelerates growth and stimulates the economy.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik has underscored that the Sultanate of Oman will follow the wise policy outlined by His Majesty, the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said, the architect of modern Oman and mastermind of its foreign policy and its international relations over the past 50 years. The Sultanate of Oman adopts the path of dialogue and encourages it.

My country's Government supports the values of tolerance, collective action and peaceful coexistence with everyone. We believe in the principles of justice, equality, good-neighbourliness, the rule of law, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and respect for the sovereignty of countries. We stress the peaceful settlement of disputes, based on the provisions and principles of the United Nations Charter and international law. It is an obligation that we should all honour.

While my country supports the sovereign right of States to determine the actions they deem fit for their national interests, our common interests make it incumbent upon us all to support peace and participate positively in efforts aimed at ensuring that peace prevails as a global culture that fosters progress and prosperity. Accordingly, the Sultanate of Oman reiterates, from this international platform, its support for the legitimate and just demands of the brotherly Palestinian people to establish an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the basis of international law, relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, which is based on the principle of land for peace and the two-State solution.

My country calls on all stakeholders in the Republic of Yemen to join constructive dialogue in order to reach a peaceful and consensus-based solution to the ongoing conflict. We call on all parties to support the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen. We also call on the international community, in particular donor countries and organizations, to intensify their efforts to provide and deliver humanitarian supplies in the light of the critical situation and tragic suffering of the people of that Arab country.

We would like to express our support for the Lebanese Republic. We call on the international community to support Lebanon's reconstruction efforts and help it grapple with the impact of the recent tragic explosion in the port of Beirut.

With regard to Libya, the Sultanate of Oman welcomes the ceasefire agreement and ongoing work to establish a mechanism for the resumption of oil production and export, as well as the management of oil revenues for the benefit of the people of Libya. We hope that they enjoy security, stability and prosperity through the launching of a peaceful settlement that will put an end to division and build harmony and unity among the one people of that country.

This year, the Sultanate of Oman has taken important steps to restructure and modernize its administrative apparatus in support of the current phase of economic development within Oman Vision 2020-2040. This is based on the principles of the basic statute of the State. It is worth mentioning that our economic system is guided by the principles of the market economy. Undoubtedly, this will enhance the value of our geographic location and its importance in international trade in the twenty-first century. It is also worth mentioning that my country enjoys political stability, touristic attractions and diverse investment opportunities in various areas and development sectors.

Oman actively participated in the various international and regional forums that resulted in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Sultanate sought to translate its commitments into the key components reflected in its ninth five-year development plan and in Oman Vision 2020-2040. We are determined to continue working to achieve the economic, social and environmental dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals on time.

There is no doubt that the young people of any country represent hope for its present and future and are key to its development. Therefore, Governments must prioritize young people and provide them with the resources necessary to harness their potential and develop their talents in order to ensure sustainable development. In this vein, I note that the Sultanate of Oman pays continuous attention to youth, while keeping pace with developments throughout the world. This will help young people garner greater capabilities, knowledge and active participation in the process of construction and development.

We live in a world of continuous and successive transformations that have engendered scientific and technological advancement. If humankind is to prevail in this new world, we will always need to find ways and means of working together better and more effectively to move from one phase to the next.

In conclusion, allow me to convey to you our best and most sincere greetings from the Sultanate of Oman and express our best wishes to our brothers and sisters all over the world, wishing them all the best of health and prosperity.

May peace and God's mercy and blessings be upon you.

Benin (see also A/75/PV.14, annex XIII)

Statement by Mr. Aurélien Agbenonci, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Benin

Delivered on Tuesday, 29 September 2020, at the 14th meeting of the General Assembly

[Original: French]

President of the General Assembly,
Heads of State and Government and Heads of Delegation,
Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

His Excellency Mr. Patrice Talon, President of the Republic of Benin, Head of State and Head of Government, who could not be here today, has instructed me to deliver the following address on his behalf.

“First of all, I would like to reiterate to you, Mr. Volkan Bozkir, my warm and sincere congratulations on your election as President of this august Assembly and assure you of Benin’s full support and cooperation as you conduct your duties.

I take this opportunity to express Benin’s gratitude to Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, and to reiterate my support and that of my Government.

At a time when the entire world faces the COVID-19 pandemic, I take this opportunity to offer my sincere condolences to all nations that have recorded deaths and express the solidarity of the Republic of Benin with those affected by this scourge.

As all States mobilize to deal effectively with this health crisis, my country welcomes the fact that the United Nations and its specialized agencies, in particular the World Health Organization, consider it a priority.

Benin welcomes the theme of this year’s session, which is entitled, “The future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism — confronting COVID-19 through effective multilateral action”.

This theme forces us to shoulder our responsibilities and reiterate our faith in and commitment to multilateralism and the ideals of the Charter of the United Nations. It reminds us of the urgency of collective action to find appropriate and lasting solutions to the challenges of our time, the most pressing of which is, as you know, the eradication of COVID-19.

With the support of all its people and of the international community, Benin will continue its efforts to grapple with this pandemic and its consequences and, in particular, to revitalize its economy which, like the economies of the majority of countries, is deeply affected by this scourge.

To that end, among other things, my Government has rolled out a vast programme that amounts to nearly 200 billion CFA francs to support formal and informal businesses alike, as well as artisans and vulnerable people.

I would like to express my Government's gratitude to the United Nations, its Member States and all international organizations for the considerable assistance provided to developing countries in general and to Benin, in particular, in the design and implementation of strategies to respond to the pandemic. Thanks to our combined efforts, the spread of the virus has been limited in my country, which has meant that Benin's rate of spread and death rates are low.

The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the most serious public health crises in modern history. This threat should not lead us to ignore the fight against HIV/AIDS and other diseases that pose a threat to our communities.

Effectively combating this scourge requires, just as managing all of today's global challenges, a coordinated international response and enhanced cooperation on a global scale.

That is why Benin, through my voice, reiterates its commitment to promoting and strengthening multilateralism, as the only framework for cooperation among States seeking to resolve contemporary issues of all kinds, including the fight against extreme poverty, which is a priority.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me remind you that in September 2016, during the general debate of the seventy-first session of the United Nations General Assembly, I stressed that mass poverty is a major threat to humankind and that we must take proactive collective action to eradicate it. Four years later, this call remains relevant.

I reiterate the need for the urgent implementation of a global programme to overcome this form of poverty through collective and voluntary action. Multilateralism, which enabled the United Nations to provide the world with the Paris Climate Agreement, should be the right tool for achieving this objective.

In this regard, I welcome the courageous reforms undertaken by the United Nations Secretary-General to reposition the United Nations development system. Benin supported resolution 72/279, aimed at strengthening the institutional architecture of the United Nations development system to ensure its greater effectiveness.

Benin also firmly supports the intergovernmental negotiations on the reform of the United Nations Security Council. We believe that this reform will make it possible to redress the historical injustice done to Africa — the only continent not represented in the Council as a permanent member. Benin also reaffirms, through my voice, the urgency of allocating two permanent member seats to Africa, in accordance with the Ezulwini Consensus.

Mr. President,

Heads of Government and Heads of Delegations,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Peace and harmony among States is a key component of Benin's foreign policy.

My country therefore reaffirms its support for diplomatic initiatives aimed at creating a viable and fully sovereign Palestinian State, living side by side and in peace with the State of Israel.

Benin believes that the current context of COVID-19 should justify concrete steps for the total and definitive lifting of the embargo on Cuba. However, in spite of the pandemic, regrettably, we see that the embargo is being tightened.

My country again makes an urgent appeal for the normalization of relations between Cuba and the United States of America, in the interest of the people of both countries and of the entire world.

Mr. President,

Since April 2016, Benin has been engaged in far-reaching political and economic reforms designed to clean up its economy, create a favourable environment for investment and combat corruption and prevarication.

Benin has therefore decided to break with the mistakes of the past and seek to engage in rigorous and resolute governance in all sectors. My Government systematically implements major reforms through its Action Programme, whose goals are in line with the SDGs.

The results achieved, which have been lauded nationally and internationally, have convinced the people of Benin that, with determination and resolve, it is possible for countries to get out of the rut and return to the path of development and prosperity.

“My Government is relentlessly pursuing its path towards the radical transformation of living conditions in Benin’s cities and rural areas, including universal access to drinking water and electric power, which, as recently as 2016, was considered a privilege and a luxury in Benin.

“My Government’s programme of action also attaches prime importance to preserving the environment and the energy transition. The measures planned within that framework are complementary to the objectives and priorities contained in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

“The appeal I launched on 15 November 2016 in Marrakech at the Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which was aimed at creating an international research centre to address the effects of climate change on agriculture, received a favourable response from States.

“I take this opportunity to commend the States and regional groups, along with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat, who are sparing no effort to reach the consensus necessary for the effective establishment of the centre.

“Mr. President,

“Ladies and Gentlemen Heads of Government and heads of delegations,

“Ladies and Gentlemen,

“Benin belongs to a subregion increasingly affected by the deteriorating security situation. Unfortunately, the number of victims of terrorist violence continues to grow, particularly in the Sahel. The situation requires joint efforts and collective actions to address it.

“In that connection, I welcome the action plan for 2020-2024 adopted in December 2019 by ECOWAS with a view to effectively and comprehensively combating that scourge in the West African subregion.

“Furthermore, I would like to express Benin’s solidarity with the G-5 Sahel member countries and call on the international community to bolster regional efforts by providing strengthened support in the fight against terrorism in Africa.

“There is no doubt that, together, we will succeed in stabilizing those regions of Africa with a view to creating conditions conducive to their development and the fulfilment of the aspirations of their respective populations.

“Thank you for your kind attention.”

Nicaragua (see also A/75/PV.14, annex XIV)

Statement by Mr. Denis Ronaldo Moncada Colindres, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Nicaragua

Delivered on Tuesday, 29 September 2020, at the 14th meeting of the General Assembly

[Original: Spanish]

Your Excellency António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Your Excellency Volkan Bozkir, President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session,

Ladies and gentlemen representatives of Member States,

Receive the warmest greetings of the people of Nicaragua, from President and Commander Daniel Ortega Saavedra and Vice-President and First Lady Rosario Murillo, with a message of peace, health and prosperity for the Governments and peoples that constitute the United Nations.

We have come together at an exceptional time due to the pandemic affecting all of humankind. We reiterate our solidarity and condolences with the families around the world who are suffering the consequences of COVID-19. The pandemic has plunged the world into uncertainty and could further exacerbate major crises such as hunger, malnutrition, poverty, inequity, unemployment and climate change, which exist as a result of an economic system that is unjust and degrading to human beings.

Mr. President,

As we commemorate 75 years of our Organization, the world continues to cry out for peace, justice, security and a comprehensive response from the United Nations for the benefit of humankind. Reform of the United Nations, as proposed on behalf of Nicaragua by the priest and Nicaraguan Foreign Minister, Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, during his presidency of the General Assembly in 2008, is a matter of urgency.

We express both our hope for and our commitment to that necessary and dutiful transformation, with the reform and democratization of the United Nations and its organs, which will enable our Organization to serve in the interests of our peoples and not hegemonic Powers. We are confident that our peoples will move forward with vigour and hope to build a new world order, with justice, equality and multilateralism at its core, in order to guarantee international peace and security for the common good and the fulfilment of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

We are entering the last decade of action to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. In order to achieve those objectives, we must join efforts in a true global alliance to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as other pandemics imposed by some Powers to the detriment of international peace and security, the independence and sovereignty of States and the self-determination of peoples.

Nicaragua will continue to promote a culture of peace and peaceful coexistence among the brotherly countries that form the United Nations and we will continue to be a factor of regional peace and security and stability in Central America.

We also call for the continuation of global efforts in favour of safe, orderly and regular migration.

Although the challenges posed by the pandemic are complex, we cannot forget the existential threat of climate change that continues to be overlooked as a consequence of unbridled capitalism. It is urgent that we ensure the survival of the human species and protect the life and rights of Mother Earth

In line with our peaceful vocation, Nicaragua also advocates for general and complete disarmament and is in favour of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

The illegal unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States against other populations must cease immediately to ensure stability, peace and development for families. We denounce and condemn the repeated attacks in a cruel and unrelenting war against the peoples of Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua in particular, which are designed to serve only foreign interests, as outlined in the interfering and interventionist policies of imperialists, and constitute a violation of human rights.

We denounce and condemn the aggression, through a brutal economic, political and commercial blockade, that is causing the worthy people of Cuba great suffering. We reaffirm our enduring solidarity with the legacy of Commander Fidel Castro, with General Raúl Castro and with the President of sovereign Cuba, our brother Miguel Díaz-Canel.

We reaffirm our strong support for the sister Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which is suffering a brutal and criminal cowardly onslaught of aggressions by the United States imperialists. We reiterate our firm and unwavering defence of the sovereignty and the rights of the Bolivarian people, the people of Commander Hugo Chávez, led by our comrade Nicolás Maduro Moros, the legitimate President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela who is demonstrating heroic resistance with great civil-military unity in an unequal struggle.

Such coercive and aggressive imperialist policies constitute the real obstacle to the eradication of poverty and to progress towards sustainable development. Against the backdrop of a pandemic, these measures have become a crime against humanity by those who impose them.

The United Nations must focus on the well-being of human beings. Nicaragua rejects the politicization of the United Nations system, as promoted in particular by the Government of the United States, which seeks to convert its organs into instruments at the service of its interests in order to destabilize countries that do not submit to its imperialist dictates.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights does not act fairly and equitably towards our country, by turning its oral updates and reports into intentionally politicized content. In addition to revealing worrying and serious methodological deficiencies, its reports are prepared exclusively from sources opposed to the Government of Nicaragua, compiling only information directly related to the failed coup attempt of 2018 from NGOs and the media.

We implore those bodies to remember that, 75 years ago, the countries of the world created the United Nations to ensure respect for human dignity, security and the peaceful coexistence and lives of peoples, and that they must conduct themselves in a manner consistent with international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations itself. We demand that all perspectives and all rights be taken into account by strengthening dialogue and peace in a world so in need of harmony and the peaceful resolution of any conflict.

Mr. President,

Nicaragua calls for the decolonization of the continent, with independence for Puerto Rico and the restitution of the sovereignty of the Malvinas Islands to the Republic of Argentina.

Nicaragua advocates for the two-State solution, with the State of Israel and the State of Palestine living side by side in peace and harmony, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the latter, in accordance with the pre-1967 borders, as enshrined in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

We reaffirm our unshakeable will to continue supporting the just struggle of the noble Saharawi people for self-determination. We respect their dignity and rights as a sovereign nation.

Our Government of National Reconciliation and Unity expresses its unwavering support for the cause of the Syrian people in their fight to defend their dignity foreign aggression and international terrorism.

We hail the brotherly people of Iran and will continue to strengthen our bilateral relations in all fields of mutual interest and in defence of peace, sovereignty, and peaceful coexistence.

We condemn the hegemonic political aggressions of the United States, which undermine the peaceful resolution of conflicts, as well as the military, economic and commercial threats against Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

We must defend the principles of dialogue and negotiation and the non-use and threat of use of force, which are fundamental principles of our Organization.

Mr. President,

Ladies and gentlemen heads of delegation,

Today, our commitment to strengthening the essential pillars of multilateralism cannot be postponed. We must safeguard and defend international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Nicaragua believes that only together, with solidarity, love and cooperation and without selfishness, can we triumph in the face of the great challenges facing humankind.

Nicaragua expresses its firm support for the theme that will guide our work throughout the seventy-fifth session, namely "The future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism". Having affected all countries, the pandemic has highlighted the need to create a new international economic model based on inclusion, equality and justice, prioritizing health as a universal human right and demanding that the resources allocated for war be made available for life and peace.

In the face of the pandemic, it is essential, for humanitarian reasons, that the principle of universality be applied so that Taiwan can participate in the corresponding mechanisms and meetings of the United Nations system.

Mr. President,

Ladies and gentlemen heads of delegation,

Together we must build a United Nations in the service of humankind. Building a better world is possible, and it is what all our peoples rightly demand.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Israel (see also A/75/PV.14, annex XV)

Address by Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel

Delivered on Tuesday, 29 September 2020, at the 14th meeting of the General Assembly

Mr. President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Middle East is not exactly renowned for producing good news, and few expected this year to be any different. As you know, the pandemic virus is ravaging our part of the world, like everywhere else. But I am pleased to report to you that, this year, I can tell you about good news from the Middle East — in fact, I can report two pieces of good news.

Earlier this month, at a White House ceremony hosted by President Trump, Israel signed historic agreements with the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Bahrain. This was the first peace treaty between Israel and an Arab country in over a quarter of a century and it was the first time that peace agreements between Israel and two Arab countries were signed on the same day.

These new agreements will bring our peoples the blessings of peace and the enormous benefits that come with more trade, more investment, more commerce, transportation, tourism and increased cooperation in so many areas. I also have no doubt that more Arab and Muslim countries will be joining the circle of peace soon — very soon.

This good news about peace came about because of a clear break with the failed strategies of the past. For far too long, the Palestinians effectively wielded the veto on peace between Israel and the broader Arab world. For decades, all progress was halted and held hostage to completely unrealistic Palestinian demands, such as the demand that Israel withdraw to the indefensible lines of 1967 and place its security in the hands of others; or the demand that Israel expel tens of thousands of Jews from their homes, effectively committing ethnic cleansing; or the demand that Israel absorb millions of Palestinians or descendants of refugees from a war that was launched by the Palestinians against Israel more than half a century ago.

Of course, these demands, along with many others, are complete non-starters for any responsible Israeli Government. Yet for years, many in the international community have tried to appease these absurd Palestinian demands and, as a result, they have wasted time trying to advance an illusion that will not happen instead of working for a realistic solution that could happen.

Thankfully, President Trump chose a different path to peace; a path anchored in reality. He recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital. He recognized Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights and he put forward a realistic peace plan that recognizes Israel's rights, addresses Israel's security needs and provides the Palestinians with a dignified, realistic path forward if they make peace with Israel.

Critics argued that each of these steps by President Trump would kill the chances for peace. Well, they were wrong — dead wrong. Those steps advanced peace. Now two Arab States have decided to make peace with Israel and more will

follow. The expanding circle of peace will not make an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians less likely; it will make peace between Israelis and Palestinians more likely. Palestinian leaders will increasingly realize that they no longer have a veto over peace and progress in our region and hopefully those leaders will ultimately decide to make peace with the Jewish State. And when that happens, Israel will be ready. I will be ready and I would be willing to negotiate, on the basis of the Trump plan, to end our conflict with the Palestinians once and for all.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Israel and States across the Arab world not only stand together in advancing peace; we stand together in confronting the greatest enemy of peace in the Middle East: Iran. Iran wantonly and repeatedly attacks its neighbours and its terror proxies are directly involved in violence throughout the Middle East, including in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Gaza and, of course, Lebanon.

We all saw the terrible explosion at Beirut port last month. The explosion happened here. This is the Beirut port. Two hundred people died. Thousands of people were injured and a quarter of a million people were made homeless.

Now, here is where the next explosion could take place: right here. This is the Beirut neighbourhood of Janah. It is right next to the international airport. And here, Hezbollah is keeping a secret arms depot. The secret arms depot, right here, is adjacent, a metre away, from a gas company. These are gas canisters, right here. It is a few metres away from a gas station. It is 50 metres away from the gas company. Here are more gas trucks. And it is embedded in civilian housing here and civilian housing here. For the Janah neighbourhood residents these are the actual coordinates.

So, I want to show you the entrance to Hezbollah's missile factory, because that is what it is. It is right here. This is the gas company and this is the missile explosive depot.

I say to the people of Janah: you have got to act now. You have got to protest this, because if this thing explodes it will be another tragedy.

I say to the people of Lebanon: Israel means you no harm, but Iran does. Iran and Hezbollah have deliberately put you and your families in grave danger. And what you should make clear is what they have done is unacceptable. You should tell them: "Tear these depots down!"

Just a few days ago, one of these depots exploded at Ain Qana in south Lebanon. And that is why the international community must insist that Hezbollah stop using Lebanon and Lebanese civilians as human shields.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We must all stand up to Iran, and President Trump deserves praise for doing exactly that. First and foremost, I commend President Trump for withdrawing from the flawed nuclear deal with Iran. In 2015, I stood alone among world leaders in opposing the shameful nuclear deal that was made with Iran. I opposed it because the nuclear deal did not block Iran's path to the bomb — it actually paved its way to it. I opposed it because the deal's restrictions on Iran's nuclear programme were only temporary and were in no way tied to Iran's change of behaviour.

Now Iran has violated even those temporary restrictions. Because of these violations, Iran will have enough enriched uranium in a few months for two nuclear

bombs. And Iran has been working on a new generation of centrifuges. It is called the IR9, which will multiply Iran's enrichment capability fifty-fold.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There is no question that Iran is seeking nuclear weapons. The once-secret nuclear archive Israel's agents obtained from the heart of Tehran proves that beyond a shadow of a doubt. In the run up to the nuclear deal, Israel was told — especially by our European friends — that any Iranian violation would be met with a quick and severe response.

But in the face of Iran's brazen violations, in the face of the irrefutable evidence of the nuclear archive, the Security Council has done — well, absolutely nothing. Wedded to the failed nuclear deal, the Security Council also still refuses to see what was obvious to anyone who understands anything about the Middle East. Rather than curb Iran's aggression, the nuclear deal fed and funded it.

Five years ago, in removing the sanctions on Iran, the leading Powers of the world opened the door of a tiger's cage and then they simply hoped for the best. But instead, exactly as I warned five years ago, we who live in the Middle East are suffering the consequences of that irresponsible deal.

A richer and emboldened Iran use the billions that flowed into its coffers to fuel its campaign of carnage and conquest across the region while, thankfully, President Trump recognized the disastrous nuclear deal for what it was and he acted. He restored United States sanctions, forced countries to choose between doing business with America or doing business with Iran and took out the world's most dangerous terrorist, Qassem Suleimani. And last month, when the Security Council refused to extend an arms embargo on Iran, the United States snapped back the sanctions.

While the Security Council is divided, we in the region are united. Both Arabs and Israelis are together urging for tough action on Iran. And when Arabs and Israelis agree, others should pay attention.

Israel calls upon all members of the Security Council to stand with the United States against Iran's aggression; stand with it in insisting that Iran and its nuclear weapons programme once and for all; stand with the United States in confronting the greatest danger to peace in our region. And if you do, I am confident that, in the years ahead, we will be able to celebrate more good news from the Middle East — good news for Israel, good news for our Arab neighbours and good news for the world and for all those who seek peace security and prosperity.

Thank you.

Guatemala (see also A/75/PV.14, annex XVI)

Statement by Mr. Pedro Brolo Vila, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Guatemala

Delivered on Tuesday, 29 September 2020, at the 14th meeting of the General Assembly

[Original: Spanish]

It is a great honour for me to speak at the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session for the first time, as Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Guatemala on behalf of President Alejandro Giammattei Falla.

My country highlights the importance of the central theme of our deliberations and acknowledges the focus on our collective commitment to multilateralism and confronting COVID-19 through effective multilateral action.

I join others in expressing our condolences to the families of all those who have lost loved ones as a result the terrible consequences of COVID-19. I appreciate the heroism of all the health-care professionals and their support staff who have worked tirelessly every day for many months, while working with courage and commitment on the front lines of this crisis.

The event has required us to devise urgently needed comprehensive responses, which has involved joint efforts among Governments, active political forces and multilateral organizations and international cooperation to coordinate capacities and resources to combat the disease, while safeguarding health, security and every citizen's right to food.

The Government of Guatemala acknowledges that no one will be safe until everyone is safe. I therefore express my country's interest in gaining immediate and fair access to vaccines and our readiness to cooperate with regard to logistics and their distribution in the countries of the region, particularly Central America.

We know that, by pooling efforts, we can find a solution to counter the virus and that we will be able to count on global solidarity, as we have in the past. We are grateful for the support that has been provided by the United Nations system's agencies, international actors, and friendly countries throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

Mr. President,

Faced with the challenge of COVID-19, despite the fact that Guatemala took early preventive health-care measures, declared a "State of Calamity" and established a specialized commission to prevent the spread of the coronavirus disease, the country has been severely affected. However, that has presented an obstacle to the country's development efforts.

The health-care sector, the economy and food security, among others, have been the areas most affected. We therefore implemented plans to strengthen the social and economic reconstruction of our country, while highlighting the importance of attending to the most vulnerable people.

In the area of health care, we encountered a system that had been neglected and forgotten for many years. Added to that was our having to deal with the current pandemic, which forced us to act from day one with aggressive plans to restore the

health-care system. We have upgraded existing hospitals and opened up an additional five others in record time throughout the regions of the country. In recent months, we have increased the number of beds to more than 2,000, as well as resources and capacities to provide timely medical care to the Guatemalan population.

I would like to acknowledge the invaluable support provided by multilateral cooperation and the friendly countries that have prioritized assisting the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare.

With regard to the economy, the Law of Economic Rescue to Families for the Effects Caused by COVID-19 was adopted, as a result of which the Family Bonus Fund was established, as a social financial support measure to mitigate the economic crisis within the country. Likewise, the Employment Protection Fund was also created to support companies experiencing financial difficulties so that they could continue to employ their personnel, while providing them with the option to suspend work for the duration of the crisis and a payment for three consecutive months to ensure income. In the case of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, programmes are being promoted to provide soft loans so that they can overcome liquidity problems and avoid closing down.

Within the framework of food security, the COVID-19 food support and prevention programme was established, which involves the delivery of basic food needs, while taking into account cultural considerations, to vulnerable families or those in areas at risk. The pandemic has aggravated one of the most challenging problems already facing us — malnutrition.

That is why we are implementing the Grand National Crusade for Nutrition, as one of the most important programmes to be developed during my Government. The initiative aims to unite all sectors of the country in order to improve the nutrition of Guatemalan families, with an emphasis on the poorest and most marginalized areas, while applying a comprehensive approach to address the problem's myriad causes.

We are promoting our candidature to become a member of the Executive Board of the World Food Programme (WFP) for the period from 2021 to 2023, whence we are certain that we will be able to contribute to the promotion of food security and sustainable agriculture and the eradication of hunger and malnutrition, which represent fundamental challenges for our region.

Moreover, in the area of respect for and the promotion of human rights, we are in the phase of restructuring the functions of the current State Ministries, with a view to addressing compliance with the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace, the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights and social conflict agreements in an effective, responsible and consistent manner in line with the Government's priorities. A detailed record was made of the international commitments assumed by the State of Guatemala in those areas in order to continue providing adequate follow-up to the reports and recommendations issued by the human rights mechanisms of both the United Nations and the inter-American systems.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Guatemala is convinced that the work of the United Nations is crucial to sustaining peace, protecting human rights and promoting development by serving the most vulnerable. Accordingly, I will mention several important points that we must consider:

Migrants today represent a major portion of the population and continue to suffer humiliation and unjustified discrimination because of their origin. Two years ago, Guatemala, together with other friendly States, established the International Day of Family Remittances, which is commemorated every 16 June and reminds us of migrants working far from home to support their families.

Owing to our geography, we are a country of origin, transit, destination and return. We are deeply committed to respecting the human rights of migrants, particularly as we are currently dealing with the pandemic. We urge the international community to avoid the criminalization of migrants as their work is vital to their communities' development.

Through the relative United Nations agencies, we are finding opportunities to meet the challenges. That is why we advocated an agreement with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in order to viably support dialogue on and the exchange of proposals enabling an increased focus on returning migrants.

The situation has provided us with lessons learned, which have enabled us to establish and improve the health-care protocols for the migrant population and responsibly shoulder our obligation to receive our fellow countrymen in a dignified manner, while preventing the pandemic to spread.

We continue to witness how hatred, racism, discrimination, radicalization and their dire consequences, such as terrorism, continue to claim innocent lives. As a nation with a peaceful mission, Guatemala will always advocate strengthening political dialogue to avoid any escalation of violence and seek peaceful resolutions, based on the exercise of constructive diplomacy with respects for international law.

To renew the purposes of the United Nations and take effective steps to prevent and eliminate threats to and breaches of peace, and suppress acts of aggression, Guatemala calls on the Security Council to act in a manner consistent with its functions, including the responsible use of the veto in order to avoid aggravating international crises. In that regard, Guatemala supports the French-Mexican initiative to limit the use of the veto in the case of mass atrocities. Therefore, it is important that efforts to reform the Council continue.

The reform of the United Nations remains a key issue. I emphasize this point. We need to re-engineer and enhance coordination within the entire system. We must work together for a less bureaucratic Organization. We want efforts to have a direct impact on the people most in need, while investing in development with existing human resources.

We know that measures to reform the Secretariat are under way, but the imperative reform of the United Nations remains an outstanding issue, and the lack of faith in multilateralism demonstrates that. As a country, Guatemala wants to show people that general debates and multilateral meetings are not vacuous speeches or pretty words. They embody the ambition to join our efforts for the sake of communities.

We have the human resources needed to carry out our work. We do not need United Nations cooperation to be focused on administrative issues or technical assistance. We are confident that we are working under the same banner to achieve prosperity and that, in moments of crisis, we will work to renew development, the

economy and employment, all of which will translate into improved living conditions for our citizens.

We must promote strengthening a model that allows us to move from a paradigm of cooperation to one of investment in which countries like ours can acquire their own capacities to reduce the gaps that today challenge their development. More than ever, we are called upon to promote profound transformations. To that end, it is necessary to re-engineer the work of the Organization.

Among the threats facing the world, the use of nuclear weapons poses one of the greatest threats to humankind's existence. Guatemala reiterates its position in favour of complete, irreversible and transparent nuclear disarmament according to established timelines and condemns any nuclear test or threat of the use of force involving this category of weapon, which jeopardizes the continuation of life on earth. The early entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is of great significance.

Mr. President,

All actions taken by global leaders will undoubtedly impact the Sustainable Development Goals. Countries must take responsibility for their own development within the framework of a common path.

Guatemala will be a member of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) under the banner of inclusive development for all. Guatemala's election to ECOSOC represents an important commitment for my country in terms of meeting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Within that framework, we will expand mechanisms to address the devastating effects of climate change, which not only affects developing countries disproportionately but constitutes a crisis that must be urgently addressed.

The lockdown, which most of us have endured, has shown us that it was a respite for our shared home — Earth. Climate change is a reality that we cannot ignore. We must work to revitalize our ecosystems and maintain cleaner water sources, without the overbearing pressure of pollution.

Likewise, we will seek to advocate for and promote the participation of indigenous peoples — while taking into account the fact that their millennial culture, traditions and ancestral wisdom are an essential part of sustainable development — and people with disabilities, whose talent, efforts and perseverance in the face of adversity embody strength. We will therefore be their voice so that their needs will be heard.

Mr. President,

Today, before the Assembly, I reaffirm my country's commitment to permanently and definitively resolving, before the International Court of Justice, the territorial, insular and maritime dispute we have with Belize, with which we aspire to have a privileged relationship and a permanent dialogue to peacefully resolve our common issues.

We are convinced that the dispute's resolution will bring about economic, social and political benefits for both States, and, above all, development for those people residing in the adjacent zone; while, as a State, Guatemala reaffirms its democratic mission and full respect for international law.

On behalf of my country, today more than ever, on its seventy-fifth anniversary, I affirm my commitment to the United Nations, multilateralism, peace, respect for human rights and sustainable development for present and future generations. Let us build together more inclusive nations, while promoting prosperity and respect for our planet.

Guatemala does not stop!

Thank you very much!

Dominica (see also A/75/PV.14, annex XVII)

**Statement by Mr. Kenneth Darroux, Minister for Foreign Affairs,
International Business and Diaspora Relations of the Commonwealth
of Dominica**

Delivered on Tuesday, 29 September 2020, at the 14th meeting of the General Assembly

Mr. President of the General Assembly,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Heads and Members of Delegations,
Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by congratulating His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkir on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande for his leadership of the seventy-fourth session and salute Secretary-General António Guterres for his continued efforts in promoting peace, security and development during these challenging times.

Mr. President,

The General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session is being convened at a time when the global community has been galvanized in pursuit of impartiality, respect and justice for all in the face of a pandemic that presents global economic uncertainties unlike any we have witnessed in recent history.

Distinguished Delegates,

Moments like these, as difficult and challenging as they appear, also provide us with an opportunity to temper a culture that must now find new meaning through the reconnection to all ideals. Indeed, we must pursue an economic construct that responds to community and conscience. The United Nations must ensure that the appropriate response addresses the inconsistencies of every nation at all levels and must not be seen to favour the more developed and powerful. This response must not only make for a greener planet and cleaner oceans, but must also provide hope for growing diverse generations that stand to congregate at all levels across the globe to dialogue on issues of mutual importance in the interest of this generation and future ones.

History will record the seventy-fifth session as a historic one. The impact of COVID-19 continues to redefine our very existence and test our resilience. It has reshaped how organizations, such as this united body, continues to function and how all countries do business. The reality is that small island developing States like Dominica already face several inherent challenges, and the added consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have further exacerbated those difficulties, including the limitation to protect the health and well-being of our citizens.

Mr. President, Fellow Delegates,

The Commonwealth of Dominica recorded its first case of the dreaded COVID-19 virus on 20 March, and we have been fortunate so far to have only 30 confirmed cases of which only six are currently active, with no recorded deaths.

Mr. President,

When Dominica recorded its first active case of COVID-19, the Government immediately imposed responsible measures in accordance with World Health Organization standards and protocols. Our Government adopted a series of containment measures, which included the enforcement of curfew hours and the closure of all ports of entry, educational institutions, non-essential businesses and public services for a period of three months. As a result of those actions, with the support of every citizen, we united in a collective fight against the pandemic, which resulted in the Commonwealth of Dominica being ranked very highly among countries that have remained steadfast in their goals of reducing and eliminating all active cases of the pandemic over the past eight months. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, health-care experts have now informed us that we must ready our populations for a second wave. It is therefore the sober, moral and ethical duty of us leaders, who appreciate the work of the experts, to serve notice to our citizens.

Mr. President,

For small States like ours, the potential second wave has drastically raised the stakes, and if we do not rise to the occasion, we could lose an entire generation.

Mr. President,

At every level of our response to COVID-19, we have respected the fundamental rights and freedoms of all of our citizens. The Government remains committed to ensuring that all citizens who have been infected are properly treated and cared for, while, at the same time, continuing to provide our regular services to all citizens. Students have returned to their schools, and businesses are operating once again in their new number. The crisis has however resulted in job losses for many of our citizens, particularly those working in our tourism industry. That threatens to undermine the development gains that we have made and plunge many of our citizens into poverty.

Distinguished Delegates,

In our role as leaders of our respective Governments, the task is always to provide guidance and hope to our populations. That is a greater challenge for small States like Dominica that must simultaneously battle the effects of climate change, the recent shocks and our inability to access concessionary financing to build the resilience needed to counter the natural and economic shocks that are way beyond our control.

Mr. President, Fellow Delegates,

The Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica will continue to use platforms, such as the General Assembly high-level debate, to highlight the inequality and inadequacy that continue to permeate our generation, and, to that end, we will call on the United Nations to assist small States like ours in unlocking funds that have been made available to small island developing States to fight climate change and be resilient.

Fellow Delegates,

Despite our many challenges, we have not sat idly by. As a response to the complete devastation of our island by Hurricane Maria in 2017, we developed a national resilience development strategy. The strategy has since been translated

into a climate resilience recovery plan, which will guide us on our journey towards becoming a climate resilient nation. It is an ambitious, but very achievable, plan. And we are confident that, with the support of our development partners, it can serve as a pathway for other small island developing States, which share similar challenges and experiences, to ensure their continued survival.

Fellow Delegates,

The situation is dire. The situation is urgent. We welcome any support that could influence the provision of adequate financial support in a timely and equitable manner.

Mr. President,

With regard to financial matters, I would also like to assert before this body that small economies like ours run the risk of being crippled if banking restrictions and inequalities are allowed to continue in their existing form. In that regard, the support of the international community in the achievement of fiscal and financial resilience is paramount. It is therefore in the interest of all of our nations to explore more adaptable solutions to de-risking, which would involve broadening the revenue base of States.

Distinguished Delegates,

Dominica extend its congratulations to the Republic of Cuba on the nomination of the Henry Reeve international contingent of doctors specializing in major diseases and epidemics for the Nobel Peace Prize. That is a fitting recognition of the sterling work that Cuba has done in providing support throughout the world to countries confronting pandemics and natural disasters. The Cuban medical Brigade has been an example of health diplomacy, genuine internationalism and the true embodiment of the term, "being our brother's keeper". We sincerely hope that the world is taking note. We salute Cuba for its humanitarian assistance to more than 40 countries, including Dominica, which has received an immeasurable benefit from the supportive work of Cuban doctors, nurses and health-care professionals, particularly during this critical period of addressing the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the light of that, we reiterate our call to end the 60-year-long unfair and unjustifiable blockade against the Cuban Government and people. Despite being substantially disadvantaged by the blockade, Cuba continues to reach out to support others. If this crisis has shown us nothing else, it has shown us how vulnerable we all are and that our life as we know it can change in an instant. We therefore call and will continue to call for a change of policy on the matter.

The Government of Dominica also salutes the Government and the people of the People's Republic of China and the Government and the people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela who, notwithstanding their own challenges, have both made significant contributions to the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic in the Caribbean region. We also express our sincere gratitude to the The Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), the Pan American Health Organization and the World Health Organization for their exceptional guidance throughout the pandemic.

To our global partners and supporting agencies that continue to assess our vulnerable Caribbean region during these challenging times we say, "Thank you".

Like every other small island developing State, The Commonwealth of Dominica remains hopeful that its population size and small economy will not place it

at a disadvantage with regard to accessing COVID-19 vaccines and other medications in the coming months, but that small States like Dominica will be allowed fair and equitable access to global supplies.

Mr. President,

Dominica remains committed to collaborating with the United Nations and all its agencies, as well as Member States, to strengthen the mission of this noble body that, notwithstanding its imperfections, is critical to maintaining world peace and security. We affirm our confidence in the United Nations system as the ultimate negotiating and deliberative body for addressing major challenges confronting the world. Our populations far and wide are being impacted by every decision that we make, and they are depending on us to do the right thing. Notwithstanding our many challenges, limitations and differences, we owe it to them to rise to the occasion.

I thank you.

Tunisia (see also A/75/PV.14, annex XVIII)

Statement by Mr. Othman Jerandi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tunisia

Delivered on Tuesday, 29 September 2020, at the 14th meeting of the General Assembly

[Original: Arabic]

Mr. President, I am honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of the President of the Republic of Tunisia, Mr. Kaïs Saïed, as His Excellency's contribution to the general debate of the seventy-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

In the name of God, most compassionate, most merciful,

Mr. President of the United Nations General Assembly,

Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Your Majesties and Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me pleasure to begin by congratulating Mr. Volkan Bozkir and the sisterly Republic of Turkey on presiding over the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session. I wish him every success in his tasks.

I would also like to express our great appreciation for Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande for his able leadership of the seventy-fourth session.

I also reiterate my appreciation for Secretary-General António Guterres and express our continued support for his work and initiatives to strengthen the role of this international Organization.

This session coincides with the seventy-fifth anniversary of the creation of the United Nations. It is an opportunity to review the Organization's work and explore the ways to develop it further so that its organs become more effective and flexible in order to meet the aspirations of the peoples of the world to peace, security, democracy and development, and to embody the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

This session also coincides with a very critical international situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has raised unprecedented challenges and has had serious repercussions on international peace and security and on the socioeconomic conditions around the globe. These challenges and threats highlight the urgent need to promote international cooperation and human solidarity while energizing multilateralism further. That would contain their effects, lead to establishing collective and proactive strategies and constitute the core of international action.

I reiterate on this occasion Tunisia's commitment to the United Nations Charter. We believe in the importance of this international Organization and we are ready to maintain our contribution to its activities and the pursuit of its goals. As a member of the Security Council, Tunisia continues to shoulder its responsibilities and actively participate in our collective efforts to consolidate international peace and security; prioritize preventive diplomacy; promote political settlements of conflicts and disputes; mitigate the effects of humanitarian tragedies; and support international

efforts to address the various challenges and threats posed to our peoples. Tunisia also renews its commitment to participating in peacekeeping operations around the world.

Resolving the Palestinian question based on the resolutions of international legitimacy, the terms of reference of the peace process and the Arab Peace Initiative is an urgent priority and main entry point to restoring regional and world peace and security.

The situation in our sister nation Libya is a source of deep concern. We again underscore that military action and foreign intervention cannot be a solution. Such choices further complicate the crisis, deepen the suffering of the Libyan people and threaten security and stability in Libya and the wider region.

Tunisia once more welcomes the ceasefire agreement in sisterly Libya and underscores its firm commitment to doing its utmost to assist our Libyan brothers in reaching a political settlement through inclusive Libyan dialogue, under United Nations auspices. We also call on the international community to uphold its responsibility to establish security and find sustained and comprehensive solutions for the various disputes and crises in our region and the world.

The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened the crises on our African continent. Tunisia stresses its commitment to continuing to work with our African brothers and international partners to achieve sustainable and comprehensive development and overcome the challenges we face together. In this context, we reiterate our support for silencing the guns in Africa. This initiative is an ongoing effort that needs greater international support in order for the African continent to be free of conflict and to focus on construction and development.

Terrorism and violent extremism continue to represent one of the most serious threats to our nations and peoples and to international peace and security. The scourge is worsening and exploiting ongoing crises and the activities of organized crime in certain countries and regions. That threat now targets States themselves, social cohesion and their efforts for development and democracy.

While there has been important progress on the issue of counter-terrorism through national, regional and international efforts, the threat persists and requires us to coordinate our efforts at all levels. We must intensify cooperation to counter plans of terrorist organizations and extremists in order to protect our societies and our people, in particular the young.

May peace and God's mercy and blessings be upon you.
