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General debate

## Note by the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to circulate, pursuant to decision 75/573 of 14 July 2021, 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 Friday, 24 September 2021, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly (see A/76/PV.12). Document A/76/332 and its addenda 1 through 12 contain the statements delivered at the 3rd, 4th, 6th, 7th and 9th through 17th meetings of the General Assembly (A/76/PV.3, A/76/PV.4, A/76/PV.6, A/76/PV.7 and A/76/PV.9-A/76/PV.17).

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**Lebanon** (see also A/76/PV.12, annex I)

**Address by Mr. Michel Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic**

*Delivered on Friday, 24 September 2021, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly*

[Original: Arabic, English and French]

Your Excellency, Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the General Assembly,  
Your Excellency, Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations,  
Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate your Excellency on your election to preside over the seventy-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly, wishing you success in carrying out your duties, in light of the continuous global endeavours to recover from the repercussions of Covid-19. I would have preferred to congratulate you in person rather than through video-conference, which was imposed by the global health situation, for the second year in a row.

I wish to thank His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkir for running well the affairs of last year's General Assembly, and to congratulate His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres on his re-election for a second term at the head of the international organization, thanking him on his efforts for Lebanon and his contribution to the organization of three conferences in support of the Lebanese people in the aftermath of the Beirut Port blast tragedy.

Our thanks also go to the Heads of States who participated in these conferences, to governmental and non-governmental organizations, and to all those who have contributed to this support. I wish to thank France in particular, whose President rushed to Lebanon personally to support it in its ordeal, and the friendly and brotherly States that contribute to promoting our armed forces which are fighting terrorism and cooperating with the Peacekeeping forces to preserve calm and stability on our Southern borders and to implement resolution 1701 (2006).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Twenty years ago, a few miles from the headquarters, the largest terrorist operation struck the heart of New York, causing thousands of victims and leaving deep marks in the world's conscience. It also had tremendous repercussions at a global scale, and entailed a war on terrorism that succeeded sometimes and failed sometimes.

In all cases, many peoples, especially in our region, have paid dearly for that war, in terms of death, destruction and displacement, and they are now pulling themselves together and trying to rise as New York had risen, because the will of life is more powerful than any terrorism, and it undoubtedly converges with the theme of the present session "Building Resilience Through Hope".

Esteemed audience,

As the Lebanese Government has been formed according to the constitutional mechanism after a political crisis that lasted more than a year, Lebanon has embarked on a new phase that would hopefully mark a promising step on the path of recovery.

There is no doubt that major internal and international challenges await the new government to earn the confidence of both the people and the international community after having obtained that of the Lebanese Parliament.

Over the past two years, Lebanon has known its hardest times, whereas successive crises — some inherited and ramified and some urgent — exploded simultaneously, affecting all sectors.

Indeed, the financial and economic policies adopted for decades and built upon the profit-based pattern, in addition to corruption and waste that result from bad management and absence of accountability, pushed Lebanon into an unprecedented financial and monetary crisis which led to economic stagnation, a stifling livelihood crisis, and growing in unemployment, migration and poverty rates.

The Government has committed to carry out the pressing and required financial and economic reforms, to fight corruption and lay down a financial recovery plan in the context of continuing negotiations with the International Monetary Fund, accompanied by a plan to generalize the social safety net, a plan to reform and — where needed — restructure the banking system, and to carry on with the implementation of the electricity sector plan.

The kick-off was with the entry of the financial forensic audit of Lebanon's Central Bank's accounts into force after completing the necessary procedures, and this audit shall be applied to all public accounts; this very audit that I have committed before the people of Lebanon and the international community to execute in line with the principles of transparency and accountability.

And as we rely on the international community to finance vital projects in the public and private sectors to revitalize the economic cycle and create job opportunities, we also rely on it to help us recover the smuggled funds stemming from corruption crimes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The wars of the region around us have contributed to the exacerbation of our crises, especially the Syrian war which have weighed heavily on us, notably through the imposed siege that has deprived Lebanon of its vital extension, or the infiltration of terrorism into our territories, or the large numbers of Syrian displaced who streamed into Lebanon, exceeding today 1.5 million.

I have been vocal, at all fora and specifically that of the United Nations, in exposing the catastrophic outcomes of displacement on all economic, social, health and security aspects, and I appealed to the international community to help us secure the safe return of the displaced; but unfortunately, no one responded to our appeals, and assistance continued to be given to the Syrians in their place of residence in Lebanon rather than extending it to them in their country, and this encouraged them to stay where they are.

Today, as Lebanon is resisting to survive and go on, I repeat the plea: yes, the international community must help Lebanon shoulder the exhausting burden entailed by the displacement crisis; yet, it must first work for the safe return of the displaced to their country. Lebanon, which has laid a comprehensive plan for this return, affirms its position rejecting any form of integration of the displaced, as it reiterates its position rejecting any form of settlement of Palestinian refugees, based

on the necessity to find a solution to the Palestinian issue in accordance with relevant international resolutions, specifically those guaranteeing the right of return.

On the other hand, the persistent Israeli threats remain the main concern of the Lebanese State, the last aspect of which was Israel's attempt to explore for oil and gas in the disputed area on the maritime borders. Lebanon condemns any attempt to transgress the boundaries of the Exclusive Economic Zone within which Lebanon holds on to its right to oil and gas resources, especially that exploration procurement has begun months ago, then was halted due to strains whose source is no longer a secret to anyone.

Lebanon demands the resumption of indirect negotiations for the demarcation of the Southern maritime borders according to international laws. It affirms that it shall not back off and shall not accept any compromise. The role of the international community is to stand by it.

Esteemed audience,

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit the world with its catastrophic consequences on health, economy, education and other sectors. In Lebanon, its repercussions were exponentially greater because they added up to its crises and they still do. Although the concerned authorities and health organs have dealt with this emergency situation with a professional and proactive approach that kept the infection figures within acceptable ranges, the repercussions have been very hard on an already shaky economy and on the health sector, in light of the growing shortage of drugs, medical supplies and fuel, in addition to the human drain of doctors and nurses due to migration for economic reasons.

As for the vaccination, Lebanon shall have the credit of being among the pioneering countries in this respect, as the rate of vaccination to date has reached 30 per cent, and we are striving to surpass the 40 per cent goal by the end of the year.

Amid these crises, the catastrophic Beirut Port blast came to aggravate the suffering. Today, more than a year later, our capital continues to be quiet and dark, as it remains a disaster-stricken city. We want the heart of our country to beat again, and we also want the Port of Beirut to return to being a pole of attraction.

We are grateful for all the humanitarian assistance that has been sent to our people. Today, the need remains pressing for reconstruction and development supplies and we welcome any international endeavour to rehabilitate and develop the port, till it is re-operated fully as per the applicable laws.

The international solidarity with our capital and our people is commendable. It has contributed indeed to healing some wounds, but the assistance that Beirut wants as well lies in what may be required by the probe in order to disclose the truth to serve justice. The comfort of the victims' parents and the healing of the wounded's pain can only be complete by serving justice.

The Lebanese justice is investigating the causes and circumstances of the explosion and the administrative liabilities; it has many defendants and arrested. The investigation, which remains confidential, still needs to unveil where the explosive materials came from, why they entered our port, which is really behind them, and if the satellites captured anything at the moment of the blast. We therefore repeat our request to the States, which possess information and data that help the investigation to share them as needed.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The crises of the past two years in Lebanon and the world have delayed the procedures related to the creation of the “Academy for Human Encounters and Dialogue” which I had launched from the rostrum of the United Nations in 2017, and which earned the support of the General Assembly in 2019 as per resolution 73/344. However, the course of events and the raging conflicts in the surroundings reaffirm the importance of this initiative and what is sought from it in terms of human and civilizational communication.

I’m pleased that a large piece of land very close to Beirut has been allocated to host the Academy, and the necessary studies have been prepared to initiate construction works. I call on all friendly and brotherly States to join those, which have already expressed their desire to sign the Academy establishment convention.

Esteemed audience,

The theme that you have picked for this session, “Building Resilience Through Hope”, is not a mere literary title for the Lebanese people. It is rather a life experienced on a daily basis, for resilience is our life’s journey, our hope has never faded nor has its light ever dimmed. And despite all the hardships, crises and tragedies that besiege us, our people are struggling for a better tomorrow.

As Lebanon tries tenaciously to work its way towards recovery, it relies on international solidarity to achieve its goals.

Thank you.

**Paraguay** (see also A/76/PV.12, annex II)

**Address by Mr. Mario Abdo Benítez, President of the Republic of Paraguay.**

*Delivered on Friday, 24 September 2021, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly*

[Original: Spanish]

Mr. President of the General Assembly,

Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We find ourselves gathered here to address the problems that are causing the most distress to all of our peoples. It is our responsibility to ensure that every speech amounts to more than just words and that we can create a space for deep and sincere reflection.

COVID-19 continues to teach us all lessons. It has shown us how solidarity and empathy are vital in dealing with a pandemic and how countries made rapid progress in vaccine production with commendable speed, but it also brought to light some realities that we must face.

On vaccines: how difficult it has been for many countries, like ours, to have to tell our peoples that, despite having arranged and paid for vaccines on time through the COVAX mechanism recommended by the World Health Organization to ensure equitable distribution, the vaccines did not arrive on time. That is the experience of Paraguay and many other countries that have had to wait.

Paraguay has always been committed to multilateralism because we understand that the common problems that transcend our individual countries require a joint response, as in the case of COVID-19. However, we cannot hide our deep disappointment at the response of the multilateral system to the effective and timely distribution of vaccines.

That reality must be addressed in this Hall with a willingness to assess what has happened and to make changes for the future. We cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that some tried to use the vaccine as a tool for political and ideological extortion at one of the most difficult moments in recent human history.

I would like to highlight the cooperation of those brotherly and friendly countries that selflessly extended their hands in solidarity to the Paraguayan people by donating vaccines that allowed us to save lives and move forward with our immunization programme. I would therefore like to thank, once again, the Governments of the United States, Qatar, India, Spain, Mexico, Chile, Colombia, the United Arab Emirates and Uruguay for such a noble gesture. Our country will never forget it.

Mr. President,

Paraguay's economy is largely based on food production for the world and our status as a landlocked developing country strongly conditions our development, including in a structural manner. In the context of post-pandemic recovery, those

conditions will once again be a determining factor and it will be vital to facilitate effective access for our products to the markets of most developed countries.

For our part, to lessen the impact of those conditions, we are deploying our efforts to turn our geographical location into an advantage. The ambitious bioceanic corridor project, which will cross Paraguayan territory and link the Atlantic Ocean with the Pacific, is a clear example of how we intend to take advantage of our geographical position and promote the physical integration of our region.

Mr. President,

Integration and sustainable development are priorities in the Republic of Paraguay's foreign policy. For decades, my country has been committed to an energy matrix based on clean and renewable energy, with a commitment to care for the environment and the conviction that energy is an indispensable requirement to continue promoting development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Climate change is linked to the current water crisis affecting our region. Low river levels are compromising the availability of water for human consumption, affecting navigability conditions, severely damaging our foreign trade, which depends on river transport, and threatening the efficiency of our energy generation sources. We therefore underline the importance of honouring the international commitments of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, in particular those on climate finance, to support the mitigation and adaptation efforts of developing countries, especially those of us most vulnerable to global warming.

Mr. President,

Terrorism, drug trafficking and transnational organized crime are real threats to the international community. For that reason, Paraguay is committed to combating the financing of such activities and money laundering in particular. To that end, we have updated our regulatory frameworks — as well as taking other measures — with the aim of strengthening institutional response capacities and international cooperation to effectively address that scourge.

One of the greatest atrocities of organized crime is the use of children in its activities. Paraguay once again condemns that despicable practice, which we have already suffered, as well as other inhumane actions such as kidnapping and extortion.

Our Government will not cease in its unrelenting and determined fight against criminal groups within the framework of the law, nor will it spare any effort to achieve the return of our compatriots kidnapped by such groups. Our country is a staunch defender of life, the family and human rights.

Mr. President,

As a founding Member, Paraguay reaffirms its support for the United Nations and its importance as the forum that brings together most of the countries of the world.

In order to strengthen democratic governance and establish a more balanced system of decision-making in the United Nations, we believe that the role of the General Assembly should be strengthened and the reform of the functioning of the Security Council should be considered.

Universality is a basic principle of our Organization and, in that connection, we support the inclusion of Taiwan in the United Nations system.

Mr. President,

The ideal of a world governed by peace, democracy and respect for human rights, freedoms and security requires the efforts of all of us. As we set aside our differences and respect the principle of equality of all States, we must deepen the dialogue aimed at promoting actions to combat poverty and inequality in order to promote more equitable development.

I conclude by echoing Pope Francis' words during the General Audience at the Vatican: "Hope is audacious". Hope knows how to look beyond personal comfort, beyond the small securities and compensations that narrow our horizons, and how to open up to great ideals that make life more beautiful and dignified. Let us walk together in hope.

I thank you.



**Palestine** (see also A/76/PV.12, annex III)

**Address by Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine**

*Delivered on Friday, 24 September 2021, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly*

In the name of God the most compassionate and merciful.

H.E. Mr. Abdullah Shahid, President of the United Nations General Assembly

H.E. Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations

Excellencies Heads of Delegations and Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year marks the 73rd anniversary of the Nakba. More than half the Palestinian people were uprooted from their land and deprived of their property in that time. Myself, my family and many others still possess the deeds to our land. These deeds are registered as part of the United Nations' records.

Here is that deed, and many Palestinians carry theirs, as they still hold onto the keys of their houses to this day. We have not been able to recover our properties due to Israeli laws that disregard international law and violate United Nations resolutions, which affirm the right of the Palestine refugees to return to their homeland and to recover their properties and receive just compensation, most notably as enshrined in General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

Contravening those rights, Israel, the occupying Power, enacts laws and holds court hearings to unlawfully and forcibly displace Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan in Jerusalem, which can only be characterized under international law as ethnic cleansing, which is rejected by our people and the international community as a whole and constitutes a crime under international law.

This year also marks the passing of 54 years since Israel's military occupation of the rest of the Palestinian territory in the West Bank, including, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip in 1967.

This occupation persists despite having concluded an agreement of principles — known as the “Oslo Agreement” — to achieve peace and mutual recognition with Israel in 1993. While we remained committed to all of its elements to this day and agreed to every call and initiative to achieve a political solution on the basis of international legitimacy, including the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative and the 2003 Quartet Roadmap, Israel has not honoured its obligations under the signed agreements and has evaded participating in peace initiatives and instead pursued its expansionist, colonial enterprise, destroying the prospect of a political settlement based on the two-State solution.

To those who claim there is no Palestinian partner for peace and that we do not “miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity”, I challenge them to demonstrate that we have rejected even once a genuine and serious initiative to achieve peace, and I accept the judgement of the world in this regard.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Does the Israeli occupying Power believe that it can elude its responsibility for the crime of uprooting more than half of the Palestinian people from their land and

for committing numerous massacres, killing and maiming thousands of Palestinians in 1948, in Bald el-Sheikh, Deir Yassin, Abushusha, Tantoura, Ein Zaytoun, Kabia and others and the subsequent destruction of over 500 Palestinian towns and villages? Does Israel believe it can simply ignore the legitimate rights, including political rights, of millions of Palestinians within and outside of Palestine, the owners and sons and daughters of this land, at the heart of it Jerusalem? Does it believe it can continue its policies to steal their land, suffocate their economy and prevent them from breathing the air of freedom?

Does Israel believe it can endlessly promote a false narrative that ignores the historic and present right of the Palestinian people to their homeland? The crimes and aggressive policies of the Israeli occupying Power against our people, land and holy sites will not thwart our people's struggle to achieve their freedom and independence on their land. This colonial regime it has established on our land will disappear, regardless of how long it takes. We will not allow them to hijack our lives and kill our people's dreams, hopes and aspirations to realize freedom and independence.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is regrettable that the policies of the international community and the decisions of the relevant United Nations bodies regarding a solution for the Question of Palestine have until now not been upheld and implemented, resulting in a failure to hold Israel accountable and sanction it for its violations of international law, allowing Israel, which claims to be a democratic State, to act as a State above the law.

There are still some countries that refuse to acknowledge the reality that Israel is an occupying Power, practicing apartheid and ethnic cleansing. These countries proudly state that they have shared values with Israel, what shared values are you referring to? This has emboldened Israel, only furthering its arrogance and allowing it to reject and violate all UN resolutions.

At the same time, there are those who demand from the Palestinian people and institutions, who believe in the culture of peace and the rule of law, to provide explanations and justifications to demonstrate they do not incite hatred and promote violence. For example, we have to explain and justify what appears in our curriculum, which reflects our narrative and national identity, while no one is demanding to review the Israeli curriculum and media, so the world can see the real incitement by Israeli institutions. We reject these double standards.

Why should we have to clarify and justify providing assistance to families of prisoners and martyrs who are the victims of the occupation and its oppressive policies? We cannot abandon our people and we will continue striving to free all our prisoners. And I salute here the prisoners' heroic stand. If the occupation ends, there will no longer be a prisoners' issue. I cannot but wonder as I address the universal conscience, is there anyone on this earth who would punish the dead and prevent their families from burying them except those who are deprived of morality and humanity?

Until when will this historical injustice against our people continue? Do the States that provide financial and military support to Israel, which it uses to prolong its occupation and kill Palestinians, or those that remain silent in the face of its aggressive policies, besieging and suffocating Palestinians, do these States actually believe they are ensuring peace and security for the Israeli people and stability for the region? I say it loud and clear: they are not.

What more do you want from the Palestinian people? We have honoured all our obligations under United Nations resolutions, we have pressured our people and ourselves to endure the suffering imposed on us in the pursuit of hope, but all for what outcome? Historical events over the decades have proven that these international policies towards Israel are misguided.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As regards unifying our internal front, we reiterate that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is the legitimate and sole representative of the Palestinian people, and that we are committed to the unity of our people and land and to holding legislative and presidential elections and to the Palestinian National Council as soon as holding such elections in Jerusalem is guaranteed as per signed agreements. We call on the international community to help us bring pressure to bear upon the occupying Power to ensure these elections are held in Jerusalem as we cannot continue being deprived of elections.

Let me state here that we did not cancel the elections, but only postponed them as we could not hold them in Jerusalem. Until this situation is addressed, we will continue striving to create the necessary conditions for the formation of a successful unity government so we can assist our people everywhere and implement reconstruction plans in the Gaza Strip, what requires a complete end to the aggression throughout the territory of the State of Palestine.

I am glad to reaffirm that the coming months will witness the holding of municipal elections in accordance with the law, and elections for all unions and universities are underway.

Ladies and Gentlemen, As regards building state institutions, we stress that we have a full-fledged State with institutions that act in accordance with the rule of law and the principles of accountability and transparency, democracy and pluralism, respect for human rights and empowerment of women and youth. We have acceded to 115 legal instruments and international organizations, committed to upholding our people's rights and strengthening our legislation and regulations, including as they pertain to human rights. We will continue our endeavours to join international organizations.

We have taken the initiative of working jointly with human rights organizations and civil society to preserve these national accomplishments and to guide and adapt the work of our institutions on the basis of the rule of law.

I have issued instructions to take the necessary measures to correct any wrongdoing and continue upholding the rule of law, the freedom of expression and human rights as the path our country insists to remain on.

I reaffirm to the international community our commitment to political engagement and dialogue as the path to achieve peace, and to peaceful popular resistance and to combating terrorism in all its forms and origins in our region and the world. We have numerous agreements with countries around the world to combat global terrorism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to refer here to the constructive dialogue currently underway with the United States administration to resume Palestinian-US relations and to undertake steps that will ensure the occupying Power's abidance by signed agreements. From

our side, we will strive to succeed in this endeavour so as to create conditions conducive to moving swiftly towards a final political settlement that ends the Israeli occupation of our country.

However, the current and former Israeli governments have persisted in evading the two-State solution based on international law and UN resolutions, and insisted in pursuing occupation and military control over the Palestinian people while presenting illusionary economic and security plans as an alternative. These unilateral plans will not achieve security and stability for anyone as they undermine efforts for a genuine peace and prolong occupation and entrench the reality of one apartheid state.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This is a moment of truth with the occupying Power. We are at a crossroads. We have had enough. This situation cannot continue and our people cannot endure it any longer.

I have dedicated my life to achieving peace and chose the path of peaceful, legal and diplomatic work in international fora. We have extended our hands time and time again for peace and still we cannot find a partner in Israel that believes in and accepts the two-State solution.

The leaders of Israel no longer feel any shame while stating their blunt opposition to this solution that is supported by global consensus. I warn that undermining the two-State solution based on international law and UN resolutions will open the way for other alternatives imposed on us by the situation on the ground as a result of the continuation of the Israeli occupation of our State; the absence of a just solution for the plight of 7 million Palestine refugees uprooted from their land in 1948; the systematic theft of Palestinian land and the ongoing crimes of the occupation and demolition of homes as a means of collective punishment; the killings and arrests and detention by the thousands, including of women, the sick and children as well as the imposition of the inhumane blockade over the Gaza Strip; and measures annexation under numerous pretexts and names, including the settlement plan they now invented in the City of Jerusalem and that we fully reject, all coupled with the crime of forcibly displacing Palestinians from their land, as part of a policy of racial discrimination and ethnic cleansing pursued by the occupation in the absence of a deterrent international response.

Our people will not surrender to the reality of occupation and its illegal policies and practices. They will pursue their just struggle to fulfil their right to self-determination, and options are available, including returning to a solution based on the partition plan of resolution 181 (II) adopted in 1947 which gives the State of Palestine 44 per cent of the land, double the space provided for on the 1967 borders. We remind everyone that Israel seized by military force half of the land dedicated to the State of Palestine in 1948, which is a solution in conformity with international legitimacy.

If the Israeli occupation authorities continue to entrench the reality of one apartheid state as is happening today, our Palestinian people and the entire world will not tolerate such a situation and circumstances on the ground will inevitably impose equal and full political rights for all on the land of historical Palestine, within one State. In all cases, Israel has to choose. These are the options, and it has to choose.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

International law stipulates the right to a free and dignified life, and calls on States to take the necessary measures to protect and secure this right, as protection

constitutes an indispensable and decisive element for the maintenance of peace, security, stability, and development. In this regard, I call on the Secretary-General António Guterres to work on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions on protection, including the resolution adopted during the General Assembly emergency session held in June 2018 under “Uniting for Peace” to take the necessary steps towards developing an international mechanism for protection, as foreseen in his report of August 2018, and to activate this mechanism on the borders of the occupied State of Palestine in 1967, including East Jerusalem, to avail our people of international protection.

In parallel, and in accordance with the same resolution, I call on the Secretary-General to convene an international peace conference, in line with the internationally-recognized terms of reference and United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, and under the sole auspices of the international Quartet.

To ensure our initiative is not open-ended, we must state that Israel, the occupying Power, has one year to withdraw from the Palestinian territory it occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem, and we are ready to work throughout this year on the delineation of borders and solving all final status issues under the auspices of the international Quartet and in accordance with United Nations resolutions. If this is not achieved, why maintain recognition of Israel based on the 1967 borders? Why maintain this recognition?

Moreover, in this regard, we will go to the International Court of Justice as the supreme international judicial body, on the issue of the legality of the occupation of the land of the Palestinian state and the relevant obligations for the United Nations and States around the world in this regard and all will have to respect the conclusions of the Court. Colonialism and apartheid are prohibited under international law and they are crimes that must be confronted and a regime that needs to be dismantled.

The international community’s support for this initiative, consistent with international law and United Nations resolutions, may save the region from an unknown fate. We all have a chance to live in peace and security, good-neighbourly relations, each in our State, and delaying implementation of these steps will keep the region in a situation of turmoil and instability with dire consequences. Do the leaders of Israel dream of maintaining their occupation forever? Do they want this occupation to last forever?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Why should a Palestinian continue living either under Israel’s racist occupation or as a refugee in neighbouring countries? Are there no other alternatives, freedom for example? The Palestinian everywhere is a creative and dynamic human being and the entire world can testify to that. Palestinians deserve to live free in their homeland.

From this podium I call on the sons and daughters of Palestine everywhere around the world to continue pursuit of their peaceful and popular struggle that has shown the true image of the valiant Palestinian people striving for freedom and independence by resisting occupation and apartheid.

I salute our people everywhere and salute all nations and countries that have stood in solidarity with our people during the Jerusalem uprising and the prisoners uprising and against the aggression that killed hundreds, spread destruction and displaced thousands of our people in the West Bank, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip

I also salute all those who took part in demonstrations in the United States and Europe and everywhere across the globe to demand an end to the Israeli occupation,

apartheid and ethnic cleansing and to call for justice, freedom and self-determination for our people. This is an awakening, recognizing the true Palestinian story, and I urge all to continue raising and defending it and defending the Palestinian right to life, equality and statehood. Opposing aggressive policies and practices of the Israeli occupation and settlers and of the Zionist narrative in general is not an act of incitement or anti-Semitism, but rather the duty of every free man and woman in the world.

In this connection, I convey to the international community our gratitude and appreciation for their political and material support to our people and for the building of our institutions and national economy. But the time has come to take tangible steps to revive hope and end the Israeli occupation of our land and people and to consecrate the values of justice and peace in our region. I wonder what prevents countries that recognize Israel from recognizing the State of Palestine, since they support the two state solution?

I say to Israel's leaders: Do not oppress and corner the Palestinian people and deprive them of dignity and their right to their land and State as you will destroy everything. Our patience and the patience of our people have limits. I reiterate yet again that the Palestinian people will defend their existence and identity and will not kneel or surrender, they will not leave and will remain on their land defending it, defending their fate and pursuing their great journey towards ending the occupation. Of the land of the State of Palestine and its capital East Jerusalem. We say once more: this is our land, our Jerusalem, our Palestinian identity, and we shall defend it until the occupier leaves, as the future belongs to us and you cannot claim peace and security for yourselves alone. Let us be.

Peace be upon you.

**Benin** (see also A/76/PV.12, annex IV)

**Address by Ms. Mariam Chabi Talata, Vice-President of the Republic of Benin**

*Delivered on Friday, 24 September 2021, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly*

[Original: French]

President of the United Nations General Assembly,

Heads of State and Government,

Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Ladies and gentlemen,

His Excellency Mr. Patrice Talon, President of the Republic of Benin, who could not be here today, has tasked me with delivering the following address on his behalf.

First of all, Mr. President, I would like to thank you for the excellent conduct of the work of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The theme of this session is: “Building resilience through hope — to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainably, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people, and revitalize the United Nations”.

When we look at the current state of the world, at various levels, we acknowledge that this theme is very significant, meaningful and relevant to our lives.

It invites us to move away from the ambient and growing scepticism and the rising despair in our hearts in order to solve our current problems and rebuild sustainably.

Mr. President,

For some time now, the international community has had to face the global and destructive reality of the COVID-19 pandemic. In that regard, my country thanks the United Nations and its specialized agencies, in particular the World Health Organization, for prioritizing the quest for a definitive solution to this health crisis.

Widespread and ongoing mobilization, as well as uniting our energies, have allowed for the development of vaccines. Vaccination rates are increasing throughout the world. However, Africa’s vaccination rate remains low, and the continent continues to face other equally deadly infections, namely malaria and HIV/AIDS.

Regarding our domestic management of COVID-19, the State of Benin has opted to fully vaccinate all its citizens and provide subsidization worth several billion CFA francs to people and companies whose businesses have been adversely affected by the pandemic.

In this regard, we thank all partners that support our country in its fight to achieve the SDGs, in line with the Government’s Action Programme.

With regard to the need to rebuild sustainably, we must strive to predict the occurrence of future scourges. Isolated, temporary and local action steps alone are no longer enough. Each State, each continent must open up to others so that, through



common and concerted efforts and synergies in actions taken, the world can be rid, once and for all, of its concerns and fears.

Concerning insecurity caused by violent extremism and crime, my country faces two critical situations:

- Terrorism, which is a genuine threat on its northern borders,
- Maritime piracy in the south

To address those issues, in addition to the necessary measures taken internally, Benin joins all initiatives at the regional and international levels to ensure peace, free movement and security for its citizens and everyone on its territory.

The same applies to the needs of the planet. We hope for and expect the same behaviour and attitudes to save a planet that suffers abuses of all kinds, such as overexploitation and excess production and consumption. Beyond our individual sovereignties, we must be compelled to work together on a plan to meet the needs of countries and the planet. We must meet food, water and energy needs — needs that I refer to as strategic — by considering current threats and future generations.

With regard to human rights, the SDGs remind us of them every day through the targets set.

Our country believes that achieving the SDGs is the most concrete and reliable way to ensure respect for human rights. That is why our country strives to mobilize, through various strategies, resources that should enable our citizens to have access to

- an adequate food system with school canteens throughout the country,
- quality education for life,
- health care via the system of insurance for the strengthening of human capital, which protects the poorest,
- drinking water, by expanding our distribution networks,
- energy, by expanding our electricity network and sources of clean energy.

Today, thanks to the successful issuance of SDG Euro bonds, our country has been able to mobilize most of the resources needed to achieve the majority of the SDGs.

At the political level, with the reform of the party system, the regular organization of elections, good governance and the fight against corruption, Benin ensures that its citizens enjoy their human rights.

Mr. President,

The progress made by our country has been tangible, palpable and concrete in recent years. We, therefore, believe that we deserve to be a member of the Human Rights Council for the period 2022-2024 in order to share our experience in the area of protecting and promoting human rights.

This platform is, therefore, a solemn opportunity for me to recall that our country's candidacy has already been formally endorsed by the African Union.

With this support from our neighbours, we also invite all member countries of the United Nations to support Benin's candidacy during the elections that will take place in New York in October 2021.



Mr. President,

Finally, with respect to revitalizing the United Nations, it is crucial to reform the institution so as to guarantee its foundation of equality, justice and solidarity among Member States. Times have changed, the world has evolved. Our institution must also evolve and adapt to modern times.

We appeal to the spirit of consensus to make the United Nations a modern, free and fair institution.

Meanwhile, my country reaffirms its support for diplomatic initiatives that seek to create a viable Palestinian State, with full international sovereignty, living in peace with the State of Israel.

Benin also supports the efforts of the United Nations to find a lasting solution to the situation concerning Western Sahara.

Lastly, my country stands in solidarity with the resolution adopted by the 34th Summit of the African Union in February 2021, in Addis Ababa, on the economic blockade imposed on Cuba by the United States of America. We reiterate the need for the United States to take all necessary measures to end the blockade in the name of promoting peace and development.

Benin therefore calls for the normalization of relations between Cuba and the United States — two countries that are friends of Benin.

Since we must live in hope, we expect that the various calls made here will be heard by all to ensure the advent of a modern, united, free, fair, secure and prosperous world for all.

I thank you.

**Armenia** (see also A/76/PV.12, annex V)

**Address by Mr. Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia**

*Delivered on Friday, 24 September 2021, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly*

Honourable President of the General Assembly,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to once again deliver a statement at the United Nations General Assembly.

First of all, I would like to congratulate Mr. Abdulla Shahid on his election as President of the General Assembly, as well as Mr. António Guterres on his re-election as Secretary-General of the United Nations. I am confident that with your leadership you will help us overcome the vast challenges we are facing.

Today in my speech, I would like to refer to the situation in the South Caucasus region, present our views and proposals on the solution of the existing problems.

As you know, in the fall of 2020, Nagorno-Karabakh was subjected to aggression. The war that lasted forty-four days took the lives of several thousands of people. Tens of thousands of residents of Nagorno-Karabakh were displaced. The aggression was accompanied by numerous gross violations of international law by the Azerbaijani armed forces, including deliberate targeting of civilians and vital infrastructure, extrajudicial killings of prisoners of war and civilian hostages, torture and many other documented crimes. As a result of these actions, in the parts of Nagorno-Karabakh, which came under the control of Azerbaijan, the Armenian people were subjected to complete ethnic cleansing. Unfortunately, the international community here again could not prevent the mass atrocities. Today, no Armenian lives or practically could live in the territories under the control of Azerbaijan.

Thanks to the mediation efforts of the Russian Federation, it was possible to stop the bloodshed. On November 9, a trilateral ceasefire statement was signed. Peacekeeping forces of the Russian Federation were deployed in Nagorno-Karabakh, which today ensure stability and security thereon.

Dear Colleagues,

One month ago, the Republic of Armenia National Assembly approved the Government's Action Plan for 2021-2026, where one of the key provisions is to open an era of peaceful development for our country and the region. Moreover, as per the results of the early parliamentary election held on June 20, 2021, the people of Armenia gave to our Government a mandate to move towards this key goal. It should be emphasized that our Government received this important mandate based on the results of elections that were held to overcome the domestic political crisis.

This was the second election in our country after the Non-violent, Velvet, People's Revolution in Armenia in 2018. Both elections were assessed by international observers as competitive, transparent, and in line with democratic standards.

So, how are we going to achieve the goal of opening an era of peaceful development for our country and the region? Through dialogue, overcoming

incrementally the atmosphere of painful hostility in our region. We realize that the path will be difficult and long. Unfortunately, the incidents designed to delegitimize the peace agenda and deepen and institutionalize the atmosphere of hostility occur on a daily basis. Violations of the ceasefire, aggressive and insulting statements against Armenia and the Armenian people continue to escalate the atmosphere.

An act against the peace agenda is the fact that, contrary to Article 8 of the November 9 statement, Azerbaijan not only still holds several dozen citizens of the Republic of Armenia in captivity, but also has sentenced many of them to 6 to 20 years imprisonment on trumped-up charges. In addition, there are persons whose captivity has not yet been confirmed by Azerbaijan, although there is clear evidence that they were captured. This becomes even more unacceptable against the background that in the fall of 2020, Azerbaijani users posted videos of the capture of specific Armenian soldiers, and later the decapitated or shot bodies of those soldiers were discovered. We have irrefutable evidence about the torture of our captives.

An outrageous example of the deepening of the atmosphere of hostility is the opening of the so-called trophy park in Baku, where Azerbaijani schoolchildren are taken on excursions to watch the mannequins of captured, killed or bleeding Armenian soldiers.

These and other steps are taken to demonstrate the impossibility of peace in our region, but we will consistently advance that agenda by using every opportunity and by creating new opportunities to open an era of peace for our region.

In this sense, I consider the opening of regional communications extremely important, which is stated in the 9th point of the trilateral declaration signed by the President of the Russian Federation, the President of Azerbaijan and the Prime Minister of Armenia of November 9, 2020 and January 11, 2021.

The interconnected transport arteries of the region will be an outcome of resolving this issue. Opportunity will be created for establishing economic ties, which is one of the important prerequisites for peaceful development.

While examining the topic of reopening transport links, we discovered that there are options that aim at sustaining regional isolation and hostility, but there are also options that emphasize regional interconnectedness and can be a step-by-step solution of the problem of hostility. We are an advocate for the latter option.

If the railway connecting Armenia to Turkey is opened too, then the topic of opening regional communications will cover broader scope.

Honourable Mr. Secretary General,

Armenia is ready for a constructive dialogue, which should lead to the establishment of sustainable and lasting peace in the region. In this regard, we propose to complete the process of return of prisoners of war, hostages and other captives without delay.

It is also necessary to resume the peace process for the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

There is no doubt that the situation created through the use of force cannot gain legitimacy from the point of view of international law. The right of the people of Artsakh to self-determination cannot be suspended through the use of force; the conflict cannot be considered resolved through the use of force. The Nagorno-Karabakh

conflict is awaiting its just settlement. This is evidenced by the statements of the Co-Chair countries, which emphasize the need to resume the negotiation process based on the well-known principles.

We believe that the contacts mediated by the Co-Chairs will enable the parties to find common ground, and to open avenues for addressing many difficult issues.

Next is the issue of delimitation and demarcation of the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. I must state with regret that it is difficult to imagine a border delimitation process on the backdrop of almost daily shootings and various provocations on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, on the backdrop of units of the armed forces of Azerbaijan having infiltrated the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia on May 12, 2021 in the Sotk-Khoznavar section. To overcome this situation, we have suggested the following actions: In the above mentioned section, the armed forces of both Armenia and Azerbaijan should withdraw simultaneously to the Soviet times border, international observers would be deployed along that border and under international auspices we would start delimitation and demarcation. We are ready to implement this proposal at any time.

Dear Colleagues,

In my speech, I touched upon issues of vital importance for our country and for the region. These issues need urgently to be addressed today and require the urgent attention of the international community.

At the same time, as I conclude my speech, I would like to reaffirm that Armenia, as a responsible member of the international community and a reliable partner, will continue to contribute to the strengthening of comprehensive international order, to international cooperation based on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, promoting sustainable development and protection of fundamental human rights.

We are committed to a constructive and inclusive dialogue with all our partners.

Armenia is ready to make every effort to contribute to overcoming the current global challenges such as climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, issues of international peace, security and sustainable development.

With this, let me complete my speech by wishing success to the works of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly.

Thank you for attention.

**Mauritius** (see also A/76/PV.12, annex VI)

**Address by Mr. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister for Defense, Home Affairs, and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands, and Territorial Integrity of the Republic of Mauritius**

*Delivered on Friday, 24 September 2021, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly*

Mr. President,

It is indeed a great pleasure to see you steering the proceedings of the 76th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Mauritius and Maldives share common challenges as developing islands of the Indian Ocean. We wish to assure you of our full cooperation and support during your Presidency.

I extend my gratitude to H.E. Mr. Volkan Bozkır for his successful Presidency of the last Session.

Let me also congratulate His Excellency Mr. António Guterres upon his re-election as Secretary-General of the United Nations and thank him for his comprehensive report entitled “Our Common Agenda”.

Mr. President,

You have chosen a very appropriate theme for this session given the unique situation we are in for the past 20 months.

Building resilience through hope, recovering from COVID-19, rebuilding sustainably, responding to the needs of the planet, respecting the rights of people, and revitalizing the United Nations cover the whole range of activities which are not only urgent but also crucial if we are to ensure our long term continued existence on our planet, in a manner that enhances multilateralism and cooperation, protects the rights of people by reinforcing our institutions and the Rule of Law, and leaves no one behind.

The COVID-19 pandemic caught a totally unprepared world with unparalleled intensity, disrupting governments and societies, the multilateral system, and more importantly, the lives and livelihood of people.

It has brought to light the scale of global interconnectedness. Events in one country can have rippling effects across the globe.

Almost two years later, we are still grappling with the pandemic and its mutations and despite the fact that vaccines have come out amazingly fast, we are still not in a position to say that life is back to normal.

In fact, just as many countries were finding it hard to find basic protective equipment at the beginning of the pandemic, they are now facing similar challenges to have access to affordable and effective vaccines.

While advanced economies have been able to deploy massive fiscal stimulus to cushion the pandemic’s impact and have succeeded in achieving mass vaccinations, the policy response of developing countries has been constrained by several factors, and access to vaccines is still limited.

Inequitable vaccine distribution is not only leaving millions of people vulnerable to the virus, but it is also allowing new variants to emerge, with the result that recovery will take longer.

We welcome the US initiative to organize a Leaders' Summit to consider ways of eradicating the Pandemic. The meeting held this week shows that bringing together World Leaders, economic partners, and vaccine producers, and the scientific community can lead to concerted actions to fight the pandemic.

We should strive towards producing more vaccines, more rapidly, and decentralize their production to cater for the needs of the people around the globe.

Multilateral facilities such as the COVAX should be fully funded and empowered to redistribute surplus vaccine doses.

Necessary technology and resources should be shared with developing countries, including SIDS like Mauritius, to enable the roll out of vaccines for faster return to normalcy.

In the same vein, unilateral economic sanctions should be reviewed in light of the humanitarian urgency to fight the pandemic.

Mr. President,

With these initiatives, we stand a good chance to eradicate the pandemic or at the very least, be able to learn to live with it, but the world will still have to face the economic challenge that has come with the pandemic.

COVID-19 has severely impacted the world economy. Mauritius was not spared and our GDP contracted by 14.9 per cent in 2020.

Public health spending has had to be increased significantly, together with a string of measures to assist business transformation, support the tourism sector, increase local food production, and support various sectors of the economy.

Along with the pandemic, Mauritius has also faced other challenges concerning its financial services sector, and we have had to address these as a matter of great urgency in order to keep the sector afloat.

Mr. President,

Before the pandemic, Small Island Developing States were already facing significant levels of debt distress.

While we welcome the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative, we believe this facility should be extended to include Small Island Developing States, in particular the Middle-Income Countries as well.

A new global financial architecture focusing on fiscal space and debt sustainability is urgently needed for SIDS.

Mauritius fully supports the proposal to produce a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index to be used in determining the type and measure of support that will be needed by a country, not only to build its resilience, but also to put it on track to achieve its SDGs.

Mr. President,

The Paris Agreement was hailed as a major breakthrough in our efforts to tackle climate change, but the climate events since, show that unless we commit to doing much more, our planet, and indeed our existence, are severely threatened.

The last Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report is unequivocal, we are in the red and human influence is to a large extent responsible for the state of our atmosphere, ocean, and land.

The world has great expectations from the COP26 Summit. We all know what needs to be done; it is not sufficient to simply raise ambitions, but more importantly, we need to commit to deliver on them.

We owe this to future generations.

Mauritius welcomes the fact that the Green Climate Fund has nearly reached the level of contributions that has been pledged. But this will be meaningless unless access to it is simplified, especially for SIDS.

Mr. President,

Oceans are hosts to huge amounts and varieties of biodiversity that need to be protected.

We support ongoing work for a legally binding instrument on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction that would allow an equitable sharing of benefits.

Mr. President,

The protection and promotion of human rights and gender equality should remain at the centre of all our endeavours.

We have an immense responsibility towards our future generations. Throughout the world, students and young people have been facing growing frustration because of confinements, education disruptions, and fewer job opportunities.

Special efforts need to be made to bring them in the mainstream. Mauritius stands ready to support all initiatives in that regard.

Mr. President,

One sector which has thrived during the pandemic relates to infodemics and criminal activities in cyberspace. This has to be addressed globally.

We support the elaboration of an international Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for Criminal Purposes.

Mr. President,

The use of force to legitimize governments is a matter of grave concern to the international community and affects peace and regional stability. We condemn such acts just as much as we condemn the resurgence of violent extremism and terrorism in Africa.

We stand in solidarity with the Afghan people and hope that peace prevails and brings stability to the region. We support all regional and international initiatives aimed at finding sustainable peaceful solutions. We also call for a just and lasting settlement for the Palestinian people.

Mr. President,

Mauritius expresses the hope that under your Presidency, the process of reforming the Security Council in order to make it more representative of the new realities will be accelerated.

The historical injustice done to Africa must be corrected. Africa should have its rightful place in an expanded Security Council which should also include a seat for SIDS.

Mr. President,

It remains a matter of concern that more than two years after the International Court of Justice ruled that the decolonization process of Mauritius has not been lawfully completed in view of the unlawful excision of the Chagos Archipelago from its territory prior to independence, and that the United Kingdom has an obligation to withdraw its unlawful administration from the Archipelago as rapidly as possible, we still see no action on the part of the colonial power.

And yet, the findings of the ICJ have been affirmed by UN General Assembly Resolution 73/295 and in January this year, a Special Chamber of ITLOS has held that those authoritative determinations of international law by the ICJ have binding legal effect, rendering it beyond legitimate dispute that Mauritius is sovereign over the Chagos Archipelago as an integral part of its national territory.

The ITLOS Special Chamber also underscored that in adopting resolution 73/295, the General Assembly has set out modalities for the completion of the decolonization of Mauritius, which the ICJ has ruled every member of the UN, and UN agency, has an obligation to support.

The ITLOS Chamber will now proceed to delimit the maritime boundary between Mauritius and Maldives on the basis of Mauritius being the Coastal State in relation to the Chagos Archipelago.

We note with further satisfaction that Specialized Agencies of the United Nations such as the Universal Postal Union have recently adopted by a large majority a resolution to give practical effect to General Assembly resolution 73/295, thereby ensuring respect for international law and its obligations under the Agreement it signed in 1947 with the UN.

Mauritius looks forward to further implementation of Resolution 73/295 by other international and regional organizations, with the support of UN Member States.

Mauritius remains committed to implementing a programme for the resettlement in the Chagos Archipelago of Mauritian nationals, in particular those of Chagossian origin who were forcibly removed by the UK from the Chagos Archipelago in violation of their basic human rights.

I express, on behalf of the Government and people of Mauritius and in particular the Mauritians of Chagossian origin, our sincere gratitude to all the countries that have been supporting us in completing our decolonization and we appeal to the colonial power to comply with the rulings of the international courts and the resolutions of the General Assembly. Compliance with international law is the responsibility of all law-abiding States.

Mr. President,

I would like to reiterate the commitment of Mauritius to ensuring the continued operation of the defence facility in Diego Garcia. Mauritius considers the facility vital to the maintenance of international peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region, and to efforts to combat terrorism, piracy, and the illicit trafficking of drugs and persons. In this regard, Mauritius, as sovereign over the Chagos Archipelago, which includes



Diego Garcia, stands ready to enter into a long-term arrangement with the United States in respect of Diego Garcia.

Mr. President,

With regard to Tromelin which also forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius, we call for the early resolution of the dispute over the island in the spirit of friendship that characterizes the relations between Mauritius and France.

Mr. President,

We can no longer afford to be fractious. We need to promote, preserve, and strengthen multilateralism.

Together, we can build more sustainable, equal societies and economies.

Together, we can transform our world into one that recognizes and respects the dignity of every human being.

I thank you.

**Sweden** (see also A/76/PV.12, annex VII)

**Address by Mr. Stefan Löfven, Prime Minister of Sweden**

*Delivered on Friday, 24 September 2021, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly*

Excellencies,

This year marks 75 years since Sweden became a member of the United Nations.

Today's global challenges demonstrate the urgent need to strengthen international cooperation, with a modern UN at its core.

The devastating impact of the pandemic has tested the resilience of our societies and put pressure on the multilateral system.

More than half of the world's population have not yet been vaccinated against COVID-19.

Making sure that vaccines are accessible equally to everyone must be our priority.

COVAX remains our best instrument. Sweden is its largest per capita contributor, and I am proud to announce that we intend to increase our support for global access to vaccines.

We look forward to cooperating with all Member States in identifying ways to improve health systems' prevention, preparedness and response capacities.

Excellencies,

The extreme weather events we have witnessed, with forest fires, flooding and heat waves, underline the urgent need to act against climate change.

We must listen to the science and transform our societies. We must keep the 1.5 degree goal alive.

Lower emissions, adaptation and protection of biodiversity must be our priority. Recovering from the pandemic will provide an opportunity to build back greener.

This year, we need to stand up to the test as we gather at COP26 in Glasgow, COP15 in Kunming, and prepare to conclude a legal instrument to protect biodiversity in the high seas.

Next year marks 50 years since the world gathered in Stockholm for the first ever UN conference on the environment. In June, we will host Stockholm+50, which we expect will be a catalyst for necessary transformative actions for a systemic change as with regard to the environment and climate change agenda. Let's take this opportunity to help redefine humankind's relationship with nature.

Excellencies,

A renewed commitment to strengthening international cooperation must be based on our joint responsibility to uphold international law.

Human rights are universal and apply to all.

We reiterate our strong support for the Secretary-General's 'Call to Action for Human Rights' and advancing human rights across all of the work conducted by the UN.

We remain deeply concerned that respect for democracy continues to decrease globally. Sweden will continue our strong support to democratic institutions and processes, and to defenders of democracy.

Through Sweden's cross-regional 'Drive for Democracy' initiative, we aim to push back against authoritarianism and promote democracy worldwide.

Excellencies,

The pandemic has exacerbated critical gaps in equality, particularly gender equality. Women and girls have been disproportionately affected. Sustainable development, peace and security are not possible when women and girls are left behind.

This is why my Government is a feminist government.

Sweden will always stand up for sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Excellencies,

International solidarity is part of the Swedish DNA. We remain firm in our global commitments, including to provide 1 per cent of GNI to overseas development assistance.

Free, fair and sustainable trade is key in order to create new jobs and increase prosperity. The World Trade Organization has an essential role in upholding a rules-based international trading system. We must ensure that we have the means to build back better and greener.

As chair of the ILO Governing Body this year, we will promote labour rights.

Excellencies,

The pandemic has also increased the suffering of the most vulnerable. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance to survive has reached a new record level. Global hunger, driven by armed conflicts and climate change, is soaring.

We urge Member States to urgently step up funding to save lives and alleviate suffering.

Sweden remains one of the largest humanitarian donors.

We need to find new ways to support the Afghan people to sustain the achievements made in the last 20 years. The increasingly acute humanitarian crisis and the protection and promotion of human rights — in particular regarding people belonging to minorities, women and girls — must be addressed. In this, the UN plays a critical role. Sweden's longstanding engagement and our support to the Afghan people remain steadfast.

Excellencies,

Sweden continues to be a champion for long-term peacebuilding and we are a substantial contributor of personnel to UN peace operations.

In Yemen, relentless fighting has worsened the humanitarian catastrophe. Sweden remains deeply engaged. We urge the parties to agree on a ceasefire and take part in political talks under UN auspices. The implementation of the Stockholm and Riyadh agreements remains a key step. Sweden is committed to leading international efforts to mobilise additional funding for the world's largest humanitarian operation.

In Ethiopia, the Tigray conflict's expansion is causing immense human suffering. We urgently call on all parties to ensure full and sustained humanitarian access, agree to a ceasefire and work for a political solution.

Excellencies,

One year ago, peaceful protests in Belarus were followed by ruthless repression. Sweden and the EU demand respect for human rights. We support the Belarusian people's right to democracy, freedom of expression and the rule of law.

Sweden remains a steadfast supporter of Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. We continue to unequivocally denounce Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol.

This year, Sweden is chairing the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Our guiding principle is to return to the basics by defending the European security order based on respect for international law and the UN charter.

Strengthening the OSCE's cooperation with the UN is a priority, not least on the ground in conflict situations.

Excellencies,

The nuclear threat is as present as ever. To reverse this negative trend, we welcome recent steps such as the extension of the New START Treaty, and the US and Russian joint statement reaffirming that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought".

The Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament aims to ensure that concrete steps towards nuclear disarmament are taken, not least in view of the upcoming Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Some progress has been made, but much more remains to be done. We call on all States, in particular nuclear weapon states, to do their part.

We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to adhere to its international obligations and take steps towards denuclearisation.

Excellencies,

This will be my last address as Prime Minister of Sweden to the General Assembly. As I look back at my seven years in office, I can only conclude that global challenges are becoming ever more pressing. But together, we have also made important progress.

Sweden remains an active champion of finding common solutions to the challenges we jointly face. Our roadmap is global implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Gender equality is the unfinished human rights struggle of this century. Gender equality has always been a key priority in decision-making and resource allocation in my government — and I have promoted gender equality globally.

Climate change is the defining issue of our time. In 2017, the Swedish Parliament adopted the most ambitious climate reform in Sweden's history, aiming at net zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2045. Together with India, I am proud to have launched the Leadership Group for Industry Transition.

Inequality has further accelerated. Together with the ILO and the OECD, I launched the Global Deal partnership for decent work and inclusive growth in 2016.

The objective is to improve the global labour market and enable people to benefit from globalization.

In October, I will host the Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Anti-Semitism — Remember ReAct. The rise of racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and antisemitism must be rigorously countered. The Forum aims to take concrete steps in the work for Holocaust remembrance and the fight against antisemitism.

Excellencies,

Last year's adoption of the UN75 Declaration, co-facilitated by Sweden and Qatar, was a recommitment to strengthening international cooperation, with a modern, innovative and inclusive United Nations at its core.

Together with the Prime Minister of Spain, I have launched a network of leaders to support the Secretary-General in taking the Common Agenda forward. Future generations should be at the centre of these efforts. We look forward to contributing to the preparations of a 'Summit of the Future' in 2023.

Sweden joined the United Nations 75 years ago. Rest assured that we will continue working with all of you all towards a peaceful, green, more equal and healthier planet.

We will remain as committed to international cooperation in the future as we have been over these last 75 years.

Thank you.

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