



General Assembly

Seventy-sixth session

14th plenary meeting
Saturday, 25 September 2021, 9 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Shahid (Maldives)

The meeting was called to order at 9.05 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

Address by Mr. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of India.

Mr. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Modi (India) (*spoke in Hindi; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): First of all, I would like to formally congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the office of President of the General Assembly. Your becoming President is a matter of pride for all developing countries, in particular small island developing States.

For the past one and a half years, the world has been grappling with the worst pandemic it has seen in 100 years. I pay tribute to all those who have lost their lives during the deadly coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and express my condolences to their families.

I represent a country that is proud to be known as the mother of democracy. We have a great tradition of democracy that dates back thousands of years. On

15 August, India began the seventy-fifth year of its independence. Our diversity accounts for the nature of our strong democracy. India is a country that counts dozens of languages and hundreds of dialects, distinct ways of life and cuisines. That is the best example of a vibrant democracy. The strength of our democracy is demonstrated by the fact that a little boy who at one time used to help his father at his tea stall at a railway station is today addressing the General Assembly for the fourth time as Prime Minister of India.

I will soon have spent 20 years serving my people as Head of Government — as the longest-serving Chief Minister of Gujarat and then as Prime Minister for the past seven years. Based on my own experience, yes, democracy can deliver. Yes, democracy has delivered.

Today is the birthday of Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, who propounded the philosophy of *Ekatma Manav Darshan*, which translates into integral humanism or the development journey undertaken together and the expansion from the self to the universe, whereby the self moves from the individual to society, the nation and all humankind. This philosophy is dedicated to the concept of *Antyodaya* — the modern-day equivalent of leaving no one behind. It is with that principle in mind that India today is moving forward on the path of integrated equitable development. Our priority is that development should be all-inclusive, all-pervasive, universal and one that nurtures all.

In the past seven years, India has brought more than 430 million people who were previously unbanked into the banking system. Today more than 360 million people

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who previously could not even have imagined it was possible now have the security of insurance coverage. By giving more than 500 million people free treatment in hospitals, India has provided them with access to quality health services. By building 30 million proper homes, India has made homeless families homeowners.

Polluted water is a very big problem, not just for India but for the entire world, in particular for poor and developing countries. In order to address that challenge in India, we have launched a broad campaign to ensure that piped clean water reaches more than 170 million homes.

Reputed institutions of the world have said that, for the development of any country, people must have property rights to their homes and land — that is, ownership records are a must. In the most developed countries, there are many people who do not have property rights to their homes or land. Today we use drones in India to map more than 600,000 villages. By doing so, we give people digital records of their homes and land, which will not only reduce property disputes but also give people increased access to credit and bank loans.

Today every sixth person in the world is Indian. When Indians make progress, it also gives impetus to the development of the world. When India grows, the world grows. When India reforms, the world transforms.

The science- and technology-based innovations taking place in India can make a big contribution to the world. Both the scalability of our technology solutions and their cost-effectiveness are unparalleled. More than 3.5 billion transactions are completed every month in India through our unified payment interface. India's vaccine delivery platform, CoWIN, offers digital support to register the administration of millions of vaccine doses in a single day.

India, which puts into practice the principle of *Seva Parmo Dharma*, meaning “service is the highest religion”, today spares no effort in vaccine development and manufacturing, despite its limited resources. I would like to inform the General Assembly that India has developed the world's first DNA vaccine, which can be administered to anyone above the age of 12. Another vaccine — a messenger RNA vaccine — is in the final stages of development. Indian scientists are also working on the development of a nasal vaccine against COVID-19.

Deeply conscious of its responsibility towards humankind, India has resumed the process of providing vaccines to those who need it in the world. Today I also extend an invitation to vaccine manufacturers from across the world to come and make vaccines in India.

All of us are well aware of how important technology is in the lives of people today. However, in this ever-changing world, it is equally important to ensure that technology is applied with democratic values. No matter which country the doctors, innovators, engineers and managers of Indian origin live in, our democratic values inspire them to continue serving humankind. That is indeed a spirit we have seen during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also taught the world another important lesson — that the global economy needs to be diversified even further. To that end, the expansion of global value chains is necessary. Our *Atmanirbhar Bharat*, or “self-reliant India”, movement is inspired by that very spirit.

India is becoming a democratic and reliable partner for global industrial diversification, and in that context has struck a better balance between both economy and ecology. I am sure that everyone here is also proud of the efforts made by India on climate change as compared to those made by large developed nations. Today India has advanced with great speed towards its target of generating 450 gigawatts of renewable energy by 2030. We have also started to work on making India the world's largest green hydrogen hub.

We are answerable to future generations when they ask what was done by the people whose responsibility it was to give direction to the world when it was time to take decisions. Today the world faces an increased threat of regressive thinking and extremism. In such a situation, the entire world must make scientific, rational and progressive thinking the basis for development.

In order to strengthen a science-based approach, India is promoting experience-based learning. Thousands of Atal Tinkering Laboratories have been set up in Indian schools. We have also set up incubators, and a strong start-up ecosystem has been developed. On the occasion of the seventy-fifth year of its independence, when we celebrate the *Azadi Ka Amrit* festival, India will launch 75 satellites made by Indian students in schools and colleges.

On the other hand, countries with regressive thinking are using terrorism as a political tool. Those countries must understand that terrorism represents an equally grave threat to them. It is absolutely essential to ensure that Afghanistan's territory not be used to spread terrorism or for terrorist attacks. We also need to be alert and ensure that no country tries to take advantage of the delicate situation there and use it as a tool for its own selfish interests. At this time, the people of Afghanistan, particularly its women, children and minorities, need help. We must fulfil our duty by providing them with that help.

Our oceans are also our shared heritage. That is why we must bear in mind the need to, use and not abuse, ocean resources. Our oceans are also the lifeline of international trade. We must protect them from the race towards expansion and exclusion. The international community must speak with one voice to strengthen a rules-based world order. The broad consensus reached in the Security Council during India's presidency shows the world the way forward in maritime security.

Hundreds of years ago, Chanakya, the great diplomat of India, said that, when the right action is not taken at the right time, then it is time itself that causes the action to fail. If the United Nations wants to remain relevant, it will need to improve its effectiveness and enhance its reliability. Today all kinds of questions are being raised about the United Nations. We have heard such questions raised in relation to the climate crisis as well as in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. The proxy wars being waged in many parts of the world, terrorism and the recent Afghan crisis have further highlighted the seriousness of those questions.

In terms of both the origins of COVID-19 and the rankings on the ease of doing business, global governance institutions have damaged the credibility they had built — the result of decades of hard work. It is essential that we persevere in strengthening the United Nations in order to safeguard global order, global laws and global values.

I would like to end my address with the words of Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore: "Boldly proceed on your path of good deeds; may you overcome all weaknesses and doubts." In the current context, that message is as relevant to every responsible nation as it is to the United Nations. I am confident that our efforts will enhance peace and harmony in the world and make the world healthy, safe and prosperous.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of India for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Philip Joseph Pierre, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Development and Youth Economy of Saint Lucia

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Saint Lucia to introduce an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Development and Youth Economy of Saint Lucia.

Mr. Richardson (Saint Lucia): I have the distinct honour and privilege to introduce a pre-recorded statement by His Excellency Mr. Philip J. Pierre, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Development and Youth Economy of Saint Lucia.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Development and Youth Economy of Saint Lucia.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex I and see A/76/332/Add.9).

Address by Mr. Xavier Espot Zamora, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Andorra to introduce an address by the Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra.

Ms. Ubach Font (Andorra) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to introduce the pre-recorded statement of His Excellency Mr. Xavier Espot Zamora, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex II and see A/76/332/Add.9).

Mr. Salovaara (Finland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Cleopas Sipho Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Eswatini

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Eswatini to introduce an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Eswatini.

Mr. Mbingo (Eswatini): I have the honour to introduce a pre-recorded statement by His Excellency The Right Honourable Cleopas Sipho Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Eswatini, during the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Eswatini.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex III and see A/76/332/Add.9).

Address by Mr. Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, the Public Service, National Security, Legal Affairs and Grenadines Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to introduce an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, the Public Service, National Security, Legal Affairs and Grenadines Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): I have the honour to introduce the pre-recorded statement of the Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, the Public Service, National Security, Legal Affairs and Grenadines Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex IV and see A/76/332/Add.9).

Address by Mr. Ariel Henry, Prime Minister and Minister of Social Affairs and Labour of the Republic of Haiti

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Haiti to introduce an address by the Prime Minister and Minister of Social Affairs and Labour of the Republic of Haiti.

Mr. Joseph (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): For the second year in a row, the General Assembly session is being held in the throes of a pandemic. For almost two years, the world has been devastated by the catastrophic consequences of the coronavirus disease pandemic. There have been millions of deaths, and hundreds of millions of people have been affected. Our health systems are being severely tested, and the world economy is being stretched to the limit. Given those circumstances, and in order to mitigate damage, precautionary measures and health restrictions are unavoidable. For that reason, the Prime Minister, His Excellency Mr. Ariel Henry, was unable to travel to participate in person at the general debate. I therefore invite the Assembly to listen to his pre-recorded statement.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister of Social Affairs and Labour of the Republic of Haiti.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex V and see A/76/332/Add.9).

Address by Mr. Ismail Sabri Yaakob, Prime Minister of Malaysia

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia to introduce an address by the Prime Minister of Malaysia.

Mr. Aidid (Malaysia): I have the honour and the privilege to introduce the pre-recorded statement by the Honourable Ismail Sabri Yaakob, Prime Minister of Malaysia.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Malaysia.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex VI and see A/76/332/Add.9).

**Address by Mr. Phankham Viphavanh,
Prime Minister of the Lao People's
Democratic Republic**

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to introduce an address by the Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Mr. Vongnorkeo (Lao People's Democratic Republic): It is my distinct honour to introduce the pre-recorded statement by His Excellency Mr. Phankham Viphavanh, Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex VII and see A/76/332/Add.9).

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

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan to introduce an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of the Sudan.

Mr. Alhassein (Sudan): I have the distinct honour to introduce the pre-recorded statement of His Excellency Mr. Abdalla Adam Hamdok, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Sudan.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of the Sudan.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex VIII and see A/76/332/Add.9).

Mr. Kridelka (Belgium), Vice-President, took the Chair.

**Address by Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei
Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom
of Cambodia**

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Cambodia to introduce an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Mr. Ke (Cambodia): I have the distinct honour to introduce the pre-recorded statement by His Excellency Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex IX and see A/76/332/Add.9).

**Address by Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama,
Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei
Affairs, Sugar Industry, and Foreign Affairs of
the Republic of Fiji**

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Fiji to introduce an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Fiji.

Mr. Prasad (Fiji): I am deeply honoured to introduce the pre-recorded address by Fiji's Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Fiji, the Honourable Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, at the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Fiji.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex X and see A/76/332/Add.9).

**Address by Mr. Lotay Tshering, Prime Minister
of the Kingdom of Bhutan**

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bhutan to introduce an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

Ms. Tshering (Bhutan): I have the honour and great privilege to introduce the pre-recorded video message from the Honourable Prime Minister of Bhutan, Mr. Lotay Tshering.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Prime Minister of Bhutan.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex XI and see A/76/332/Add.9).

Address by Mr. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Thailand to introduce an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand.

Mr. Pramudwinai (Thailand): I have the honour to introduce the pre-recorded statement by His Excellency General Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand, at the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex XII and see A/76/332/Add.9).

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

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Vanuatu to introduce an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Mr. Tevi (Vanuatu): I have the distinct honour to introduce the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, the Honourable Mr. Bob Loughman Weibur, to present his pre-recorded statement.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex XIII and see A/76/332/Add.9).

Mr. Vongnorkeo (Lao People's Democratic Republic), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Philip Edward Davis, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Mr. Philip Edward Davis, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Philip Edward Davis, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Davis (Bahamas): On 16 September, Bahamian citizens took to the polls to make their voices heard. It is an honour to meet with the General Assembly fewer than 10 days after this peaceful exercise of the democratic process.

I wish to extend congratulations to the Maldives, a sister small island developing State, on its election to take the helm of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. I assure the President that he will find the Bahamas to be a strong, engaged and thoughtful partner for the road ahead.

We also congratulate Secretary-General Guterres on his reappointment to a second term and wish him every success.

We are meeting at a most extraordinary time. We come here from different corners of the Earth, with our theme — building resilience through hope — reflecting our shared determination to pivot from crisis to opportunity. These crises are interconnected and multifaceted, and they need a global response. We must collaborate to end the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and address public-health issues. We must cooperate to mitigate the effects of climate change. Access to development financing must be equitable and fair. An inadequate response to these issues will have dire consequences for the global economy.

The world has changed enormously since we first learned about the COVID-19 virus. This crisis has made abundantly clear what has always been true: we are all in this together. In every country, we have lost loved ones. We have seen our health-care workers battle bravely. We have contended with disruption, uncertainty and grief.

We have benefited from extraordinary cooperation and achievements in science, but we have also had to contend with misinformation and disinformation and insufficient attempts to curb bad actors propagating the same.

Bad information has flowed across borders, undermining public health and public trust. The pandemic has been particularly difficult for countries like mine. We are facing an extraordinary need for new resources in health and education and housing, just as our economy is contracting dramatically.

Our interconnected world means that we will be safe only when all countries, including mine, have the tools needed to fight this virus. This requires the equitable distribution of vaccines, which includes distribution to small island developing States, which are not manufacturers. Stockpiling for self-preservation is a fallacy. You will be safe only when we are all safe.

I wish to thank the Government and the people of the United States for their donations of vaccines to the Bahamas and the wider Caribbean region. This gift, alongside donations received previously from India, China, Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica, will save many Bahamian lives. This is in addition to the ongoing support of the Pan American Health Organization, the Caribbean Public Health Agency and the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility as well as the regional collaboration among the countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). But this is still not enough. We need more. Our demand for vaccines has significantly outstripped supply.

Along with vaccines, it is important that safe treatments and therapeutics are made accessible and designated as public goods. We need to fortify critical global supply chains and distribution mechanisms, so that we can win this battle and be better prepared for the next one. You will be safe only when we are all safe.

The Bahamas joins those reiterating the need to fully fund the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator and its COVAX Facility, and we reiterate our alignment with CARICOM's call for continued high-level engagement to urgently address equitable access to vaccines. When vaccines are deployed to reduce transmission, everyone is made safer — not just the direct recipient. By doing so, we can reduce the opportunities for new and more dangerous variants to emerge. This virus is global, and it requires a global response.

Even before COVID-19 shut down my country's borders, we were already dealing with a catastrophic shock to our economy and our country. Two years ago this month, one of the strongest storms ever recorded in the Atlantic caused catastrophic damage to our islands of Abaco and Grand Bahama. Hurricane Dorian was strengthened by waters that were well above average temperatures; the Earth's changing climate means that hurricanes like Dorian linger longer and cause greater damage.

The devastation caused by this storm is part of our country's landscape; the physical and emotional wreckage are still with us. Recently I spoke with a woman who lost her husband and her three children in the storm. Every rainfall is a reminder of the horror. How can we continue to do nothing in the face of such tragedy?

The very worst thing about Dorian is our sense of foreboding — our sense that this hurricane, which took so much from so many, is only the beginning. None of us believes this was a once-in-a-generation storm. Instead, we know it was a nightmare that could easily recur next month, next week or even tomorrow. I invite any leader who believes we still have plenty of time to address climate change to visit Abaco and Grand Bahama in our country.

For island nations such as ours, climate change is here, and it is a real and present danger. Before Hurricane Dorian in 2019, we faced hurricanes in 2015, 2016 and 2017. We cannot survive this "new normal".

The recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned that avoiding the worst outcomes requires immediate action; this is, as the Secretary-General noted, a "code red" moment. We are therefore not in this Hall to call for measured steps. We are here to say that big and radical change is the only response that can save our country. We are out of time.

We stand with CARICOM countries and small island developing States to remind the world that those who are hit hardest by the impact of climate change are the least responsible. Our countries disproportionately bear the burden of the "recovery trap", in which we attempt to rebuild to the tune of billions — billions we never had, even before COVID-19.

In a few short weeks, we will meet in Glasgow, Scotland. The twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework

Convention on Climate Change cannot be like the 25 sessions that preceded it. We cannot pretend that incremental change is sufficient. We cannot set goals we have no intention of meeting. We cannot keep postponing the change we need for countries like mine to survive. If we are the serious leaders these times require, we must raise our ambitions and make real commitments to cut emissions. We must make real progress on bridging the divides in investment and access to technology and skills, especially in areas relevant to climate mitigation and adaptation. We must strengthen technical assistance for creating nationally determined contribution commitments, along with commensurate implementation financing. We must give teeth and substance to the mechanism for loss and damage if it is to be a meaningful tool for supporting fair recovery and not simply an exercise in defining and highlighting disaster risk.

Along with our sister nations in CARICOM, the Bahamas calls for greater climate financing and the need for more engagement and progress on a climate-investment platform, and, as a matter of priority, more innovative financing and debt solutions are needed, including debt-for-climate-adaptation swaps. We also look forward to the capitalization of a Caribbean resilience fund. We also need adequate resourcing and timely access to the Green Climate Fund and the Climate Finance Accelerator.

In my just-concluded campaign, we called for new renewable-energy initiatives in our own country. We are going to build structural and economic resilience in a green recovery, with plans to invest in climate-smart infrastructure and environmental protection. The Bahamas will lead on wetlands and ocean preservation, and we will seek re-election to the International Maritime Organization. We look forward to the Biodiversity Conference next month; we are committed to the successful conclusion of negotiations towards an international treaty to conserve marine biodiversity.

The compounding impact of economic, environmental and now public-health shocks means that access to affordable finance will be the real driver of progress in the near and long term. The global development financing gap for meeting the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, estimated in 2019 to be \$2.5 trillion, is only increasing. Today we reiterate our country's support for the inclusion of a multidimensional vulnerability index in the decision-making of international financial institutions

and of the international donor community. On a related front, we believe that access to the global financial system and tax cooperation should not be undermined by ad hoc and constantly shifting and arbitrary goal posts and threats of exclusion from the global economy.

Financial Services is a crucial component of the Bahamian economy. We see an indispensable role for the United Nations in leveraging its universal jurisdiction for greater oversight of global anti-money-laundering, de-risking and tax-cooperation matters. On a separate note, I wish to convey the Bahamas' rejection of the ongoing economic blockade of our sister Caribbean nation of Cuba.

As I conclude, I recall the words of our nation's first prime minister, Sir Lynden Pindling, as he stood in this Hall 48 years ago this month, on the occasion of our nation's accession to the United Nations (see A/PV.2119). He spoke about the journey of our people from slavery to colonialism to sovereign independence. He spoke of our country's wish to be neither dominated nor coerced and our wish to build friendships with nations that respected our freedom. He could not have foreseen at that time the challenges we are facing today with intensifying hurricanes and a deadly virus that has left no nation untouched. But he saw already that no nation is an island unto itself and spoke of the interdependence of all countries. That interdependence has never been clearer. The General Assembly can rest assured that in the Bahamas it will find a trusted partner, committed to moving forward on our collective goals for sustainable development, security and peace.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Philip Edward Davis, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Pohiva Tu'i'onetoa, Prime Minister and Minister for Public Enterprises of the Kingdom of Tonga

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Tonga to introduce an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Public Enterprises of the Kingdom of Tonga.

Mr. Tōnē (Tonga): I have the honour to introduce the pre-recorded statement of His Excellency Mr. Pohiva Tu'i'onetoa, Prime Minister and Minister for Public Enterprises of the Kingdom of Tonga.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Public Enterprises of the Kingdom of Tonga.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex XIV and see A/76/332/Add.9).

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I am glad to have this opportunity to speak from the rostrum of the General Assembly. The fact that we have once again gathered in this Hall symbolizes our collective readiness to resume our normal communication, which had been suspended since the onset of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

Essentially, we have no other option since broad cooperation at the United Nations is particularly relevant now when the number of problems on the international agenda is increasing. The range of cross-border threats is also expanding. Numerous regional hotbeds of tension have a substantial destabilizing potential. The “might is right” approach is increasingly being used instead of the “right is might” approach. Instead of international law, increasingly there is no consensus among the leading Powers on the principles of the world order.

For Russia, it is obvious that threats and challenges can be countered effectively only through concerted efforts made in strict compliance with the universally recognized norms of international law, above all the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. This global Organization should play a central coordinating role in world politics in order to fully unlock its potential for universal multilateralism and legitimacy.

Recently, we have witnessed persistent attempts to diminish the role of the United Nations in resolving the key problems of today, to marginalize it or to transform it into a malleable tool for promoting someone's selfish interests. Such attempts are clearly evident in the concept of a so-called “rules-based order” that the

West persistently introduces into political discourse in opposition to international law.

Naturally, no one can be opposed to rules as such. After all, that is exactly what the Charter of the United Nations is — a set of rules. Those rules, however, were approved by all the countries of the world. Similarly, any new norms governing international interaction must be agreed in universal forums, above all in this one. On the other hand, when rules are established behind closed doors, circumventing this universal Organization, they cannot be fully legitimate.

By shifting the discussion on key issues to formats that suit it best, the West wants to exclude from global decision-making processes those who have independent and different points of view. Following the same logic, Germany and France recently announced the creation of the Alliance for Multilateralism; but what kind of structure could be more multilateral than the United Nations? Berlin and Paris, however, have decided that at the United Nations there are many conservatives that hinder the efforts of the vanguard. They have proclaimed the European Union (EU) to be the epitome of effective multilateralism, and all others are supposed to emulate it.

There is a recent example: the United States Administration has come up with the idea of convening a Summit for Democracy. It goes without saying that Washington will choose the participants by itself, thereby hijacking the right to decide to what degree a country meets the standards of democracy. Essentially, that initiative is in the spirit of the Cold War, as it declares a new ideological crusade against all dissenters. It should be noted that the initiative is being implemented against the background of President Biden's words that the United States does not seek a world divided into opposing blocs. The fact is that the Summit for Democracy will be a step towards dividing the global community into “us” and “them”.

It is also telling that, while it declares the primacy of democracy in its relations with all its partners, Washington is concerned only with the domestic situation in relevant countries. When it comes to establishing democracy in international relations, the United States and its allies quickly lose any interest in the discussion, because no one dares to encroach on the authority of NATO and the EU. Those are the rules.

President Biden recently announced the rejection of military methods used, as he put it, to remake other

countries. We expect the United States to go one step further and reject not only the use of force but also any other methods of imposing their development model on others.

The rules-based order is founded on double standards. When it serves the West's interests, peoples' right to self-determination is absolute. For example, the artificially created entity of Kosovo, which was earlier forcefully seized from a European country, Serbia, was recognized as an independent State in violation of Security Council resolutions and without any referendums.

It does not bother anyone that the Malvinas are 12,000 kilometres away from Great Britain and that Paris and London still control their former colonies, despite the relevant United Nations and International Court of Justice decisions, and have no intention of giving them their freedom.

On the other hand, when the right to self-determination runs counter to the West's geopolitical interests, as it did when the people of Crimea expressed their free will in the 2014 referendum on the peninsula's reunification with Russia, the West forgets all about that right and introduces illegitimate sanctions against its exercise. The reason is simple — the Crimean people were trying to break free from the ultra-radicals who were behind the coup in Ukraine supported by the West. That means that since the good guys came to power in Kyiv, they are, according to the Western rules, to be protected and exonerated.

Applying the concept of a "rules-based order" in the same way, the United States preserves the obsolete trade embargo against Cuba and strives to impose its will on the people of Venezuela and Nicaragua — in flagrant violation of the Charter-based principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States. The use of unilateral restrictive measures undermines the prerogatives of the Security Council and runs counter to the Secretary-General's call to suspend such measures at least for the duration of the pandemic.

Efforts by a number of countries to rewrite the history of the Second World War are also intended to weaken the United Nations-centric world order. EU and NATO member States refuse to support the General Assembly resolution on the inadmissibility of the glorification of Nazism and reject proposals

to condemn the practice of destroying monuments to those who liberated Europe from the "brown plague".

Instilling a rules-based order rather than ensuring unconditional compliance with international law is fraught with the risk of a dangerous relapse into a policy based on blocs and the creation of dividing lines, this time between a group of Western countries and the rest of the world. However, recent events have shown that arbitrary rules can be applied within the Western bloc as well if one of its members becomes too independent.

At least, many world media have picked up the unfolding story of submarines being supplied to Australia in the context of the talk of Europe's strategic autonomy, which has intensified since the hasty withdrawal of the United States from Afghanistan. The chaos that accompanied that withdrawal is a further demonstration of the rules on which the West intends to build its world order.

We are convinced that it is time to draw lessons from the dangerous repercussions of the policy of undermining the United Nations-centric architecture, which was created in the aftermath of the Second World War and has repeatedly proven itself to be a reliable bulwark against disastrous eventualities. In the face of global challenges, the world needs unity rather than a new divide. Russia strongly advocates that we reject any confrontation and stereotypes and join efforts to solve the key tasks of development and humankind's survival.

We have the instruments to ensure that. Above all, the United Nations and the Security Council should be adapted to the reality of a polycentric world order by enlarging the Council and providing increased representation for Asia, Africa and Latin America. The permanent members of the Security Council, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, bear a special responsibility to the Organization and must encourage genuine collective action.

President Putin has proposed to convene a summit of the five permanent members of the Security Council to hold a frank discussion on global stability issues. There are also great expectations for the prospect of a Russian-American dialogue on the future of arms control, the start of which was agreed at a Russia-United States summit held in Geneva.

Where there is goodwill, finding a mutually acceptable solution is very realistic. The world was encouraged when the new United States Administration

agreed to our proposal to extend the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty without any preconditions. It was very significant that the joint statement of the Russian and American Presidents reaffirmed the commitment to the principle that nuclear war has no winners and such a war must never be fought.

A responsible approach is also needed in other spheres of strategic stability. After Washington's withdrawal from the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles, Russia made a unilateral commitment not to deploy intermediate- or shorter-range conventional or nuclear missiles in regions where there are no similar United States-made weapons. We continue to await the response of NATO members to our proposal to proclaim a similar moratorium, reinforced — and I emphasize this — with mutual verification measures.

We also recognize the new challenge and threat of States that intend to militarize the Internet and unleash a cyberarms race. Russia advocates the adoption of a United Nations agreement on ways to ensure international information security. The process should not be based on anyone's special rules but rather on universal agreements that allow for the consideration of all concerns in a transparent and fact-based manner. That is the aim of our initiative to elaborate standard norms for responsible State behaviour in the use of information and communications technologies and to prepare a universal convention on combating cybercrime.

In addition to digital space, some countries view outer space as an arena for confrontation. We see that as a dangerous trend and propose to prohibit the placement of weapons and the threat or use of force in outer space. The relevant Russian-Chinese draft treaty remains before the Conference on Disarmament.

Russia consistently puts forward initiatives on other issues requiring concerted action. Today, 20 years after the atrocious terrorist acts in New York, President Putin's call to form a broad counter-terrorism coalition on the basis of international law and without double standards is more relevant than ever. We await a response to the Russian initiative to elaborate a convention on the suppression of acts of chemical and biological terrorism.

We can make progress in resolving regional conflicts only by acting on the basis of international

law and involving all stakeholders and addressing their concerns. In Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Yemen and other hotspots, all external actors have to show an understanding of the cultural and civilizational specifics of society, reject the politicization of humanitarian aid and assist in the creation of broadly representative bodies of authority that involve all the major ethnic, religious and political authorities of the relevant countries.

Guided by such an approach, Russia has constructively engaged in the promotion of an Afghan settlement via the extended troika and the Moscow format and helped to stabilize the situation in Syria in the framework of the Astana process. Russia has also been working with all Libyan parties in order to implement political reforms.

The processes under way in the Middle East should not sideline the task of reaching a sustainable Israeli-Palestinian settlement, within the universally recognized international legal framework, providing for the creation of an independent and viable Palestinian State coexisting in peace with Israel. We advocate the resumption of direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians and galvanizing the role of the Quartet of international mediators, in coordination with the League of Arab States.

Russia continues to contribute to the normalization of relations between Iran and its Arab neighbours. Together with our partners, we seek a resumption of the full implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action as soon as possible. A holistic approach is required to settle the situation of the Iran nuclear programme if we are to sustainably stabilize the entire region. That is the objective of the updated Russian concept of collective security in the Persian Gulf, which was recently circulated in a Security Council and General Assembly document (see A/75/999-S/2021/740).

In the context of seeking ways to overcome regional crises, we are ready to share Russia's unique experience of the peaceful coexistence of different civilizations, religions and cultures. We expect the World Conference on Intercultural and Interfaith Dialogue, to be held from 16 to 18 May 2022 in Saint Petersburg, to produce substantial, practical results. The Conference enjoys the support of the Secretary-General and the leadership of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Today the humanitarian, socioeconomic and environmental dimensions of the work of the United

Nations are increasingly significant. It is essential to avoid the temptation to turn them into yet another arena for geopolitical games and unfair competition. The COVID-19 pandemic is our common enemy. We support the mutual recognition of vaccines that have been approved by national oversight bodies in order to promptly lift restrictions on international travel.

It is vitally important that we not cease efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We hope that the decisions adopted at the recent United Nations Food Systems Summit will promote the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We advocate strengthening the central role of the United Nations in building an agenda for environmental protection on the basis of equality and respect for each other's interests, including by giving due consideration to socioeconomic realities. Otherwise, it will be difficult to mobilize all States towards reaching global climate goals.

We should fine-tune the work of all mechanisms that can impact the efficiency of global governance to search for a balance of interests and fully leverage inclusive associations such as the Group of 20, which brings together both old and the new dynamically developing global centres, such as the BRICS countries — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — as well as other like-minded countries.

It was with great interest that we heard of the global development initiative proposed by the President of China, Xi Jinping. It resonates with our own approach.

Russia, together with its partners and allies, supports strengthening a mutually reinforcing network of alliances by developing integrative processes within the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation

Organization. President Vladimir Putin's initiative to create a greater Eurasian partnership that would also engage the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the key actor defining the norms of behaviour in the Asia-Pacific region, is also positive.

In general, the regional dimension of the world's development plays an increasingly defining role. Much will depend on whether we succeed in redirecting the growing rivalry among regions onto a constructive track. Which is more important — Europe or Asia? The Indian Ocean or the Pacific Ocean? Will a Latin American Union on the model of the European Union be established? Why make Africa an arena for confrontation?

Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations is dedicated to relations with regional organizations. On that basis, the Secretary-General brings such organizations together every year to host an exchange of opinions on issues of global politics. We believe it would be very useful to take the next step in that format and use it to draft some proposals on how to harmonize regional aspirations in order to enable the most effective global response to the challenges of our time.

We are all in the same boat. It is in our shared interests to make sure that the boat stays safely afloat on the waves of global politics. We are all different, but that must not prevent us from working for the benefit of our nations and all of humankind. It is the only way that we may be able to fulfil the honourable mission of the United Nations — to save this generation and succeeding generations from the scourges of war, hunger and disease and to build a more peaceful, stable and democratic future for all.

In conclusion, let me propose a hash tag — #UNCharterIsOurRules.

The meeting rose at 2.40 p.m.

Annex I

Address by Mr. Philip Joseph Pierre, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Development and Youth Economy of Saint Lucia

Mr. President, colleague Heads of Government and Foreign Ministers, Country Representatives, and members of country delegations, I bring you warm greetings from the most beautiful piece of territory on Earth, the sovereign state of Saint Lucia.

Mr. President, I am honoured to address this body for the first time, as the Prime Minister of Saint Lucia. It was my privilege to lead my party into general elections less than two months ago, and to have witnessed the people of my country continue to uphold and nurture the deep democratic traditions of our Caribbean by giving my party an overwhelming mandate to govern Saint Lucia for the next five years. I wish to pledge to the international community, that under my leadership Saint Lucia's intention to uphold the highest traditions of universal brotherhood, the pursuit of mutually beneficial goals, respect for all peoples and cultures, and the recognition and respect of the sovereignty of all member states of the United Nations.

Mr. President, permit me to join other colleagues in extending congratulations to you, on your elevation to the Presidency of this vital and crucial catalyst of global development — the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). It is our sincere hope and our profound expectation that your tenure will be marked by thoughtful and tangible action, given the global challenges that confront us as UN Member States, and given that our very lives and continued existence as peoples and as a planet are directly threatened by the issues now confronting us.

Since Saint Lucia joined the United Nations in 1979, we have always prided ourselves on our principled positions in matters of foreign policy. If there were any recent doubts about St. Lucia's adherence to these basic principles, I am here to reassure you that Saint Lucia subscribes fully to, and stands firmly on, the principle of non-interference in the internal politics of nations. In pursuit of our Sustainable Development Goals, we shall be, in the words of Barbados' Independence pioneer and late Prime Minister — The Right Honourable Errol Walton Barrow — “friends of all but satellites of none.” We shall as much as possible engage in foreign policy coordination with our CARICOM and OECS partners, and our relationships shall continue to be based on mutual respect. Saint Lucia will not sacrifice these principles on the altar of convenient, short-term, and temporary alliances with great powers whose shifting global stances may or may not coincide with Saint Lucia's permanent insistence on being a mutually respected regional development partner.

Mr. President, I must confess that our excitement at the opportunity to sensitise the global community to Saint Lucia's perspective on the issues confronting before this respected body, has been tempered by the frustrating realization that, if I may borrow an idiom from one of my fellow CARICOM Member States, “we are spinning top in mud or we are going around in circles.” I say this Mr. President because, in perusing the contribution delivered to this body by Saint Lucia in 2015, I was struck by the similarity of the concerns raised then to the concerns confronting us today, in 2021. Mr. President, the date, the names, and the faces have changed, but the issues remain the same.

It is not my intention to question the modus operandi of this honourable institution, because the evidence confirming the good work of the United Nations, is

undeniable. However, Mr. President, Saint Lucia cannot pretend to be unconcerned by the fact that Small Island Developing States (SIDS) like Saint Lucia continues to suffer from a number of challenges, arising out of our smallness, our island existence, and our vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change. However, while we struggle to formulate solutions for these ills, we have been confronted with the novel coronavirus COVID-19. While its novelty and evolving character are baffling, COVID-19 has enlarged and worsened the issues confronting SIDS. In this sense Mr. President we are now being inundated by the new, while still being overwhelmed by the old.

Mr. President, we continue to contend with the near-impossible balancing act of preserving lives and livelihoods. The insidious nature of the virus has allowed it to sneak across even the most heavily patrolled borders, and Saint Lucia has experienced waves of highs and lows in managing this pandemic. In that regard, we extend our deepest gratitude to international institutions such as the COVAX Facility, and our many bilateral partners such as India and the United States of America, for their commitment to ensuring that we in Saint Lucia and by extension the Caribbean region, were not further disadvantaged by our inability to access vaccines.

Mr. President, as we battle this pandemic, there is another global threat that runs parallel to it, by the name of “misinformation.” The Government of Saint Lucia has embarked upon a robust education programme to encourage our population to get vaccinated, as realistically, this is the only way to reduce, eliminate and eradicate the risks and restrictions caused by this pandemic, and permit us to rebuild our economies and societies, stronger. However, we have witnessed in dismay the politics at play even in the midst of this pandemic, as various countries create their lists of recognized and unrecognized vaccines, with certain privileges awarded to global citizens who have opted for certain branded vaccines over others. We have witnessed vaccine apartheid in various forms and not only in terms of production and distribution. Some countries which have stockpiled vaccines are now in the middle of debates about third doses and boosters, while other countries watch helplessly as COVID-related deaths continue to rise for want of a jab.

Mr. President, in Saint Lucia, we recognize all vaccines that are endorsed and administered by a country’s respective government, as we have entrusted sovereign states with the responsibility of following the science. In this regard, we call for standardization of vaccine privileges across the global community, as it relates to quarantine, isolation, and other related requirements.

Saint Lucia, like many other countries, is grappling with a decline in investment, trade, remittances, and growing debt burdens. There is an urgent need to accelerate global momentum towards the ambitious targets across various international agreements and development agendas. A common thread across these instruments is the need to address the unique vulnerabilities and special circumstances of SIDS. Saint Lucia and all SIDS, continue to face huge spending needs to finance the immediate health responses, that are well beyond our capacities. Such a shift of focus will reverse achievements in Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) implementation and in building climate resilience.

Therefore, Saint Lucia stands in solidarity with all SIDS, in calling for an abolition of current classical economics criteria for accessing concessional development finance. These indicators erroneously paint a picture of “national prosperity” that lies in stark contrast to existing realities.

Mr. President, Saint Lucia is calling for the adoption of a global vulnerability index by international institutions. This index should include variables such as vulnerability to adverse weather systems and natural disasters, historical disadvantages arising out of plunder, colonialism and exploitation, and the vagaries of the economic activities which such states depend for survival. Such a global vulnerability index would ensure that access to concessional development finance is granted based on criteria that consider the true contexts of our fragile economies, which are constantly under threat of regression, due to natural, man-made or political disasters.

Saint Lucia also calls for immediate measures to safeguard the solvency of SIDS — which have been disproportionately affected during the pandemic. These measures must include debt restructuring and write-off, support to strengthen health systems, more equitable distribution and access to vaccines, and assistance for recovery that meets the demands of the development model adopted in the beneficiary country, and is consistent with our current socio-economic environment.

Mr. President, the pandemic seems to have slowed down everything but the deterioration of our beloved planet earth. Climate change continues to wreak havoc across all areas of the globe. While COVID-19 now grabs the headlines, it is a fact that the pandemic emerged at a time when the World was already on an unsustainable path towards the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. With less than a decade left to achieve the 2030 Agenda, the UN's Decade of Delivery requires urgent and adequate solutions towards salvaging our global living quarters. The resilience we need, and the adaptations required system-wide to respond to COVID-19; are directly relevant to the resilience and adaptation required for climate change. It can be argued that the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate change challenge confronts us with an intermeshed problem of symptom as cause and cause as symptom. It provides us with a harsh and timely reminder that human health and planetary health are linked.

Sadly, Mr. President, the cost of meeting these challenges and undertaking the resilience activities, whether it be for health or climate, is way beyond the financial reach of our small islands. We, therefore, appeal to all, especially those ablest financially, to contribute towards our recovery efforts, and to pay their commitments to the Adaptation and Mitigation Funds, so that SIDS can benefit.

On the eve of COP26, we encourage the larger economies, the often-major contributors to greenhouse gases, to honour their financial pledges. This would allow us, the smaller vulnerable economies, whose contributions to greenhouse gases are often negligible, the fiscal room to build climate-resilient societies.

Mr. President, as we manoeuvre the turmoil of these unprecedented times, the young people must be brought into the mainstream of national development. Too often, the Youth are placed on the back burner when things get rough, and the belt used for economic tightening is strung around their very necks. Such an approach fails to consider the immense energy, enthusiasm, and creativity which young people bring to the development table. It is for this reason, that Saint Lucia has prioritized the implementation of "The Youth Economy," as the new frontier of our economic development, formalized in a new Government Department under the purview of the Prime Minister, with the mandate of propelling our young people to turn their talents, skills and hobbies into economic enterprises for their own empowerment. We see our young people as a resource to be moulded and optimized, not as problems to

be managed or solved. We believe that a country must consider the aspirations of its young citizens and turn them into concrete and practical assets, purposes and goals.

Mr. President, we are committed to improving the lives of our young people, especially the most vulnerable, and we are working with all citizens to assist them in transforming their lives and to make viable contributions to the economy. In this regard, Saint Lucia invites the International Community to discuss and engage with us strategically, on mutually beneficial relationships and projects to promote The Youth Economy, as we seek to build a better and more sustainable future for all.

Mr. President, Saint Lucia remains among a handful of countries that maintain official relations with the Government of the Republic of Taiwan. We continue to plead the case to advance their cause to be accepted as a legitimate participant in the global decision-making process.

Mr. President, the development of Saint Lucia will continue to be compromised, as long as the development of our sister nation of Cuba continues to be frustrated by global political considerations. In this regard, Mr. President, Saint Lucia encourages a revisiting of the chapter in history not too long ago, where diplomatic reconciliation had commenced between the United States of America and the Republic of Cuba, under the Obama-Biden administration. In fact, then- Vice President Biden was the chief envoy of the United States to Cuba, and it would be a signal achievement, if as President of the Biden-Harris administration, he was to bring his work on Cuba to its logical conclusion, with the normalization of relations.

Cuba continues to punch above its weight with its humanitarian efforts, playing its part in the global COVID-19 response, despite its disadvantaged position in the International Community. Saint Lucia joins CARICOM and the global community in renewing calls to the United States to normalize its relations with Cuba, and for the abolition of the existing embargo, which only serves as a hindrance to economic growth in Cuba, and an obstacle to realizing full regional economic integration in the Caribbean. Given Cuba's role in health, education, sports, and social development in our region, the normalisation of relations with Cuba, means the advancement of development in our entire Caribbean region. As we make this annual call for the normalisation of relations with Cuba, Saint Lucia wants it to be known that we are speaking to our own development in as much as we are speaking about the betterment of the lives of the Cuban people.

At a time when we are experiencing global turmoil, it is important for good sense to prevail, and for the world to fully embrace the immense expertise and resources which the Cuban people have to offer. It is more than overdue for us to make right this grave injustice to Cuba that has deliberately cut them off from the global supply chain. The continuation of this embargo in 2021 is unconscionable.

Mr. President, the situation in Venezuela concerns Saint Lucia tremendously. As one of the first nations to establish diplomatic relations with Saint Lucia after we gained Independence in 1979, and as a beneficiary of Venezuelan economic cooperation, Saint Lucia considers Venezuela a loyal and legitimate friend and partner. The virtual economic blockade which has been imposed on the democratically elected government of Venezuela by a few big and powerful countries is unacceptable in this international system. It is even more outrageous, that prominent members of this international system, who pride themselves on their democratic traditions, have sought to recognize an alternative President who did not even contest elections,

and who has no political legitimacy whatsoever. Further, the act of seizing and freezing Venezuelan Government gold, cash, and assets, while preventing access by the Venezuelan people to basic food, medicines, and supplies during this pandemic, could quite conceivably qualify as modern-day piracy, economic terrorism, and crimes against humanity. Saint Lucia and CARICOM cannot in good conscience continue to be part of this unjust attack against the Venezuelan people.

Mr. President, as I conclude, I again call for urgent consideration of the harsh reality and the many and continuing challenges confronting SIDS like Saint Lucia. Mr. President, now is the time for a change, the time to act, the time to overcome our challenges through global solidarity and mutual assistance. The future of every nation and country is at risk, we need the global economy to work for the 99 per cent and not just the wealthy and powerful 1 per cent.

Mr. President, I appeal to the International community to remain focused on working in partnership with SIDS like Saint Lucia. For the balanced development of the global community, we need the powerful to behave responsibly and cooperate more effectively to enable a more inclusive and sustainable humanity for all, and to ensure that no one is left behind.

Caribbean countries like ours which were exploited and underdeveloped to finance the development of Europe, have put forward a case for reparations for slavery and native genocide, and we expect that case to be treated with the seriousness and urgency it deserves. There should be no double-standards in the international system in recognizing acknowledging and compensating victims of crimes against humanity. And so, Saint Lucia urges that the principles which have applied to other victims of mass slavery and such forms of exploitation, be applied with equal force and sincerity and seriousness of purpose to Caribbean nations who suffered more than three centuries of slavery and native genocide between 1492 and 1838, by the colonizing powers of Europe. Saint Lucia fully endorses the stance of the CARICOM's reparations Commission that our:

“Reparations Movement is a moral, legal and political response to the crimes against humanity committed during the European imperial project — specifically the genocide against the native population and the trading and enslavement of enchained bodies of Africans.”

Mr. President, as one of our Local Laureates — Robert Lee penned — Saint Lucia is a State, Not a real estate, Not plantation estate.

This is an open wound crying out for justice, healing, compassion, and closure, and it continues to fester with every decree or decision of the OECD and such other groupings. If the international system is to work fairly for all nations, wrong cannot continue to be strong and might cannot continue to be right. Let us, therefore, return to our core principles of peace, harmony, fairness, tolerance, and non-interference in the internal politics of sovereign states. Let us be guided by the golden chord of mutual respect and universal fraternity, particularly in these perilous times which demand that we recognise our common humanity above anything else.

Mr. President, I continue to believe in dialogue, inclusion, fairness, and a common humanity. Saint Lucia is confident in your leadership of this august body, and Saint Lucia is assured, that under our joint effort, we can transform the words of the theme of our meeting, into our lived reality and we will successfully build resilience through hope to recover from COVID-19, we will rebuild sustainably by

responding appropriately to the needs of the planet, we will respect the rights of all peoples, and we will revitalise the United Nations, so that it can reflect the highest and most noble principles upon which it was founded.

Mr, President, I end with a verse from Love After Love by Nobel Laureate and Saint Lucian son, Sir Derek Walcott:

“The time will come when, with elation you will greet yourself arriving at your own door, in your own mirror and each will smile at the other’s welcome”

We work towards this goal.

I Thank You.

Annex II

Address by Mr. Xavier Espot Zamora, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra

[Original: French]

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by congratulating His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid on his election as President of this General Assembly and His Excellency Mr. Antonio Guterres on his reappointment for a second term as Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), this great assembly of all peoples and for all peoples, whose main objective is to build a system of values and a code of conduct based on multilateralism and cooperation. We wish you every success in this new period that we hope will be largely marked by economic and social recovery that is more human and more sustainable and anchored in the conviction that solidarity must be the foundation of our actions.

I would also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkır, who has tirelessly maintained the activity of the Assembly throughout the 75th session. The year 2020 will be a year that will be remembered in our modern history, as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis has shaken the pillars of our societies and had repercussions in almost all areas. Today, more than ever, we are aware that our present can change course and our future can be challenged irreparably and without warning. The pandemic has cruelly reminded us of our fragility and our lack of preparedness in the face of a crisis of such magnitude.

The Declaration on the occasion of the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations underlined the fact that our world remains far from realizing the goals set out by the founders of this great organization. The United Nations was built upon the ashes of the deadliest conflict in history to send a message of peace to the world, overcome the challenges of the world and provide an institutional framework to that end. It has made great strides in such crucial areas as human rights, poverty eradication, building democratic institutions, the fight against climate change, sustainable development and the protection of the most vulnerable people in armed conflicts. Unfortunately, we continue to have a long way to go.

This year, the rich countries have once again asserted their privileged position: we have enjoyed rapid access to vaccines and have hoarded millions of doses, which has once again increased inequalities. The world is once again witnessing entire families fleeing their home countries in search of a better future, humanitarian crises worsening, the planet sounding the alarm that the point of no return on climate change will soon be reached and the wholesale backsliding on women's rights.

Mr. President,

Let me congratulate you on the appropriateness of the theme of this 76th General Assembly: "the presidency of hope". Hope. Indeed, all is not lost. We must continue our efforts and plan and propose a response that will allow for the recovery of the

countries most ravaged by the pandemic — a response based on more sustainable and inclusive development that leaves no one behind so that everyone can live their lives in peace, with dignity and on an equal footing. You are urging us to cooperate, pool our multilateral efforts and do so with respect for the founding values of the United Nations in a spirit of inclusion.

On 20 and 21 April, Andorra hosted the 27th Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, under the theme, entitled “Innovation for sustainable development — Goal 2030”, at which my country — a country with a population of 78,000 — addressed a community of 670 million people. We had the opportunity to highlight the essential role of multilateralism, especially in the face of challenges, such as the coronavirus pandemic and climate change, as no country or State, no matter how powerful, can meet a challenge of such magnitude without the participation of the international community at large.

Throughout the past few months, we have seen that the hope of curbing the COVID-19 epidemic lies with vaccines. Vaccines are the most powerful tool at our disposal to fight the pandemic, but they will be ineffective if the entire global population cannot benefit from them. That is why the collaboration that exists among public institutions, the private sector, universities and research centres must also be focused on the delivery of vaccines. That is the call I made on 21 April. It is unacceptable that such disparity in vaccination rates between developed and developing countries remains. The World Health Organization (WHO) has warned us that such an attitude will lead to a disastrous moral failure because the pandemic will continue so long as the solution is only partially implemented. There is still time to avoid such a situation. We must promote more effective systems, such as the COVAX Facility to which Andorra is honoured to contribute so as to ensure timely universal access to vaccines.

The climate emergency is the other great challenge that we must consider from an inclusive point of view. There is no turning back. It is too late to rectify our environmental mistakes, but it is not too late to stop making more. The next decade will be fundamental for the future of our planet. The COP26 to be held next November in Glasgow will be the last opportunity for the most powerful economies to transform their commitments into reality and achieve carbon neutrality.

Andorra welcomes in a positive light the two high-level meetings that will be held within the framework of the 76th United Nations General Assembly. The Food Systems Summit, which Andorra will attend, could not be timelier. Agricultural production, distribution and income, as well as consumption patterns, have very serious consequences for human beings and the environment. Making amends with nature and the planet is possible if we adopt an approach that combines healthy food, traditional knowledge and science in order to innovate and conserve the only resource we have and that we must learn to share sustainably — the planet.

Andorra has taken part in the global call to make SDG 2 (to end hunger) an imminent reality. According to the report on food insecurity by the FAO and other agencies, world hunger and child obesity are increasing. Those seemingly opposite trends must compel us reflect on the urgent need to reform food production and consumption systems in order to achieve more sustainable and healthier models and consumption patterns. To that end, I welcome the role of the FAO and the World Food Programme, which are contributing to meeting SDG 2, which should be met as soon as possible.

Excellencies,

We are facing an exercise in rebuilding in several areas: health care, the economy, the environment and migration. Our modes of working, movement and consumption have been challenged in and of themselves. The question remains as to whether we want to return to the normality that we lost.

Let us take the opportunities that this great organization, the United Nations, provides us for resolving that issue so that multilateralism will become the path to follow and find solutions for all our citizens. The United Nations has at its disposal the mechanisms to move forward, identify and analyse imbalances, injustices and the most vulnerable populations and articulate the solutions that States can provide. We must insist on the pillar of human rights, which must guide us in all our actions. Andorra therefore supports the Secretary-General's proposal to convene a summit of the future.

The preservation of peace and security is the *raison d'être* of this organization. It is one of its founding pillars. But I note with concern the worsening humanitarian crises, including the increase in poverty, the ever-more frequent and devastating occurrence of natural disasters and the reduction in international aid. Some of these catastrophic situations have been ongoing for years. The United Nations has mechanisms, such as peacekeeping operations, to alleviate the impact of such situations, but prevention, which is multidimensional, must be the main objective of our action, as well as the protection of the most vulnerable, inclusion and equality.

We have entered the 76th session. In the Declaration adopted on the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, we reaffirmed our confidence in this organization and multilateralism. We know that we must act together and proactively and that we must take on new challenges, such as digital cooperation so that no one is left behind and the inclusion of young people, who are the vectors of change. Ladies and gentlemen, let us make no mistake. The future of better prepared generations is in our hands. Their life experience and maturity depend largely on the consequences of our action and inaction. We cannot fail them once again.

Education is a human right that, since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, has been acknowledged in SDG 4 and as one of the main catalysts for sustainable development, poverty eradication, and conflict prevention. By empowering people and communities and providing quality education, SDG 4 is the best way to transform societies and protect your planet

When we invest in girls and women's education; when they participate in every facet of life; and when our actions are inclusive, the conditions are right for creating change and economic and social progress for the benefit of all.

Equality and gender balance require the active participation of women not only so that they can have access to decision-making spaces, but also so that their voices can be meaningfully considered, regardless of their situation or condition. New relationships must be established to end patriarchal patterns, which are genuine obstacles for half of the world's population. The empowerment of women, which has made strides, cannot be allowed to stop or backslide because of the pandemic. I would like to commend the work of UN-Women and congratulate its new Executive Director, Ambassador Sima Sami Bahous. Andorra is staying the course, as it has firmly committed itself in recent years to promoting policies related to gender

equality. That commitment is reflected in its legislation, which sets out a pioneering and ambitious system to promote gender equality and the fight against discrimination.

Mr. President,

Andorra has been part of the international community since 1993. It is a country with a small territory and population. But Andorra must not, and has never, used that as a pretext to shirk in responding to or shouldering national and international responsibilities and overcoming related challenges.

In 2013, the highest-level representative of the UN visited Andorra on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of our membership in the United Nations. The Secretary-General of the UN, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, underscored, “the dignity of the Andorran people. The pride in [its] story ... singularity ... and solidarity”. He asked the Andorrans to go even further. We heard him, and we have committed ourselves to that path. We are part of this community, and we must all assume the same responsibility.

It is in this spirit that, as we live in a mountain environment, we are addressing the climate crisis. Last August, every media source echoed the conclusions of the latest report of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which warned of the serious consequences of climate change and global warming.

As I mentioned earlier, the countdown has begun.

In terms of climate change mitigation and adaptation, Andorra has committed itself to the terms of the Paris Agreement and is investing in renewable energy production and carbon taxation to reduce its emissions and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. We are at the forefront of a critical project which promotes biodiversity through a national strategy, and we want to become the first country to be designated as a biosphere reserve through our model of balance between development and sustainability.

We are sparing no effort to achieve the energy transition and promote renewable energies. We are reducing our energy dependency and subsidizing programmes for energy efficiency in buildings and electromobility. The imminent entry into force of the carbon tax has also enabled us to significantly lower the cost of public transport.

We will soon adopt circular economy legislation that will enable us to move from a linear economy to a more efficient economic model that will optimize the use of natural resources, reduce environmental impact and will allow for the use of products and natural resources to be maintained for as long as possible, thereby preventing emissions and material losses.

Excellencies,

Andorra’s measures to mitigate the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have always focused on guaranteeing the health of people and safeguarding its health-care system. I thank our neighbouring countries, France, Spain and Portugal, for their solidarity in distributing vaccines, as well as the supply mechanisms of the European Union and the WHO, through the COVAX Facility, thanks to which Andorra has been able to administer full vaccine doses to almost 75 per cent of its population over 16 years of age.

The COVID-19 epidemic has had a significant impact on the Andorran economy. Andorra is a country that highly depends on the tourism sector. The Government has

supported families, workers and businesses. As a result of the pandemic, we have ramped up some of the initiatives we had already undertaken, and we have promoted new ones to rethink tourism as a sustainable economic vector and open our economy to new sectors. We are committed to recovery, which will allow us to create stability, growth and the diversification of our economy, create new jobs and redirect public spending to the sectors with the greatest multiplier effect, with a special focus on policies for health, sustainability, science, innovation and human capital.

The COVID-19 epidemic has tested us as a society. It has taught us that the present and the future require less individualism, selfishness and confrontation and more cooperation, resilience, empathy and solidarity. No country or community has been able to tackle this pandemic without an approach based on solidarity. Owing to its calling and nature, Andorra is unable to leave anyone behind. Andorra will do its utmost to contribute, together with all of you, to transforming the world in accordance with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda.

With this message reiterating our clear commitment to multilateralism and the United Nations, we begin this 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

I thank you all.

Annex III

Address by Mr. Cleopas Siphon Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Eswatini

Mr. President,
Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
United Nations Secretary-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Mr. President,

It is my singular honour to address the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. Allow me to express my sincere congratulations to you Mr. President, on your election as President of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly. We commend the outstanding leadership and sterling performance of the outgoing President. I also extend our profound congratulations to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, for his re-election for another five-year term.

The theme of this session touches on every aspect of our daily lives. It underscores the need to ensure that the world does not lose sight of the three dimensions of sustainable development during the last decade of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — the “Decade of Action.” Over the past year, the Kingdom of Eswatini experienced immeasurable and unimaginable setbacks in the implementation of our development priorities since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. This compelled the country to rethink its development strategy and re-direct its resources to cater for additional needs of the population. Nevertheless, we have not lost sight of the objective of the 2030 Agenda: “To leave no one behind.”

Mr. President,

Sincere appreciation goes to all the frontline medical workers who have become the first line of defence in the battle against the virulent pandemic, labouring tirelessly to keep us safe. Many of them throughout this challenging period lost their lives for our sake. Without their commitment and sacrifice, the world would not be anywhere near the path to recovery from this pandemic. In the same vein, similar appreciation and honour also goes to all involved in research, sharing of expertise and resource mobilization, be it institutions and individuals, for the successful development of vaccines.

It is without doubt that the panacea for any practical, effective and efficient plan to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic rests on vaccination of national populations. This has been demonstrated and proven in countries that have endeavoured to achieve herd immunity. Low access to vaccines by many countries remains a cause for concern. Such a scenario has been more pronounced in developing countries, especially countries in special situations, in Africa, and other vulnerable regions. This was one of the pressing reasons why Eswatini supported the call for a temporary waiver of the obligation of member states under the TRIPS Agreement to protect intellectual property rights for technologies related to the prevention, containment

or treatment of COVID-19. The Kingdom of Eswatini applauds the establishment of the COVAX Facility, which came to existence through efforts by the United Nations, in the wake of the pandemic and solely meant to be of assistance to member states, particularly low middle-income countries. As a beneficiary, Eswatini is grateful for such an initiative and also extends further appreciation to the generous donors, particularly the United States of America amongst many others, whom in their absence, the objectives of this initiative would not have been achieved thus far.

Mr. President,

In this view, the Kingdom of Eswatini commends African countries that have commenced manufacturing COVID-19 vaccines. We bank on the successful implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to widen and strengthen Africa's integration process. We are confident that this arrangement will create and/or strengthen the value chains and the ability for African countries to produce more vaccines. Eswatini has prioritized health, for every member of the population is at the centre of our socio-economic agenda. Currently, a significant percentage of the eligible population has been vaccinated, having commenced with our frontline staff and the elderly, most recently, effective 30th August 2021, the Eswatini Government commenced inoculating all aged 18 years and above. We aim at reaching herd immunity hopefully by the end of 2021.

Mr. President,

Resilience is a multifaceted and complex concept that calls for our attention to comprehend its meaning academically and in practice. It entails the ability to bounce-back, build-back and build better from any situation that confronts us. In the context of the pandemic, resilience transcends the health sector to cut across all sectors of the economy. The Kingdom of Eswatini believes that the starting point of building resilience through hope entails access to vaccination by all eligible populations, and while doing so, ensuring that no one is left behind. This will determine the ability, power and speed to recover from COVID-19, and to rebuild sustainably.

Like many other countries, the pandemic has been an eye-opener to the Kingdom of Eswatini and has overly sensitized Government to 're-think resilience' and incorporate it in all its policies. In this view, building resilience has become a cornerstone and an inevitable component in all our mitigation, adaptation strategies and recovery plans.

Mr. President,

The pandemic has, momentarily, shifted our focus from issues that are perpetually on the global agenda, particularly our quest to respond to the needs of the planet including the mitigation and adaptation to the persisting impact of climate change. Nonetheless, it has highlighted our interconnectedness in all facets of our daily lives and further clarified the meaning and practicality of living in a global village. Climate-related impacts continue to overwhelm our economies and remains one of the insistent challenges of the 21st century. The Kingdom of Eswatini has not lost sight of its commitment to respond to the needs of the planet. In this view, we reaffirm our resolve to play our part in operationalizing the Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) that presents steps taken by the country to develop effective climate change responses, while fast-tracking the implementation of our objectives for sustainable development and poverty eradication. We look forward to the 26th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on

Climate Change (UNFCCC) for the world to re-ignite, re-engage and accelerate climate actions.

Mr. President,

Education is an important tool utilized to equip, capacitate, develop and empower every learner to create and/or sustain development and attain the future we want. The closure of schools and institutions of higher learning due to the pandemic, has had an unparalleled devastating impact to millions of learners. This has been more pronounced in the developing world, mainly because many of these countries are not adequately equipped to pursue their education virtually.

The impact of students being out of school for an extended period of time was enormous and a nightmare in many developing countries. The lack of access to digital learning resources was a setback to students' learning opportunities. Upon resumption of classes in the Kingdom of Eswatini, schools had to stagger attendance in order to prevent the snowballing of infections and the spread of the virus, as it evolves and changes phases.

Mr. President,

It is important to highlight the fact that our economies have been severely battered, businesses continue to close down and people are losing jobs, Governments are struggling with rising debt levels. Eswatini is therefore appreciative of the decision by the Board of Governors of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to approve Special Drawing Rights (SDR) to boost global liquidity, this cash injection of over \$75 million to the economy of Eswatini could not have come at a better time. On Monday 06th September 2021, His Majesty King Mswati III, launched the Reconstruction Fund, meant to rebuild infrastructure and the economy, following a civil unrest which was brought about by a vast array of economic challenges including the added burden of the COVID-19 pandemic, and these funds will assist Government advance closer to the budget target of \$200 million.

Mr. President,

On another note, in the fight against HIV and AIDS, Eswatini has continued to employ all means possible to stop the spread of the virus even during this critical time in history. This is evidenced by the achievement of the UNAIDS goal of 95-95-95, which summarily means 95 percent of people with HIV identified, 95 percent of people with HIV on treatment, and 95 percent of people on treatment virally suppressed. Although this was deemed achievable, in a decade from now, fortunately the Kingdom is now one of only two countries to have made such an achievement of SDG goal number three on health, as announced by the United Nations body.

In Eswatini, as much as some of our plans to accelerate the process have been derailed, we have remained focused. Since 2016, the country has integrated the SDGs into the national development framework and put in place appropriate institutional arrangements to ensure that the implementation is properly monitored at all levels. Government has infused the spirit of ownership to every citizen, so that every individual understands and appreciates the importance of the SDGs.

Both the Executive and Legislative arms of Government are involved. In the midst of the obtaining challenges, we have not lost hope and sight of our development agenda.

Mr. President,

As the reforms of the United Nations development system evolves, the Kingdom of Eswatini continues to steadfastly reiterate and maintain its call for Africa's voice to be heard at the United Nations Security Council. This follows an annual call by the African Union Heads of State and Government articulated in the Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration. The Common African Position remains intact with regard to allocation of permanent and non-permanent seats in the United Nations Security Council, a very important decision-making Organ of the United Nations.

When all members and regions are efficiently and effectively represented and their voice conspicuously heard, the revitalization of the work of the United Nations will be enhanced.

Mr. President,

May I take this opportunity to share with the nations of the world how the Tinkhundla System of governance works. The elections conducted under this system embrace our traditional and cultural existence where people from communities nominate candidates in their chiefdoms to compete at constituency level, which we call Tinkhundla. This system was agreed upon by the nation through consultations. A Commission was set up to consult widely the populace as to which governance system they would like to have in place as a nation.

The winners then go straight to parliament as a direct representation — some of the elected candidates end up being members of cabinet. As a result, the people are part of the government formulation process because they can claim ownership of the people who constitute the government of the day. We are convinced that our system of governance has a place in modern day democracy and it complies with all structures of the United Nations family. The Kingdom of Eswatini is committed to the ideals of the United Nations in just as much as she is dedicated to protecting its history, legacy, and dignity. While at the same time embracing the opportunities and the possibilities of cooperating in the community of nations.

It is, therefore, the Kingdom of Eswatini's position that it believes in democracy as an idea but not as an ideal because things that are ideal to you may not be ideal to other people. The Kingdom of Eswatini will, however, continue to embrace the opportunities, technologies and the mechanisms that create a modern society. Our country is committed to a process of consultation with the people at the people's parliament, Sibaya, and other dialogue forums through which people provide advice and counsel to the King that ensures transparency and accountability. This is how our monarchy operates, in counsel. As such, the practice is democratic and participatory in that everybody is involved in our key decision-making processes. As a nation we shall remain seized with the preservation of our cultural norms and traditions, promoting of peace and stability, addressing our different opinions in a peaceful manner, not by violence. Above all this, dialogue is at the apex of our existence as a nation.

Our philosophy is inclusive, we use a bottom-up approach, from the grass roots level, where every Liswati must have an opportunity to voice his or her opinion in a free and fair environment. whilst we embrace modernity, we cannot forget who we are and where we come from, our identity as a nation remains pivotal so that we can work together to develop our country and ensure that we realize a robust social

and economic foundation for the benefit of future generations as our predecessors have done.

Mr. President,

The persistent exclusion of the Republic of China (Taiwan) from the United Nations and the discrimination of its citizens in a system meant to serve international citizens, is a gross violation of the unshakeable principles of the UN Charter. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Taiwan in solidarity with UN Member States, made a significant contribution in realizing the theme of this year's Session.

Eswatini would again this year continue to urge the United Nations to consider the meaningful participation of Taiwan, especially in the World Health Organisation, International Civil Aviation Authority and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. With this inclusion of Taiwan, it is our hope that the UN will be living up to its objectives and equally serving the interests of all its Member States.

The path to 2030 on the attainment of the UN SDGs was dented as a result of the pandemic, and Taiwan, adhering to the principle of living no one behind, shared its disease prevention expertise and experience with more than 80 countries & further assisted 40 countries make headway in ICT, agriculture, education and health. Furthermore this year, in demonstrating that "Taiwan Can Help, and Taiwan is Helping", Taiwan continued to send medical assistance, in the form of medical specialists and protective equipment for Eswatini's health sector. It is in this light that we call upon for the recognition of Taiwan's efforts for the global wellbeing.

Lastly, the Kingdom of Eswatini can attest to the fact that Taiwan is an indispensable partner and would, if given an opportunity, play a meaningful role in the global body.

Mr. President,

Finally, allow me to take this opportunity to wish the United Nations family a prosperous future as we battle COVID-19, to rebuild sustainably and respond to the needs of the people.

Thank you and May the Almighty God bless us all.

Annex IV

Address by Mr. Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, the Public Service, National Security, Legal Affairs and Grenadines Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Mr. President, Excellencies:

We are convened at this 76th Session of the United Nations' General Assembly at a time of severe health, socio-economic, political, climatic, and security challenges, globally, though unevenly, not in equal measure. The raging pandemic of COVID-19, which came upon us early last year, has put the world in a veritable tailspin, even as the roll-out of the vaccines has eased the strain somewhat, particularly in the developed world. A major shift has occurred in the global condition; a parallelogram of unruly and complex forces has been unleashed; a new paradigm has emerged; outmoded approaches are becoming, or have become, irrelevant; fresh initiatives and directions are required; and transformational leadership is needed, now more than ever.

In my country, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, a small-island developing state with all its historical legacies of underdevelopment and contemporary burdens and limitations, has had to cope, additionally, with the devastating volcanic eruptions of April 2021, the on-rushing Atlantic Hurricane season, vaccine hesitance amongst the population, and real uncertainty about the future. Amidst all this, our people are nevertheless possessed of a settled resilience and optimism of life and living, undergirded by God's redemptive grace, our own possibilities and strengths, a sterling regional solidarity, and promising internationalist support, inclusive of that of our United Nations, for peace and security, good health and prosperity for our people, as pledged in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Immediately, all of us in this global family of nations, must work together to defeat COVID-19, return to an acceptable level of normalcy and the opening up of our economies. This represents a many-sided and enormous challenge of historic proportions in both diagnosis and prescription. A huge bundle of pre-existing, divisive and debilitating conditions ought to be efficaciously addressed; historic wrongs ought to be righted; and extant and emergent limitations and weaknesses, real or contrived, require appropriate correctives. The metaphoric lions and lionesses, globally, ought to converse with each other meaningfully, rather than hanker for perpetual disorder, insecurity, and war; they do not actually need to lay down with each other in joyous embrace; they ought simply to resolve their differences, whether ancient or modern; and compromise, where necessary and desirable, in the interest of all. But for the sake of humanity, let us drop the vaunted self-interests, the vanities, and divisiveness — real or imagined, and work together, for the better.

These are the ennobling impulses which prompted the ancient prophets and teachers of all the world's monotheistic religions to summon their peoples, and their better angels, to uplifting purposes in this our Earthly City. These have been the civilising sentiments expressed, from time immemorial, in the voices of wise Emperors and thoughtful warriors. These are humanity's core values which constitute the bedrock upon which our United Nations organisation was originally built, and has been henceforth sustained. Faith in them, and accompanying works, will see us through these troubling times in which it appears that things are falling apart and the centre cannot hold.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put the global community at the critical, proverbial crossroads. What is to be done? First, let us recognise, and internalise, the novel, historic juncture at which we are, and accept, generally, the sage poetic advice that two roads diverge in the woods; and we ought to take the one least travelled by; and that will make all the difference. "This will not be easy for historic combatants or contemporary rivals to do; but it is the only choice that humanity has.

In tackling the pandemic itself, the old ways have tended to predominate, even as the sunlit rays of a possible new path have emerged. Thus, for example, globally, we have witnessed unacceptable vaccine nationalism; the politicisation of the roll-out of the vaccines; and the roll-out of vaccines for the rich first and the poor afterwards. To be sure, we have also witnessed notable, and noble, work by some global institutions such as the World Health Organisation, the World Bank, and the COVAX Facility, to make vaccines more accessible to poor or marginalised countries.

It is true, too, though relatively late in day, that some rich countries in the North Atlantic (USA, Canada, and the United Kingdom) have delivered or agreed to deliver, freely, from their surpluses, vaccines to some less developed countries; we are very grateful. Still, though, some of these countries may be so slow in their promised deliveries that they may end up, embarrassingly, with expired doses of the vaccines running into several millions. It is timely to remind all of us that the noblest form of solidarity is to give not from the abundance or surplus that we may have but from the little that we possess; that is the lesson of the proverbial widow's mite. In this regard, on behalf of the Caribbean, I thank the government of the Republic of India for their early, and meaningful gift of Covishield AstraZeneca vaccines. Sadly, at least one country in the North Atlantic has refused to recognise Covishield for entry of persons into that country.

Mr. President, not only have the ways of the old order, pre-COVID, tended, still, to guide powerful countries in their actions; so, too, the behemoths in global communications. These entities, enveloped in mega profits and profiteering, own and control the various internet platforms, with little or no public regulation, and have ignored or abandoned any real sense of responsibility for the anti-vax misinformation and disinformation which occupy cyberspace. As a consequence, real people die in their multitudes across the world.

Surely, this irresponsibility must stop!

Surely, too, many ancient and long-standing political quarrels ought to come to an end in these new, perilous times which humanity faces. The refusal of Israel and its international backers to come to terms with the requisite of an independent Palestine, and a secure Israel, in accord with repeated resolutions of this august body; and, similarly, the refusal of the United States of America to dismantle the internationally unlawful, and crippling, economic blockade of Cuba, and to bring to an end the unjust, harsh, unilateral economic and financial sanctions against Venezuela and, to a lesser extent, Nicaragua.

So, too, it is high time for this United Nations and its agencies to cease their exclusion of Taiwan from meaningful participation. Surely, the world will benefit from Taiwan's inclusion in global bodies such as the World Health Assembly, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the International Civil Aviation Organisation, and INTERPOL. Concerted, multi-lateral cooperation on global matters such as health, climate change, civil aviation, crime, and so forth

requires all hands-on deck, metaphorically speaking. Taiwan is a relatively small, but legitimate, political expression of the magnificent Chinese civilisation; it has been an impressive economic miracle; it is a thriving democracy; and it has a right to ask for meaningful inclusion in the relevant global institutions. New times demand fresh solutions, not old-fashioned hegemonic responses.

By now, Mr. President, the folly of invading and seeking to remake countries in an invader's image and likeness is plain for all to see in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. The human and economic costs are staggering. Still, though, the values of our United Nations demand that women must be respected and empowered, that religious discrimination must be rejected, that theocracies accommodate competing voices, and that terrorism and political violence be not embedded in any statecraft. The sacred principles of non-intervention and non-interference ought not to be blind, perpetually or at all, to unacceptable and egregious excesses against humanity.

Mr. President, a looming ecological disaster awaits humanity unless we change course, for the better. No serious person who objectively examines the scientific data can but conclude that climate change is an existential threat to humanity, and especially to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and countries, such as in West Africa and the Sahel region, which are being swept into seemingly unending natural disasters as a consequence of desertification and extreme land degradation. Science, the real world, and the Paris Accord have pointed to alternative pathways for humanity but the political will and requisite resources from the major emitters to address the grave challenge of climate change have not gone much beyond pious mouthings and marginal tinkering. St. Vincent and the Grenadines is hoping for the best at the Conference of Parties (COP) in Glasgow in November 2021, but we fear the worst — more procrastination and the ducking of serious responsibility by the major emitters. On this, humanity is at the midnight hour. Can we meet the challenge? We may not live to find out the answer if the usual continues.

Mr. President, there is a range of other pressing concerns relevant to the Caribbean that demand urgent, global, multilateral action. These include: Meaningful debt restructuring and a favourable reform of the global financial architecture; the replacing of certain wrong-headed criteria, such as GDP per head of population, by a Vulnerability Index to determine access to development financing; the cessation of the use of unilateral sanctions and the weaponizing of the financial and banking systems against small states, including the capricious termination of corresponding banking relationships; the reversal of the diminution or slow-down of Official Development Assistance by rich countries; that Small Island Exceptionalism be accepted as a category to be objectively embraced in efficacious actions on the Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs) and a rules-based international order; the necessity and desirability for reparatory justice from European nations in respect of native genocide and the enslavement of Africans from which the European nations profited systematically and from which, consequentially, our Caribbean countries have suffered a legacy of under-development; and the urgent need for an appropriate multi-lateral initiative to assist Haiti, a CARICOM member, in its current peril.

Mr. President, at our United Nations, the reform agenda, including that of Security Council reform, demand renewed impetus. We have been talking about this subject for far too long, and avoiding concrete steps forward. St. Vincent and the Grenadines recognises the difficulties at hand but it is evident to all reasonable persons that the stranglehold of “the Permanent Five” on the Security Council ought

to be appropriately loosened or broken in these times which are so different than in 1945.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines has been honoured over the past near-two years to sit as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. St. Vincent and the Grenadines is the smallest country ever to sit on this esteemed Council. All objective observers concur that we have carried out our work and responsibilities commendably, and have contributed to the maintenance and advancement of peace, security, and prosperity, globally. Importantly, St. Vincent and the Grenadines has been a central party to the establishment of an institutional nexus known as the A3 plus One (the three non-permanent members from Africa plus St. Vincent and the Grenadines), as a distinctive voice for Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America. Long may this nexus continue, especially in this the UN Decade for Peoples of African Descent.

Mr. President,

The lessons of today mirror many of those lodged in the tiring, and oft-times tired, struggles of yesteryear. From whence, in the still smouldering ashes of global conflict, our forebears crafted this multilateral institution called the United Nations to provide hope and stability to all of humanity. Yet, this labour is incomplete. The pervasive inequalities that defined the pre-COVID political and socioeconomic order must not become tomorrow's nightmarish reality. Instead, in this COVID era, we must reorganise ourselves, locally, regionally, nationally and globally, in a quest to provide peace, security, and development to all countries and peoples, in novel ways and with fresh initiatives. And let us also, with a renewed sense of urgency and compassion, strive to protect, and improve upon, this planet that we all call home. It is pellucid that of all time, only the future is ours to desecrate. Our United Nations ought never to be accomplices in any such desecration.

So, I reiterate: We are at historic cross-roads of a special kind. We must rise, collectively, to address sensibly, the requisite fresh imperatives in these, our most challenging, times.

Thank you!

Annex V**Address by Mr. Ariel Henry, Prime Minister and Minister for Social Affairs and Labour of the Republic of Haiti**

[Original: French]

President of the General Assembly,
Secretary-General,
Ambassadors, Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me, Mr. President, to begin by extending to you my warmest congratulations on your election to steer the seventy-sixth (76th) session of our Organization's General Assembly. I also extend my congratulations to the members of the Bureau. I assure you of the full support of the Haitian delegation for the success of our work.

I would also like to commend the outstanding work by your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkır, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, during the seventy-fifth (75th) session of the General Assembly. He was able to guide our work with dexterity and leadership, despite the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I would like to again congratulate the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres, on his reappointment to the helm the Organization. It is no coincidence that the Member States have granted you a second term of office which, I firmly believe, will be successful.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for your ongoing support to the Haitian people and, in particular, for the Organization's renewed commitment to and solidarity with my country.

I would be remiss if I did not reiterate the appreciation of the Government of the Republic of Haiti for the initiative of the Bureau of the 75th session of the General Assembly to organize a ceremony on 14 July 2021 to pay tribute to the memory of His Excellency President Jovenel Moïse. He was tragically shot to death during the night of 6 to 7 July. The Haitian people appreciated the messages of comfort and expressions of sympathy from the Governments of the Member States of the Organization.

I would like to reaffirm here, at this rostrum, my determination to do my utmost to find the perpetrators, accomplices and sponsors of this heinous crime. Nothing, absolutely nothing — no political manoeuvring media campaign or distraction — can divert my attention from the goal of ensuring that justice is served for President Moïse. It is owed to his memory, his family and the Haitian people. The current judicial investigation is challenging. It is a transnational crime. For that reason, we formally request mutual legal assistance. This is a priority of my Government for the entire nation. This crime must not go unpunished, and the culprits, all of them, must be punished.

Mr. President,

The theme you proposed for the 76th session, “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”, is timely.

Indeed, the coronavirus pandemic has challenged, to varying degrees, virtually every country in the world. This global health crisis has highlighted, among other things, the inequalities that exist between our countries, and exposed the weaknesses of our health systems. This pandemic has also demonstrated that only solidarity and cooperation among peoples can help us end it.

Thankfully, people have understood this and have committed to sharing vaccines with countries that have less. The World Health Organization’s COVAX programme and bilateral solidarity actions around the world give hope that, together, we will be able to overcome this disease. The stakes are high for the future of humankind.

Mr. President,

The maintenance of international peace and security has been a priority objective of the United Nations since its inception. On this basis, the Organization’s activities are focused mainly on the areas of conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

We recognize that the United Nations has done much to save our world from the scourge of a world war, but we must admit that several areas of tension and violent conflict remain the greatest challenges facing our Organization.

We must find relevant and adequate responses to new threats facing our world, such as the rise of international terrorism, mass atrocities, cross-border crime and other challenges, such as extreme poverty and climate change.

The phenomenon of climate change is a major concern for all countries of the world. Global warming, severe weather conditions with alternating drought and flooding that affect agricultural and food production, and sea level rise have dire global consequences.

It is imperative that we take the right measures to slow down the rate of temperature rise on the Earth’s surface. Immediate and collective action is therefore needed. I encourage all States to implement the ambitious measures adopted in Paris to avoid a climate catastrophe that could jeopardize humankind’s very existence.

Mr. President,

On the humanitarian front, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has estimated that there are more than 80 million people around the world who have been displaced. Nearly 30 million of them are refugees and asylum seekers. This is a humanitarian crisis whose magnitude challenges the human conscience.

To find a lasting solution to the migration issue, we must address the root causes of human displacement. I call on the international community to urgently strengthen measures to improve living conditions in the countries of origin of political or economic refugees. To achieve this, States parties must recommit to the fundamental principles of the 1951 Convention and work together, in a spirit of cooperation, to find the best ways and means to ensure that the rights of refugees are respected and protected.

In recent days, images of the treatment of several of my compatriots at the border between Mexico and the United States have shocked many. Without attempting to dispute the right of a sovereign State to control the entry of foreigners into its territory or to send back to their country of origin those who enter illegally, we believe that several countries that now enjoy prosperity were built by successive waves of migrants and refugees. The migration issue should remind us that human beings, fathers and mothers, will always seek to escape poverty and conflict and to provide better living conditions for their offspring. Migration will continue so long as there are areas of prosperity on our planet, while the majority of the world's population lives in poverty, at times extreme poverty, with no prospects for a better life.

Mr. President,

It should be recalled that multilateral diplomacy within the framework of the United Nations has shaped our world for more than 75 years and is increasingly becoming an essential part of relations among States. Indeed, considerable progress has been made on initial aspirations of peace and international security, justice and prosperity for all, due to collective commitment and a permanent system of dialogue and consultation employed by State actors to reach negotiated solutions to their differences.

However, much remains to be done to reach the ideal world to which we all aspire. In this respect, today, more than ever before, we need to strengthen the multilateral system and make it more supportive and effective.

Faithful to its historical traditions, the Republic of Haiti reiterates its commitment and willingness to continue working alongside the members of the international community, eager to build a more just and equitable world order.

Mr. President,

Secretary-General,

Ambassadors, Distinguished Delegates, It has been a little over two months since I assumed the functions of Prime Minister, in the absence of President Moïse, who honoured me by appointing me to this position only a few days before his horrific assassination. As soon as I took office, my main concern was to do my utmost to ensure that my country's democratic institutions resumed regular operations as soon as possible.

This was the wish of President Moïse and it is the objective that has guided our actions, to date, and will continue to guide them. Some of you may not know it but I am governing a country whose democratic institutions no longer exist or are completely dysfunctional.

In the light of the situation and in order to resolve the major political problems facing the country, such as unbearable insecurity, dysfunctional legislative power, shortcomings in the judicial system, I had to quickly form a Government to address State affairs. But it was obvious that only dialogue involving political parties and organized civil society actors would allow for the consensus required to ensure socio-political stability.

Since assuming office as Head of Government, it is in this spirit that I have increased the number of meetings and discussions with all sectors of national life, without distinction, to create a peaceful socio-political climate, which is essential for

the organization of credible, transparent and inclusive general elections as soon as possible. In my opinion, it is essential for institutions to resume normal operations, headed by elected officials who are trusted by the people.

A few days ago, our official journal published the “Political Agreement for the Peaceful and Effective Governance of the Interim Period”, which I negotiated and signed with major political stakeholders, several popular organizations and various segments of civil society. This Agreement provides for the creation of a security environment that will encourage broad citizen participation in the upcoming elections. It puts in place a mechanism that requires the Government to be transparent and accountable. All sectors of national life will have a voice in the drafting of a constitution that will be adopted following a referendum.

This is an important step in the process of restoring rule of law and democratic institutions. Despite this broad participation, we remain open to continuing discussions to expand consensus. We want the support of our fellow countrymen and women for this common project aimed at giving our country a new start. I have begun discussions with the signatories of the Agreement, as part of its implementation, and will continue them in the days ahead.

I have chosen the quickest path to free, transparent, inclusive and non-partisan elections. Some wish a longer transition. But I, along with many others, believe that this is not the right move. I will not shy away from persuading those who are still reluctant to sign the above-mentioned Agreement, so that, together, in peace and through ongoing dialogue, we will move towards lasting solutions to our country’s problems.

Mr. President,

In addition to the political crisis I have just briefly described, the effects of natural disasters must also be addressed. Haiti is ranked as one of the countries most vulnerable to natural disasters.

After a spate of deadly and devastating disasters, including the 2010 earthquake and Hurricane Matthew in 2016, which hit the country hard, a powerful 7.2 earthquake destroyed the entire southern peninsula of the Republic of Haiti on 14 August. According to official statistics, at least 2,207 people died; 344 people are missing; more than 12,268 were injured and thousands of houses, as well as hospitals, schools, churches, bridges and roads, were destroyed or damaged.

I would like to take this opportunity to again express gratitude for the spontaneous outpouring of solidarity from the international community, which quickly mobilized, alongside authorities that provide aid and assistance to victims. We welcomed Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Amina Mohammed, who visited the affected areas to assess the extent of the damage and the needs of the people affected. I will not mention the names of all the countries and organizations that came to our aid for fear of forgetting some of them, but please know that we thank them all.

Allow me to invite the international community to remain collectively committed to Haiti to help it meet its immediate humanitarian needs and support the reconstruction process on which our Government is working. I have launched a PDNA (Post-Disaster Needs Assessment) with our technical and financial partners. Over the next few weeks, we should receive a comprehensive needs assessment to begin

reconstruction. We need to rebuild better and more resiliently to better withstand climate threats and natural disasters in general. Here again, we are counting on your active solidarity, through existing mechanisms and new commitments, alike.

The focus on reconstruction in the southern peninsula cannot and should not make us forget that fighting poverty and creating wealth remain a major Government priority. That is why we will continue to work to create an environment that will bring about economic recovery and attract domestic and foreign investment. Our population is young. Young people need decent jobs and better prospects.

Mr. President,

Now, more than ever before, we need a stronger and more effective multilateral system to enable the Member States of the Organization to develop joint strategies to address these major challenges within the framework of a holistic vision of a better world for all, while reaffirming our collective commitment to strong and renewed multilateralism.

I cannot conclude without inviting member countries to consider the aspirations of the Republic of China/Taiwan, which is willing and able to play a significant role in our Organization's initiatives to preserve international peace and security and promote cooperation and development among nations.

In conclusion, I recall that multilateralism has been affirmed for more than three quarters of a century as an essential mechanism for relations among States. The United Nations remains the principal intergovernmental and universal instrument for building together a more just, peaceful and brotherly world. Let us make sure that it can continue to play its role as a forum for the peoples of the United Nations where, together, we can find common solutions to our common problems.

I thank you.

Annex VI

Address by Mr. Ismail Sabri Yaakob, Prime Minister of Malaysia

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

Introduction

I join others in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election as President of the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly.

I would also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkır for his dedication and leadership in successfully completing the work of the last session, which was done under difficult circumstances due to the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic.

Malaysia welcomes the theme of this year's General Assembly — “Building resilience through hope — to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainably, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people, and revitalise the United Nations”. The theme serves as a stark reminder of what needs to be done and the long road we have before us.

Mr. President,

Malaysia is fully committed in managing, overcoming and recovering from this deadly pandemic. No one is safe unless everyone is safe. We must fight this battle together. Our common mission in these unprecedented times call us to recognize that humankind is one big extended family. It is in that spirit that we in Malaysia have very consciously referred to ourselves as ‘*Keluarga Malaysia*’. Together, and putting aside our differences, we will protect lives and livelihoods. We will ensure that Malaysia will not only bounce back but will thrive as the world emerges from the depths of the pandemic.

But, Mr. President, I am not here to only speak about Malaysia. I am here to call for us to work together in the spirit of a “world family”, to address the deep-rooted challenges of inequality, political instability and global governance.

COVID-19 and Health Diplomacy

Last year, the international community came together with a pledge to fight COVID-19 hand-in-hand. With our unified commitment; with the aggressive rollout of vaccines; and, with the sharing and adoption of best practices, we should have been on our way to recovery. Sadly, the reality today is that we are far from winning the war against this deadly virus.

Our relief that vaccines were developed in record time was quickly followed by distress at its discriminatory rollout. While most vaccine producing nations as well as those that have the financial means have achieved some measure of success, the majority of the world's population, mainly from middle income and least developed countries, remain unvaccinated.

Nevertheless, our focus should not just be on vaccines. There are other aspects of health that require our attention. Many health challenges transcend national borders. COVID-19 is just the latest challenge besetting us. Before that, the international

community had to deal with other serious outbreaks, which had their unique security and socio-economic dimensions.

With the growing frequency of global health threats, this world family must come together and engage in more effective health diplomacy. We must ensure greater collaboration not just to end this pandemic but on an array of other health-related issues. These include expanding the public health capacity of nations, particularly by enhancing their access to relevant technology and knowledge.

We truly need to regard public health as a global public good rather than the exclusive domain of individual nations. It is because of this that Malaysia will play a more prominent role and participate more actively in health diplomacy, and our approach will be more inter-disciplinary in nature and involve more relevant stakeholders.

As for COVID-19, we cannot afford to wait for an even deadlier variant to emerge and claim more lives. We need to act now.

Growing inequities and achieving the SDGs

Mr. President,

The path towards achieving the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was never easy to begin with. Yet, we have made steady progress. COVID-19 has, however, reversed many hard-won gains. The pandemic has amplified pre-existing inequalities and uncertainties. It has widened the gap between the “haves and the have-nots”. Varying degrees of shortfalls in governance and social security have driven populations back into poverty. Needless to say, we are further away from achieving the 2030 Agenda now than we were before.

Like the rest of the world, Malaysia’s economy has not been spared. In 2020, Malaysia’s GDP contracted by 5.6 per cent. This marks the worst decline in more than 20 years since the Asian Financial Crisis.

From the beginning of the pandemic, Malaysia took a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach in addressing this unprecedented crisis. We executed a clear strategy which focused on three thrusts. Firstly, we expanded our healthcare delivery system to prevent the spread and tend to the infected; secondly, we provided strategic fiscal injections to safeguard the economy; and, thirdly, we protected the people’s livelihood.

In doing so, we introduced economic stimulus packages worth about \$130 billion or 36 per cent of our GDP. We ensured inclusive growth by addressing poverty, while providing a social safety net to protect vulnerable groups. These packages also play an important role in assisting enterprises to remain afloat during these difficult times.

Almost two years into the pandemic, we realise that we need to balance between keeping our people safe while protecting their livelihoods. As such, Malaysia introduced the National Recovery Plan as the nation’s exit strategy from the pandemic. This includes speeding up vaccination rates, which stand at more than 500,000 doses daily in recent weeks. It also includes reopening key economic sectors to revive the economy. We are pleased that these efforts as well as our pursuit in attaining the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development were commended during our Voluntary National Review in July this year.

Climate Action

That said, rebuilding lives and economies after the pandemic will not come easy. The challenges are even greater for countries that are more vulnerable to natural disasters. Recovery efforts will certainly be more difficult and, thus, require more time and resources to take effect.

For Malaysia, mainstreaming sustainability is key in ensuring a smooth transition to a greener socioeconomic ecosystem. We have set ambitious plans to facilitate the transition to a more sustainable, low-carbon, and climate-resilient future. We have introduced policies including the concept of Circular Economy, which will drive mitigation and adaptation initiatives in our cities. We are confident that they will greatly contribute towards making Malaysia a low carbon nation by 2050.

At the same time, developed countries have the responsibility to provide financial resources and technology transfer to the developing world to undertake sustainable initiatives. This is in line with the equity principle of ‘common but differentiated responsibility’.

Nuclear Disarmament

Mr. President,

The development and deployment of nuclear weapons continues to be a threat to all mankind. Given the global health crisis, we find it disheartening that billions of dollars are being spent to maintain and modernise nuclear weapons, rather than on saving lives and livelihoods.

Malaysia supports the total elimination of nuclear weapons and the assurance that they will never be produced again. This is the only guarantee against the catastrophic consequences arising from their use. Towards this end, Malaysia welcomes the coming into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) earlier this year.

Malaysia reaffirms its commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and as Chair of Main Committee One (I) on Nuclear Disarmament for the 10th NPT Review Conference, we will strive towards bringing State Parties together and do our best to steer deliberations towards a fruitful outcome.

Peaceful Coexistence and Global Ceasefire

Mr. President,

Malaysia has always been a firm believer in all efforts and initiatives that promote peaceful coexistence between nations; between different peoples; and, between different faiths and cultures.

As a multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-religious country, Malaysia strongly believes what we have been practicing can also be applied to the entire world. At the same time, we are a strong proponent of multilateralism. Both multilateralism and peaceful coexistence are mutually reinforcing. We need to realise that as we progress further, we should be far more integrated and stronger as a family of nations.

Respect and mutual understanding must be the backbone and essence in our interactions and discourse. We believe that diversity can be a powerful source of strength and resilience. Thus, we need to take a deeper look at the many qualities that make up our family of nations.

It is no longer enough that we tolerate differences, but we should, instead, learn to celebrate and treat them with genuine curiosity and meaningful respect. Amid the global uncertainties, it is time for us to work and strengthen our efforts towards living together in peace and harmony.

As such, Malaysia will continue to do what it can in promoting peace and preventing conflict in the conduct of its foreign policy. With this approach, Malaysia will continue to uphold its fundamental principles of defending the nation's sovereignty and interest, maintaining good relations including promoting tolerance, mutual respect and understanding among all peoples and actors of all nations. As a Member State of ASEAN, Malaysia is committed in preserving ASEAN region as a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN).

Malaysia also reaffirms its commitment towards global peace, security and prosperity by continuing to lead on the issuance of a Joint Communiqué on global ceasefire in June this year. We strongly believe that the UN membership must speak with one voice on the need for an immediate cessation of hostilities in all corners of the world. This would allow governments and all stakeholders to focus their attention on combating humankind's deadliest enemy.

The Situation in Myanmar and the Rohingya issue

Nevertheless, Mr. President, it is unfortunate that we are far from realizing this global ceasefire. Many places are still experiencing instability. The situation in Myanmar remains of grave concern.

Malaysia cannot emphasize enough the importance of respecting the will and interests of the people of Myanmar. There is a need for a peaceful solution to be found, especially with a multitude of challenges besetting the country.

Malaysia is particularly worried about the humanitarian situation, now further aggravated by Myanmar's healthcare system, which is stretched thin. It is absolutely essential for aid to reach those in need.

Equally troubling is the refugee crisis that has engulfed Myanmar since the mass exodus of Rohingya in 2017. Malaysia currently hosts more than 154,000 refugees from Myanmar, comprising 86 per cent of the refugee population in the country. More than 66 per cent of those are from the Rohingya ethnic minority and this is just a conservative estimate.

ASEAN Member States have taken steps to engage key parties of this conflict to extend assistance where possible. Malaysia fully supports the work of the ASEAN Chair's Special Envoy on Myanmar. However, we remain concerned that the authorities have yet to allow ASEAN's Special Envoy to visit the country. We urge the authorities to accept the visit and assist the Special Envoy in his duties as well as expedite the implementation of the 'Five-Point Consensus'.

The Palestinian issue

Mr. President,

On the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), Malaysia is appalled by the deaths of many Palestinian civilians, including women and children, following the brutal attacks by Israel in May this year. We strongly condemn repeated violations and aggression by Israeli forces and settlers against Palestinian worshipers in Al-Aqsa

Mosque. The targeted aggression against worshippers is indeed contemptuous to all Muslims, or for any peace-loving religion.

In fact, let us be truly frank about what is happening in the OPT. The systematic oppression of Palestinians over many years through discriminatory policies; denial of basic civil rights; imposition of harsh conditions; large scale land confiscation; and, inhumane acts committed against them tantamount to the crime of apartheid. Yes, Mr. President, apartheid still exists in this world and most of us are just turning a blind eye to this.

Malaysia stresses again that Israel must be held responsible and accountable for all its wrongdoings including its flagrant violations of international law.

We welcome the establishment of an international commission of inquiry by the Human Rights Council to investigate violations of international human rights law during the 11-day crisis.

Malaysia continues to call for the deployment of a temporary international presence in the city of Al-Quds, to monitor the cessation of hostilities in the OPT. The international community must spare no effort to ensure the safety, protection, dignity and well-being of the Palestinian civilian population.

While generations have had to endure this oppression, it is time that we pay attention to the voices and roles of the younger generation of Palestinians. It is time to give them a better future. They have been suffering in dreadful living conditions under illegal Israeli occupation for so many years and we cannot allow this to continue indefinitely.

Malaysia has and will continue to lend its unwavering support and solidarity to the Palestinians.

The Situation in Afghanistan

Turning to the situation in Afghanistan, Malaysia is appalled by the terrorist attack outside the Hamid Karzai International Airport last month. The attack resulted in the loss of innocent lives with many more injured. Malaysia expresses its deepest condolences to the bereaved families of the victims. We also wish those injured a full recovery.

Malaysia condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. The region cannot be allowed to be turned into a fertile breeding ground for terrorism again. The world family must come together to support Afghanistan in this time of need, including by extending humanitarian assistance to the people. On this, Malaysia stands ready to extend its assistance and do what it can.

Reform of the UN: Revitalisation of the General Assembly and the reform of the Security Council

Mr. President,

The UN has been in existence for over 75 years. In that time, the world has changed significantly. As such, the UN must keep pace with a rapidly changing world as it continues to face a crisis of expectations. Reform is necessary to strengthen the UN's effectiveness as a multilateral organisation, to bring more transparency to it and to enhance its credibility. On this, we must work together to reform the

organisation and we hope Member States will demonstrate openness, flexibility, and political will in the interest of international peace, security, and prosperity.

Conclusion

Mr. President,

During its inception, we looked to the United Nations to save humanity from the scourge of war. Today, we place our resolve in the UN and its Member States to save humanity from the scourge of the global pandemic.

The pandemic has shown that we need to improve our resolve to strengthen international cooperation and multilateralism, and consider ourselves as a family of nations.

At the same time, the world family must be made a more peaceful, prosperous, sustainable and equitable one. We must close ranks and enhance our unity and cohesion. We must live in peaceful coexistence. Only then will we have a chance to succeed.

Thank you.

Annex VII

Address by Mr. Phankham Viphavanh, Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic

Mr. President,

At the outset, on behalf of the delegation of the Lao PDR, I would like to congratulate you, H.E. Mr. Abdulla Shahid, on your election as President of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). I am confident that with your extensive diplomatic experience, you will be able to lead the deliberation to a great success. Taking this opportunity, I would also like to commend H.E. Mr. Volkan Bozkır for his successful presidency of the 75th Session of the UNGA.

Mr. President,

It has been almost two years now that we have learned about and lived with the COVID-19 pandemic, which has claimed more than 4.5 million lives around the world and posed unprecedented pressure on our healthcare system, disrupted the global economic chain, made more people poor, hindered physical interaction between people, and created disorder and mutual mistrust. Although this kind of situation had occurred before in human history, but what we are encountering now is considered the most severe crisis and remains unpredictable for how long we will eventually overcome it. Nonetheless, the last 2 years have given us many lessons learnt. The key lesson we have drawn from is to uphold a genuine cooperation among all in local and international community. Disunity, prejudice, and mutual antagonism will not only make us succumb to COVID-19, but it could further bring about catastrophe for humanity. Lessons from the pandemic have taught us that where there is unity, mutual cooperation and support, there the success on containing COVID-19 prevails.

Mr. President,

I am delighted to observe that during the span of COVID-19 pandemic, the international community has attached great attention and has been determined to combat and contain COVID-19 pandemic. This issue has become an international agenda at all fora, be it at bilateral or multilateral levels, where preventive measures and solutions are discussed and agreed upon. This has given us encouragement and impetus to triumph over the COVID-19 pandemic in the near future. The global commitment toward enhanced cooperation has clearly been translated into practical actions, such as information and lessons learnt sharing and execution of various preventive measures, including provision of medical supports, vaccines and medicines, as well as adoption of mitigation measures to address the social and economic impacts from the outbreak of COVID-19.

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Government as well as the people of the Lao PDR, to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the international community, the friendly countries, including international organizations for rendering assistance to the Lao PDR in various areas, which enabled our country to contain the outbreak at a manageable level. This is a reflection of effective concrete assistance and genuine cooperation of the international community and I hope that the Lao PDR will continue to receive further support in the future.

Mr. President,

Although the fight against COVID-19 pandemic in many countries has gained a positive momentum. However, if we do not continue our enhanced cooperation and mutual assistance, be it at the political or technical levels, we would hardly overcome this crisis. Against this backdrop, I would like to urge the international community, particularly the countries with advanced medical science and all scientists worldwide to make concerted efforts in combatting COVID-19, especially in research and development of vaccines, medicines, including cooperation on COVID-19 origin tracing. We should avoid blame game and politicization of COVID-19 issue that may lead to political discourse. We are enthusiastic to see all medical scientists around the world, coming to work closely together in finding ways to protect people's lives without discrimination.

On another note, throughout the past two years, COVID-19 has destroyed global economic chain, forcing every country in the world into economic recession and stagnation. It has created direct impacts on socio-economic development of every country, especially developing and least developed countries, including the Lao PDR. The progress made prior to COVID-19 in the implementation of international commitments, namely the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and others, have been undermined. Moreover, the ability and capacity of these countries to recover from this impact has been minimal. In this regard, I would like to call on the international community, particularly the developed countries, to give importance to and pay attention on enhancing assistance to the developing and least developed countries in order to enable them to overcome the impacts from COVID-19.

Mr. President,

As mentioned above, the Lao PDR, like many other countries, has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The national economic growth, as well as progress made in the implementation of the National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP), have significantly been undermined despite the efforts made by the Lao Government, such as adopting the short and long-term measures, which include the integration of SDGs into the 5-year NSEDP, as well as the Development Strategy 2025 and the vision 2030. Furthermore, there has been an effort to implement the Istanbul Programme of Action, with an ambition to lift the country out of the least developed country (LDC) status in the near future. Although Lao PDR successfully met all the 3 criteria for graduation from LDC status in the 2nd review in February 2021, we still have concerns over the impacts of COVID-19 that may impair the Lao PDR's competence to remain on track in all the 3 established criteria.

Under these difficult and challenging circumstances, nevertheless, Lao Government has continued its effort to implement its 9th 5-year NSEDP (2021-2025) that was recently adopted by the National Assembly while the issue of addressing the economic and financial constraints and the fight against drug was made a national agenda, calling for all walks of life nationwide to effectively implement this national priority. Taking this opportunity, I would like to request the international community to consider their continued support and assistance to the Government and people of the Lao PDR, so as to make our goal as well as our national agenda a reality.

Mr. President,

In the regional cooperation context, the Lao PDR has actively participated and contributed with great responsibility under the framework of ASEAN, especially in the maintenance and promotion of peace and stability in the region, to create an

environment conducive for the development cooperation of ASEAN member states. In addition, ASEAN has attached the importance on the cooperation for the prevention and response to COVID-19 as well as post-COVID-19 economic recovery, aimed at building ASEAN a community with strong foundation for the future by adhering to the principles as stipulated in the ASEAN Charter in the wake of ever-increasing international integration and interdependence. At the same time, the Lao PDR is committed to reducing the development disparity and promoting the intra-ASEAN and inter-regional connectivity, putting all the efforts in utilizing potentials within the region together with the external ones in the implementation of the 4th Initiative for ASEAN Integration and the Masterplan for ASEAN Connectivity 2025, with a purpose to create an opportunity to promote infrastructure development, poverty reduction, and sustainable development in the region. On this note, the Lao PDR continues its economic infrastructure development in order to efficiently facilitate the regional and subregional integration through various cooperation frameworks. One of the milestone events in the coming months is the inauguration of the China-Laos high-speed railway to be held by the end of 2021, which will mark the first ever the Lao PDR's railway and the opening of a new era under the vision to transform a landlocked into land-linked country so as to further promote the better facilitation of regional trade.

Mr. President,

In the midst of the current global situations which are overwhelmed with complexity, conflicts and different perspectives, the Lao PDR still stands solid on its foreign policy for peace, independence, friendship and cooperation, as well as on the principles of conflict resolution through peaceful means and non-interference in others' internal affairs, and always believes that peace and security is the ultimate priority and prerequisites for every nation's socioeconomic development. Therefore, negotiations by peaceful means and dialogue with sincerity are pivotal in ensuring peace and cooperation. Isolation, confrontation and unilateral sanctions imposed on one country bring no benefit for any parties involved and the international community at large. In our continued support along with the world community, we urge the lifting of economic embargo on the Republic of Cuba, aimed at enabling the country to contain the outbreak of COVID-19 and sustain self-development, be able to carry out economic, trade and investment cooperation with other countries without any restriction in order to bring about tangible benefits for the people in this country and in the region.

The prolonged Israeli-Palestinian conflict over many decades has resulted in great loss of lives and properties for the Palestinian and Israeli, of which it should have been solved by peaceful means. The Lao PDR once again calls for the relevant parties to resume dialogues and mutual trust building for solving the issue aimed at accomplishing the establishment of two sovereign states of Palestine and Israel, peacefully coexisting under the relevant UN resolutions.

Mr. President,

The Lao PDR has attached the importance of addressing climate change by integrating the commitment under the Paris Agreement into its NSEDP and the National Green Growth Strategy. From 2000 to 2020, the greenhouse gas emission by Lao PDR has been lowered by 34 percent in comparison with the baseline emission. Furthermore, the Government has presented a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) on Climate Change to the United Nations, in which it targets to reduce

60 percent of the greenhouse gas emission by 2030. This is another remarkable step of the Lao PDR in contribution to tackling climate change issue and upholding its commitment under the Paris Agreement. In this regard, the Lao PDR sincerely urges all countries around the world to reinforce their efforts to realize the Paris Agreement commitment in order to prevent and minimize the occurrence of severe natural disasters and devastating impacts on our planet.

Mr. President,

I have a firm confidence that the upholding of multilateralism, conflict resolution through peaceful means and development cooperation under the UN Charter, remain true and relevant mechanism for us to address and battle against the global crisis we are facing, aimed at meeting humanity's common aspiration for a future that all people live in peace and prosperity. The Lao PDR will continue to actively contribute to promoting the cooperation under the United Nations auspices. In this spirit, I would like to reiterate our candidature for membership of the ECOSOC for the term 2023 – 2025. This has clearly demonstrated our utmost determination and readiness to make full and active contribution in the noble tasks of United Nations. We, therefore, look forward to the support for our candidature from all UN member states and hope for the opportunity to actively contribute to the work of the Council.

Thank you.

Annex VIII

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

[Original: Arabic]

Mr. President,
Excellencies, Heads of State, Heads of Government
Mr. Secretary-General,
Ladies and gentlemen,
May the peace, mercy and blessings of God be upon you.

It gives us great pleasure to address you two years after the glorious December revolution, which was vouchsafed by the blood of all classes of Sudanese and gave expression to the hopes and aspirations of our people for complete freedom, peace and justice. I am also pleased to extend my sincere congratulations to Your Excellency Abdulla Shahid on your election as President of the General Assembly. We wish you the best of luck and hope that the proceedings of this session will be crowned with success. We should be remiss if we did not also express our appreciation for the efforts of your predecessor, His Excellency Volkan Bozkır, President of the previous session.

The deliberations of this session come at a time when the deadly coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is casting its shadow over all aspects of life. Even as the virus mutates into new strains, poor countries are having difficulty obtaining the vaccinations they need for their peoples. The only way to make the slogan “no one is safe until everyone is safe” a reality is the path of cooperation and multilateral action. That starts with providing vaccinations to developing countries, and must include rebuilding what the virus has destroyed — bearing in mind existing international economic frameworks and above all our sustainable development agendas — in creative ways that are grounded in sustainability and environmental soundness. It is with all this in mind that we express our support for the theme of the current session, whose five components cover the concerns of the members of this Organization nicely, as they also cover its three cornerstones: maintaining security, promoting development and protecting human rights.

As we confront the pandemic, we express our renewed support and appreciation for the World Health Organization, which has played an outstanding role from the very beginning and continues to provide technical support to affected States. We also express our gratitude to the States and organizations that provided us and others in the third world with support and assistance in the health sector.

Mr. President,

Our transitional Government continues to implement policies aimed at bringing about a democratic transformation, instilling the rule of law and improving the human rights situation. We are also working to address inherited structural imbalances in the Sudanese economy. All our programmes and policies have the goal of building a secure and stable Sudan in which all can live in peace and prosperity and citizens can enjoy freedom and justice as envisioned by the goals of our glorious December revolution.

These reforms have already had an impact on the more vulnerable classes of society. We have put in place social protection programmes to support the more vulnerable classes with assistance from regional and international partners. Such efforts need support from the international community.

Mr. President,

With regard to protecting civilians, improving the human rights situation and enforcing the rule of law, we are implementing institutional and legal reforms, enhancing and protecting human rights frameworks, and working to achieve justice. In that connection, and in line with regional and international instruments, we have established a national human rights mechanism whose membership includes all the national parties concerned with protecting and improving human rights in the country. Over the past few months, we have ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the United Nations Convention against Torture.

Mr. President,

Since the transitional Government was put in place in the Sudan, we have followed a foreign policy based on mutual respect and cooperation. Our central objective has been to pursue the higher interests of the Sudan while promoting the values of good-neighbourliness and regional cooperation, in keeping with the principles of our peaceful glorious revolution and our constitutional document.

We express our appreciation for the United Nations, its humanitarian agencies, and the donor community for helping the Government of the revolution to address the conditions of displaced persons, refugees and those returning to their countries of origin. The Government of the revolution has expedited the removal of all obstacles in the way of delivering humanitarian aid to affected persons in conflict zones. In its national plan, the State addresses the issue of what is needed to improve the climate for humanitarian work by adopting potential sustainable solutions for displaced persons and improving their conditions in line with international instruments and the guiding principles for humanitarian work. Here, I take note of arrangements to hold a high-level meeting to find sustainable solutions for refugees, returnees and their host communities currently being conducted at the initiative of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Mr. President,

The refugee issue is an important strategic issue with a direct bearing on national security, the economy, infrastructure and the services sector in our country. As you are aware, the Sudan, by virtue of its location and other factors, continues to be a destination for refugees from neighbouring countries that are facing political, security and economic challenges.

Host communities are the front line of protection and solidarity for refugees and must share scarce resources with them. However, they are not receiving the support they need. The situation of refugees in the camps is far better than in host communities. The international community must take an active part in developing those communities as part of burden sharing.

We note here that even though UNHCR issued a plea last year for the international community to mobilize financing to meet needs, the response was not

sufficient. The Sudan calls on the international community and all humanitarian aid organizations and donors to provide support and marshal the resources needed to meet the challenges posed by this emergency humanitarian situation.

Mr. President,

We place great importance on the rule of law and the national and international levels. We are making ongoing efforts to review national laws to make sure they are in line with international standards and agreements. Those efforts are happening in tandem with numerous domestic initiatives by the relevant parties to build and reinforce national capacities to enable the competent agencies to fulfil their responsibilities and tasks. Establishing the rule of law at the national level is the responsibility of States and governments, including the humanitarian aspect. The Sudan has acceded to a number of agreements and conventions in that regard. At the domestic level, we have taken a number of proactive steps to address distortions in the human rights area. Following the previous period of totalitarian rule, the most pressing tasks were to rescind several laws restricting freedoms; strengthen the position of women in society; protect women's rights, freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly; and combat impunity. We have also been eager to increase cooperation with the international community. In that regard, the country office of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has been carrying out its tasks in the Sudan since January of last year.

Our country continues to contribute to political and security stability on the African continent. We are an active member of regional and subregional organizations such as the African Union and the League of Arab States, as well as the Great Lakes, Sahel and Sahara regional groupings, and IGAD.

As Chair of IGAD, the Sudan has made efforts to support security and peace and resolve disputes among States of the region. Post-revolution Sudan believes in the importance of good-neighbourly relations, security and stability in those States, and non-intervention in internal affairs.

Mr. President,

As you are aware, last July the Security Council held its second meeting this year on developments surrounding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, at the time that Ethiopia announced that it was taking the unilateral step of filling it a second time. That came after intransigence on the issue prevented the parties from reach agreement during several rounds of negotiations, despite the efforts of the former and current Chairs of the African Union.

In that connection, we reiterate our position rejecting any unilateral measures. We stress that a binding agreement must be reached on filling and operating the dam, so that our country can avoid potential ill effects on the livelihoods of as much as half of the population of the Sudan. Those ill effects include threats to the operation of dams in the Sudan and irrigation for agricultural projects and drinking water facilities, as well as a host of social, economic and environmental impacts up and down the Blue Nile and Nile rivers. We have already suffered some of those impacts both from the first unilateral filling last year and from the second unilateral filling over the past few weeks, notwithstanding the contingency measures we have taken.

Bringing the issue of the dam before the Security Council would promote the African Union-sponsored negotiation track towards the desired agreement. We

reiterate our readiness to resume participation in any initiative or peaceful overture that might lead to an agreement that serves the interests of all parties.

Mr. President,

The Sudan has seen the blood of martyrs spilt over decades of tyranny, oppression and injustice. Unfortunately, despite the achievements in the short period since the glorious revolution, the transition process continues to face major challenges. Support from the international community and our friends is needed to implement the Government's plans to reform the country's economic conditions. Top priorities include debt forgiveness and facilitated loan access, as well as fulfilment of the pledges made at the Sudan Partnership Conference in Berlin last year and the Paris conference to support the Sudan held this year and previously. Procedural obstacles that remain even after the removal of the Sudan from the list of State sponsors of terrorism must be eliminated so that our country can return to the family of nations after having been cut off for three decades. In that connection, I should like to express the utmost gratitude to President Emmanuel Macron and France for organizing and hosting the Paris conference. I also thank all the States that have forgiven debts owed by the Sudan and the States and organizations that have provided support for social protection to cushion the side effects of structural reform on the vulnerable classes of our society.

Mr. President,

Allow me to express my sincere gratitude to the United Nations, the African Union and the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), which has ended its operations in Darfur, for the many lessons learned, and is now leaving the Sudan after handing over its headquarters to the Government of the Sudan and commencing the final stages of dissolution.

It also gives me pleasure to inform you that the Government of the Sudan and the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) have signed a status-of-mission agreement. The Government of the Sudan is committed to providing facilities and cooperation in support of that Mission's goals. I commend the positive spirit displayed by UNITMAS and urge it to continue to carry out its mandate to assist the Government of the Sudan in implementing the democratic transition in accordance with the terms of reference and tasks contained in Security Council resolution 2425 (2018) establishing its mandate.

Although transitional Government has to a great extent overcome challenges to bringing about peace, the challenges that come after peace remain considerable. We hope that the international community, United Nations agencies and UNITAMS will be able to play active roles in the peacebuilding process and the return of displaced persons, and provide financial and technical resource for reintegration and demobilization in implementation of the section of the Juba Peace Agreement on security arrangements.

Mr. President,

In closing, I should like to stress that we will continue to pursue rebuilding projects, reform our institutions and strengthen our foreign relations so that the Sudan can resume an active role in its regional and international environment, contribute to building the future we want, and help to strengthen the role of the United Nations

in promoting cooperation and collective action as an effective approach to facing the challenges that threaten our peoples.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Annex IX

Address by Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia

Mr. President,

Mr. Secretary General,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, let me express my heartfelt appreciation to Excellency Volkan Bozkır for his past efforts to guide the work of the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I wish to congratulate as well Excellency Abdulla Shahid for his election as the President of the 76th UNGA Session. I also have the great pleasure to congratulate His Excellency António Guterres for his second term reappointment as the United Nations Secretary-General.

This is the second time that the UNGA has to hold its session in a virtual setting due to the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 and the surge of its variants are the biggest challenge and the most disruptive event in modern history. Overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic and efforts to restore growth have been the top priority for all countries. Cambodia has joined international efforts to rollout a widespread vaccination campaign. Our National Campaign was launched on 10 February 2021, and we have made steady progress, including the vaccination of foreign nationals, children, and youth between 6 to 18 years of age. At this rate, we expect to vaccinate around 80 per cent (13 million people) of the total population (of around 16 million) by no later than November of this year.

With good vaccination progress in combination with strong containment and treatment measures, Cambodia looks ahead to a gradual re-opening of a sustainable and inclusive social and economic activity. We take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to all our bilateral and multilateral friends for the generous support extended to Cambodia in our fight against COVID-19.

Mr. President,

Our world still has to tackle a myriad of other pressing challenges such as geopolitical competition and rivalries between major powers, technological and trade wars, territorial armed conflicts, terrorism and transnational crimes, and Climate Change. The pressure on international peace and security is as great as ever.

History has told us time and again that interference and worse, military options to impose different systems of governance are not the solutions. Far from it, they have only led to many more deaths, human suffering and misery, social and economic strife. Cambodia is the real-life example and has experienced the worst tragedy; and sadly, we are now witnessing the repetition of the same policies. If the recent events in Afghanistan, and many more before it, are lessons to be learnt from, there is great merit to respect the wishes of each nation and their people's rights to self-determination.

That is why there is now a compelling reason to strengthen multilateralism and rules-based international cooperation. Countries, large and small, differ in their history, culture, traditions, ways of life and political organization. They should not be hindered by the imposition of unilateral sanctions, embargoes or other coercive

economic measures that violate international law and the very principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

This coming November, Cambodia is proud to host virtually the 13th Summit of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM13) with a theme “Strengthening multilateralism for shared growth” that we view today as still very important. In my view, the main agenda that must dominate the Summit should be that multilateralism gives priority to convergences: a convergence on the fight against COVID-19 and to build back a stronger society and economy; a convergence on the fight against climate change and on key proposals for WTO reform, amongst others.

Climate change is another impending challenge that requires urgent and concrete global actions at all levels. In this context, Cambodia supports the Secretary-General’s call to scale up support for regional adaptation and mitigation efforts and reaffirm our commitment to the Paris Agreement, in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Mr. President,

International peace and security are of utmost importance for a sustainable future. Cambodia would like to reiterate its longstanding position that the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security rests with the United Nations. Since 2006, Cambodia has contributed more than 7,500 troops to serve in various UN peacekeeping missions across the globe, and a number of our troops have made the ultimate sacrifice during their mission to protect the innocents. Moreover, Cambodia supports the Secretary-General’s Action for Peacekeeping Plus (A4P+) initiative. Cambodia also supports the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda which will help integrate a meaningful gender perspective in various peacekeeping operations.

In addition, I would like to emphasize that the changing realities of the twenty-first century demand a newly revamped and responsive United Nations. The organization requires a more democratic, inclusive, and representative approach to the problems of the day. In this light, Cambodia fully supports the Secretary-General’s proactive efforts to make the organization nimbler and responsive to the needs of its Member States. The relationship between the Security Council, the General Assembly, and the United Nations Secretariat must also be reinvigorated. In this regard, Cambodia wishes to reaffirm its support for the Security Council reform. We are of the view that the foremost priority should be given to increasing the representation of developing countries which comprise the vast majority of Member States.

Mr. President,

As the incoming chair of ASEAN next year, Cambodia will seek to address the common challenges facing our region. With a strong solidarity from ASEAN Member States and the support of its external partners, Cambodia will aim to further advance the ASEAN Community building process and to sustain ASEAN as a region of critical importance for global trade, investment, and supply chains. Cambodia will continue to push for a more vibrant and harmonious ASEAN Community with better protection of migrant workers, a greener and more inclusive development

agenda, and a more advanced digital transformation for MSMEs, women and youth entrepreneurship.

May I conclude by expressing my strong hope for a strengthened multilateralism with the United Nations at the core to galvanize international solidarity for the global community to succeed in overcoming the COVID-19 crisis, advancing peace, sustainable development, and shared prosperity for all. Multilateralism is our hope, and we look to the UN as our “beacon of hope”.

I thank you for your kind attention.

Annex X**Address by Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry, and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Fiji**

President of 76th Session of UN General Assembly, Abdulla Shahid;

Secretary General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres;

Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen

Bula Vinaka from Fiji.

I've just stepped away from a session in our Parliament — the beating heart of our eight-year-old true parliamentary democracy. I wish I could be with you in New York, but I am beholden to Fiji's shores to lead our COVID-19 response.

Allow me to first congratulate you, Your Excellency Abdulla Shahid, on your election as the President of the General Assembly. The Fijian people — the stewards of 1.3 million square kilometers of Blue Pacific — are proud to see the Maldives, another large ocean state, offer Presidency to the international community.

And to my friend, Secretary-General Guterres, congratulations on your second term. Your re-election was a win for the planet, for the climate, and for the smallest states among us.

Our multilateral challenges: UN 2:0

Your Report to the UNGA on Our Common Agenda is the blueprint for a future that is better, greener, and safer — and I would humbly add, “bluer.”

We want that future for Fiji. We want islands inhabited by citizens who stand with nature and not against it. We want sustainable economic growth that is powered by clean energy and protected from the impacts of climate change.

We want robust and resilient health systems, and we want good jobs and income supported by a green and blue economy. To succeed, our vision must become the vision of humanity, because our fate is the world's fate.

The world's present course leads nowhere near the future we want for ourselves. A deadly pathogen is burning through humanity like a bushfire — and inequity is fanning the flames. This year alone, climate-driven floods, heatwaves, fires, and cyclones have killed hundreds and inflicted unsustainable economic damage. We humans are the cause, but we are refusing to become the solution.

This grave moment is not without parallel. In the wake of the death and destruction of World War Two, world leaders saw unilateral action as kindling for another world war, one fought with nuclear weapons of planet-destroying potential. They answered that challenge with the genius of this multilateral system.

Our challenges are different, but the stakes are alike. Mr. Secretary General, your recommendations in Our Common Agenda are spot on. We must meet this moment with a new UN — a new energy, new resources, and new bonds of trust with the people this institution serves. A new UN that enlists the dynamism of young people, because our action — and inaction — directly affects their future.

A new UN that empowers those on the margins of society — particularly women and girls — and brings them into the centre of global decision-making.

Excellencies,

Since we last gathered, it has become clearer that we face two pandemics — one that is ending for the wealthy nations and one that is worsening across much of the developing world. That widening chasm can be measured in lives lost and in years of economic progress undone.

Across the Global South, what the world once branded as “sustainable development” is unravelling before our eyes.

Hundreds of millions of jobs have been lost, hundreds of millions of people cannot access adequate food, and an entire generation has had their education disrupted. The wounds of this crisis will cripple us for years if left untreated.

Fiji’s experience shows how an equitable recovery can begin. It starts by getting jabs in arms, fast.

After one full year with zero local COVID cases, the insidious Delta variant crept into our country and sparked a deadly second outbreak. After a slow start while we scrambled to acquire enough vaccines, we are winning the battle.

Over 98 per cent of adults across our 110 populated islands have one jab of the vaccine, and more than 67 per cent are fully-vaccinated. We thank India, Australia, New Zealand and the United States for helping us secure the doses we needed.

Our mission now is to recover the more than 100,000 jobs lost to the pandemic and to recoup a 50 per cent loss in Government revenues. Soon, Fiji will reopen to tourism and to regional and international business. We will look to accelerate investment trends, like increased digitization, that will modernize our economy and help it recover.

But Fiji’s victory over the virus will be short-lived unless the global community can accelerate vaccinations everywhere.

It is appalling that wealthier countries are already considering third doses or boosters for their citizens while millions of people – including frontline healthcare workers - in the developing world cannot access a single dose. Globally, thousands of lives are still being lost every day to the virus. The majority represent our collective failure to make vaccines available to developing countries.

Vaccine nationalism must end. The G7, G20, and multilateral financial institutions have failed to stop it. Only the UN can fill this void of leadership.

I join other leaders in calling on the UN to convene an urgent special meeting of Leaders to agree to a time bound, costed, and detailed plan for the full vaccination of developing countries.

Our Socio-Economic challenge

Vaccine inequity is a symptom of a much larger injustice, one that is inherent to the international economic system. This injustice is the unequal distribution of finance, or access to finance, that can fuel a recovery.

While wealthy nations have propped up their economies by printing and investing trillions at near zero interest rates, developing nations — particularly Small

States — have had to borrow at punitive rates to simply keep our people alive, fed, and healthy.

Through the pandemic, my Government rolled out the largest cash transfer program in our history — providing hundreds of millions of dollars in unemployment benefits to nearly one-third of Fiji's adult population. We even expanded some of our social protection programs, including pensions for the elderly, and financial support for the differently-abled and other vulnerable communities.

The alternative was mass destitution, which we would not accept. But to pay for it, we had to take on debt, precipitated by massive reduction in Government revenue.

We need a more innovative framework for development finance that recognises the unique needs of SIDS. And we must adopt a more sophisticated framework of assessing debt sustainability that incorporates the urgency of building resilience and breaks free of the norms of the 20th century.

This pandemic has been a painful lesson about where unilateral action can lead and where our multilateral institutions are unwilling to go.

We must find new frontiers of co-operation if we stand any chance of averting future pandemics — or staving off the worst of climate change. If Small States are to build back greener, bluer, and better, we will need an equal voice about and vote on decisions that determine our future. Small States need our interests heard, understood, and acted upon.

Our Climate Challenge

Despite all the talk we hear of saving the planet, the world's collective commitments are paltry. Akin to spitting into the strengthening winds of climate-fuelled super-storms.

The climate is on track for 2.7°C of global warming, which would ensure the loss of entire low-lying nations in the Pacific and huge chunks of global coastlines. It guarantees frequent devastation from floods, cyclones, coastal inundations, and wildfires. It spells climate-driven conflict, mass migration, and the collapse of food systems and ecosystems. It is appalling. It is unimaginable. But it is where we are headed.

Since March 2020, Fiji has experienced three cyclones — two of which approached Category Five intensity. Fijians are strong people. We endured much, and we will endure more still. But I am tired of applauding my people's resilience. True resilience is not just defined by a nation's grit but by our access to financial resources.

Resilience is seawalls. It is parametric insurance for those most vulnerable. It is nature-based solutions. It is systematically relocating communities from the rising seas. Fiji is using every fiscal tool in our kit to do these things. And we are doing everything within our means to reduce our emissions. We have submitted an NDC that commits Fiji to net-zero emissions and harnesses nature to lead that transition — commitments that will soon become law through a comprehensive Climate Change Bill. In recognition of the ocean-climate nexus — Fiji hopes to secure a blue bond next year in support of a sustainable blue Fijian economy. But Fiji can't halt climate change by itself.

Today, SIDS are able to access less than 2 per cent of the available climate finance. To build a truly resilient Fiji, we need access to fast-deploying targeted

grants, long-term concessionary financing and, financial tools and instruments established through public-private collaboration and partnership.

Our Oceans Challenge

The Fijian economy depends on a healthy ocean and so we are taking bold strides to reverse its current decline. We have committed to 100 percent sustainable management of EEZ and 30 percent declared as marine protected areas by 2030. We are expanding investments in sustainable aquaculture, seaweed farming, and high-value processed fish.

But we cannot do this alone. We look to the global system to stop illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. We look to Member States to agree to a new treaty to preserve marine in waters beyond national jurisdictions. We need global greenhouse gas emissions to fall dramatically and quickly. At COP26, we expect the oceans pathway will be locked into the UNFCCC processes. Fiji seeks a decision in “one slash COP26” reflecting this change.

Our COP26 Package

In one month, we meet in Scotland for a hugely consequential COP. The Pacific’s mission in Glasgow is clear: we must keep the 1.5 target alive.

This demands drastic emissions cuts by 2030 that put large nations on a path towards net-zero emissions before 2050.

Leaders who cannot summon the courage to unveil these commitments and policy packages at COP26 should not bother booking a flight to Glasgow. Instead, they — and the selfish interests they stand for — should face consequences that match the severity of what they are unleashing on our planet. We do not tolerate war between our Members States. So, how can we tolerate war waged against the planet, on the life it sustains, and on future generations? That is the firm red line Pacific nations will draw in Glasgow. We are demanding net-zero emissions and accepting zero excuses.

And, Excellencies, at COP26, the global north must finally deliver on \$100 Billion per year in climate finance and agree to a pathway to increase financing commitments to at least \$750 Billion per year from 2025 forward. If we can spend trillions on missiles, drones, and nuclear submarines, we can fund climate action. It is criminal that vulnerable Pacific Small Island Developing States can access a mere .05 per cent of the climate finance currently available to protect ourselves from an existential crisis we did not cause.

Mr. President, these are the challenges we face, at this UNGA and at COP26. We must find the courage to face them squarely.

The consequences of not doing so are simply unthinkable. We will see you in Glasgow.

Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you.

Annex XI

Address by Mr. Lotay Tshering, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan

Mr. President,
Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

I bring you warm greetings from His Majesty The King, Her Majesty The Queen and the people of Bhutan, the land of Gross National Happiness.

I begin with prayers for all the precious lives lost to the pandemic and sincerely hope it comes to an end very soon.

Congratulations Your Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid for the presidency. I assure you my full support as you assume this role at a critical time. I also extend my gratitude to the 75th President for conducting the last session successfully.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Your Excellency Mr. António Guterres, on your re-election as the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Nobody else can give us better hope and guidance to build back from this pandemic than Your Excellency.

I would also like to thank Your Excellency as well as Prime Minister Johnson for organising the Leaders Roundtable on Climate Change five days ago. I spoke on behalf of the 46 LDCs and we are already excited for concrete results out of the COP26 in the coming month.

I would like to inform the august gathering that this year marks the 50th anniversary of Bhutan's membership to the UN. I was excited to attend the session and celebrate the milestone with you all, but the situation as you know did not favour our physical participation.

I thank everyone at the organization and all the members for enriching Bhutan's five decades of journey with the UN.

We have come a long way. The fact that we are ready to graduate from the LDC category is a clear indication that our efforts together have born results.

In addition to the UN and other partners, I thank the Government of India for your unconditional support all these years.

We will continue to work closely with all our partners.

Please allow me to talk a little more on the last five decades.

During the 50 years, the global poverty rate dropped from 52 to 9 per cent. Life expectancy increased from 57 to almost 73 years. Bhutan's was just 40 when we joined the UN. The infant mortality rate decreased from 98 to 27 deaths per 1000 live births.

Similarly, the maternal mortality reduced from almost 400 to 200 deaths per 100,000 live births. The global literacy rate spiked from 67 to 86 percent. Without the coordinated global efforts through the UN, these progresses would not have been

possible or worse, many nations could have slipped backwards. We are thankful that Bhutan has comparatively benefitted more.

In the last 50 years, Bhutan was blessed with three successive monarchs.

It was His Late Majesty the Third King who worked tirelessly to install Bhutan into the UN. It was a historic move to establish global diplomacy and harness meaningful friendship. The farsighted monarch led the country on the path of modernization, with focus on modern education and progressive techniques in all spheres.

When the Fourth King took over soon after, he came with the profound development philosophy of Gross National Happiness in as early as 1972.

As the term “GNH” became more pronounced over the years, the world appreciated its relevance in the sustainable and holistic format as opposed to the conventional GDP growth.

I am happy to see this concept reflected in Secretary General’s “Our Common Agenda” report, which I would like to touch upon later.

The nation lived through major socioeconomic development, championing in conservation efforts and strengthening global ties. The world will recall that during the peak of his reign, our fourth King stepped down to offer the throne to his son and despite public resistance, he ushered in democratic transition.

Destined to carry forward the legacy, Bhutan received a young and dynamic monarch, His Majesty The King, in 2006. We embarked on a new chapter. Just under two decades, people of Bhutan relished the reign of a King who was caring, learned and astute.

For generations, Bhutanese have always loved and revered our Kings ... for the simple reason that our monarchs have been selfless for the nation and the people. But when COVID-19 crisis unfolded, for Bhutan, we uncovered the true essence of our King’s leadership.

In him, we saw a son who ensured the old and vulnerable people were protected from the infection. In him, we saw a brother who travelled tirelessly throughout the country, uplifting the spirits of the front-liners, and working alongside to protect the people.

In His Majesty, we saw a parent who ensured the livelihoods of all those affected. The supports ranged from emotional to cash to food. But of all, we saw a noble being who led with science and wisdom on one hand and care and compassion on the other.

Complementing all the noble efforts, Her Majesty The Queen showed personal care and initiated targeted interventions for the vulnerable sections of our society with emphasis on mental health care and services in the country.

When the world was dealing with the unprecedented plight that questioned our survival and livelihood daily, we sailed through with a minimum scratch from the pandemic. To update, we have seen only three COVID deaths and slightly over 2,500 cases so far, most of which were imported cases.

Similarly, our vaccination coverage for 12 years and above is almost 80 percent, as I speak. Despite being resource constraint, we have not compromised on the quality and standards of the COVID measures.

Let me also mention that in the entire process of battling the pandemic, we ensured the routine health services were delivered uninterrupted. Besides the regular vaccination programs, we introduced HPV vaccines for the first time for our boys and flu shots for everyone amid the pandemic.

We also launched nationwide program on prevention and early detection of the three most common cancers in Bhutan-stomach, breast and cervical.

All these are aligned with the royal visions enshrined in the Constitution that mandates the State to provide free health and education. His Majesty tells us that quality health and education, made affordable and available to all, are the biggest social levellers.

Excellencies,

Just like the rest of the world, we are also looking at the pandemic as an opportunity to reset ourselves. The process to overhaul the civil service in consonance with education reform is underway. This is an unprecedented move.

A nationwide roll-out of Bhutan baccalaureate system is in progress following successful trial of a formative education system in the last ten years.

Knowing that the path ahead is ICT driven, we have started digital initiatives with the ultimate goal for everyone in Bhutan to have a digital ID, as a build-up for Big Data system.

Some other components are ICTisation of schools, Integrated Taxation System, and electronic Patient Information management.

On the other hand, our Central Bank is also piloting a project on digital Ngultrum, Bhutan's currency, using block chain technology. This is to adapt with the overall ICT transformation and harness technology for a 21st-century Bhutan.

Here, let me share that it is as though His Majesty saw the pandemic coming. In 2011, an extensive program that engaged citizens in a greater role of nation building, calling it De-Suung, the Guardians of Peace, was started.

It recharged the entire spirit of volunteerism, opened world of opportunities for our youth and injected sense of purpose and responsibility. Thousands of youth were involved in the programs that created a mass societal shift.

When disease entered the country, the De-Suungs in their orange uniform were helping guard the borders and entry points, ensuring everyone followed the COVID-19 norms and even became a part of the paramedics. This made a huge impact in efficient management of the pandemic.

In another unique transformative step, the De-Suungs when not a part of COVID-19 related duties, are engaged in various skilling and re-skilling programs across the nation.

We know that the pandemic has forced many out of jobs and their basic skills have become irrelevant.

The ILO projects the global shortfall of jobs to be 75 million this year and 23 million in 2022.

This means unless we re-tool ourselves in keeping with the change, it will be difficult to find gainful employment and other opportunities for many.

The ongoing youth engagement programs are major steps to recover from the pandemic.

While the effects may not be immediate, down the years, it would have been one of the main reasons for us to come out of the pandemic stronger.

I feel when Bhutan's socioeconomic transformation is reviewed later, our human development initiatives, guided by our King, will be the chapter that would have truly steered our nation into the 21st century.

I am highly appreciative of the fact that the UN instruments are sensitive in picking this up. A special recognition was awarded to His Majesty for his leadership in advancing human development and the wellbeing of Bhutanese people in 2019.

Excellencies,

We have immense lessons to draw from the pandemic, be it at national or global level. It has uncovered weaknesses and potentials of many nations and societies. But one lesson that we all must keep in mind is to be prepared with a more resilient system for future.

The nomenclature of SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19 clearly indicate that there will be successive outbreaks of infectious diseases. It is a matter of when. I mean nobody knows where SARS-CoV-3 is getting incubated.

Therefore, our focus to build back better can never be good if we don't emphasise on health and quality healthcare that is easily accessible and affordable by everyone.

We must also be mindful that immediate disease outbreak could be potentially from the pandemic induced starvation and poverty. The pandemic has disrupted the already weak global food system. The Asia-Pacific region alone has 90 million people pushed back into extreme poverty in the aftermath of the current health crisis.

I shared my concern during the UN food system summit the day before. Forget meeting the nutritional requirements, we are struggling to ensure adequate quantity.

We must coordinate clear action plans to meet the immediate food shortage and long term sustenance plan.

In all the discussions about food security, one immediate challenge besides the pandemic is the climate change that has tested the resilience of the food we grow as well as the patience of the growers.

Which is why it is time for action now. On Bhutan's part, our visionary monarchs have maintained high legal standards to safeguard our natural heritage.

We have a dedicated chapter on environment in our Constitution, which mandates 60 per cent forest coverage and maintain inter-generational equity of our natural resources.

We have more than half the country as protected areas. In order to safeguard the health of the protected areas, and the livelihood of people living there, a Royal Charter was issued for an innovative funding mechanism called Bhutan for Life. We consider these as our eternal NDCs from Bhutan.

If we mean what we say about working for the next generation, we must talk about tough climate laws as a component of NDCs from all countries.

Excellencies

Despite being a small developing nation, as a GNH country, we always believe in global peace and harmony. Bhutan joined the peacekeeping fraternity in 2014. Since then, our involvement with UN Peace Keeping has grown.

We are now set to deploy a Bhutanese Quick Reaction Force for the first time this year. I thank the UN for trusting us. I am confident that our troops will live up to His Majesty's aspirations of serving with distinction and honour.

In conclusion, we all know that COVID-19 will leave behind a different world. But what sort of a world we want lies in our hands.

Mr. Secretary General's report titled "Our Common Agenda" offers all of us a good reference point for our collective progress.

For this, I thank the Secretary-General for coming out with this comprehensive and bold report for a greener and safer world. Please know that Bhutan is committed to working with other Member States in advancing the ideas in the report. We have full confidence in your leadership to spearhead Our Common Agenda.

I want to share that it was almost as if the theme of the general debate was designed for Bhutan. It gave me an opportunity to reflect on our hope as a nation.

The pandemic brought out the very essence of GNH, which seeks collective happiness and not just of oneself. It calls for us to act in unity.

For Bhutan, everyone came forward to show solidarity to shield our country from the pandemic under His Majesty's leadership. If not, this small, resource constraint country would have been crushed in the stampede of the COVID19 pandemic.

Our unique system is beyond conventional definition of progress and prosperity. A country's future is not just founded based on economic might and technological advancements but on the integral values of human bonding and respect. And in this, His Majesty is our true hope and our future.

I feel this is our biggest strength to come out of any adversities, just as we did this time.

With prayers from Bhutan to the rest of the world I thank you all for listening. I wish the 76th session of the UN General Assembly every success.

Thank you and *Tashi Delek*.

Annex XII

Address by Mr. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand

Mr. President, Distinguished delegates, Very warm greetings from Thailand,

First of all, I am delighted to extend my warmest congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid on his election as President of the 76th session of UN General Assembly.

At the end of last year, we believed that the rollout of vaccines would be the beginning of the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in reality, viruses are constantly mutating, taking new forms and spreading faster than earlier forms. The variants have raised concerns about the efficacy of existing COVID-19 vaccines and tend to become endemic which means that the viruses are here to stay for years to come. Thus, it is crucial that all countries learn to coexist with COVID-19 and foster quality societies in the ‘next normal’ world.

With COVID-19, the global community is confronting one of the most serious multi-dimensional challenges of our lifetime. To compound this situation, climate-induced catastrophes have also aggravated the ongoing turmoil caused by the pandemic and created tremendous losses, while further disrupting global efforts towards the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These unfortunate events also affect the livelihoods of the global population, especially those living in developing countries.

In this connection, I would like to congratulate the Secretary-General for his “Our Common Agenda” report, which envisages closer global cooperation on key issues and reinvigorating inclusive, networked, and effective multilateralism in order to foster a peaceful international environment, as well as a better and more sustainable future for all.

I agree with you, Mr. President, that in this world full of chaos, the most important things for us are “hope” and the aspiration towards building a better future by focusing on balanced and people-centric development that leaves nobody behind. I believe that the crises and challenges we face today have presented us with an opportunity to learn from past lessons, to reorient our approach and to better prepare for the future. With this in mind, I would like to encourage everyone to turn crisis into opportunity — an opportunity to reform multilateral cooperation and make it a genuine driver of change. This demands a reaffirmation of faith in multilateralism since no national capabilities, however large, can on their own be adequate to effect meaningful change or transition. We need global-scale solidarity and cooperation that is commensurate with the scale of the crisis. We must build global immunity and deal with challenges in a sustainable and concrete manner.

Mr. President,

The COVID-19 pandemic is living proof that nobody is safe until everybody is safe. In this regard, I urge that COVID-19 vaccines and medicines be considered as global public goods which can be accessible to all in an equitable and rapid manner. Any country that has surplus COVID-19 vaccines and medicines in hand is encouraged to share them with those in need, either through donations or swap arrangements. At the same time, research and development on vaccines, medicines and necessary medical equipment must also be encouraged in order to better equip and elevate the

medical industries of countries around the world to deal with emerging diseases of the future.

Moreover, every country must take actions to strengthen public health systems, particularly on achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and supporting efforts within the scope of the World Health Organization (WHO) to collectively enhance global health security. This includes the call for a new Pandemic Treaty and the imperative to rethink the paradigm of global health security – one that focuses on equal and borderless access to public health services. As for Thailand, we have also been promoting integration and coherence between health and disaster risk management, both natural-related and emerging diseases-related. Thailand encourages the international community to utilize the Bangkok Principles which provide guidance on the implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. I believe that the building of a resilient, equitable and fair global health system will be a fundamental basis for our recovery in a sustainable manner.

Indeed, fighting against COVID-19 is not an individual competition that has a definite winner or loser. Instead, it is a team sport and we are all in the same team. So, a win-all situation is our shared goal. Recently, we have seen positive trends in coping with the COVID-19 pandemic in many parts of the world, as well as enhanced collaboration in vaccine production and distribution through bilateral and multilateral frameworks. Thus, I strongly believe that we will overcome this health crisis together.

Mr. President,

As I mentioned earlier, due to unbalanced growth and development, the world is facing a growing existential threat of natural catastrophes connected with climate change on an unprecedented scale. Over the past centuries, we have carelessly enjoyed and, at times, exploited planet earth's environment without listening to the repeated warning signals sent over time. We are now inevitably left with self-inflicted consequences that we have to bear with for the next 30 years.

Such a future might not seem to be bright and shiny. But if we continue on our current path, the global temperature change might rise beyond 2° C which would result in even more catastrophic changes. Heat waves and extreme weather events are likely to be more frequent and increasingly intense, leading to disruptions in agriculture and harvesting seasons and may lead to food security crises. It is, therefore, a quintessential agenda on Thailand's priorities as we are rich in biodiversity with a large agricultural sector. I view the organization of the Food Systems Summit this week as reflecting the due importance that should be given to food security, and hope that the global community will be able to find sustainable solutions.

Thailand is in the process of preparing the National Energy Plan with an aim to achieve carbon neutrality by 2065-2070. At the same time, we have set the target to increase the proportion of renewable energy to at least 50 per cent of the total amount of electricity generated. We are committed to increase the use of electric vehicles (EV) to 30 per cent of total domestic vehicles. In this regard, Thailand urges developed countries to take lead in significantly reducing in greenhouse gas emissions, and calls on the global community to take collective actions to ensure constructive and concrete outcomes at COP26.

But I believe that every cloud has a silver lining. I would like to emphasize that we must turn the crisis into an opportunity to reengineer the way the world works

to better prepare for the transformative reset to ensure “Balance of All Things”. It is particularly important to foster balanced development that is environment-friendly. Accordingly, the global community has to accelerate cooperation on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI), especially by investing in clean and renewable energy, energy storage technology, electric vehicles, and relevant infrastructure. For its part, Thailand remains committed to carry forward our initiative on the Eastern Economic Corridor or the EEC to be a jewel in the crown for international creative economy. We emphasize the importance of financial assistance and technology transfers for research and development and innovation extended to developing countries through various cooperative frameworks. This would boost their capacities and increase their participation in addressing global problems as well as enable them to swiftly adjust to changes, build immunity and better recover from global warming in a sustainable manner.

Mr. Presidents, Distinguished delegates,

Driving forward realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across all sectors is a key instrument to respond to the challenges the world is facing, and to deal with inequalities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Financing for development, therefore, is of crucial importance. The international community must place due importance on the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, as well as to other economic measures vital for stimulating economic recovery in developing countries, especially the Least Developing Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. Therefore, I call on the international community to mobilize utmost efforts to assist these countries in overcoming pressing development challenges. Thailand, as the ASEAN Coordinator on Sustainable Development Cooperation, is committed to promoting complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to boost the post COVID-19 pandemic recovery, as well as to contribute to global immunity against future challenges.

I firmly believe that balance is at the heart of the realization of the SDGs and is a key instrument for dealing with crises and challenges, whether from emerging diseases, food security, threats to biodiversity, human rights problems, or poverty eradication. Last July, Thailand submitted our second Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The report placed emphasis on the application of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) as guidelines for achieving the SDGs including through the promotion of the Bio-Circular-Green Economy Model. The BCG Economy Model constitutes a balanced and sustainable approach to development, encompassing economic, social and environmental aspects through application of technology and innovation that are connected to global supply chains. Moreover, Thailand pays great attention to the promotion of global food security through the adoption of the New Theory Agriculture, accompanied by initiatives such as the Agriculture for School Lunch Project, under the patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, as prototype to instil a sustainable consumption approach into the youth.

Mr. President,

Peace and stability are an indispensable foundation for driving forward the Sustainable Development Agenda, leaving no one behind. It is, therefore, crucial for the global community to join hands in creating a peaceful environment by promoting mutual trust and solidarity, particularly among the major powers. Thailand has

continuously played a role on questions of sustaining peace and in peacekeeping and security processes, including by seeking a constructive role in the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and making voluntary contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). Meanwhile, Thai police and military forces continue to participate actively in UN missions in support of the vital work of peace building. In so doing, we also believe that promoting the development agenda in conflict areas will help resolve the root causes of problems.

The situation of Afghanistan has brought home the realization that the international community must come together to strengthen stability and security across the regions. Thailand is particularly concerned with the humanitarian situation as we, the peoples of Thailand and Afghanistan, belong to the same Asian region. Thailand, therefore, has pledged a financial contribution of \$150,000 to support the work of UN organizations in order to alleviate humanitarian crisis there. We have also made financial contributions to assist with the situation in Haiti.

17. Thailand and other Core Group states consider the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapon (TPNW) on 22 January 2021 as an encouraging manifestation of the determination of the global community to comply with commitments under the UN Charter in promoting a world that is free from nuclear weapons for succeeding generations. Given this positive development despite current international tensions, the global community should take heart and seek to collectively deepen collaboration in various fields, such as on cyber issues and peaceful applications of nuclear technology. In this connection, Thailand further supports building complementarities between cooperation under the TPNW and the Treaty on the Non -Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Thailand is committed to supporting efforts in fostering an environment of peace and reconciliation in Myanmar through multilateral diplomacy. As a close neighbour and fellow ASEAN Member State, Thailand has been closely following developments, and fully supports the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus agreed upon by ASEAN leaders, accompanied by cooperation on health and humanitarian assistance. Thailand has continuously provided concrete humanitarian assistance to the people of Myanmar, particularly in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, through various channels such as the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) which has a satellite warehouse in Thailand's Chai Nat Province, as well as through UN agencies.

Mr. President, Distinguished delegates,

At the moment, the COVID-19 situation in Thailand is still as challenging as in many other countries. However, I do believe that ongoing endeavour to build the immunity of people against the virus remains crucial. In this regard, Universal Health Coverage (UHC) will continue to serve as an efficient tool to deal with health challenges and emerging diseases. Thailand has also leveraged the strength of our Village Volunteers system and Thai traditional knowledge to fight against COVID-19. We are proud of having been able to draw on *Fah Talai Chon*, a local Thai herb, as an alternative medicine to relieve COVID-19 symptoms. It has become an example of how local Thai wisdom can be further developed to generate wider benefits.

December this year will mark the 75th anniversary of Thailand's membership in the United Nations. As the representative of Thailand, I am immensely proud that, throughout the past 75 years, Thailand has been a responsible, reliable and

constructive member and development partner of the UN across all three pillars. Moreover, Thailand is honoured to act as a superhub for the UN in Asia, hosting over 40 agencies. We, hereby, reaffirm our commitments as host country and will continue our strong support for the Life-cycle Replacement and Seismic Mitigation Project (SMP) of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).

Furthermore, Thailand has strong determination to be a regional centre for international cooperation and training. We have always attached importance to promoting development cooperation and assistance in various areas through South-South and triangular cooperation. Thailand, in collaboration with the UNESCAP and the UN Office for South-South Cooperation, will therefore, co-host the Global South-South Development Expo in Bangkok in 2022.

And in 2022, Thailand will be the host of Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). The three main priorities that Thailand is driving forward are: (1) facilitating trade and investment; (2) rebooting regional connectivity, particularly in the travel and tourism industry; and (3) advancing sustainable and inclusive growth. These priorities underscore Thailand's commitment to promoting multilateral cooperation to ensure balanced development in the post-COVID-19 world. We hope to welcome the world to Thailand in the present context of constant change.

Excellencies, history has empirically taught us that after sufferings, comes growth and prosperity. Thus, I am confident that multilateral cooperation in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, especially under the UN framework, will lead to great advances in the field of medical science. Equally, the strength of the international community in tackling the global warming crisis will serve as a catalyst for breakthroughs in advanced technology and innovation. Resilient adaptation and swift response to challenges will be an asset for us to address the problems of today, to be better prepared for challenges of tomorrow, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and ultimately to build back a better world.

Thank you, *Sawasdee krab*.

Annex XIII

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

Mr. President;
Excellencies, Heads of State and Governments;

Mr. Secretary-General;
Distinguished Delegates;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Introduction

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

Mr President,

At the outset, let me sincerely congratulate you on assuming the presidency of this 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly. Your Excellency, I assure you of Vanuatu's committed support during your tenure. We have every confidence that your presidency will successfully guide us in our collective pursuit of the future we want, and rally the spirit of cooperation essential for the United Nations we need.

I would also like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to His Excellency Volkan Bozkır, the outgoing President of the 75th Session on his outstanding stewardship of this august body during such a challenging time.

Mr. President,

Let me join my fellow world leaders by expressing Vanuatu's sympathy and solidarity to all Governments and peoples around the world who have been gravely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The UN High -Level Week is convened at a time where we need to scale up our collaborative efforts to find solutions to a myriad of global issues, not least to join efforts in containing the COVID-19 pandemic. Disease and despair have characterized the past two years. Inequality, injustice and instability have increased. Our planet is suffering and we need to get moving again, rebuild communities and join efforts to rescue the planet, recover economies and restore hope. We need to adapt to the new normal to work together towards a better future for ourselves, our children and the future generations to come.

The theme for this 76th Session — “Building resilience through hope — to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainability, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people, and revitalize the United Nations” — is very fitting to address the current global challenges that we face and is consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Global Challenges

Mr. President,

The last two years have been undoubtedly dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic which has thus far resulted in the death of more than 4 million people

worldwide. The pandemic represents one of the most profound challenges to socioeconomic development in all countries.

There is no doubt that it has a broad humanitarian, social and economic impact in the short to long term and has set back achievements of the 2030 agenda and sustainable development goals.

There are increasingly evident effects of climate change, including record-breaking wildfires, flooding and more extreme temperatures. The latest IPCC report provides new estimates of the chances of crossing the global warming level of 1.5°C in the next decades. Unless there are immediate, rapid and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, limiting warming to near 1.5°C will be beyond reach.

These issues are increasingly eluding the control of individual national governments. Global solidarity and concerted international cooperation is therefore very essential. For us and other small island developing states especially, our biggest threats are global — most notably climate change, the management of our oceans and of course the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, our solutions too must be global. To recover better together, we need to take comprehensive action at the global, regional and national levels. Effective and sustainable support is now needed more than ever to regain momentum of international cooperation to advancing the 2030 Agenda, while building inclusive economies and resilient societies.

The Pacific leaders during the recent 51st Pacific Islands Forum meeting also acknowledged the challenges that threatens the strength and solidarity of the Forum family and called on leaders to be redirected to the Pacific Way of dialogue to address these challenges. This includes the COVID-19 pandemic, economic challenges, the intensifying climate crisis facing Pacific Island Countries and intensification of geopolitical competition in the Pacific region.

Vanuatu situation

Mr President,

In all countries, the economic shock caused by the pandemic has exposed structural weaknesses, notably in health and social protection systems. For Vanuatu, a recently graduated least developed country (LDC), the challenge was compounded by a natural disaster. The COVID-19 pandemic followed by the category-5 Tropical Cyclone Harold which caused extensive devastation in April 2020 has meant detrimental impacts on the economy, society and communities at an unprecedented level. The path to recovery will be a challenging one to navigate if the pandemic is not contained soon.

Like many other small Pacific island countries, Vanuatu has managed to escape the COVID-19 transmission. Swift lockdown on international borders provided a window to prepare on the health side, but these containment measures have crippled the economy. If the Coronavirus did enter Vanuatu, the health focus would immediately need to swing from prevention and preparedness to treatment and containment. An internal lockdown would heavily impact private and domestic sector participation in recovery process, add further stress to the economy and deepen the impact on community coping mechanisms.

For Vanuatu, rapid closure of international borders in March 2020, meant transitioning from a health threat to an economic emergency. Many businesses, especially those reliant on tourism effectively ground to a halt. No tourist arrivals and

a reduced resident community immediately impacted the hospitality and construction sectors, putting at least 8,000 formal jobs in jeopardy and affecting the livelihoods of tens of thousands of people in the informal sector. For more than 1,000 licensed handicraft artisans, their incomes plummeted to near-zero.

Mr. President,

As a small island nation, we know too well the importance of global solidarity. We know from experience that we are always better off when we are working together rather than in isolation.

It was in this spirit that we came together as a nation in July to celebrate our 41st anniversary of political independence. We celebrated our achievements with strong determination, resilience and hope for a better future despite the catastrophe that has been unleashed by the pandemic and natural disasters. We recommitted ourselves as a nation to work towards economic self-reliance with a major focus on the productive sector.

In responding to the COVID-19 and TC Harold, the Vanuatu Government has put together policies and strategies, aligned to the National Sustainable Development Plan, to address the impacts of the compounded disaster.

We reacted swiftly, imposing international lockdown followed by an extended period of national state of emergency from March 2020 to date as an immediate measure to contain the spread of the virus.

We developed a national recovery strategy that is aimed at supporting communities impacted by TC Harold and COVID-19, providing that framework to recover, rebuild and emerge stronger and more resilient. The strategy responds to social, economic and environmental impacts of the compounded disaster. It re-establishes and strengthens the public service to effectively lead and implement recovery in health and education, support and protect people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, in repairing and upgrading infrastructure and strengthening environmental service and resilience.

We commend the tremendous support of our development partners to the implementation of this strategy, especially in this difficult time where impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have imposed great threat to the implementation progress of the country's National Sustainable Development Plan.

The Vanuatu Government also introduced the COVID-19 stimulus package with a focus on preserving jobs, providing Government subsidies and commodity support grant, tuition fee exemption, grants for employment stabilization, stabilizing business and trade activities, tax relief, facilitating rural growth and enabling remittances through labour mobility programs. Recognizing our development partners' support, the Government has spent over 4 billion vatu for this program and may require further prudent fiscal measures to sustain the economy if the COVID-19 situation persists.

We have re-negotiated and re-established the seasonal workers program with Australia and New Zealand, a bilateral arrangement where Vanuatu exports labour to work in farms, hospitality and meat processing factories in New Zealand and Australia. The program has proven to be a success with more than 5000 Ni-Vanuatu workers recruited in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We started the COVID-19 vaccination roll out program towards the end of May this year and at this point we have only vaccinated about 10 per cent of the eligible population. The Government is ramping up efforts across the country, providing awareness to educate the citizens on benefits of the vaccines and mobilize the masses to get vaccinated. We thank our major development partners who assisted us to making vaccines available through the COVAX facility. Vaccine access remains the most critical issue for the global recovery. Global cooperation on vaccines is required to help prevent renewed waves of infection and the emergence of new variants, to end the health crisis sooner, and allow for faster normalization of activities in all countries.

Mr. President,

Vanuatu has also taken a bold step to graduate out of the LDC category on December 4, 2020 despite TC Harold and in the midst of COVID-19. We have done so because we believe it is the right thing to do which propels Vanuatu in a positive ‘can do’ attitude that we will rise up and do all we can with courage, boldness and determination to address and cope with the natural characteristics of our existence and most importantly the unique nature of the COVID-19 pandemic that is still unravelling. We wish to acknowledge the invaluable backing from UNESCAP, UNDESA, UNCTAD, EU, the Government of Australia, New Zealand, Japan and China and other development partners who are supporting the implementation of Vanuatu’s Smooth Transition Strategy. With their support, Vanuatu will transition smoothly beyond graduation — with new vigour, new thinking and new pathways of development and partnerships towards equality, resilience and environmental sustainability.

I wish to also acknowledge support from the international community to successfully get a United Nations General Assembly resolution which extended the International Support Measures cut-off date for Vanuatu to December 2025. This extension gives us ample time to fully recover from the impacts of TC Harold and ensuring also the full implementation of our smooth transition strategy, particularly in the targeted areas of trade, aid for trade and participation in international forums.

We need the international community to strengthen and expand the international support measures both for graduating and graduated countries. This is especially important given the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and to build resilience in these countries to ensure smooth transitions. The Graduation Support Facility by UNDESA offering dedicated capacity development support services as new measures of support to graduated and graduating LDCs is an excellent example.

The facility being piloted by UNDESA in Vanuatu is supporting us to implement our Smooth Transition Strategy. Vanuatu will share its experiences to inform the services of the facility to other graduating LDCs.

I want to also highlight the need for UN agencies to improve monitoring mechanisms for graduating and graduated countries, and provide better incentives for countries to participate in that mechanism as many face capacity challenges. Here, regional UN organizations like ESCAP could continue its support to graduating LDCs in preparing for Smooth Transition Strategies and scale up its technical assistance to graduated countries in implementing and monitoring the strategies.

Human Rights and Decolonization

Mr. President,

As we look ahead to the future we want, we must picture a world of freedom; one that is free from predominance of colonial rule, persecution and human rights abuses.

In my region, New Caledonia, French Polynesia and West Papua are still struggling for self-determination. Drawing attention to the principle of “equal rights and self-determination of peoples” as stipulated in the UN Charter, it is important that the UN and the international community continue to support the relevant territories, giving them an equal opportunity to determine their own statehood.

With recent referendum results in New Caledonia, in comparison to the 2018 results, there is now a narrower margin of votes between those voting for and against independence. It is therefore important that the referendums remain free, fair and transparent and continue under the supervision of the United Nations.

It is in this connection that we continue to remind ourselves the people of Vanuatu of our strong cultural connection with the Umaenupne and Umaeneag islands, commonly referred to in English as Matthew and Hunter Islands. Recognizing the incomplete process for the decolonization of Vanuatu, we hope that the UN-led process draws a clear pathway to achieve peaceful settlement of these disputed islands.

Mr. President,

There are widespread human rights violations around the world. In my region, the indigenous people of West Papua continue to suffer from human rights violations. The Pacific Forum and ACP Leaders among other leaders have called on the Indonesian Government to allow the United Nations Office of the Human Rights Commissioner to visit West Papua Province and to provide an independent assessment of the human rights situation. To date there has been little progress on this front. I hope the international community through appropriate UN-led process takes a serious look at this issue and address it fairly.

Conclusion

Mr. President,

Amongst many other issues facing our world today, COVID-19 pandemic is undoubtedly an imminent and common threat to humanity. To ensure global recovery and building back better together, global cooperation on vaccines is very essential to allow for faster normalization of activity in all countries. The world is only resilient as the least resilient country.

The theme of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly is very fitting and points us to the very essence of the United Nations. As imbedded in the United Nations Charter, the system was designed to be flexible to allow a myriad of challenges and unforeseen issues to be urgently addressed.

To recover from the pandemic, we need international cooperation to build back better for a sustainable, inclusive and just recovery. We must leave our differences and disagreements aside and renew our collective commitment to multilateralism. We must combine our efforts to address our global challenges and make sure that no one is left behind.

I thank you!

Annex XIV**Address by Mr. Pohiva Tu'i'onetoa, Prime Minister and Minister for Public Enterprises of the Kingdom of Tonga**

Mr. President,

It's been over a year and a half from when the COVID-19 was declared a pandemic, disrupting the ebb and flow of economies and social infrastructures worldwide. But it is by God's grace that the Kingdom of Tonga remains COVID-19 free. And while so many lives have been claimed in the wake of this pandemic, Tonga, now more than ever, commits to multilateralism thereby supporting the theme for this session, aptly introduced by Your Excellency as President of the General Assembly for the 76th session entitled "Building resilience through hope — to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainably, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people, and revitalise the United Nations".

On that note, I congratulate Your Excellency on the assumption of your presidency at the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly and assure you of our delegation's full support throughout this session. I express our gratitude to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkır in successfully spearheading the 75th session of the General Assembly during unprecedented and most difficult times.

I congratulate His Excellency Mr. António Guterres on his re-appointment as Secretary General of the United Nations to a second term and commend his leadership in safely navigating the operations of the United Nations under the undesirable circumstances of the pandemic.

Mr. President,

I express sincere condolences and solidarity with all Member States afflicted in the loss of lives due to the pandemic while confronted by unprecedented natural disasters and other tragedies. While Tonga remains COVID-19 free, we have not been spared from the socioeconomic consequences thereof, worsened by an already dire economic situation facing many Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Tonga is fortunate to be the third country in the Pacific to receive the COVID-19 vaccine doses in March 2021 through the COVAX Facility. To date, approximately one third of the population have been vaccinated and Tonga aims to vaccinate up to 70 per cent of the population by end of 2022.

Accordingly, Tonga joins other leaders in calling for timely and equitable access to COVID19 vaccines while supporting a WTO TRIPS waiver for COVID-19 vaccines. Tonga supports to strengthen regional and global early pandemic and disaster planning and resilience building efforts.

I express sincere gratitude to all development partners, including the governments of New Zealand, Australia, China, Japan, United States of America, India, United Arab Emirates, to name but a few, and international organizations including the World Health Organization, UNICEF, CEPI, Asian Development Bank and the World Bank for their most generous financial and humanitarian assistance, through the COVAX Facility from which Tonga has received more than 70,000 doses in addition to logistic and other support which have aptly facilitated Tonga's response to remain vigilant amidst this global pandemic.

Mr. President,

In light of the continued situation of the COVID-19, the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Conference on the Conservation and Sustainable use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction has been further postponed to the earliest possible available date in 2022. The progress of BBNJ intersessional work through dialogue on relevant topics is well underway thereby keeping the momentum in this important process. Tonga is grateful for the commitment by the International Seabed Authority (ISA) to further building the capacity of developing States especially through the recent workshop of the Abyssal Initiative project which was jointly organized by the ISA and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) in July 2021 in collaboration with the Cook Islands, who hosted the workshop, and with the support of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). Tonga looks forward to hosting the final workshop of the Abyssal Initiative project later this year.

Mr. President,

Tonga along with other leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum, at its Fifty-First Forum Leaders' meeting, recently held on 6 August 2021, once again reaffirm that Climate Change is the single greatest threat facing the Blue Pacific while recommitting to the goals enshrined in the Paris Agreement. Tonga is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change due to geographical and economic factors. It has been ranked by the World Risk Report 2017 as the second most at-risk country in the world to natural disasters such as cyclones, flooding and sea level rise.

While Tonga contributes to a negligible amount to global greenhouse gas emissions, we are nonetheless ambitious in supporting the goal of limiting global warming through the submission of our second Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) in 2020 in line with the timeline agreed to under the Paris Agreement. Tonga also launched the Tonga Energy Efficiency Master Plan (TEEMP for 2020-2030) and the National Certificate on Sustainable Energy (NCSE) which is a clear testament of our determination to achieving a sustainable energy future while mitigating the effects of climate change.

Mr. President,

Tonga had the honour of co-chairing the Twenty-first meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (ICP21) with the Principality of Monaco from 14 to 18 June 2021, focusing its discussions on "Sea level rise and its impacts". The discussions on this very critical and timely topic for Tonga and the Pacific brought to the fore the need for accelerated actions to slow the rate of increase in sea level rise.

Speaking of sea-level rise, our Pacific Islands Forum leaders continue to note with grave concern the threat posed by sea level rise to our Blue Pacific and are committed to ensuring that maritime zones of Pacific Member States are delineated in accordance with the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) which should not be challenged or reduced due to climate change related sea level rise. At their Fifty-First meeting on 6 August 2021, the Pacific Islands Forum leaders supported the development of a draft Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the face of Climate Change-related Sea-level rise.

The Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) provides the "...most up-to-date physical understanding of the climate system and climate change..." (AR6 Climate Change 2021, IPCC Report) for which

it made a clarion call in their comprehensive assessment report on the Ocean and the Cryosphere for urgent action to prioritize adaptation and mitigation measures. The 2021 IPCC Report alluded to “global mean sea level keeps rising even in the lowest scenarios” of low emissions. However, should countries fail to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, presenting a high emissions scenario, it is highly likely that this will result in an increase on average of sea level five times that in low emissions, and such is not an option specifically for Tonga and low-lying small island States in the Pacific and the rest of the world.

The Pacific region, because of its peculiar setting of low-lying small island States and atoll, is unfortunately experiencing sea level rise at a faster and in more extensive form than others, to which are most vulnerable to sea level rise. Accordingly, the adaptation period that is required for low lying coasts such as Tonga and the Pacific region will require a shorter time to prepare than others. The impacts of which are set to hinder the progress of achieving Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda.

Mr. President,

Achieving the crucial goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C is a moral obligation of each country, whereby the aggregated individual country NDC efforts would help in reducing national emissions while adapting to the impacts of climate change.

Thus, Tonga calls on major emitters around the globe to urgently commit to stronger climate action through robust strategies developed to achieving a net zero carbon by 2050. The commitments already made by leading countries to curb greenhouse gas emissions are most welcome and held in high regard. We look forward to participating in the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow, United Kingdom, from 31 October to 12 November 2021 with the view to accelerating actions towards achieving goals of the Paris Agreement.

Mr. President,

The Secretary-General’s report on developments and issues relating to ocean affairs and the law of the sea aptly addresses the continued importance of the “blue economy”. The sustainable use of the ocean resources, and preserving the health of ocean ecosystems, are critical, given the strong linkages between the people of the Pacific region and the ocean for which they rely upon for their livelihood. The declining health of the oceans due to the considerable amount of living coral lost, overfishing, growing number of ocean acidification and insurmountable problem of marine plastic pollution poses great risks to our food security, livelihoods, and the environment, for which is deeply felt in this way by low-lying coastal States and small island developing States such as Tonga.

It is therefore urgent for us to call on others to assist in this endeavour of reversing the declining trend affecting the ocean as our traditional provider. Urgent actions are needed on the achievement of ocean-related Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway. This is becoming more evident in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic specifically for SIDS.

While much has been done to address the plight of the oceans and pertinent issues raised in respective reports, our delegation would like to stress the need

for urgent actions to addressing sustainable livelihoods while upholding the legal framework as set out under UNCLOS.

Mr. President,

It is very disheartening to see how the global pandemic, now entering the second year, has caused major disruptions in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We acknowledge the comprehensive Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021 prepared by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) in collaboration with other international agencies.

On that note, we are grateful for the positive engagements thus far with the United Nations Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing countries and Small Island Developing States, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs; the UNDP, the UNESCAP, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in the Pacific, Non-Government Organizations, Civil Society Organizations, and Development Partners.

I acknowledge with gratitude the successful completion of the term of employment for Mrs. Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu as Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing countries and Small Island Developing States. The opportunity afforded to one of our very own from Tonga and the Pacific considering the underrepresentation of our country and the Pacific at the higher echelon of the United Nations is deeply valued. We look forward to receiving more recognition and inclusion of people from the Pacific in the executive tiers of the United Nations systems in future.

Mr. President,

I conclude by reaffirming our commitment to sustainable development and resilience through multilateralism. Recognizing the urgent call for action in response to nature and the environment while being mindful of what humankind so deserve. And with hope and determination, a more secure and durable future is envisaged through creative partnership and peaceful cooperation.

I thank you.
