



General Assembly

Seventy-seventh session

10th plenary meeting
Friday, 23 September 2022, 9 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Körösi (Hungary)

The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m.

Address by Mr. José Ramos-Horta, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

Mr. José Ramos-Horta, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. José Ramos-Horta, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ramos-Horta: It is an honour to return to this Assembly of nations once again as President of my country, a position to which I was re-elected five months ago. I am conscious of time, so I have distributed my full speech, and I will skip over many pages as a courtesy and out of respect for the Assembly.

Like almost every country on the planet, Timor-Leste has endured multiple climate change catastrophes, a prolonged dry season followed by floods, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and now the global economic impact of the confrontation between Russia, Ukraine and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

We had a minimal direct impact from the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of hospitalizations and fatalities.

More children died of dengue than of COVID-19. But the policies we undertook to prevent the spread of that insidious virus, such as curtailing the free movement of peoples and goods, inevitably affected the livelihoods of rural and urban people across the country. Farmers and traders suffered the most.

To protect our children, we closed down schools even though we knew that this decision would have serious detrimental consequences for the hundreds of thousands of children and youth who had to miss school and miss out on the one-meal-a-day programme, which provides a meal for every child in schools across the country.

In the very early days of the onset of the pandemic, our health authorities and the World Health Organization and other United Nations agencies on the ground scrambled and worked hard, day and night, to prevent the much-feared virus from killing our people. Thanks to the prompt actions taken by the Government, supported by our partners and friends, we avoided a public health crisis.

Australia proved to be a true sisterly neighbour, promptly delivering every assistance our fragile health system required. We are deeply grateful for the speedy generous action taken by the Australian Government in deploying medical specialists, ventilators and intubation equipment and in training local staff. When a vaccine became available, Australia provided it beyond our needs, enabling the vaccination of more than 72 per cent of our people, including children, in record time.

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Government and civil servants, who at times move at a tropical leisurely pace, quickly drafted a COVID-19 prevention and economic recovery strategy, which included cash transfers and food baskets for every low-income household.

We are grateful to the vaccines pillar of the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (COVAX) for the initial shipments of vaccines. We are grateful to New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Japan, China, the European Union, Portugal and the United States for their generous support in kind and cash.

In a world plagued with conflicts and man-made catastrophes, from Myanmar to Afghanistan, to Yemen and to Ukraine, Timor-Leste is an oasis of tranquillity. Common criminality is very low; armed robbery is unheard of. We do not have organized crime.

Our Catholic majority population — 98 per cent of the population — and their Protestant and Muslim brother and sister communities live side by side in total harmony. Timor-Leste does not have a single case of ethnic or religious-based tension or conflict.

In 2023, Timor-Leste will hopefully gain World Trade Organization (WTO) accession, another natural extension of our country's regional and global economic integration. The accessions to WTO and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are driven by Timor-Leste's own economic interests, such as the domestic economic reform process, to ensure a healthy enabling environment for foreign direct investment, national investment and the diversification of our economy.

ASEAN membership is a strategic imperative, which is as important for Timor-Leste's stability and prosperity as our country's peace and prosperity should be to ASEAN. As much as peace and prosperity in our neighbourhood benefits us all, conflicts, threats of conflict and risks originating in one country inevitably affect others.

At our independence 20 years ago, we had only 20 medical doctors. Today we have more than 1,200 doctors for a population of 1.5 million. That would not have been possible without Cuban solidarity. At independence 20 years ago, life expectancy was less than 60 years; now a Timorese woman can expect to live beyond 71 years of age.

Connectivity will surge in the next three to four years, as Timor-Leste will be linked by several

submarine cables to Australia, Indonesia and beyond. As it is, we already have a high percentage of mobile phone and social media users, and we are experimenting with exciting digital and e-government technologies.

I wish to now touch upon three matters of profound concern.

The first issue is the extremely serious food crisis affecting millions of people in Africa and Asia. I hope that all have carefully read the letter of our esteemed Secretary-General, dated 31 August and addressed to all Heads of State, which provides with clinical precision exact figures on the number of our fellow human beings who are affected — women and children, youth and the elderly, in several African countries, Yemen and Afghanistan.

The World Bank's Food Commodity Price Index, which reached a record high in nominal terms during March and April, increased by 15 per cent between April and May, and is more than 80 per cent higher than it was two years ago. Add to that the recent devastating floods in Pakistan inflicting heartbreaking suffering on over 30 million people.

Aid to poorer countries of the South should not be cancelled out to be reallocated to address the refugee crisis caused by the war in Ukraine. In 2015, donor countries reallocated their official development assistance commitments to the North African, Syrian, Afghan and Iraqi refugee crisis flowing into Europe, causing an estimated 15 per cent drop in total aid. The potential for a diversion of aid is even greater now, after \$349 billion was estimated as needed for the reconstruction of Ukraine. We must ensure that the Ukrainians are supported, but not at the expense of unity with the many struggling people in other nations.

In the aftermath of the 2008-2009 subprime crisis, which had knock-on effects across the globe, hundreds of billions of dollars were quickly mobilized to rescue exposed European and American banks. Draconian fiscal austerity measures in the form of cuts in public expenditure and higher taxes were forced on workers and the middle class in the crisis-affected Western countries. But rarely are we able to inspire the rich to show the same level of compassion and wisdom towards the poorer South. I continue to believe that we are all part of the great human family, yet some seem to feel that we are not really equal or part of that same human family. Part of the world lives in dazzling citadels, while their billions of distant

relatives live in poor global neighbourhoods. The Western countries and others started off on high moral ground in confronting Russia's invasion of Ukraine but may end up losing the support of the developing world, which constitutes 80 per cent of the global population, after all. They should pause for a moment to reflect on the glaring contrast in their response to other wars elsewhere, where women and children have died in thousands from conflict and starvation. Our beloved Secretary-General's cries for help in those situations have not been met with equal compassion in response.

And we are now facing a ruinous situation in terms of the rising cost of living for the poor, which has already resulted in riots in Sri Lanka, Peru, Kenya and most recently Haiti. Low-income countries were able to spend only a fraction of the amounts that high-income countries spent on COVID-19 stimulus packages. High-income countries spent 20 per cent of their gross domestic product, middle-income countries, 6 per cent, and low-income countries just 2.5 per cent. As a result, many countries had to increase their debt. Debt levels now limit our ability to protect the weakest and most vulnerable from the effects of rising prices, let alone to increase our efforts to address the climate emergency that threatens our very existence. Since 2015 the number of developing countries in debt distress or at high risk has doubled, to 60 per cent.

But equally I want to address our cries for solidarity and fraternity to the billionaires and trillionaires of Asia, Africa and Latin America. There is more liquidity in Asia than in Europe and the United States combined. It is time for the richest families and corporations of the so-called global South to gather at a historic summit, hosted by the Secretary-General, to commit to a vision and plan of action to rid Asia, Africa and Latin America of extreme poverty and child malnutrition, ensure that every poor community has clean water and sanitation, provide vaccines and basic public health services and offer better education facilities and better housing with renewable energy and connectivity for better access to education and business. That can be done by the rich of the global South — all it requires is vision, great heart, courage and the understanding that by investing in the poor of our own countries we are investing in peace.

Finally, I want to talk about the situation in Myanmar. The people of Myanmar feel abandoned and betrayed by the so-called international community. They are asking why there is such a stark difference in how they are treated compared with the prompt and

extremely generous support for Ukrainian civilians and refugees. They are asking why there is so much sophisticated military support for Ukraine's resistance, yet such a mute reaction to the war that has been waged on them. The Myanmar conflict is affecting the security and stability of neighbouring countries and may escalate. There has to be dialogue among all involved in the conflicts in Ukraine and Myanmar and in other crises around the world. The Tatmadaw cannot claim it is defending itself from external aggression.

In the Ukraine conflict, Russia and Ukraine should clear their ports and sea routes and allow a resumption of normal international shipping activities, following the breakthrough in the grain and fertilizer agreements brokered by the Secretary-General. Considering the extremely limited number of credible, neutral global leaders, the Secretary-General and the envoys of his choice should work hard day and night to reach a humanitarian ceasefire agreement and a provisional peace agreement. The ultimate goal should be a comprehensive, permanent peace agreement, but in the short term we must aim for a temporary cessation of troop movements and military action, the opening of humanitarian air and land corridors and zones for unimpeded humanitarian assistance and a resumption of export and import activities. Russia, Ukraine and NATO countries must swallow their pride, review the past policies that have led to this mutual suicide, back away from each other's borders, let the Ukrainians rebuild their country and their lives and let Russia retreat in security to its borders.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste for the statement he has just made.

Mr. José Ramos-Horta, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Paul Henri Sandaogo Damiba, President, Head of State and President of the Council of Ministers of Burkina Faso

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by Mr. Paul Henri Sandaogo Damiba, President, Head of State and President of the Council of Ministers of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Paul Henri Sandaogo Damiba, President, Head of State and President of the Council of Ministers

of Burkina Faso, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Paul Henri Sandaogo Damiba, President, Head of State and President of the Council of Ministers of Burkina Faso, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Damiba (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by expressing my warmest and most heartfelt congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the United Nations General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. I am confident that your vast experience, deep knowledge of the United Nations system and well-known commitment to multilateral diplomacy will ensure the success of your mandate. I also want to assure you of the full support of the delegation of Burkina Faso in your exercise of your burdensome duty and in the success of our work. My congratulations also go to your predecessor, Mr. Abdulla Shahid, for his admirable stewardship of the work of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. And I solemnly reaffirm Burkina Faso's gratitude to Secretary-General António Guterres for his constant, resolute and renewed commitment to peace and security and development.

I would like to take the opportunity today in this Hall to welcome the holding of the Transforming Education Summit, which has enabled a broad mobilization of actors in the education arena. I dare to hope that the global commitment to the implementation of the Summit's conclusions will contribute significantly to accelerating progress towards achieving quality education for all, particularly in the countries of the South.

The theme of the General Assembly at this session, "A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges", aptly highlights the urgency and the historic responsibility borne by the political, economic and social actors of our time in the face of the multiple crises facing our planet. While the world is gradually recovering from the coronavirus disease pandemic, other scourges — such as terrorism, intra- and inter-State conflicts and the humanitarian and food security crises they engender, along with climate change and its perverse effects — continue to blight daily life across the world. They serve as a reminder that we are fragile, individually and collectively, that countries and peoples are interdependent, and that international solidarity is urgently needed. If we want

to save humankind from collective and inescapable peril, we must not ignore that reminder.

The end of the Cold War gave us an opportunity to dream and to aspire to a world based on consensus, with a focus on the core values of peace, justice, freedom, democracy and solidarity. But that dream was an illusion, because for some time now we have unfortunately been seeing nationalism and inward-looking attitudes resurgent in certain parts of the planet, while freedom and democracy are shrinking in others. We have seen the readiness of certain countries to impose their world view on others. And we are seeing games of rivalry and confrontation play out between Powers as they vie for the political, military or economic control of certain parts of the world. Simply put, actors in the international community have been brazenly spreading a unipolar and monochromatic world view that reflects their own ideology and interests.

We urgently need to regroup and develop the inner strength to refrain from succumbing to those temptations. Let us instead emphasize a spirit of solidarity that is aimed at preserving our world's diversity and realizing the principle of the interdependence of peoples, a world in which everyone can contribute to managing its affairs. Burkina Faso firmly believes that humankind's chance of survival lies in accepting our differences and diversity and using them resourcefully. Far from being a source of antagonism or hostility, our differences and diversity represent an excellent opportunity to find complementarity and solidarity — a way of encouraging peaceful coexistence and sustainable development that costs us nothing.

The key challenges facing our world today are well known to everyone. They include primarily peace and security, democracy and sustainable development, climate change and environment and health and education. I want to emphasize that the only way we can meet those challenges is by working together. That is why we must try to extend our concerns beyond our individual and private interests, which are often factors in crises, in order to maintain peaceful relations with one another. I therefore call earnestly on all the actors of the international community, whether they are from the North or the South and regardless of the political, economic or military power they have, to take that approach.

Certain issues have recurred on the General Assembly's plenary agenda for several years now, including Palestine, the Western Sahara, debt, climate

change, the embargo on Cuba, the war in Ukraine and Security Council reform. In order to resolve each of those issues, on behalf of Burkina Faso I strongly recommend that we respected the rule of law, champion justice and equity and let common sense lead the way.

I would now like to say a few words about the situation in my country and the aim of the political transition currently under way, in connection with the General Assembly's very relevant theme this session and the goals of the Charter of the United Nations. On 24 January, a group of young patriots felt compelled to take responsibility for the public management of the nation's affairs in a natural response to a drift in political governance, growing insecurity in our country and the gradual and continuing disintegration of the State, and they did so by putting an end to a regime that while democratically elected was also mired in chaos. But we have no intention of justifying or promoting destabilizing practices or violating the constitutional order.

While the 24 January movement was technically illegal and perhaps contrary to principles dear to the United Nations and the international community as a whole, when we consider how things were being handled we believe it was necessary, indeed vital, to disrupt the constitutional order. It was a matter of our nation's survival above all. That is why the movement, which is focused on safeguarding the territory and implementing reforms, enjoys genuine popular legitimacy among public opinion in our country, and that enthusiasm and popular support have continued for the transitional authorities, which I have been leading for eight months now.

The security situation in Burkina Faso began to deteriorate in 2015, before reaching a low point in 2020 and 2021. The recent events that disrupted my country's march towards democracy have resulted from a failure to respond appropriately to the security crisis, as well as terrible political governance, which among other things led to the largest number of internally displaced persons in the political history of our country and subregion — 1,520,012 people as of 31 August. We are also facing a humanitarian and food crisis unprecedented in the country's history, as well as the closure of several thousand schools, with half a million students deprived of education, and economic stagnation induced by the slowdown, if not total halt, in economic activity in a number of industries such as mining, tourism and hotels, as well as agriculture

and livestock farming and transportation. Those difficulties, which I have touched on briefly, are part of a wider subregional security context of attacks perpetrated by various terrorist groups operating in the Sahel, particularly in its centre, which includes Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger.

Nevertheless, in order to deal with this, the transitional Government, relying largely on new internal initiatives, has shouldered its responsibilities by developing an action plan based on four strategic objectives — combating terrorism and restoring territorial integrity, responding to the humanitarian crisis, rebuilding the State and improving governance and ensuring national reconciliation and social cohesion. In order to achieve those objectives, we have launched some major initiatives.

The first is to restructure our national security apparatus and to take firm and vigorous action on the ground to combat terrorism and armed groups. The second is to combat radicalization, hate speech and the stigmatization of communities. The third is to implement a policy of de-radicalization and social and professional reintegration for reformed combatants from armed groups. The fourth is to support the resettlement and socioeconomic integration of internally displaced persons and those affected by terrorism. Lastly, we aim to combat corruption and promote justice, equity and education for peace and for our citizens.

However, Burkina Faso's will and determination alone in combating terrorism will not be enough to make a long-lasting impact. The support of the international community is both crucial and expected, and it is particularly urgent for Burkina Faso, whose geographic position makes it a buffer zone for curbing the spread of terrorism to countries on the coast such as Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo. Ensuring stability, security and peace in the Sahel is not just a matter of concern for the countries of our region because the current situation in the Sahel countries, needless to say, is the result of terrorism's migration from North Africa towards the South.

The current situation in the Sahel, a result of that cross-border impact, is a problem that is jeopardizing international peace and security. It is therefore important for the international community to understand it better and be more involved. The efforts that have been made so far are certainly welcome, but they fall short of what is needed, given the reality on the ground. In that context, I welcome the initiative that the Chairperson

of the African Union and the Secretary-General of the United Nations have taken to mandate the former President of the Niger Mahamadou Issoufou to lead the joint African Union-United Nations Independent High-Level Panel on Security and Development in the Sahel, which should produce recommendations on how to strengthen the international response to the security crisis in the Sahel with a view to finding a comprehensive and lasting solution.

I appeal to our bilateral and multilateral technical and financial partners to support the transition action plan we adopted on 6 May. Burkina Faso is hoping for their support in order to close a gap of approximately \$4.5 billion out of a total budget of about \$18 billion. The Government has also begun developing an emergency transition programme, which will be devoted to priority projects, as well as innovative projects and others expected to significantly benefit people's living conditions. We are therefore counting on our friends and partners to mobilize support to that end.

The transition authorities in Burkina Faso are aware of their responsibilities to our people and their duty to the international community, and I want to make it clear that we will not abandon those responsibilities. In that regard, on 3 July we agreed to a dynamic compromise with the Economic Community of West African States on the duration of the transition, which was set at 24 months from 1 July, and on the need to set up a transitional monitoring and evaluation mechanism based on indicators relating to security, the restoration of Government services to the occupied areas and the return of displaced persons.

I firmly believe that achieving significant progress in those three areas will help create the conditions for holding credible and transparent elections with a view to a return to a normal constitutional order. Such progress can be achieved only with the substantial support of the international community, for which I urge wholeheartedly from this rostrum today. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of our bilateral, multilateral and private technical and financial partners who are supporting us or have promised to do so. I would also like to invite those that have not yet done so to join us and support us as we strive to rebuild and strengthen the economic, social and security fabric of the country.

The peoples of our planet, rich or poor, powerful or weak, need a secure and peaceful world in which all can live in peace and fully exercise their rights.

The Sahel is currently riddled with armed groups that are causing devastation all over the globe. They threaten the security both of the region and the rest of the world. If nothing is decisively and urgently done to help our countries, we may see terrorism flare up in the countries of the Gulf of Guinea and then the rest of the world — starting with Europe, the continent closest to Africa. Nor will any precautionary or preventive measure be able to prevent terrorism from spreading to the other side of the Atlantic if the Sahel is left to its fate. And as long as the young people of the Sahel and neighbouring countries no longer have hope in their own lands, nothing will be able to prevent them from attempting the perilous migration to Europe via the Sahara and the Mediterranean.

Against the backdrop of terrorism-inflicted misery in the region, the Sahel has become a stage for futile rivalries and shameful greed, which make the situation even worse. The countries of the Sahel deserve better than this and need solidarity and help — but not just any help. We need help that enables us to no longer ask for help — the kind that will make our need for help obsolete. And we need it to be consistent with our beliefs and to respect our dignity.

I would like to conclude my remarks by urging all the actors of the international community to show greater solidarity with one another, because that is the best way to address the challenges of our time and preserve the interests of all. Raoul Follereau said that no one has the right to be happy all by themselves.

Let us therefore make sure that there are no more malnourished children without education or instruction; that there are no more young people without training or jobs; that there are no more peasants without land to live in dignity; that there are no more workers whose rights are trampled; that the abundance of some is not the cause of the destitution of others; that force does not prevail over truth and justice; and finally, that the reasons of our selfishness never prevail over the demands of the dignity of humankind and peoples.

I vow that Burkina Faso will spare no effort to make its contribution to the building of a better, peaceful, united and prosperous world.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President, Head of State and President of the Council of Ministers of Burkina Faso for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Paul Henri Sandaogo Damiba, President, Head of State and President of the Council of Ministers of Burkina Faso, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cyprus.

Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Anastasiades: With only a few months left of my 10-year tenure in office, I stand before members to address the plenary session of the General Assembly for the very last time. I would have wished nothing more than for this address to have been a reflection of positive developments in what humankind has had to face or is facing. Like all of those here, I would have liked to have applauded the results of the implementation either of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations or of the decisions and resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

That would have ensured that any threat or attempt to call into question the sovereignty and territorial integrity of any United Nations State Member would have been brought to a complete halt or minimized; that long-standing conflicts and disputes would have been resolved or would be in the process of being resolved in accordance with the decisions and resolutions of the United Nations; that the need for the Organization's reform would have led to the effective prevention of new threats and challenges to world peace; that, through its new role, the United Nations would have implemented projects to effectively combat hunger and to improve the living conditions of hundreds of millions of people in dire need of aid; and that the number of refugees and migrants forced to flee from their homes due to conflict or poverty would have been greatly reduced.

Furthermore, that would have ensured that we would have been able to tackle social and economic exclusion, the lack of adequate health-care standards and the shortage of educational opportunities; that

sustainable development would have finally become a reality for all countries and regions in need by establishing the necessary political and socioeconomic conditions that lead to stability, economic growth and institution-building; that measures for the prevention of climate change and its devastating consequences would have been implemented consistently by all parties involved; that terrorism and religious fundamentalism would have given way to tolerance and understanding; that the trillions of dollars spent on destructive weapons would instead have been spent on actions and programmes aiming to bridge the gap between rich and poor States; and, finally, that multilateralism would have been the guiding doctrine of all States.

In addressing the General Assembly in 2018 and referring to the weakness of dealing with the same problems, I wondered aloud:

“how is it that we come back again and again, year after year, as a kind of ritual, to attest to the dismal lack of effectiveness for some and the attempts at embellishment of others for what is in fact our inability to fulfil the aims of the Charter of the United Nations?” (A/73/PV.10, p. 5)

I wondered further:

“Why do the decisions of the Security Council in their overwhelming majority remain mere certificates that attest to violations? Why are international law and international agreements not implemented? Why do strategies and programmes aimed at creating better conditions for people who are suffering remain wishful thinking?” (*ibid.*)

Although I am well aware that what I am about to say is well known to everyone in attendance, for the sake of history I cannot but relay some truths that are leading us on a declining path and to the gradual loss of credibility of the United Nations, an Organization that was formed right after the Second World War in order to prevent new disasters and to provide protection and hope to those in need of effective protection, as well as to take action to tackle the challenges I just mentioned.

I know that what I am saying may be outside the bounds of diplomatic etiquette, but I believe that the obligation of each leader before history is not to overlook failings and shortcomings in favour of wishful thinking or flattery. That is why I will proceed with a review, not just of the reasons that have transformed the Organization into a repository of problems, but also of what States are required to do in order to lend

credibility to the Organization so that it can effectively impose international legal order and consistently implement decisions and programmes for the benefit of humankind.

In my opinion, the weaknesses and inefficacies of the United Nations are due to several factors.

The first problem is the fact that international law is dictated by the financial or other interests of powerful Member States.

Secondly, despite the end of the Cold War, alliances based on common interests lead to tolerance towards States that violate international law if the offender is under their sphere of influence.

Thirdly, there is a resurgence of hegemonic tendencies by some States, with the aim of creating new empires, at the expense of smaller States and in violation of international law.

Fourthly, despite the declared intention of the Secretary-General to proceed with the much-needed reform and modernization of the Organization, as well as its modus operandi and decision-making processes, the lack of willingness on the part of the States I referred to has not allowed for the implementation of such a change.

Fifthly, as a result of the same political expediencies, the United Nations, unfortunately, adopts an equal-distance stance, even when faced with the violation of decisions, resolutions and defined scope and terms of reference specified to the Secretariat. That results in emboldening offending States, which not only disregard international law but also create new precedents outside the framework of legality.

I have set out the main reasons for the lack of effectiveness, as well as the weakness, of the United Nations in living up to the expectations of billions of people. I know that I may be considered a romantic ideologist, but I believe that the recent events and problems affecting the world do not leave any choice other than to take bold, but necessary decisions.

The first decision is to ensure the identification of the causes that lead to unnecessary rivalries and conflicts and the renewal of our commitment to a global order based on international law — a global order that ensures that peace, security, human rights and sustainable development remain the highest values, which we undertake to preserve and hold.

The second decision is to ensure the political will and determination to proceed with the reform and modernization of the United Nations into a just and efficient multilateral governance system. That reform and modernization process becomes even more imperative and urgent with the imminent danger, after 77 years, of a new world war following the Russian aggression and Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine.

My reference to the need for reforms to the structure and implementation mechanism of decisions taken by the United Nations arises not only from my assessment as to other international problems, but also from what my country still endures and suffers as a result of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974.

It is with deep disappointment that I heard President Erdoğan claiming that

“As a country, Türkiye wants all the issues in the Aegean Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean to be resolved within the framework of good-neighbourly relations and in conformity with international law.” (A/77/PV.4, p.24).

How ironic is it for the Turkish President to put forward such a claim when every day he threatens to overtake Greek islands, or when he commits thousands of violations of the airspace of the sovereign and neighbouring country, contrary to international law? How even more provocative is it to express the desire to resolve disputes “in conformity with international law” when he refuses to implement numerous resolutions of the United Nations on the Cyprus problem and creates new faits accomplis? How much in conformity with international law is his refusal to abide by, first, resolution 3212 (XXIX), adopted in October 1974, which urges the speedy withdrawal of all foreign armed forces and foreign military presence and personnel from the Republic of Cyprus and the cessation of all foreign interference in its affairs; secondly, resolution 365 (1974), which was endorsed by the Security Council in December of the same year; and thirdly, Security Council resolution 1251 (1999), which reaffirms the Council's position that a Cyprus settlement must be based on a State of Cyprus with a single sovereignty, international personality and citizenship, with its independence and territorial integrity safeguarded in a bizonal, bicomunal federation? The latter resolution also stresses that such a settlement must exclude union, in whole or in part, with any other country or any form of partition or secession.

Last year, Mr. Erdoğan claimed that efforts should concentrate on reaching a settlement based on the so-called realities on the ground (see A/76/PV.3), while this year he spoke about the need for everyone to “see the truth” and that there were “two distinct States and two distinct peoples on the island today”.

I am wondering as to which truth is he talking about? Is it the truth that 37 per cent of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus, a State member of the European Union, remains under military occupation? Is it the truth that, after the Turkish invasion of 1974, one third of Greek Cypriots were forced to leave their ancestral homes? Is it the truth that they have implanted hundreds of thousands of Turkish nationals in the occupied areas, thereby altering the demographic character of the island, turning the Turkish Cypriots into a minority in the areas that they illegally occupy? Is it the truth that Turkey established an illegal entity in the occupied areas, which is under its absolute political, economic, social, cultural and religious control — an illegal entity, bear in mind, described by the European Court of Human Rights as a subordinate local administration of Turkey? Is it the truth that Turkey tries to equate the State, the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus, with the illegal secessionist entity?

Is it the truth that that proclamation of the purported secession was condemned by the Security Council and considered legally invalid? Is it the truth that the Security Council called for its reversal and for all States and the international community as a whole not to accept it or in any way assist it? Is it the truth that it is trying to change the status of the fenced city of Famagusta, contrary to Security Council resolutions 550 (1983) and 789 (1992)? Is it the truth that Turkey adopts its own arbitrary interpretation of international law, which reduces the exclusive economic zone of Cyprus by 44 per cent, at the expense of both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, contrary to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea?

As I noted earlier, when decisions or resolutions based on international law are not implemented or enforced, that, rightly so, could be perceived as fostering, or even rewarding, arbitrariness. That is what we are actually witnessing today with the Cyprus problem. Turkey, which systematically violates international law, calls on the international community to recognize its illegal *faits accomplis*.

Unfortunately, that was the long-standing aim of Turkey ever since 1956. That is why, despite

the historical compromises by the Greek Cypriot side, all efforts to reach a settlement of the Cyprus problem failed as a result of the intransigent stance and irrational demands of Turkey. The latest example of this was the Conference on Cyprus held at Crans-Montana in July 2017. In his report dated 28 September 2017, the Secretary-General offered his assessment of the proceedings at Crans-Montana with regard to the internal aspects of the Cyprus problem, stating that,

“[t]he core outstanding issues related to governance and power-sharing remained few ...” (S/2017/814, para. 20)

and that

“[b]y the time the Conference closed, the sides had essentially solved the key issue of effective participation” (*ibid.*, para. 27).

Therefore, while the aim of the Secretary-General to reach a strategic agreement was within close reach, the reason for the unsuccessful outcome was Turkey’s inflexible stance and its insistence on maintaining the anachronistic Treaty of Guarantee, the right of intervention and a permanent presence of troops. I would further like to recall the Secretary-General’s statement in June 2017, in which he stressed that,

“Progress in this chapter [on security and guarantees] is an essential element in reaching an overall agreement”.

Following a period of stalemate and despite our disappointment, we undertook new initiatives to resume the process where it was left off at Crans-Montana, culminating in the joint understanding reached with the Secretary-General and the then-leader of the Turkish Cypriots on 25 November 2019, which reaffirmed the principles for the resumption of a new round of talks, namely, the Joint Declaration of 11 February 2014, the prior convergences and the six-point framework the Secretary-General presented at Crans-Montana.

Regrettably, once again, Turkey undermined the prospect of resuming the negotiating process and, instead, at the meeting held in Geneva in April 2021, the Turks presented their position, which was to change the agreed basis of a settlement from a federal solution to a two-State solution.

Nonetheless, our side undertook another initiative, which also led to a new joint meeting of the leaders of the two communities with the Secretary-General in September 2021, during which it was agreed that the

Secretary-General would proceed with the appointment of an envoy in order to deliberate with both sides and all interested parties, so as to reach common ground for a new peace process to resume. Yet again, Turkey refused to uphold said agreement.

We also continued taking initiatives to break the impasse, including through a letter I sent to the Turkish Cypriot leader on 23 May 2022, by which I conveyed constructive proposals for the adoption of bold win-win confidence-building measures — measures that were immediately rejected by the Turkish Cypriot side, which submitted counter-proposals in line with their aim for a two-State solution.

Mrs. González López (El Salvador), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Based on the foregoing, I believe that it is clear that the Greek Cypriot community has exerted and will continue to exert every possible effort for the resumption of talks, in order to reach a settlement based on the United Nations resolutions. And as I have emphasized, the only way forward in resolving conflicts and for peace to prevail is none other than the unwavering adherence to international law and the United Nations Charter — and not as arbitrarily interpreted by those who seek to disguise their revisionist aspirations.

During my 10-year tenure as President of Cyprus, I may not have been able to enjoy what the vast majority would have also wished to see: the necessary reforms of this international Organization, the resolution of international conflicts and the tackling of such challenges that affect hundreds of millions of people as hunger, poverty and climate change. I may have not been able to see my homeland reunited, with my Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot compatriots living in conditions of peace, prosperity and stability, but I earnestly hope that, during my lifetime, I will be able to witness a better and more stable future for humankind.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Cyprus for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Nikenike Vurobaravu, President of the Republic of Vanuatu

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

Mr. Nikenike Vurobaravu, President of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nikenike Vurobaravu, President of the Republic of Vanuatu, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Vurobaravu: It is my great honour and privilege to speak for the first time as the President of the Republic of Vanuatu in this important body, the United Nations General Assembly.

Let me start by congratulating His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. I assure him that during his term of office, my delegation will work closely with him to implement the agendas he has set out for this session. The President's vision for the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session is fitting for addressing the myriad of global issues that confront us today.

I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid for his stellar leadership as the General Assembly's President of Hope at its seventy-sixth session, during an unprecedented and tumultuous year. His inspiring work for humankind has left a strong impression at the United Nations and around the world.

Today the world is facing a profusion of mounting challenges, many of which are inextricably linked. We are slowly recovering from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, but recovery is becoming ever more difficult with rising debt levels and looming inflation caused by supply-chain disruptions and the increase in fuel and food prices as a result of the Russia-Ukraine crisis. Those challenges pose a major risk of global recession and add to the rising humanitarian crisis that we are already facing. As we gather here, more families around the world are finding it extremely difficult to put food on the table, pay their bills and rent and meet other basic expenses. Such hardships

can be avoided by deploying smarter diplomacy and appropriate macroeconomic policies.

Those challenges are compounded by an existential climate crisis that is already devastating our economies and ecosystems. In the past few years we have witnessed record heat, wildfires, severe hurricanes, coral bleaching, rising sea levels, prolonged droughts and record flooding. The global challenges that we are facing have the greatest impact on the poor and vulnerable. Without basic social safety nets and fundamental human rights protections, their future is uncertain. We are experiencing the debilitating consequences of the climate crisis every day, and the world is now demanding more ambitious action on climate at every level. That emergency, one of our own making, is now affecting everyone, from the poorest nations to the richest. No one is immune to the extreme weather events ravaging our islands, cities and States. No one can escape the rising tides. Our young people are terrified of the future world we are handing to them through expanded fossil-fuel dependency, and we are compromising intergenerational trust and equity.

Fundamental human rights are being violated, as we begin measuring climate change not in degrees Celsius or tons of carbon but in human lives. The time is up. Action is required now. And that is why the nations of the blue Pacific continent are leading a global initiative to bring climate change to the International Court of Justice, the only principal organ of the United Nations that has not yet been given an opportunity to weigh in on the climate crisis. We believe that bringing climate change to the Court is a global public good that will further support the progressive development of international law. In this very Hall, working in solidarity with Member States, we will ask the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion on existing obligations under international law to protect the rights of present and future generations against the adverse effects of climate change. We believe that legal clarity from the world's highest court will help to spur even greater climate action and strengthen the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We believe in the norms and rules of international law, and we firmly believe that our existing international laws and conventions already contain critical protections for human rights and for the environment.

Taking climate change to the International Court of Justice via the General Assembly is not a silver bullet for increasing climate action, but just one tool to get us

closer to the end goal of a safe planet for humankind. The leaders of the Pacific islands continue to show that they are seeking higher levels of climate ambition and collective action. That is why apart from the International Court of Justice, we are supporting several other tools to battle the existential threat of climate change. We are calling on States to join the group of nations proposing to include the crime of ecocide in the Rome Statute. Pursuing actions in the knowledge that they have the potential to inflict severe and widespread or long-term damage on the environment can no longer be tolerated. We are guardians of the future of tomorrow.

I acknowledge and commend the work of the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law, led by Antigua and Barbuda, Tuvalu and Palau, to bring to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea the issue of climate change as it relates to the law of the sea. We call for the development of a fossil-fuel non-proliferation treaty to phase down coal, oil and gas production in line with the goal of limiting warming to 1.5°C and enable a just global transition for every worker, community and nation with fossil-fuel dependence. It will be critical to ensure that States revise and enhance their nationally determined contributions to the Paris Agreement, as Vanuatu did last month according to its agreement in the Glasgow Climate Pact at the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. As is clear, we are leaving no stone unturned as we seek solutions to the climate crisis, and I particularly call on Member States to support Vanuatu and our global coalition as we bring an International Court of Justice climate change draft resolution before the General Assembly this session.

The nuclear risk still remains and presents an existential threat to the human species and all forms of life that inhabit the Earth. The nuclear risk is becoming even greater, given the Ukraine-Russian war and the intense geopolitical tensions rapidly evolving before us. The lack of consensus at the recent Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has made it harder to achieve nuclear disarmament. That division reveals that the NPT, a central pillar of the international rules-based order, is not seen as a priority by certain nuclear Powers, and that is a major cause of concern for our planet.

Like most countries in the world, my country, Vanuatu, was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our economy is heavily dependent on tourism, and that

was halted when borders were closed. Our economic activity declined significantly, and our households' livelihoods were severely affected. We have been fortunate that the labour mobility programmes that we enjoy with Australia and New Zealand have allowed Vanuatu to export those services, enabling remittance flows that have helped household income and boosted our economy. Furthermore, since most of our population resides in rural areas, the subsistence economy has been able to sustain their livelihoods. In order to avert economic decline and social hardship, the Government responded by implementing stimulus packages that targeted household incomes and provided finance to the commercial sector to keep businesses afloat. We were able to do that thanks to an accumulation of budget surpluses over the past few years.

Our Government launched a nation-wide COVID-19 pandemic programme enabling essential supplies to be distributed before the disease reached Vanuatu, and as a result we experienced only a few deaths. As soon as the vaccination rate had reached 70 per cent of our total population, we reopened our borders. On that note, and on behalf of the people and the Government of Vanuatu, I would like to convey my gratitude to all the bilateral and multilateral partners that assisted Vanuatu during that very difficult time. COVID-19 taught us a few lessons, one of which was about the need to ensure that digital inclusion is prioritized in all our economies. When the schools in Vanuatu closed, it was difficult for many students to participate in online classes owing to a lack of connectivity. I am sure that this is something that other developing countries experienced as well, and that is why I believe that digitalization requires a concerted global response and action. Without it, the many goals spelled out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development may not be realized.

Vanuatu is gradually recovering from COVID-19 and Tropical Cyclone Harold. Our borders are open and tourism is starting to bounce back. As it stands, we are poised for economic growth of 3 per cent in 2022. The recovery, however, has been undermined by the inflationary pressures posed by rising prices of fuel and food. The recovery is also threatened by climate change and severe weather patterns, as we are about to enter the cyclone season. For Vanuatu, category 5 cyclones are becoming a new normal.

Vanuatu's fragile economic recovery is a story that I am sure is not unique to Vanuatu but is familiar to most small island developing States (SIDS) and other

developing countries. Our economic recovery requires not only domestic policies that spur growth and build resilience but also complementary bilateral support measures. One way to do that is to ensure that SIDS have access to concessional financing. As we all know, the current international financial architecture and criteria for financing are inconsistent with the economic realities that SIDS are facing. However, I am delighted to see that the Alliance of Small Island States is working with other United Nations members to craft a multidimensional vulnerability index with a view to accessing concessional financing. I join other leaders in calling on all Member States, and in particular our development partners, to support that important initiative.

Our large blue ocean space will continue to present more complex issues that will affect the way we manage our people's livelihoods. The 2050 Strategy of the Blue Pacific Continent sets out our region's long-term vision and aspirations — our North Star and guide to sustaining a healthy, wealthy and prosperous future for the generations to come. At this juncture, one issue that has remained gratuitously complex since the birth of our nation is the unjustified and continuing colonial claim over our traditional sovereign waters. The rights of the indigenous people and their entire territorial waters within our region must be restored and affirmed in order to enable our sovereign States to take on and manage the ever-increasing complexity that the blue ocean space presents. In that context, the major security and political issue for my country, Vanuatu, remains the illegal claim on the Matthew and Hunter Islands.

Even with human rights principles so well embedded in the Charter of the United Nations and despite countless pleas here in the Assembly, human rights violations continue globally across sovereign and disputed spaces. It is no different in the wider blue Pacific. Drawing inspiration from the Secretary-General's opening statement on Tuesday (see A/77/PV.4), global report cards will continue to remind our community that more remains to be done.

In conclusion, the challenges before us, which are exacerbated by the deterioration in law and order in many areas around the world, are a sombre reminder that we are still falling short of achieving the ideals envisioned in the Charter. The United Nations, as the heartbeat of multilateralism and global cooperation, remains well placed to address those challenges. It can be done, but only if we trust one another and work

together for the betterment of our common humanity. Our children are watching; their future is in our hands. The time to act and lead is now.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Vanuatu for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nikenike Vurobaravu, President of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

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

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the State of Palestine.

Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Abbas (*spoke in Arabic*): I am addressing the General Assembly today on behalf of the more than 14 million Palestinians whose parents and ancestors lived through the tragic Nakba 74 years ago and who are still experiencing its consequences, a source of shame for humankind and especially for all who conspired, planned and executed that heinous crime. More than 5 million Palestinians have been living under Israel's military occupation for 54 years. I want to tell the Assembly today, on behalf of the Palestinians to whom I proudly belong, that unfortunately our trust in the possibility of achieving peace based on justice and international law is deteriorating because of Israel's occupation policies. Does the international community want to smother whatever hope we have left?

It is clear that Israel, which is ignoring all the resolutions of international legitimacy, has decided not to be our partner in the peace process. It has undermined the Oslo Accords, which it signed with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Through its current policies, which are premeditated and deliberate, it has destroyed the possibility of a two-State solution, and that is unequivocal proof that Israel does not believe in

peace. It believes in imposing the status quo by brute force and aggression. We therefore do not have an Israeli partner with whom we can talk. Israel is ending its contractual relation with us and is making the relationship between the State of Palestine and Israel into no more than one between an occupying State and an occupied people. We will therefore deal with Israel as such henceforward, and we call on the international community to do the same. It was not we who made that choice but rather Israel on its own.

Israel is launching a frantic campaign to confiscate our lands, build colonial settlements and loot our resources, as if the land was unpopulated and had no owners, just as in 1948. It is giving free rein to the army and the terrorist settlers who are killing our Palestinian people in broad daylight, looting their land and taking their water, burning and demolishing their homes and forcing them to pay for the demolition or to destroy their homes with their own hands and uproot their own trees. All of that is done with official protection. Can anyone imagine such a thing? Israel is telling the Palestinian people, "Either you demolish your house or I will demolish it myself. But it is better if you demolish your house yourself with your own hands, because if I demolish it, you will have to pay for the demolition." Can anyone conceive of that? I have to demolish my house or Israel will demolish it and make me pay for it.

The Israeli Government has authorized the establishment of racist Jewish terrorist organizations committing acts of terror against our people. It has provided them with protection while they subject Palestinians to aggression and call for them to be expelled from their homes. Foremost among those terrorist organizations are Hilltop Youth, Price Tag, Lehava, the Temple Guardians and many others. Those terrorist organizations are led by members of the Israeli Knesset, the Israeli authority. In that context, we call on the international community to put those organizations on the international terrorist lists. That is the only place they deserve to be.

In its frantic settlement expansion, Israel has not left us any land on which we can establish our independent State. Where can our people live in freedom and dignity? Where can we build our independent State to live in peace with our neighbours? We want to live in peace with them, with Israel. Where will we establish our independent State to live in peace with them, with Israel? Unfortunately there are now nearly 750,000 settlers, or 25 per cent of the total population, in the

West Bank, the remaining Palestinian land after the partition resolution.

Israel is killing our people with impunity, as it did with the Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh. Everyone here has heard about Shireen Abu Akleh. She was killed with a sniper's bullets, which means that the sniper targeted her deliberately. Israel has admitted that a sniper killed her. In addition to being Palestinian, she also had American nationality. I dare the United States to prosecute or make accountable those who killed her, because they are Israelis.

Israel also commits acts of aggression against our sacred holy sites, both Christian and Islamic, especially in Jerusalem, our eternal capital and crown jewel. I would like to reiterate in that regard our acknowledgement of the Hashemite Custodianship of those holy sites. Israel attacks Muslim and Christian holy sites on a daily basis and without any reason. Israel attacked the funeral procession of Shireen Abu Akleh and her corpse inside the church, a holy place. That is what Israel is doing to the holy sites.

Israel is imposing falsified curriculums in our schools in the occupied Jerusalem. They are inventing curriculums. They take books and change what is in them under the same authors and then they impose the curriculums on our children to control what they learn. We will not allow that to happen. That is a violation of international law.

Israel is disrupting the Palestinian presidential and legislative elections by forbidding Palestinian citizens in Jerusalem to take part in those elections. Israel has done that three times before — in 1996, 2005 and 2006. The Israeli authorities ask us, "Why do you not organize elections?" We are ready. We issued the decrees to organize those elections, and we decided to hold them, but Israel prevented us from holding them. Therefore, we did not cancel the elections, we only postponed them. When Israel allows the elections to take place, or when some party tells Israel that it can allow us to hold elections, or when orders reach Israel to allow elections to take place, we will then organize them.

Israel is enacting racist laws and consecrating the apartheid regime. Yes, it is apartheid. Even if Israel does not like that appellation, it is apartheid. Israel is an apartheid regime. This is not only between Palestinians and Jews. Israel is taking actions against our people before the eyes of the international community with impunity. Why is Israel not being held accountable

for violating international law? Who is protecting Israel from being held accountable? I have no idea. Do Member States know who is protecting Israel from being held accountable? It is the United Nations, and foremost of which the most powerful in the United Nations. Why practise double standards when it comes to Israel?

Israel has repeatedly violated our land, and recently it closed the headquarters of six Palestinian human rights organizations. Israel tries to implement the law, but if we make a mistake, it holds us accountable and says, "You have made a mistake." Israel determined, suddenly, that those organizations were terrorist organizations, and it raided their headquarters, looted their assets, confiscated their documents and burned them and did whatever it wanted. The whole world says that was wrong, except for Israel. Israel is saying that it was not wrong. If that is what Israel did to the offices of human rights organizations, imagine what it would have done if they were not human rights organizations.

Since its creation, Israel has committed brutal crimes against our people. It destroyed 529 Palestinian villages and expelled their residents during and after the war of 1948. It displaced 950,000 Palestinian refugees, in other words, half of the Palestinian population at the time. That is a figure that some try to manipulate. It is not, as Israel says, 250,000 refugees. No, the figure is indeed 950,000, according to the statistics of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, that is, the United Nations. And of course, now the number of displaced is in the millions.

Since 1948, Israel has committed more than 50 massacres, including in Tantoura and Kafr Qasim. Israel admitted that it had deliberately committed those massacres and targeted farmers returning from their farmland and killed them in cold blood. There have been 50 or 51 massacres, the most recent of which was against Gaza, which was targeted with missiles. I will not tell the Assembly how many elderly persons it killed, but *The New York Times*, a United States newspaper, said 67 children were killed in Gaza, as if they had been carrying rockets, using tanks and launching missiles. Sixty-seven children were killed by Israel. These are their photos. Who is going to assume responsibility for that? Why did Israel kill them?

I would like to provide the Assembly with the lists of the villages that were destroyed and the massacres that were perpetrated, and I would ask Israel, from

this rostrum, to acknowledge its responsibility for destroying those villages, committing those massacres and displacing the Palestinian citizens and to apologize to the Palestinian people. After all that killing, Israel must apologize.

We call on Israel to bear the legal, political, moral and material responsibilities. It should be held accountable, and the international community must hold it accountable. We ask the international community right now to hold Israel accountable for the massacres it has committed.

Yes, we will go to the International Criminal Court, and to all the courts of the world, but first and foremost to the International Criminal Court to ask Israel to assume its legal, political, moral and material responsibilities.

Do the Israeli people want to remain colonizers forever? They have been colonizers for nearly 75 years. How much longer do they want to remain so? I ask the Assembly, should we wait for a century, or maybe for two centuries? Why are we the only people on this planet still living under occupation? I ask the General Assembly, the Security Council and advocates of human rights, why should we remain under occupation?

What are we still missing? What are the Israelis going to teach us? What are we missing that they need to occupy us, teach us, kill us, slaughter us or confiscate our land and loot our resources? They even take the rain that falls on us, and then they sell it back to us. They take our rain, and they sell it back to us.

We do not accept remaining the only party to respect the agreements we signed with Israel in 1993. Those agreements are no longer valid on the ground because of Israel's persistence on violating them. Although we have asked Israel to end its occupation, its hostile measures and policies and unilateral actions, which were explicitly prohibited in the Oslo Accords and which President Biden mentioned to me personally — he said that unilateral actions should be ended — and while the Oslo Accords state that they should be ended, Israel has been the first to violate this prohibition, taking nothing but unilateral actions, while we have not taken any. We do not want to do that, and we do not want to violate agreements. Until when will we be the only ones committed to these agreements?

It is therefore our right — or, rather, our obligation — to look for other means to recover our rights and achieve a peace built on justice, including the implementation of the resolutions that were adopted

by our respective leaders, in particular our parliaments. Seven years ago, our parliament adopted decisions, and we told its members to wait awhile, since maybe things will change; we told them to be patient, since maybe the United States or Israel will change its stance. But no one listened to us.

We have made these decisions in order to preserve our national existence on our land and to uphold our historical rights as a nation under the umbrella of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The PLO brings together all Palestinian people, wherever they are in the world, be it inside Palestine, in the refugee camps or in the diaspora. All those who have Palestinian nationality or used to have the Palestinian nationality fall under the umbrella of the PLO.

The United Nations, with its different bodies, has adopted hundreds of resolutions on Palestine. None has been implemented. How is that possible? Not a single resolution has been implemented. I am talking about 754 General Assembly resolutions, 97 Security Council resolutions and 96 Human Rights Council resolutions — and not a single one has been implemented.

How come? Why is that? Whenever a resolution is adopted, everyone calls for its implementation in line with international legitimacy, but no one cares about any of the resolutions adopted for Palestine. Not a single resolution has been implemented.

We ask that one single resolution be implemented, so we can know that it has been implemented. We now want the implementation of a single resolution, resolution 181 (II), which was adopted by the General Assembly, and which unjustly and aggressively partitioned Palestine. Yes, we want that resolution to be implemented. We want the General Assembly to implement resolution 181 (II), and with it, another resolution, namely, resolution 194 (III). We want those two resolutions to be implemented because they are preconditions for Israel being accepted as a member of the United Nations. When those resolutions were adopted, Moshe Sharett, the Israeli Minister for Foreign Affairs at the time, pledged to implement them, and as a result, Israel was accepted as member of the United Nations. But until now neither resolution has been implemented. I want resolution 181 (II) to be implemented — one single resolution. It is our right to ask for its implementation.

I therefore ask that the General Assembly implement resolution 181 (II) and tell us that it has done so. We have submitted a request to the Secretary-General to implement that resolution. Is that possible or the Assembly will ignore us once again, as always?

The State of Palestine will also start the process of acceding to other international organizations. We were allowed to join the United Nations as an observer State. We are now an observer State at the United Nations. There are 15 million Palestinians, all of them educated, some of them highly educated, but we are only observer member.

That membership status allows us to accede to other international organizations, and starting tomorrow we will pursue our right and accede to them. It is our right to do so. We will join the World Health Organization, the World Intellectual Property Organization and the International Civil Aviation Organization. We are going to accede to those organizations, which is our right to do, and no one should blame us.

The Security Council has adopted clear resolutions, whose implementation would achieve a just and comprehensive peace. The most recent of those was resolution 2334 (2016), which the United States itself submitted for adoption. The resolution was adopted, and two days after taking office Mr. Trump cancelled everything, including resolution 2334 (2016), and subsequently came up with his ultimate deal, which, together with all his other projects, we have totally rejected. Resolution 2334 (2016) was submitted by the United States and adopted under its sponsorship. But it went away because Mr. Trump rejected it.

I would like to remind the Assembly that we no longer need double standards. If the State of Palestine is prohibited from obtaining full membership at the United Nations and if the Palestinian people are not protected from aggression — but no one has done anything — and if practical steps are not taken to end occupation and achieve peace, then we will have to resort once again to petitioning the General Assembly, asking for legal measures and political steps to be taken to achieve those goals. Then we will have hope. We have the right to hope. We hope to be able to hope. We are living on hope. We are confident that the General Assembly will fully shoulder its responsibilities.

I am also confident that the Assembly will understand why we are going to take all those steps now. Throughout the years we have tried everything to

convince Israel to return to the negotiating table based on the resolutions of international legitimacy and the signed agreements, but Israel has refused and continues to refuse to do so.

With all due respect to what the international community has done — or has at least tried to do, because it has not done everything — in terms of support to our people and our just question politically and materially, it has unfortunately been unable to end the Israeli occupation and the heinous and continuous Israeli aggression against our people and provide them with protection. We want to be protected. We ask that we be protected. Protect us.

We will not resort to weapons. We will not resort to violence. That I can promise. We will not resort to terrorism. Working hand in hand with members of the General Assembly, we will fight terrorism, but we want to be protected from violence, terrorism and arms just like other peoples of the world.

The occupying State is acting as if it were a State above the law. Why is Israel acting as if it were a State above the law? Can anyone answer me? No one will answer me.

Surprisingly, States like the United States of America claim that they uphold international law and human rights, while at the same time — and I will speak frankly in this context — they provide unlimited support to Israel, and protect Israel from accountability. Those States assist Israel in pursuing its hostile policies, in contempt of the international community as a whole. Israel would not have been able to do what it is doing without the cover or the support of those States. Honestly put, even if members do not say that out of courtesy, I will say it.

Some of those States were partners at the very beginning, when they adopted decisions that led to the Nakba of the Palestinian people, in particular the ominous Balfour Declaration. Do members of the Assembly remember the Balfour Declaration? Of course they do not, because we are the only ones who are suffering its consequences. And then came the mandate and the sustained injustice against the Palestinian people when those States refused to compel Israel to end its occupation and aggression and respect the resolutions of international legitimacy. Those States therefore bear, along with Israel, the responsibility for the plight of the Palestinian people.

We therefore request Britain, the United States and Israel — and this is an official request — to acknowledge their responsibility for the major crime that was committed against our people and apologize for it. We ask for remedy and redress and for compensation to be granted to the Palestinian people — compensation that would be decided under international law. We will accept whatever is decided. We just want the injustice to be acknowledged.

Sadly enough, the United States and several European States that are enthusiastic about the two-State solution have recognized the State of Israel but have not so far recognized the State of Palestine. Our State exists and should be recognized in order to achieve peace. Those States have not so far recognized the State of Palestine, and they threaten to use the veto right if we try to ask for a full membership at the United Nations. If we ask — or when we ask — for full membership, they threaten us with the use of the veto right. To whom can we complain? We can only complain to God.

For 10 years now, the Observer State of Palestine at the United Nations has proved that Palestine qualifies for full membership. We have all recognized this. Palestine has been working seriously and responsibly with other States of the world in different committees and specialized organs. It has successfully and with great efficiency chaired the Group of 77 and China. We are an observer State, and yet we have chaired that Group and succeeded in our work, and the Assembly has recognized that. So why we are not allowed to be a full member? What are we lacking? Why is it that those States cannot recognize the State of Palestine and accept its full-fledged membership in the United Nations?

We therefore wish, beg and plead as we reiterate our request to attain full membership now. We also ask why double standards are imposed upon us? We are the exception. We are the only ones in the world on whom double standards are being imposed.

On the other hand, we call upon the Secretary-General of the United Nations to work tirelessly to come up with an international plan to end the occupation of the land of the State of Palestine, to achieve peace, security and stability in the region, in line with the resolutions of the international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative. The Arab Peace Initiative has been violated by some, but it still exists, and resolution 1515 (2003) still needs to be implemented.

When we hear something positive, we acknowledge it. Yesterday and the day before, I listened to President of the United States Joe Biden and the Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid (see A/77/PV. 6 and A/77/PV.8, respectively), and to other world leaders. I heard them supporting the two-State solution, and I was pleased to hear that. Undoubtedly, this is a positive development.

The real test for the seriousness and credibility of this stance — because we have had enough of resolutions and words — is for the Israeli Government to return to the negotiating table immediately, tomorrow, to implement the two-State solution in line with the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative, and to end all the unilateral measures that undermine the two-State solution.

Israel cannot negotiate while building settlements, killing and injuring people, and demolishing houses. On the contrary, those acts must cease even temporarily to let us negotiate. If the negotiations fail, then Israel can do whatever it wants. But if it wants to negotiate, it has to stop these unilateral measures.

In reality, the State of Palestine is looking forward to peace. Let us make peace so that we can live in security, stability and prosperity for the benefit of future generations of all the peoples of the region.

We want peace. We are fighting terrorism wherever it is found. The Assembly knows that we have signed agreements to fight global terrorism with 85 States around the world, at the forefront of which is the United States. No one can deny it. What more is required from us? We are ready for that.

I want to tell my people and the whole world that I am proud to have spent many decades of my life struggling with my brethren, the leaders of the Palestinian people, some who have passed away and some who are still alive, to preserve the rights of our heroes and courageous people, which have been the best example of sacrifice. Despite all the conspiracies and pressures that were placed on our people, we have maintained our independent national decision, which is a decision with which no one can interfere. The decisions we take are our own, and no one can interfere in them.

We are also attached to our national constants, which are well known, and we reiterate our rejection of any order or directive from whomever in the world. We are not ready to accept directives from any State, whether large or small. We make our own decisions.

I would like to pay tribute to the Palestinian martyrs who have lit the way to freedom and independence with their blood. They will remain symbols to be remembered by generations of Palestinians one after the other with gratitude and reverence, and we will live up to the responsibility they left us.

As for our brave prisoners, they are the living conscience of our people. They are sacrificing their freedom for the freedom of their people. Words cannot describe them. They are living martyrs. Some have received four or five life sentences, keeping them endlessly in prisons. They are heroes and deep-rooted leaders. We will always work for their freedom. We will not fail them until they are freed. We will not fail their sons and their daughters. We will not fail their families and their relatives.

Some of our prisoners are children — of 10 years of age, 8 years of age, 7 years of age, 6 years of age — yet they are prisoners. We have one child who was arrested by 30 soldiers. Is it acceptable? Tens of thousands of our children are in prison. Who can accept that? Which international law — which good conscience — can accept that a seven-year-old child is prosecuted and imprisoned? Legally and practically speaking, children are not responsible for all their acts.

I would like to talk about the hero and prisoner Nasser Abu Hamid whose transformation since he was sentenced is shocking. Look at how he was before and how he is now. Now, he is just waiting for his death to come at any time. His mother is asking to see him for just one minute. Why are they not allowing his mother to see him for a single minute? She is the mother of martyrs and prisoners. The mother of Nasser Abu Hamid has numerous children, and among them are martyrs and prisoners. She wants to see her son, but she is forbidden to see him. No religion, no law can find this acceptable.

From this rostrum, I would like to pay tribute to the mother of Nasser, a mother of prisoners and martyrs. Unfortunately, the occupying Power has not allowed her to see her son, the prisoner and hero, for a single minute while he is fighting death because of medical negligence. He is a prisoner with cancer. He committed a crime but, from a humanitarian point of view, he should be receive treatment but he is not allowed to. He is not allowed to see his mother, and no one will be allowed to see him, even after he passes away. We have hundreds of graves with numbers. They put deceased martyrs in a digital prison to punish his mother — and

us. Since 1967, martyrs are held in digital prisons and mortuaries. Is this acceptable? Who can accept that?

In conclusion, I would like to say to the General Assembly, which represents the international community and embodies international legitimacy, that the occupation will definitely end, sooner or later. Let the Assembly now bear the responsibility for implementing its resolutions. Let us achieve a just and comprehensive peace instead of achieving a peace with further sacrifices.

We have been waiting for too long. We are very tired. We have had to live through long bitter days. Does the General Assembly have a solution? I want a solution.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the State of Palestine for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

Address by Mr. Charles Michel, President of the European Council

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Charles Michel, President of the European Council.

Mr. Charles Michel, President of the European Council, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Charles Michel, President of the European Council, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Michel (European Council) (*spoke in French*): In Senegal last December, I met doctors and researchers who are passionate and determined to save lives, and it is thanks to international cooperation that, at the Institut Pasteur, they have created a vaccine-production centre equipped with the most promising technologies. A few months later, in Borodyanka, Ukraine, I met children. I saw the horror of war in their eyes, heard stories of violence against women, rape, torture, mass graves and

the sowers of death. I saw hope in Dakar and horror in Borodyanka.

To put an end to horror and choose hope: this is the promise of the United Nations, and this is what the European Union was founded upon. That is what we want — hope — for the whole world. For this, the European Union reaches out to all those who want to cooperate for the common good and honour the promise of the United Nations. I will speak of hope, but first I must talk — alas — about a war. Every war is a denial of humanity, and all suffering deserves the same commitment from us, whether in Yemen, Ethiopia, the Sahel, Myanmar or Ukraine.

The Kremlin launched a war against the Ukrainian people. And hundreds of millions of women, men and children all over the world are being targeted, threatened by famine, deprived of heating or burdened by energy bills. The Kremlin is waging a hybrid war that combines the violence of weapons with the poison of lies. Russia claims that its security has been threatened for years by “the West”. That is false. The Kremlin is attempting — in vain, I hope — to mobilize the rest of the world against an imaginary enemy. Absolutely nobody has threatened, attacked or invaded Russia. And no one in Europe wanted a conflict with Russia. What interest would we have in jeopardizing the security and prosperity of all?

The second lie is that this war, according to Russia, seeks to prevent an alleged genocide of the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine and to “denazify” the country. That is false, and it is despicable. Genocide is the concrete, intentional elimination — total or partial — of a national, ethnic or religious group. Are we to believe that today nobody, apart from the Kremlin, would have noticed the large-scale massacre of Ukrainians by Ukrainians? And what kind of liberation leads to the killing of Russian speakers and the destruction of their cities’ infrastructure?

Finally, the third lie is that the aggression against Ukraine, Russia claims, is a “special operation” — not a war. That is false and insulting. It is in fact a war. And the mobilization, announced a few days ago, of hundreds of thousands of reservists only confirms that. Banning the term “war” by punishing its use with up to 15 years of prison does not change its nature; it merely betrays its shameful character. This war is an unprovoked, illegal and unjustified aggression that seeks to change internationally recognized borders by force, and that is unacceptable. And because we must

stop the Kremlin’s war machine, massive economic sanctions were unavoidable.

That brings me to the fourth lie — that sanctions are causing food and fertilizer shortages. That is false. It was Russia that, even before the war, unilaterally decided to drastically reduce its exports of grain and fertilizers, causing price volatility on the global market. It was Russia that then decided to place a military blockade on the Black Sea ports, making maritime trade impossible. It was the European Union that opened the “solidarity lanes”, which have already allowed millions of tons of food products to leave Ukraine by land. And it was the agreement reached by Secretary-General Guterres that opened a maritime corridor in the Black Sea in order to help reduce global prices and start the resupply of Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Today it is the height of cynicism that the Kremlin is again threatening not to extend the agreement concluded with the United Nations. Once again, it is the most vulnerable countries that will be the main victims. In fact, there is a simple solution to stop the food crisis — Russia must stop the war, withdraw from Ukrainian territory and lift its blockade of ports.

One moment of truth stands out in this web of lies: one year ago, in a written and issued statement, Vladimir Putin declared — on the basis of wild historical imaginings — that Ukraine is neither a nation nor a legitimate State. That is what is behind his thinking. Nobody is fooled, and sham referendums will not change a thing.

In 1963, at the founding of the Organization of African Unity, in Addis Ababa, Modibo Keita, the first President of independent Mali, said that:

“imperialism is the manifestation of domination of one man over another, of one society over another, of one people over another, and the desire to impose — at all costs — one’s own way of thinking, way of life and method of political and economic development on others.”

Imperialism and revanchism are the foundations of this war of colonization, which targets Ukraine and is deliberately flouting international law and the Charter of the United Nations — to the point of threatening the use of nuclear weapons and using, at this very moment, the largest nuclear power plant in Europe as a military base. That must stop; it is unacceptable. We unreservedly support the efforts of Mr. Rafael Grossi,

Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, to restore security at the Zaporizhzhya plant.

I stand here in front of the General Assembly at this rostrum to say, solemnly, that the European Union is not asking anyone to choose between East or West, North or South. But there is a choice to be made. And the European Union chooses respect for borders over aggression, cooperation over threats and the rules-based order over the law of the strongest.

In 1948, at this rostrum, one of the founding fathers of the European Union, Belgian Prime Minister Paul-Henri Spaak, addressed the Soviet Union directly:

“[we were] afraid because, within the Assembly, the USSR had risen as the champion of the doctrine of absolute national sovereignty, and [we] were wondering how an international organization could function and achieve its aims if that outdated and reactionary doctrine were to triumph.” (A/PV.147, p. 281)

Today Russia is scary. The Kremlin brought war back to Europe and is engaging in blackmail. We cannot let the destructive action of one of us shake our collective determination to act for the common good.

The European Union is reaching out, sincerely and honestly. We have so many challenges to face together. The effects of the pandemic are painful, especially for the most vulnerable. The Human Development Index is falling. All too often, the rights of women and minorities are still too often flouted, or their very existence is denied. Extreme natural phenomena are becoming increasingly frequent, as we saw recently and tragically in Pakistan and Nigeria. Fissures are widening between developed and developing countries and between democracies and authoritarian regimes. Fissures are also widening within each of our various countries.

Multilateral cooperation is collective intelligence in action. It is also the DNA of the European Union, which works as a force for peace, development and the promotion of human rights. European leadership aims to build solutions together. We are not here to lecture. There is no master and no pupil. It is that spirit of cooperation that guides our action in the United Nations, in the Group of Seven (G-7) and in the Group of 20 (G-20). And that is why we are reaching out, with that spirit, that we are reaching out to form strategic partnerships.

Together with our African brothers, we have reset the parameters. Our partnership is forward-looking and truly on an equal footing. I reiterate here my call and support for the inclusion of the African Union in the G-20.

We share so much with Japan and South Korea, for example, and we are strengthening our relationship day by day. With India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, we are expanding our areas of cooperation. Our ties with the Latin American continent are natural ones, and we are relying heavily on next year's summit to give new impetus to our relationship. With the Gulf countries, we are identifying our common priorities and conducting frank and regular dialogues on our differences.

We hope that emerging Powers, including China, will participate in earnest in collective efforts for peace and development. We believe in maritime security. We believe in stability in the Taiwan Strait. We adhere to the one-China policy, but we will not turn a blind eye to human rights abuses, especially in Xinjiang and Hong Kong.

We are in this forum, the United Nations, which brings together the peoples of the world, and we all know that a robust multilateral system requires mutual trust. However, the current system is not inclusive or representative enough. The use of the veto should be the exception, but it is becoming the rule. Reform is urgently needed. I will share with the Assembly my conviction that, when a permanent member of the Security Council starts an unprovoked and unjustifiable war that is condemned by the General Assembly, that member ought to be automatically suspended from the Security Council.

We support the Secretary-General's proposals on *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982). The 2024 Summit of the Future must be seized as an opportunity to make those radical improvements.

The European Union is committed to, and stands by, the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel. We are also prepared to develop resources for the countries of the Gulf of Guinea. We are also committed to Mozambique. We support the efforts of Rwanda and the countries of the Southern African Development Community, which are present today. With our High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell Fontelles, the European Union is sparing

no effort to implement the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear issue.

The European Union stands by the Afghan people, especially Afghan women. We will continue to fight everywhere this obscurantism, which tramples on the rights of women and girls on a daily basis in all areas. And I am thinking now of the Iranian women and girls who are courageously risking their lives and standing up for their dignity.

In Yemen, a serious humanitarian crisis is unfolding. The Yemeni people have a right to peace. We support the efforts of United Nations Special Envoy Grundberg to transform the current truce into a sustainable ceasefire.

The peace agreements between Arab countries and Israel are a step forward in the region. But the Palestinian people have waited too long in vain for the slightest progress for their own future. They cannot be forgotten in the global landscape. The two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living in peaceful coexistence and security, is a priority.

Finally, I am personally engaged in a difficult mediation between the President of Azerbaijan and the Prime Minister of Armenia. The fighting must stop, with a view to resolving the conflict in order to establish lasting peace and prosperity to the South Caucasus.

Leadership is about showing the way and delivering results. When it comes to energy security, we have been too dependent for too long — putting our security, prosperity and sovereignty at risk. Energy and climate change are two sides of the same coin. To overcome the energy crisis is to reduce the climate threat, and to protect our biodiversity and our oceans is to secure our future.

Climate neutrality is the compass of the European Union. At the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Sharm El-Sheikh, we will push urgently to implement the promises of Paris and to go beyond. We want a fair and just transition. No one country alone can protect our planet. The European Union is honouring its commitment to developing countries, and we hope that the other developed countries follow our example.

Today nearly one fifth of humankind is at risk of sliding into poverty and hunger. The Russian war on Ukraine has exacerbated that crisis. Initiatives are being taken by the G-7, the European Union, the

African Union and others. The European Union is mobilizing nearly €8 billion for food security between now and 2024. But we know that more is needed — more coordination, more money and more sovereignty. New, more resilient and fairer agricultural models are needed. More food sovereignty, especially in Africa and Latin America, is indispensable. We are ready to support sustainable projects for fertilizer production on those continents, following the example of what is being done for vaccines to protect against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

COVID-19 has opened our eyes to our strengths and weaknesses. Vaccines were produced in record time. And under the leadership of the Director-General of the World Trade Organization, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, a balance was struck between intellectual property, scientific innovation and universal access to technology. Nevertheless, we know that we must fully learn the lessons from this painful pandemic. That is why Mr. Ghebreyesus and I, some time ago, launched the idea of a pandemic treaty to strengthen global health security. Negotiations on the treaty are ongoing and must be concluded.

In conclusion, we know that this is a pivotal moment in human history. The term “pivotal” has been overused perhaps, but now, more than ever, we sense that the times we are living through are not ordinary or insignificant. And I think of Winston Churchill, who, in 1946, referring to the failure of the League of Nations to avert the Second World War, he said:

“The League did not fail because of its principles or conceptions. It failed because those principles were deserted by those States which brought it into being, because the Governments of those States feared to face the facts and act while time remained.”

Like the European Union, the United Nations is a project of hope, founded in the wake of the horrors of two World Wars.

A few days ago, my 6-year-old daughter suddenly confided in her mother and me that she is afraid of war. And that sent shivers down my spine. No parent in the world can bear to have their child afraid of war, let alone have to face it. No parent in the world can bear for their child to be hungry or unable to receive medical treatment. No parent in the world can bear their child being deprived of hope of a dignified and fulfilling life. Preventing or stopping the horror in Borodyanka, Yemen, Myanmar and elsewhere; restoring hope, like

the doctors in Dakar and elsewhere, is the heart of our responsibility as leaders representing the peoples of the world. We have many differences, but beyond our differences the same blood runs through our veins. The same hearts beat within. And we share the same dreams of education and freedom for our boys and girls. I believe in the virtues of collective wisdom. I believe that science and knowledge will put the world back on the track of hope. We need a wake-up call. That must happen now, and we must act together. The world can count on the European Union.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the European Council for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Charles Michel, President of the European Council, was escorted from the rostrum.

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

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

Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry, Foreign Affairs and Forestry of the Republic of Fiji, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry, Foreign Affairs and Forestry of the Republic of Fiji and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Bainimarama (Fiji): Good morning to one and all. First, I congratulate Mr. Csaba Kőrösi on his election as the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. I also commend his predecessor, Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid of the Maldives.

In a challenging year, I am here to condemn not one but three great global conflicts. The first is Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine — a scourge that reflects a brutal mentality of conquest and empire. No matter their might or size, Fiji is unafraid to condemn any warring nation. We owe nothing less to the Fijian

peacekeepers who have sacrificed and paid the ultimate price for the sake of peace around the world. We in the Pacific, who have lived the horror of nuclear fallout, wholly denounce Mr. Putin's threatened use of nuclear weapons. And I appeal to him — give diplomacy a chance to bring this war to a speedy close.

We also condemn another war — the climate war — that humankind is waging on itself, its ecosystems and its oceans. This war is not fought with bullets and bombs, but apathy, denial and the lack of courage to do what we all know must be done. This is a war we are losing in every community, city and country of every size. But small States, those least responsible, stand to lose the most of all. Yet we are not being heard — not even, it seems, by the leadership of multilateral development banks.

Lastly, I condemn the cold war of indifference against the citizens of small islands and States who bear the brunt of this superstorm of global shocks — from rising commodity prices to the climate crisis and the pandemic. Surely, as leaders, we have the capacity to defend peace on all those fronts. I ask — where is the world's courage to do so? I see that courage in the Fijian people I serve as we build up our country, undaunted by those challenges. Today I will share their story — not for the sake of pride, but because leaders should know the lives, progress and aspirations they threaten through their inaction.

I arrived this week from the funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, a leader who holds a special place in Fijian history and in the hearts of the Fijian people, as well as in my heart. My fondest memory of Her Majesty is from London, four years ago, at a welcome reception she hosted at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. She walked over to me from her greeting post to say that she had asked the then-Prince Charles to look after their other guests so that she could personally welcome me and Fiji back into the Commonwealth. It was a simple gesture, but a special affirmation of all that we had worked to achieve for Fiji's new and true democracy. For we had done away with an undemocratic system that relegated hundreds of thousands of Fijians to the margins of society by design. We had adopted a new Constitution that echoed the spirit of the promise of the Charter of the United Nations to uphold equal rights for all peoples regardless of background, religion, ethnicity, gender, age or physical ability or provenance. It guaranteed common and equal Fijian identity and citizenship for all citizens.

The strong and accountable institutions it established and the protections it upholds produced an electoral system in which every Fijian vote holds equal value. And the Fijian people have used that vote to elect my Government twice in the past eight years.

In our service, we have worked to advance the civil, political and socioeconomic constitutional rights of every Fijian — from the protection of indigenous land ownership to the right to clean water and adequate sanitation, the right to a clean and healthy environment and the right to education, among many more. Since 2014, we have built or replaced hundreds of kilometres of water pipelines and improved access to clean water to over 80 per cent of all Fijians. Thousands of Fijian households have gained access to electric power for the first time — propelling electricity access in the country to upwards of 96 per cent. We have replaced or outright built dozens of bridges and crossings and lit up the country with thousands of new streetlights. We have built, upgraded or rehabilitated close to 1,000 kilometres of roads. Poverty is falling, incomes are rising. The cost of data has fallen by as much as 98 per cent. Ninety-five per cent of the Fijian population have mobile phone connectivity. And a national digital television platform, *Walesi*, reaches all 110 populated islands in Fiji. We achieved the longest stretch of economic growth in Fijian history.

Among those wins for sustainable development, the Fijian education revolution is my greatest pride as Prime Minister. For the first time in our history, primary and secondary education are free — not free in name, but free in fact and accessible to all. Textbooks are free. Whether they travel by road, river or ocean, disadvantaged students' transportation to schools is subsidized. We have extended opportunities for tertiary education beyond what was ever thought imaginable. And today Fijian women outnumber men in our universities. In times of crisis, our constitutional commitments to every Fijian have served us best and mattered most.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic contracted our economy by over 20 per cent. It stole half of our Government revenues, flung over 100,000 Fijians out of full-time employment and pushed us to the precipice of a socioeconomic crisis. Through decisive policy choices, we maintained the strongest possible focus on protecting people and communities. Although our tourism revenue was zero, we paid out income support to the unemployed. We did not slash a cent

of our pensions and payments to elderly and disabled Fijians. In total, we paid out half a billion dollars in social assistance — the equivalent of 10 per cent of the value of our gross domestic product. With our partners' support, we achieved near-universal vaccination of our adult population.

We reopened Fiji's borders from this past December, and we have since welcomed hundreds of thousands of visitors and earned hundreds of millions in revenue. More of our people are working again, and we are set towards record-breaking double-digit economic growth for the Fijian economy this year.

The pace of our recovery is possible because we prepared for it. We kept our national airline, Fiji Airways, ready to resume full operations throughout the COVID-19 crisis. We supported our tourism industry to weather the storm. That allowed us to set the terms of our reopening. With our steady recovery, we are now paying out tens of millions of dollars to help the most vulnerable Fijian families to meet the global rising cost of food, fuel and other essentials.

Our eight-year-old democracy has delivered the equality that our people cherish. It has delivered the services and infrastructure on which they depend. It has certainly also shown its resilience. Our eyes are now on the next eight years — the sprint from now until 2030, which will be the most defining period ever for our people's and planet's future. If we do not halve carbon emissions by that critical year, the crisis of our warming planet will imperil every gain that we and every nation have made. If we fail to secure 1.5°C, we will crush any hope of improving our citizens' quality of life. We were given glimpses of that doomsday proposition worldwide in the floods, droughts, storms, wildfires, dying coral and melting glaciers.

We in Fiji felt that devastation in the 14 cyclones that have struck us since 2014. Those storms stole lives. They levelled homes. They destroyed schools. They traumatized our young people. The Pacific's children are among the least to blame for the climate crisis, yet our children are the most affected. I challenge leaders from the high-emitting nations to name a greater global injustice than the price that young Pacific islanders are paying for climate change.

Since 2014, Fiji has rebuilt or repaired more than 200 schools devastated by cyclones. We built cement and nature-based seawalls to keep out the rising seas. We stabilized vast stretches of riverbank. Where

seawalls cannot suffice, we have already relocated six communities, with over 40 more in the queue to be moved. We are building back better to the standards demanded by a warmer world. We are borrowing hundreds of millions of dollars to do that.

The archaic architecture of multilateral development banks and global financial services gives us little to no access to grants or concessional climate financing, particularly for adaptation. We are therefore left with little to no choice. We legislated a net-zero commitment by 2050 through the Climate Change Act 2021, which will make us more energy secure, protect us from energy price shocks beyond our control and provide us with cleaner air, better health and better jobs.

Yet, despite the clear benefits, the imperative before us and all the talk that we hear of saving the planet, the world's collective commitments remain trifling. They simply will not keep us at well below the 2°C target, let alone 1.5°C. I again urge developed nations to deliver on the \$100 billion climate financing commitment at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Egypt this year. That is now three years overdue.

Ahead of Glasgow, I told leaders not to bother packing their bags if they did not come with serious carbon-slashing commitments. I have a new ask before they arrive in Sharm El-Sheikh. They should come only if they plan to arrive true to their climate financing commitments. They should come to Sharm El-Sheikh only if they are ready to agree to a loss-and-damage mechanism, in addition to a post-2025 financing framework. That must be in the order of \$750 billion, with at least 10 per cent of climate financing destined for small island States.

That is our story — a Fijian story in every sense. It is the story of David against Goliath — a small State facing nations, corporations and interests far bigger than we are.

On behalf of every family that is watching us from home and praying for our success, we are unrelenting in this fight for its future. We are determined to provide it with opportunities to do well for itself and its families. We are determined to create new jobs in nature, in technology, in sustainable tourism and in our blue and green economies.

Today we ask the world to join us. This is not the time for war. This is not the time for words. This is a

time for will and a time for courage. Fiji is ready to make the coming years count for our people and for the planet. Our question is this: Are Member States with us? They should not say yes unless they plan to show it.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Fiji for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Josai Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Fiji, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communications and Media and Minister for Religious Affairs of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communications and Media and Minister for Religious Affairs of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Mr. Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communications and Media and Minister for Religious Affairs of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communications and Media and Minister for Religious Affairs of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Bettel (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to endorse what my colleague Mr. Charles Michel just said on behalf of the European Union, since I come from a generation that has never seen war. We thought that war belonged only in history books. However, our continent is now experiencing war on its soil. I think that our strength is precisely our solidarity, our unison and, above all, our unity.

I am proud that, with its partners, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is contributing to the European Union's determined action to promote common values — human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights. As Europeans, we are wholeheartedly committed to defending such values, which are the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United

Nations, and to strengthening multilateralism — doing things together, with the United Nations at its heart.

For his presidency, the President has framed the general debate under the theme “A watershed moment”, and he stressed the need to find “transformative solutions to interlocking challenges”. I want to say that we are currently at a watershed moment for the entire world and for the United Nations.

For almost seven months, the Russian Federation, which, I do not need to recall, is a permanent member of the Security Council, has been waging a full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine, a sovereign neighbour, with the involvement of Belarus. For many people, and perhaps in many other countries, on the European continent anyway, that unprovoked and unjustified war has revived the fear of a war. As I said a moment ago, now more than ever, it is again becoming a matter of wondering if it is possible. The recent threats and measures announced by Moscow only exacerbate the situation. I want to say that we strongly condemn them.

We face a situation with the Russian veto and the Security Council deadlocked. That is difficult. The Secretary-General condemned Russia’s clear violation of the United Nations Charter. I do not need to remind Member States that, on 16 March, the International Court of Justice indicated provisional measures requiring the Russian Federation to immediately suspend the military operations.

This Assembly also met in an emergency special session and adopted three resolutions in that context (resolutions ES-11/1, ES-11/2 and ES-11/3). We also see that a large majority of the members of this Assembly condemned Russia’s aggression against Ukraine and demanded a ceasefire.

At the request of Ukrainian President Zelenskyy, I, as Prime Minister, also wanted to do something. I held talks with the Russian President. As there are representatives of the Russian Federation in this Hall, I must say that I do not regret having tried. I am disappointed with the outcome when, for example, I heard President Erdoğan say last week that there would perhaps be peace, and, the same day, President Putin announced the organization of referendums. When we ourselves organize a referendum, we know how long it takes. Organizing a referendum in time of war and, if I understood correctly, going knocking on doors and asking people to vote at the ballot box, I do not know

how that would be arranged. One cannot organize a referendum in the current circumstances.

The population is being driven abroad. I even fear that the referendums will be an excuse to justify further actions, to say that it is a Russian territory, and that Donbas must therefore be protected by Russia, and to support the use of even more brutal means than those already being used. I regret that.

I appreciated the discussions that I had with President Putin — the exchanges and the frankness. But I must say that today I note that it is easy to begin a war, but the greatness of a political figure is rather to know when to end it and to want to get out of it.

I do not know how President Putin is now going to explain. In recent days, there has also been the mobilization, where young people are requested to join the Russian troops. How is he going to explain to mothers that they are going to lose their sons, to wives that they will lose their husbands and to children that they will lose their fathers to a meaningless war? I have now been Prime Minister of my country for nine years and, as a politician, I have always tried to find answers to the questions that I ask myself. I say to the Russian representatives that this is the first time that I was not able to find answers. I cannot understand. I therefore once again appeal to their President that there be a ceasefire and diplomacy.

I made those calls but, after Bucha, I could not go on. I say it frankly. I could not understand. In particular, finding out that soldiers who had committed crimes were being decorated is intolerable to me — and that word is not strong enough. It is unacceptable to me.

The war continues. It has already claimed more than 14,000 victims among the civilian population in Ukraine, including more than 1,000 children. When we see the mass graves that are being found, with people who have been beaten up, which is what I also saw in Bucha — summary executions — every day that it continues is one day too many.

I would also like to say that the Russian aggression also poses threats to Ukrainian nuclear facilities. In many countries, people are frightened. It is an unacceptable risk for Ukraine, but also the other European countries.

As I said, about three months ago, I travelled to Ukraine. I visited the towns of Borodyanka, Bucha and Irpin, where I met — forgive me, but I am talking

about a personal experience — a woman who had lost everything, but she remained hopeful and retained the will to believe in peace. She was there with her grandson, who had become deaf from the bombings next to him. I say to the Russian representatives that one cannot condemn a country and a generation. One cannot kill innocent people. I cannot find the words.

When I saw the impact of the atrocities committed by the Russian military forces, I could only bow to the memory of the children — the innocent — who pay with their lives, shattered by the war.

I say it here, and I also said it in Kyiv: Ukraine can continue to count on us to help it to defend its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and the right to legitimate defence, as enshrined in Article 51 of the Charter. It is our responsibility to help Ukraine. We cannot accept a larger neighbour. Those here can see that I am not from one of the larger countries in terms of its size or its army, but I cannot imagine living in a country where I would have to worry about the extent of action of my neighbours. I think that the greatest project that my continent has seen is the European Union. If I have lived in peace since 1957, it is precisely because we try to build things together. It is true that my country is between France and Germany, which were enemies at the time of the Second World War. Today we are partners, and we are building something together.

I would not be here today, and I would not be living in a democracy, if countries that were not my neighbours, but other countries, had not helped us. In Luxembourg, we too opened our doors to people fleeing war. Those people are not seeking a better life; they simply want to live. We welcomed more than 1,000 students from Ukraine to our schools. Whether it is in Kyiv or in our country, there is the courage of those students, families, children and men in Ukraine who have also begun to rebuild their country and revive their cities, liberated after the barbarity that took place there. We must constantly honour that courage and support the investigations carried out by national and international actors — I am thinking in particular of the International Criminal Court — so that those responsible for war crimes and other crimes committed in Ukraine are identified, prosecuted and punished. There can be no impunity, not for war crimes, crimes against humanity, the crime of genocide or the crime of aggression.

Let me take this opportunity to also commend the courage in Russia, because President Putin has now called for a mobilization, and we see young Russians leaving their country. As Mr. Michel said earlier, we cannot talk about war by just condemning it. It is already too late, for what has taken place is inexcusable. A ceasefire and an end to the killing of innocent people are things that are close to my heart. I will say why I am so sensitive to this subject. I had a grandmother who was Russian and a grandfather who was Polish. I have a grandfather from Luxembourg and a French grandmother. My grandmother was Orthodox, my grandfather Jewish, the other grandfather an atheist and the other grandmother a Catholic. Even in my country, having Jewish blood, being liberal and one's husband being a man, I would have been condemned to death in my own country. Let us accept differences. Let us accept the wealth of diversity. If we are to live in peace, let us not make the same mistakes. I appeal to President Putin. I said earlier that starting a war was not the most difficult, but knowing how to get out of it is where one recognizes greatness, particularly as this war started at a time when most of us sighed with relief that we were leaving the coronavirus disease behind. We thought that we were going to be able to leave it behind.

Now there is food insecurity, particularly in countries with vulnerable populations in Africa and the Middle East. I reiterate to African colleagues, for I know that the narrative that it is European sanctions that create problems for the food crisis is false. It is the war, the aggression in Ukraine that is responsible for the problems that they are experiencing.

I must also thank President Erdoğan, who sat at the table to try and find a way out of the Black Sea for Ukrainian grain exports. It is a crucial agreement for millions of people.

We are also seeing a rise in energy prices and very harsh consequences for many Europeans as well. It is easy to say that we should abandon the sanctions. What I would like is that we give up the war — not us, but them, our Russian colleagues.

I would also like to welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to convene the Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance to identify short-, medium- and long-term solutions. I thank António Guterres and his teams for their tremendous efforts, as I said earlier, regarding the agreement with Türkiye.

We must also express our support for the World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the International Fund for Agricultural Development in strengthening food resilience.

Today we see that the Sahel region is suffering from food insecurity, amplified by climate change and the effects of the war. Not long ago — and I would like to thank the leadership of President Bazoum — I was in the Niger, a partner country of Luxembourg's cooperation. We want to work towards more stability in the region. I also remember when I met Mr. Roch Kaboré and Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta. The leaders have now changed. I think that stability in Africa is a tragic element, together with other existing crises.

I am proud to be Prime Minister of a country where 1 per cent of its gross national income is allocated to official development assistance (ODA). As most Member States can imagine, every time we talk about official development assistance, there is someone who will say: why are they helping others; there are still problems at home? But I am proud of the 1 per cent assistance. When we see some problems that we have at home, they are tiny compared to others.

We also want to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the partnership with Africa is crucial. We intend to strengthen it at the continental level, between the European Union and the African Union, and at the bilateral level. That partnership goes beyond traditional cooperation, focusing on social sectors, such as health care and education. It extends to cooperation on renewable energy and the fight against climate change, as we are also doing with our partners in Cabo Verde. It also extends to cooperation in technology and information and communications. I was recently in Kigali, in Rwanda, where we continue such collaboration.

If we want to be credible partners, we must particularly not just hold donor meetings, because they tend to do only that, but also deliver on our commitments. It is pointless to meet to make promises, but then not keep them. For my part, for example in terms of climate financing, my country decided to apply the principle of additionality. Our financing is therefore in addition to our ODA.

At the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Glasgow, I announced that the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg was going to increase its climate financing to €220 million for the period from 2021 to 2025. Half of that funding will go to adaptation to climate change in the most vulnerable countries. We also intend to invest an increasing share in innovative instruments to mobilize private financing.

We are a European leader in sustainable financing. We play a major role in mobilizing the private capital needed to finance the transition to carbon neutrality, including with the European Investment Bank in the area of sustainable financing.

Given the climate emergency, I must say that, as politicians, we are at times a little timid. We ask ourselves if we should or should not act. We wonder what the consequences will be if the temperature increases by 1°C or 2°C. But some countries wonder how long they will even exist. They risk being erased from the map of the world because of the temperature rise. Are we as aware of that? In Luxembourg, I launched the Citizens' Climate Council, where we asked 100 people to meet and make proposals. We realize that our citizens' proposals are often bolder than how we, as politicians, think. It is quite an interesting experience, and we need to listen to them.

Many of us will meet in Sharm El-Sheikh. We must mobilize to stay on course for the 1.5°C target that we signed up to in Paris. Only by making joint efforts can we manage to mitigate the impact of climate change. Allow me to also think about our friends in Pakistan and what is happening there.

Climate change also has an impact on human rights, in particular the rights of children. That is among Luxembourg's priorities at the Human Rights Council, where we are also committed to promoting gender equality, fighting against discrimination, strengthening the rule of law and civic space and combating impunity. Allow me to have a thought for Mahsa Amini in Iran and what happened with the morality police, who decided a woman's fate. As I said before the Assembly last year (see A/76/PV.13), is it normal that, depending on my place of birth, my rights differ, and that, depending on my place of birth, if I am a member of a certain religion, I do not have rights? Is it normal that, if I have a different political view, I do not have rights and, if I am of a different sexual orientation, I do not have rights? In some countries, I would even be condemned

to death. And if I am a woman, I have less rights than a man. That is a reality today in 2022.

It is therefore very important that we continue to have the independent international commission to investigate violations of human rights. Unfortunately, that has an increasingly heavy workload at the international level.

We are committed to living up to the responsibility of Luxembourg having been elected to the Human Rights Council for the 2022-2024 term. This is the first time that we have had the honour of a seat on the Council. I would like to take this opportunity today to thank Member States very warmly, on my own behalf and on behalf of my Government and country, for having placed their trust in us.

The President emphasized the fact that we are at a decisive turning point and that we all should meet the various challenges facing us, be it war or climate change. We must find common responses. We must also act together. To those who say that the United Nations is powerless, I say that the United Nations is what we make it. It all depends on our ambition and what we manage to do with that. It is up to us to mobilize to find solutions and forge partnerships and compromises that allow us to strengthen multilateral cooperation.

This spring, for example, Luxembourg had the honour of facilitating, together with Bangladesh, the negotiations that led to the adoption by consensus of the first declaration on the progress made in the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (resolution 76/266). We were also involved in the efforts that led to the adoption by consensus of the Liechtenstein veto initiative (resolution 76/262). It establishes a permanent mandate for this Assembly to debate the use of the veto in the Security Council. We have a system. It is what it is. Let us make the best of it. We also need Security Council reform. The United Nations cannot be a dog that barks but does not bite — a dog without teeth. It is important that we achieve a United Nations that works. We manage to explain what this body is. Let us recall why we are here. It was after the Second World War that we wanted to sit around a table to find solutions and work together. Today the United Nations should not be a place where, by means of a veto, I can obstruct the will to build something together.

We therefore welcome the work that has been launched to follow up on the proposals made by the

Secretary-General. A few days ago, the Transforming Education Summit was held. The decision was taken to establish the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth.

The involvement of young people is crucial because they will be paying for the mistakes that we are making today. We must have the courage to recognize that politics, of course, involves achieving short-term objectives but most importantly, it is about the legacy we leave to future generations.

Mrs. Ataeva (Turkmenistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I therefore want to assure the Assembly that Luxembourg will continue to place itself at the service of the United Nations in order to champion our common values — the values of humanity. That is why the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is also submitting its candidature for a seat on the Security Council for the 2031 to 2032 term. It is why we continue to be committed to peace and security in Ukraine, Mali and the Middle East. It is why we are committed to rights for all human beings and supporting humanitarian action for the people of the Sahel and Syria. And it is why we will always be at the ready to defend the Charter of the United Nations. I hope that by the time we meet here next year the ongoing atrocities in Ukraine will have been relegated to history.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communications and Media and Minister for Religious Affairs of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communications and Media and Minister for Religious Affairs of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by the Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Mr. Mark Rutte, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Mark Rutte, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Rutte (Netherlands): Growing up in Europe as a child of the Cold War, the Iron Curtain was a fact of life, and I still vividly remember when the first breaches began to appear in the mid-1980s. The credit for that shift, which made a profound impression, is largely due to Mikhail Gorbachev, who passed away a few weeks ago. Although he represented a dogmatic, undemocratic and oppressive system, he had the courage, as a matter of principle, to choose freedom and humanity.

I mention that memory here for a reason. As Russia's recent past and Mr. Gorbachev's legacy have shown, we will always have a choice to make. It is the choice between "might is right" and, in the words of the great Dag Hammarskjöld, "an international community living in peace under the laws of justice" (A/PV.690, para. 68). That is my message today — working together under the laws of justice is and will remain the only path to a safe and prosperous world. And that is why Russia's aggression must be stopped.

Right now, Russia stands on the wrong side of history. It is hard not to think of historical analogies in which one powerful country with expansionist ambitions invaded other countries under the false pretence of victimhood and security. Let me be very clear. Russia is not the victim here, it is the aggressor, and the whole world knows it. No one was invading Russia. No one was threatening the Russian people. The people of Ukraine wanted only to be left in peace and to decide their own future. Again, there is only one aggressor here, and that is Russia.

For too long, we assumed that it was pure rhetoric when Mr. Putin said that the end of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe. In hindsight, we all should have paid heed to his words, because they reflect a dangerous worldview. He will not stop at Ukraine if we do not stop him now. This war is bigger than Ukraine itself. It is about upholding the international rule of law. It is about a sovereign people's right to choose its own path. It is about freedom — theirs and ours. This war is therefore about our common future. And there is only one path for us to follow and one right choice to make. We must uphold the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations — the principles we

agreed to after the painful lessons of history learned from a past aggressor.

This year, NATO and European Union allies are more united than ever in our determination to stop Putin. All States Members of the United Nations should be united in condemning this unprovoked war, because Russia's unbridled aggression is an assault on the Charter and the international rules-based order. It is an assault on the very foundations of our partnership and therefore an assault on the security of us all.

The Ukrainian people are fighting for their freedom, one stride at a time. I have great admiration for Ukraine's achievements on the battlefield. Ukraine is gaining ground. This shows that our military assistance is working, and it motivates us to do even more. In the past week, Putin made a speech that can only be described as a sign of panic — a sign of weakness. He is losing his own ill-conceived war, and he knows it. That is why he clutches to his delusional narrative, full of lies and deceit. His words were meant to intimidate, but they leave us cold. Putin's latest threats to invoke Russia's nuclear capabilities are intended to sow division in the growing unity that the world is showing. But he will not succeed. Together with our allies, the Netherlands will continue to support Ukraine in any way we can and for however long it takes, every inch of the way.

I therefore call on everyone here — all States Members of the United Nations — to stand firm in defence of the principles we collectively enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and to stand firm until peace, freedom and territorial integrity are fully restored in Ukraine. That must be followed by rebuilding the country and achieving justice for those who have suffered from the war and the crimes and human rights violations arising from it, from sexual violence to deportations, torture and random killings. The horrific crimes committed in Bucha, which I visited, and other places must not go unpunished.

I reiterate that the empty Russian threats leave us cold. But what does not leave us cold is the suffering of the people of Ukraine and, frankly, also the suffering of Russian people, who are being called up against their will to fight. Every week we are seeing more evidence of atrocities, such as those in the recently liberated city of Izyum. The world cannot and will not stand by and do nothing. There can be no justice without accountability.

The Netherlands and the city of The Hague — the legal capital of the world — feel a special responsibility

in that regard. We have already supported fact-finding missions by sending forensic experts to Ukraine, in close cooperation with the International Criminal Court. And in July we hosted the Ukraine Accountability Conference, at which 45 countries agreed on key priorities for guaranteeing justice for Ukraine. We know from experience that achieving international justice can be a long and painstaking process.

For more than eight years now, we have been closing in on the Russians responsible for the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH-17 in eastern Ukraine. I am grateful for the unwavering support we have received from Ukraine and many other countries in our fight for justice for the 298 victims and their families. I promise the General Assembly that the Netherlands will continue to work hard to ensure justice for Ukraine as well.

By the same token, we stand firmly with those in Russia who oppose the war, who long for peace and justice, who do not want to send their children into a senseless war and whose voices are not being heard. We will also support those people all over the world who are suffering the effects of the war indirectly. Putin's war has created not only thousands of victims in Ukraine, but also hundreds of thousands, perhaps even millions, of victims of hunger and poverty around the world. Here too, the United Nations family must hold Russia to account.

Putin's cold-blooded power politics, which exploit the most basic human needs of so many people, provide yet another argument for ending the fossil fuel era even faster than we had planned. They make tackling that other major global issue — climate change — even more urgent. Here too, worldwide cooperation is an absolute must. Together we have all made pledges aimed at keeping global warming below 1.5°C. Around the world, we all feel the urgency of that task.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands, which is made up of four very different countries, is also feeling the effects of climate change, from heavier rainfall and worsening drought in the European part of the Kingdom to more severe hurricanes and rising sea levels in the Caribbean part. Small island developing States are at the forefront of the world's climate adaptation strategies, and Curaçao, Aruba and St. Maarten, the island countries of our Kingdom, are no exception. We are experiencing both the challenges confronting mainland Europe and those that small island States face

every day, including rising ocean temperatures, coral bleaching, biodiversity loss and ocean pollution.

As one Kingdom, we know that water is the factor linking all the great challenges of our time, from food and energy to migration and urbanization. Moreover, 90 per cent of all climate disasters manifest themselves through water via flooding, drought or pollution. Many parts of the world are already facing the reality of having too much or too little water or water supplies that are too polluted. The recent events in Pakistan are a sobering reminder of that: devastating floods that have disrupted the lives of more than 30 million people. That illustrates once again that water is at the heart of many global problems. It has the power to turn our lives upside down and to threaten our health, safety, food and living environments.

But at the same time, collaborating on water issues provides us with a big opportunity to make the world safer, healthier and more prosperous. Investing in water security should be a top priority for our common future because worldwide water solutions are an existential issue and therefore a basic necessity for the world. It is our responsibility to place water security at the core of all our climate action and worldwide efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. That is why the Kingdom of the Netherlands, together with our friends from Tajikistan, will be hosting next year's United Nations Water Conference. The Conference is all about action — action by Governments and the private sector, working closely across sectors and regions. It can and must be a turning point — it is now or never. I therefore urge everyone to attend.

In the meantime, we will also need to step up our other climate efforts. We will have to rapidly deliver on the promises we made last year in Glasgow. The twenty-seventh Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, will be another milestone, if only because it will mark the first time it will be convened on the African continent. Earlier this month, I met with African leaders in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, at the Africa adaptation summit. Our discussions further impressed on me the importance of climate action for Africa. I can confidently say that the European Union member States remain fully committed to a 55 per cent reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 and a swift transition to clean energy.

The Netherlands is also working to combat deforestation and to help the world meet its \$100 billion

pledge on climate finance. That money must go to the most vulnerable individuals and communities — to those hit hardest by climate change. We will continue to provide expertise and financial support to protect vulnerable areas from the elements. Developed countries have a responsibility to help developing countries take the necessary measures. Only by acting together can we turn things around. That is why the Netherlands will continue pressing for a doubling of finance for climate adaptation. Half of the money that my country spends on international climate action now goes to adaptation and resilience, and we will continue on that path, because adaptation is in our DNA.

In order to address the major issues of our time, we need each other more than ever. Cooperation is the only way forward, with the United Nations as a vital tool — one we must use far more effectively. To quote Dag Hammarskjöld once more:

“The United Nations is what the Members make it, reflecting the weakness of all human effort but also the high aspirations and noble achievements of men of good will all over the world.”

That is why the Netherlands supports *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982) as a framework for promoting peace, security and sustainable development. We will continue working every day to build broad coalitions to address the major issues of our time — coalitions in which water is our common bond.

In conclusion, together we can and must defend, protect and reinforce the international rules-based order. Putin’s war of aggression must be stopped. We cannot go back to an age of imperialist wars, mass atrocities and mass graves. I want to tell those who are still on the fence that they have a choice. Now is the time to speak out. Now is the time to be on the right side of history.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister of General Affairs of the Netherlands for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mark Rutte, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands.

Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Sogavare (Solomon Islands): On behalf of the Government and people of Solomon Islands, let me first convey my warmest greetings to the President and the members of the General Assembly. It is indeed very humbling to stand here today to address the Assembly at its seventy-seventh session as sovereign equals. I take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Csaba Kőrösi on his election as President of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly. I assure him of Solomon Islands’ support and cooperation during his tenure in office. I also commend and thank his predecessor, Mr. Abdulla Shahid, for his assertive leadership of the Assembly during an unprecedented period in our history.

Solomon Islands is a member of the family of Commonwealth countries and a realm State; therefore, on behalf of the Government and people of Solomon Islands, I express our profound grief over the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and convey our heartfelt and deepest condolences to His Royal Highness, King Charles III, the royal family and the Government and people of the United Kingdom. Her Majesty will always be remembered as an inspiration and a figure of stability, dignity and grace. May God bless the reign of King Charles III as Head of the Commonwealth and all realm countries.

The shifting international system has generated renewed strategic interests in the corner of the world that we regard as our home — the Pacific — with super-Powers and middle Powers coming together seeking to strengthen their presence in the blue Pacific continent. Solomon Islands sees the global system as interlinked and interdependent. The recently adopted 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, approved by Pacific leaders and launched here in New York yesterday, defines the Pacific region’s priorities and strategic interests. The Strategy offers opportunities that can be leveraged to benefit our people. The large ocean island

States that inhabit the blue Pacific continent share a common sense of identity and purpose. All partners that wish to work with Pacific countries must align with that strategy.

The right to establish diplomatic relations between sovereign nations is a universal principle shared by all members of the United Nations. Solomon Islands has been unfairly targeted since it formalized diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China just over three years ago. We have been subjected to a barrage of unwarranted and misplaced criticisms, misinformation and intimidation that threaten our democracy and sovereignty. Solomon Islands has been vilified in the media since formalizing its relationship with China. That decision was reached through democratic processes by a democratically elected Government. Our decision to establish a relationship with the People's Republic of China is consistent with resolution 2758 (XXVI), observed by most of the countries in the Assembly, and which also articulates the One China policy that Solomon Islands respects. I reiterate the call for all to respect our sovereignty and democracy.

Solomon Islands has adopted a "friends to all and enemies to none" foreign policy. In implementing that policy, we will not align ourselves with any external Powers or security architecture that targets our or any other sovereign country or threatens regional and international peace. Solomon Islands will not be coerced into choosing sides. I am reminded of the wisdom conveyed by the late President Nelson Mandela during an interview with Ted Koppel, which is relevant to our situation:

"One of the mistakes which some political analysts make is to think their enemies should be our enemies. Our attitude towards any country is determined by the attitude of that country to our struggle."

Solomon Islands has no enemies — only friends. Our struggle is to develop our country. We stretch out our hand of friendship and seek genuine and honest cooperation and partnership with all. Mutual respect for the national sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of any country is universal and paramount. As a sovereign nation, we embrace and zealously guard those principles.

Looking at the wider region, the Taiwan Strait is one of the world's busiest trading routes used by international shipping. We call on all countries to be

sensitive and not inflame tensions that could threaten the unity and security of any country. Any miscalculation could threaten international peace and security and have disastrous consequences on global trade.

Regarding the Ukraine conflict, Solomon Islands calls for maximum restraint by all the parties and a de-escalation of the conflict. We continue to hear words of war in this Hall of peace. We must be united in our resolve to seek peace and urge all parties to pursue a diplomatic solution to the conflict, based on the spirit and purpose of our Charter of the United Nations.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, climate change, the impact of global conflicts and domestic civil unrest have jeopardized our progress on delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They have undermined our ability to graduate out of least developed country (LDC) status in 2024. Solomon Islands has experienced negative economic growth owing to the closure of our international borders since COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic more than two years ago. Those circumstances have changed the landscape for our progress and sustainable development. We will collaborate with partners to undertake an in-depth assessment of our readiness to graduate out of LDC status in 2024.

Solomon Islands joins other countries in the blue Pacific continent that are signatories of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty for maintaining a nuclear-free Pacific. We encourage nuclear-power States that have signed the Treaty to take the steps to ratify it. The Treaty is aligned with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We reiterate our call for the total elimination of nuclear material, nuclear weapons and nuclear-powered military assets in our blue Pacific. Solomon Islands also echoes the concerns expressed by other Pacific countries about Japan's proposal to discharge water treated by the advanced liquid processing system at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant into the ocean, because of the potential transboundary and intergenerational implications.

I am pleased to inform the General Assembly that Solomon Islands has now legally formalized the delimitation of all five of its maritime boundaries with Australia, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, France and Fiji. With the completion of all five maritime boundaries, our rights and obligations are protected under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in perpetuity. In that connection, the Solomon Islands

Government supports the ongoing work undertaken by the International Law Commission on the question of sea level rise and sovereignty. The position taken by Solomon Islands is that once the signed instruments are deposited with the United Nations, our boundaries have achieved permanent status. That also upholds the principles of stability, security, certainty and perpetuity enshrined in UNCLOS.

Solomon Islands is a post-conflict country and our work to address the underlying causes of that conflict is still a work in progress. Sadly, in November 2021, that progress was seriously hampered by civil unrest and rioting that exposed the country's security and economic fragility. We welcome any assistance in addressing our post-conflict challenges.

On a brighter note, Solomon Islands will, for the first time, be hosting the Pacific Games in 2023. The event will strengthen the unity of our nation and will contribute to our nation-building and peacebuilding processes. I take this opportunity to thank our partners who have assisted us thus far in our preparation to host the Games, including the People's Republic of China, which funds the bulk of the Games' facilities; the Republic of Indonesia; Australia; Papua New Guinea; and Japan. The 2023 Pacific Games infrastructure has transformed our capital city and has opened new opportunities for our youthful population.

Solomon Islands has embarked on a digital transformation journey to enhance and modernize our telecommunications infrastructure, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 9, to link its more than 900 inhabited islands distributed over 1.2 million square kilometres of water. Together with Australia and Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands commissioned its first submarine cable in 2019. The geographical reach of the submarine cable will be expanded with the installation of approximately 170 telecommunications towers under a Belt and Road Initiative that will link 80 per cent of Solomon Islands and provide our rural populace with much-needed access to reliable, accessible and affordable telecommunications services.

We also acknowledge with appreciation the ongoing support from our bilateral and multilateral partners, including Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Union, the Green Climate Fund and others, for our infrastructure projects by building new roads, bridges, airports, wharves and hydropower dams.

I stand here in solidarity with my Pacific island brothers and sisters to continue our fight against climate change. The onset of extreme temperatures, heatwaves, droughts, flooding and sea-level rise has increased the vulnerability of Pacific countries to the negative impacts of climate change. For least developed countries like Solomon Islands, vulnerability is a key hindrance to sustainable development. Currently, indicators to measure vulnerability are inadequate. Solomon Islands therefore calls on all States and partners to support the development of the multidimensional vulnerability index and looks forward to its finalization and adoption.

Pacific Island countries, including Solomon Islands, are in a constant mode of recovery from disasters. Global financial mechanisms for disaster recovery need to be established to ensure the economic burden of recovery and building back better and stronger following rapid onset and climate-related disasters are not borne solely by countries that are in serious need of support.

Considering those challenges, the Pacific region has declared a state of climate emergency. Sadly, we are seeing more resources spent on wars than on combating climate change. This is extremely unfortunate. Pacific countries have also established a Pacific Resilience Facility — a financing mechanism that aims to build the resilience and reduce the vulnerability of Pacific populations to the negative impacts of climate change. A pledging session for the Facility will be held during the current session, and we call on all partners to support the Facility.

Solomon Islands also commends the Vanuatu-led initiative requesting support from the United Nations to ask the International Court of Justice to provide an advisory opinion on climate change, which has also been strongly supported by Pacific leaders.

As the world continues to combat climate change, we ask all parties going into the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 27) to set more ambitious nationally determined contributions that would put our world on the pathway to 1.5°C. We would also like to see a road map for ease of access to and timely disbursements of the \$100 billion earmarked for adaptation financing by 2025. The discussions on loss and damage demand a standalone agenda at COP 27 aimed at establishing a loss and damage financing facility.

Solomon Islands embraces the promotion and respect for human rights as a fundamental freedom for all. We subscribe to resolution 60/251 in that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interrelated, interdependent and mutually reinforcing, and that all human rights must be treated in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing and with the same emphasis.

Now, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that Solomon Islands has successfully deposited its instrument of ratification to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. We will be submitting our instrument of ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict within the coming weeks.

We join the international community in reiterating the call for the lifting of the economic embargo imposed on Cuba. We commend Cuba's resilience and urge the United States of America to take the initiative and normalize relations between those two close neighbours. I also wish to convey my deepest appreciation to Cuba for the training of our medical students. More than 100 Solomon Islands medical doctors have graduated from Cuban medical schools over the years.

Solomon Islands also closely follows the outcome of the third referendum in New Caledonia, which took place in December 2021 in an atmosphere of uncertainty. Solomon Islands subscribes to the contents of the draft resolution contained in document A/AC.109/2022/L.22 and supports the call to all relevant parties to ensure that the next steps for the self-determination process are transparent and inclusive.

In relation to our successful fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, we express our heartfelt gratitude to our partners, including Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, the United States of America, United Nations agencies, the World Bank and other multilateral agencies that stood with us. They provided us with tremendous support and much-needed vaccines through the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility, as well as bilaterally.

Solomon Islands is also extremely grateful for the employment opportunities provided by Australia and New Zealand through their respective labour mobility programmes to accommodate some of the 20,000 unemployed youth who enter our labour market every year.

Let me conclude by once again thanking the President of the General Assembly for the theme for this year's session. Our world is at a crossroads and is feeling the strain of divisive elements that can divide us. We must not allow that to happen. We have been weighed down by the COVID-19 pandemic. We are feeling the negative impacts of geopolitical conflicts and wars. The time has come for our world to rally and focus on what unites us, rather than what divides us, for the world will always be stronger if we are together. We must foster friendship and solidarity through genuine and durable partnerships. We must commit to working together, with one other, to ensure we can leave behind a legacy of a more peaceful, more just and brighter world for the younger generations that will come after us.

The key questions we must all ask ourselves are the following. First, what legacy do we, as leaders today, leave behind for those that will come after us? Secondly, how do we wish to be remembered by the generations that will follow? I am sure that we would all wish to be remembered as the generation of leaders that uplifted our world and united our people and our countries to live together in peaceful coexistence. If we can leave behind a legacy that safeguards the survival and freedom of our future generations, we will have done our jobs well.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Manasseh Damukana Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Ms. Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security and Intelligence, Child Poverty Reduction and Ministerial Services of New Zealand

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for National Security and Intelligence, Child Poverty Reduction and Ministerial Services of New Zealand.

Ms. Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security and Intelligence, Child Poverty Reduction and Ministerial Services of New Zealand, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security and Intelligence, Child Poverty Reduction and Ministerial Services of New Zealand, and inviting her to address the Assembly.

Ms. Ardern (New Zealand): *E ngā Mana, e ngā Reo, Rau Rangatira mā kua huihui mai nei i tēnei Whare Nui o te Ao. Ngā mihi maioha ki a koutou katoa, mai i tōku Whenua o Aotearoa. Tuia ki runga, Tuia ki raro, ka Rongo to pō ka rongo te ao. Nō reira, tēnā koutou kātoa.*

I greet you in te reo Maori, the language of the *tangata whenua*, or first people, of *Aotearoa*, New Zealand. I acknowledge the leaders who are here, gathered in person after a long and difficult period. As is tradition in my country, I also acknowledge those who have passed. Loss brings with it a chance for reflection. As leaders, between us, we each represent countries and communities who have lost much in the past few years through famine, severe weather, natural disasters and a pandemic.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic was devastating. It took millions of lives. It continues to affect our economies and, with that, the well-being of our people. It set us back in our fight against the crisis of climate change and progress on the Sustainable Development Goals while we looked to the health crisis that was right in front of us.

While we enter a period now in which the crisis is subsiding, the lessons cannot. COVID-19 schooled us. It forced us to acknowledge how interconnected and therefore how reliant we are on one another. We move between one another's countries with increasing ease. We trade our goods and services. When one link in our supply chain is affected, we all are.

The lessons of COVID-19 are, in many ways, the same as the lessons of climate change. When crisis is upon us, we cannot and will not solve these issues on our own. The next pandemic will not be prevented by one country's efforts, but by all of ours. Climate action will only ever be as successful as the least committed country, as they pull down the ambition of the collective.

However, I am not suggesting that we rely on the goodwill of others to make progress. We need a dual strategy — one in which we push for collective effort but also use our multilateral tools to make progress. That is why, on pandemic preparedness, we support

efforts to develop a new global health legal instrument, strengthened international health regulations and a strong and empowered World Health Organization.

It is why we are such advocates of the World Trade Organization and its reform to ensure supply chains remain open and critical goods and services are not subjected to protectionism in times of need. It is why we have worked so hard within the Paris Agreement to see the action we need on climate change, while also doing our bit at home, including by putting a 1.5°C warming limit into law; increasing our nationally determined contribution to 50 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030; and quadrupling our climate finance commitment.

Whether on climate, trade, health crises or seeking peaceful solutions to war and conflict, New Zealand has always been a believer in multilateral tools. We were among the founding members of the United Nations, as Governments of the day recognized that the perils of war would be avoided only through a greater sense of shared responsibility. The basis on which this institution was formed remains as relevant today as it was then. But without reform, we risk irrelevancy.

There is perhaps no greater example of that than Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Let us all be clear: Russia's war is illegal and immoral. It is a direct attack on the Charter of the United Nations and the international rules-based system and everything that this community should stand for. Putin's suggestion that Russia could, at any point, deploy further weapons that it has at its disposal reveals the false narrative upon which they have based their invasion. What country that claims to be a liberator threatens to annihilate the very civilians it claims to liberate? The war is based on a lie.

But I recognize that, for the people of Ukraine who have lost loved ones, their sense of peace and security and their livelihoods, these are all just words. They need us, as a global community, to ask one simple question: "What if it were us?" Our ability to answer that question with any confidence in the fact that we have the tools as a global community to act swiftly and collectively has been severely undermined. In March, when we most needed the Security Council to act in the defence of international peace and security, it could not. It did not fulfil its mandate because of one permanent member who was willing to abuse its privileged position. That was wrong.

We will not give up on the ability of our multilateral institutions to stand up against that illegal war or to

take on the many challenges we face. Those institutions are the ballast we need, but it is a ballast that requires modernization fit for the tumultuous waters we all face. That is why New Zealand was pleased to champion the veto initiative. Not only does it provide an opportunity to scrutinize the actions of the permanent member who cast a veto, but the veto initiative also gives the whole United Nations membership a voice where the Security Council has been unable to act.

But we continue to call for more than that. For the United Nations to maintain its relevancy and to ensure that it truly is the voice of the breadth of countries it represents, the veto must be abolished, and permanent members must exercise their responsibility for the benefit of international peace and security, rather than the pursuit of national interests.

There are other battles that we continue to wage as a nation, including our call for a global response to the use of nuclear weapons. Our history of championing not just the non-proliferation but the prohibition of nuclear weapons is grounded in what we have witnessed, as well as what we have experienced. We are a nation that is both of the Pacific and within it. It was in our region that those weapons of war were tested. Those tests have left a mark on the people, lands and waters of our home. The only way to guarantee our people that they will be safe from the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons is for them not to exist.

That is why New Zealand calls on all States that share that conviction to join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Some will call such a position naive. Some believe that we are safer as a result of nuclear weapons. In New Zealand, we have never accepted the wisdom of mutually assured destruction. It takes one country to believe that their cause is nobler, their might stronger or their people more willing to be sacrificed. None of us can stand at this rostrum and turn a blind eye to the fact that there are already leaders among us who believe that.

Nuclear weapons do not make us safer. There will be those who agree, but believe it is simply too hard to rid ourselves of nuclear weapons at this juncture.

There is no question that nuclear disarmament is an enormous challenge, but if given the choice — and we are being given a choice — surely we would choose the challenge of disarmament over the consequences of a failed strategy of weapons-based deterrence. This is why we will continue to advocate for meaningful progress

on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Such progress and consensus was recently blocked by Russia and represented a backwards step in the efforts of nearly every country in the world to make some even limited progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

None of that will stop New Zealand's advocacy. We will remain a strong and passionate advocate for efforts to address the weapons of old, but we will also be an advocate in addressing the weapons that are new. After all, the face of war has changed and, with it, the weapons used. The tools used to challenge the statehood of others are hidden and more complex. Traditional combat, espionage and the threat of nuclear weapons are now accompanied by cyberattacks, prolific disinformation and the manipulation of entire communities and societies.

As leaders, we have never treated the weapons of old in the same way as those that have emerged. That is understandable. After all, a bullet takes a life, and a bomb takes out a whole village, while a lie online or from a podium does not. But what if that lie, told repeatedly and across many platforms, prompts, inspires or motivates others to take up arms, threaten the security of others or turn a blind eye to atrocities, or worse, to become complicit in them? What then? This is no longer a hypothetical. The weapons of war have changed, they are upon us and they require the same level of action and activity that we put into the weapons of old.

We recognized the threats that the old weapons created. We came together as communities to minimize those threats. We created international rules, norms and expectations. We never saw that as a threat to our individual liberties — rather, it was a preservation of them. The same must apply now as we take on those new challenges.

In New Zealand, we deeply value our right to protest. Some of our major social progress has been brought about by *hikoi* or people power, including becoming the first country in the world to recognize women's right to vote and movement on major indigenous and human rights issues, to name but a few.

Upholding those values in a modern environment translates into protecting a free, secure and open Internet in order to realize all of the opportunities that it presents in the way we communicate, organize and gather. But that does not mean the absence

of transparency, expectations or even rules, if we correctly identify what it is we are trying to prevent. Surely we can start with violent extremism and terrorist content online.

On 15 March 2019, New Zealand experienced a horrific terrorist attack on its Muslim community. More than 50 people were killed as they prayed. The attack was live-streamed on a popular social media platform in an effort to gain notoriety and to spread hate. At that time, the ability to thwart those goals was limited, and the chances of Government alone being able to resolve that gap was equally challenging. That is why, alongside President Emmanuel Macron of France, we created the Christchurch Call to Action. The Call to Action community has worked together to address terrorism and violent extremist content online.

As that important work progresses, we have demonstrated the impact we can have by working together collaboratively. We have improved crisis reactions, stymieing the ability to live-stream attacks and have crisis protocols that kick in to prevent proliferation. We are also focused on prevention and understanding those interactions between online environments and the real world that can lead to radicalization. This week we launched an initiative alongside companies and non-profits to help improve research and understanding of how a person's online experiences are curated by automated processes. That will also be important in understanding more about misinformation and disinformation online — a challenge that we, as leaders, must address.

Sadly, I think it is easy to dismiss this problem as one in the margins. I can certainly understand the desire to leave it to someone else. As leaders, we are rightly concerned that even the most light-touch approaches to disinformation could be misinterpreted as being hostile to the values of free speech we value so highly.

But while I cannot tell you today what the answer is to that challenge, I can say with complete certainty that we cannot ignore it. To do so poses an equal threat to the norms we all value. After all, how do we successfully end a war if people are led to believe that the reason for its existence is not only legal, but noble? How do we tackle climate change if people do not believe it exists? How do we ensure the human rights of others are upheld, when they are subjected to hateful and dangerous rhetoric and ideology?

The weapons may be different, but the goals of those who perpetuate them are often the same: to cause chaos and reduce the ability of others to defend themselves; to disband communities; and to collapse the collective strength of countries that work together.

But we have an opportunity here to ensure that those particular weapons of war do not become an established part of warfare. Therefore, we once again come back to the primary tool we have: diplomacy, dialogue and working together on solutions that do not undermine human rights, but that enhance them. For those who have not sought out the Christchurch Call to Action, I ask that they consider it. As with so many of the challenges we face, we will only be as strong as those who do the least.

In these times, I am acutely aware of how easy it is to feel disheartened. We are facing many battles on many fronts. But there is cause for optimism, because for every new weapon we face, there is a new tool to overcome it. Every attempt to push the world into chaos is a collective conviction to bring us back to order. We have the means; we just need the collective will.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for National Security and Intelligence, Child Poverty Reduction and Ministerial Services of New Zealand for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security and Intelligence, Child Poverty Reduction and Ministerial Services of New Zealand, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

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

Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Sharif (Pakistan): As I stand here today to tell the story of my country, Pakistan, my heart and mind have not been able to leave home. Standing here, I still feel as though I am visiting one of the flood-affected areas of Sindh and Balochistan in my country. No words can describe the shock that we are living through or how the face of the country lies transformed. I have come to explain first-hand the scale and magnitude of that climate catastrophe that has pushed one third of my country under water in a superstorm of a scale that no one has seen in living memory. For 40 days and 40 nights, a biblical flood poured down on us, smashing centuries of weather records and challenging everything we knew about disaster and how to manage it.

Even today, huge swathes of the country are still underwater, submerged in an ocean of human suffering. In that ground-zero of climate change, 33 million people, including women and children, are now at high risk from health hazards, with 650,000 women giving birth underneath makeshift tarpaulins. More than 1,500 of my people have left the world in the great flood, including more than 400 children. Far more are in peril from disease and malnutrition. As we speak, millions of climate migrants are still looking for dry land on which to pitch their tents, with heart-breaking losses to their families, futures and livelihoods, gone for a long time to come.

Early estimates suggest that more than 13,000 kilometres of metalled roads have been damaged; more than 370 bridges have been swept away; 1 million homes have been destroyed; and another million damaged. More than 1 million farm animals have been killed; 4 million acres of crops have been washed away, stripping the people of their source of food and resulting in damage of an unimaginable scale.

Pakistan has never seen a starker and devastating example of the impact of global warming. Life in Pakistan has changed forever. I have visited and spent time in every corner of my devastated country. People in Pakistan ask why has this happened to them? When global warming rips apart whole families and an entire country at such ferocious speed, it is time to ask, "Why?" And it is time to ask not what can be done, but what must be done. The undeniable truth is that the calamity has not been triggered by anything we have done. Our glaciers are melting fast, our forests are burning and our heat waves have surpassed the 53°C mark, making us the hottest place on the planet.

And now we are living through an unprecedented monster monsoon. It is literally a monsoon on steroids, as the Secretary-General described it most befittingly. It is on steroids. One thing is very clear: What happened in Pakistan will not remain in Pakistan. As the Secretary-General has so candidly said, hotspots like Pakistan fall in the 10 most climate-vulnerable list of countries, but emit less than 1 per cent of the greenhouse gases that are burning our planet. It is therefore entirely reasonable to expect some approximation of justice for the loss and damage, not to mention building back better with resilience and strength. Clearly, the time for talk about taking action has passed.

At this point, I am profoundly grateful that Secretary-General António Guterres visited Pakistan, where he spent time with climate refugees and mothers and children in tents and repeatedly assured us of his support and assistance. At this point, I want to thank each and every one of the countries that have sent help to Pakistan and their representatives to Pakistan for standing in solidarity with us at our most trying hour. On behalf of my nation, I once again express my sincerest appreciation to all of them.

The impacts on the health and wealth of my country are beyond calculation at this point. My real worry therefore is about the next stage of the challenge. When the cameras are gone and have left the Assembly and the story just shifts away to conflicts like that in Ukraine, my question is, will we be left alone, high and dry, to cope with a crisis that we did not create and is not of our doing? Where and how do we begin to rehabilitate and reconstruct after the rescue and relief effort that is still ongoing after 12 long weeks? For many of the lives we have saved, the future is dimmed by new fragility, lost homes, decimated livelihoods, deluged crop-lands, permanent food insecurity and exposure to uncertain futures. Approximately 11 million people will be pushed further below the poverty line, while others will drift to cramped urban shelters, leaving little room for climate-smart rebuilding.

For now, we have mobilized all available resources in our domain, squeezing resources from left and right, for the national relief effort, and have repurposed all budget priorities, including development funds, to the rescue and first-order needs of millions. Cash transfers to the most affected — 4 million women heads of household — began weeks ago via our social security programme, the Benazir Income Support Programme, which was established in the name of former late

Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Her son is our Foreign Minister today. We are spending 70 billion rupees, or almost \$300 million, out of our own pockets on the Programme, but, at this point, the gap between our urgent needs and available resources is increasing by the day and is amplified by the sheer, unprecedented scale of the disaster. Our manpower and resources are totally overstretched.

The question that should be raised here is quite simple: Why are my people paying the price of such a high level of global warming through no fault of their own? We have not contributed to that. Nature has unleashed her fury on Pakistan without looking at our carbon footprint, which is next to nothing. Our actions did not contribute to that. The dual costs of global inaction and climate injustice are having a crippling effect on both our treasury and people, right now and over there.

This is going to be a long haul, and, in these most trying circumstances, hope is the best enemy of darkness. Pakistanis are known to be exceptionally resilient people. For my part, I am fully committed and geared to fighting the battle for our survival in the tents and trenches with my people until we have rebuilt Pakistan to face the growing challenges of this century. It is high time we took a pause from the preoccupations of the twentieth century to return to the challenges of the twenty-first century. The entire definition of national security has changed today, and, unless the leaders of the world come together to act now, based on an agreed common agenda, there will be no Earth to fight wars over. Nature will be fighting back, and for that humankind is no match at all.

Pakistan's urgent priority right now is to ensure rapid economic growth and lift millions of people out of poverty and hunger. In order to enable any such policy momentum, Pakistan needs a stable external environment. We look for peace with all our neighbours, including India. Sustainable peace and stability in South Asia, however, remains contingent upon a just and lasting solution to the Jammu and Kashmir dispute. At the heart of that long-standing dispute lies the denial of the inalienable right of the Kashmiri people to self-determination.

India's illegal and unilateral actions of 5 August 2019 to change the internationally recognized disputed status of Jammu and Kashmir and to alter the demographic structure of the occupied territory further undermined the prospects for peace and inflamed regional tensions.

India's ruthless campaign of repression against Kashmiris has continued to grow in scale and intensity. In pursuit of that heinous goal, New Delhi has ramped up its military deployments in occupied Jammu and Kashmir to 900,000 troops, thereby making it the most militarized zone in the world. The serial brutalization of Kashmiris has taken many forms— extrajudicial killings, incarceration, custodial torture and death, indiscriminate use of force, deliberate targeting of Kashmiri youth with pellet guns and collective punishments imposed on entire communities.

In a classic settler-colonial project, India is seeking to turn Muslim-majority Jammu and Kashmir into a Hindu territory, through illegal demographic changes. Millions of fake domicile certificates have been issued to non-Kashmiris. Kashmiri land and properties are being seized. Electoral districts have been gerrymandered, and more than 2.5 million non-Kashmiri illegal voters have fraudulently registered. All this is in blatant violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and international law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention.

For our part, the Pakistani people have always stood by our Kashmiri brothers and sisters in complete solidarity and will continue to do so until, no matter what, their right to self-determination is fully realized in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. I assure the world from this rostrum that we in Pakistan remain consistent in our commitment to peace in South Asia. India must take credible steps to create an enabling environment for constructive engagement. We are neighbours, and we will be there forever. The choice is ours whether we live in peace or continue fighting with one another. Since 1947, we have had three wars, and, as a consequence, only misery, poverty and unemployment have increased on both sides.

It is now up to us to resolve our differences, problems and issues as peaceful neighbours through peaceful negotiations and discussions and save our scarce resources for promoting education, health and employment for millions of people, including young boys and girls, on both sides of the divide, not vesting them in buying more ammunition and promoting tension in the area. I believe that it is high time that India understood the message loud and clear that both countries are armed to the teeth. War is not an option. It is not an option. Only peaceful dialogue can resolve

the issues so that world will become more peaceful in the future.

Afghanistan today presents a unique challenge; 30 million Afghans have been left without a functional economy or banking system allowing ordinary Afghans to make a living to build a better future. Pakistan would also like to see an Afghanistan that is at peace with itself and the world and that respects and nurtures all its citizens, without regard to gender, ethnicity or religion. Pakistan is working to encourage respect for the rights of Afghan girls and women to education and work. Yet, at this point, isolating the Afghan interim Government could exacerbate the suffering of the Afghan people, who are already destitute. Constructive engagement and economic support are more likely to secure a positive response.

A peaceful, prosperous and connected Afghanistan is in our collective interests. As a neighbour, Pakistan has a vital stake in peace and stability in Afghanistan. We have led the humanitarian efforts to help our Afghan brothers and sisters. We must avoid another civil war, a rise in terrorism, drug trafficking and a new wave of refugees, whom none of Afghanistan's neighbours is in a position to accommodate. Pakistan urges the international community to respond positively to the Secretary-General's appeal for \$4.2 billion in humanitarian and economic assistance to Afghanistan and release Afghanistan's financial reserves, which are essential to reviving its banking system.

Pakistan shares the key concern of the international community with regard to the threat posed by the major terrorist groups operating out of Afghanistan, especially the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province, the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan, Al-Qaida, the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. They all need to be dealt with effectively and comprehensively, with the support and cooperation of the interim Afghan authorities. In turn, the international community should address Afghanistan's dire humanitarian needs.

Pakistan strongly condemns terrorism in all its forms, shades and manifestations. Terrorism does not have a religion. It is based on dogma, fuelled by poverty, unemployment, deprivation, injustice and ignorance and fanned by vested interests. Pakistan is the principal victim of terrorism. Over the past two decades, we have suffered more than 80,000 casualties and more than \$150 billion in economic losses, owing to terrorist attacks. Our armed forces, with the

support of our people — mothers, traders, students, teachers, engineers and doctors — have broken the back of terrorism within Pakistan. Yet we continue to suffer from terrorist attacks from across our borders, sponsored and financed by our regional adversary. We are determined to defeat such cross-border terrorism.

I must say loud and clear that the number of sacrifices that Pakistan has made to defeat terrorism over that period of time has been unprecedented in its contemporary history. I tell my friends often that if they see a mother or a child limping on the streets of Pakistan, maybe they were the victims of terrorists years ago. That is the kind of sacrifice that Pakistan has made. Our generals, soldiers, doctors, mothers, teachers, students and traders all paid with their lives for Pakistan's well-being and defeated terrorism. And the peace that was restored in Pakistan, after great sacrifice, is not only for Pakistan; it is a peace for countries throughout the world and the global community. We are very proud of it. That is the greatest manifestation of our commitment, concern and continued efforts to defeat terrorism wherever it may be.

Islamophobia is a global phenomenon. Since 9/11, suspicion and fear of Muslims and discrimination against them have escalated to epidemic proportions. The officially sponsored campaign of oppression against India's more than 200 million Muslims is the worst manifestation of Islamophobia. They are subjected to discriminatory laws and policies, hijab bans, attacks on mosques and lynchings by Hindu mobs. I am particularly concerned about the calls for genocide against India's Muslims by some extremist groups.

Earlier this year, the General Assembly adopted landmark resolution 76/254, introduced by Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, designating 15 March as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia. It is my sincere and ardent hope that that will lead to concrete measures by the United Nations and Member States to combat Islamophobia and promote interfaith harmony.

Pakistan is deeply concerned about the numerous conflicts across the Middle East, including in Syria and Yemen. We support all possible efforts to promote their peaceful resolution. We call on Israel to end immediately the blatant use of force against the Palestinian people, the flagrant violations of their human rights and the repeated desecration of the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque. The only just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Palestinian question is the acceptance of a viable,

independent and contiguous Palestinian State, within the pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

The Security Council and the General Assembly must be empowered to play their respective roles under the Charter of the United Nations. The Security Council must be expanded by adding 11 new non-permanent members to make it more representative, democratic, transparent, effective and accountable. Adding new permanent members will paralyse the Council's decision-making, enlarge its representational deficit and create new centres of privilege in violation of the principle of sovereign equality of Member States.

The nations of the world must step back from the precipice. We must restore peace in Europe, avoid a war in Asia and resolve festering conflicts across the world. We must revive the vision that created the United Nations, which is often blurred by national interests and hegemonic designs. Pakistan is a partner for peace.

But peace can be ensured and guaranteed only when the rights of communities that have been suffering and subjugated for decades get and earn their freedom and are respected.

In that regard, before concluding, I will once again say, at the cost of repeating myself, that we want peace with India, but long-lasting, enduring peace can be ensured and guaranteed only through a just and fair solution to the issue of Kashmir, providing rights, including the right to self-determination, to the people of Kashmir in accordance with the Charter and the relevant Security Council resolutions. And I will be most forthcoming and ready to sit down and talk to our Indian counterpart to pave the way forward for the future so that our future generations will not suffer and we spend our resources on mitigating misery and building infrastructure to face those threats and outbursts of clouds.

We are developing societies. We do not have unlimited resources. We must deploy our resources for the people's well-being, our children and their development, empowerment, employment, health and education. Of course, other developing societies must find their own place within the community of nations through hard work, untiring efforts and sacrifice. That is the only way forward. Therefore, we will work with all those committed to the principles of the Charter to restore the vision that created the United Nations and

to equip the Organization with the capacity to preserve global peace and promote universal prosperity.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted from the rostrum.

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

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

Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Hun Sen (Cambodia) (*spoke in Khmer; English text provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. At the same time, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid for his efforts in leading the work of the Assembly at its seventy-sixth session, during a very tumultuous time.

Our theme of this session, entitled "A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges", is indeed relevant to the current context. Global uncertainties have been exacerbated by the escalation of armed conflicts, the arms race, the rise in small-scale security alliances, the technology and trade wars, the imposition of economic sanctions and the mounting threats to multilateralism.

In fact, the war in Ukraine has not just complicated international relations in Europe but caused serious economic disruptions and exacerbated our food and energy security. The escalation of hostilities involving more and more actors, directly or indirectly and with no

end in sight, coupled with the threat of nuclear war, has had serious impacts on the world at large.

Mr. Ousman (Niger), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The situation in the Korean peninsula remains alarming due to the preparations for a seventh nuclear test. This year, North Korea has launched dozens of ballistic missiles in response to military drills. In addition, the tension between the United States and China over the Taiwan issue is also of concern.

Overall, in this very challenging environment and as a country that has achieved a hard-earned peace in our own history, Cambodia is making great efforts to engage constructively with the United Nations in upholding international peace and security and promoting respect for the fundamental principles and values of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

The present gathering reflects the remarkable success of our collective efforts to overcome the unprecedented pandemic, yet the battle against that global health crisis is not over yet. New variants and other infectious diseases are emerging; what else could emerge in the future? A strong global health system, particularly the World Health Organization with its central coordination role, could help to build resilient and sustainable national health systems. Open and transparent multilateral engagement in the distribution of vaccines, driven by a true principle of shared responsibility, is the only way to prepare for and prevent future pandemics, coupled with the sharing of lessons learned and best practices, the transfer of technologies in vaccine research and development.

Moreover, another existential threat facing humankind is our vulnerability to climate change. We need to transform the process of addressing climate change issues today, not tomorrow. It has been 50 years since Governments were warned about the need to change our production and consumption patterns to avoid disaster. Sadly, ever since, we have only seen more loss of biodiversity, more land degradation and a growing scarcity of fresh water.

Our collective action must focus on global mitigation efforts to promote climate-resilient development. Our commitment to lowering the mean global temperature by 1.5° C requires dedicated climate financing and technology transfer to facilitate meaningful transition in mitigation and adaptation

efforts. The Glasgow outcomes adopted at the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change must be implemented with great urgency, bearing in mind the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

Moreover, the threat of the trade and economic decoupling arising from the United States-China rivalry will certainly dampen the prospects for global growth. Therefore, the fundamental transformative solution of the social, economic and political process is to strengthen the rules-based multilateral trading system, with the World Trade Organization at its heart, that can promote open international trade, reduce trade barriers and ensure the resilience of regional and global value chains.

Meanwhile, we need to pay greater attention to inclusive digital policies and regulatory frameworks conducive to greater investment in digital infrastructure, which is so essential to bridging the growing digital divides and generating new sources of growth. Enhancing green economic development is also an indispensable part of nurturing sustainable socioeconomic development through the expansion of cooperation in building green infrastructure, promoting energy transition and leveraging green technology.

This year, Cambodia is honoured to hold the chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which is now 55-year-old. We are proud to celebrate our historic milestone and the remarkable achievements we have made along the way. Throughout the years, ASEAN has been able to navigate the constantly changing geopolitical landscape to emerge as one of the most prominent and successful regional organizations, while making great strides in advancing its credibility and relevance in world affairs.

Our theme, “ASEAN A.C.T.: Addressing Challenges Together,” highlighting a strong spirit of togetherness, encompasses all the key pressing issues I mentioned earlier. Of course, these challenges have far-reaching implications for the ASEAN community-building process and our external relations. But as Chair of ASEAN, Cambodia is as committed as ever to consolidating our efforts to address our shared goals of bringing benefits to our peoples based on the spirit of ASEAN centrality, unity and solidarity.

ASEAN has been successful in coordinating towards accepting Timor-Leste as the eleventh member

of the Association. Earlier in this meeting, the President of Timor-Leste expressed his country's sincere aspiration to ASEAN membership, and I hope that later this year or early in the next Timor-Leste will become the eleventh member of ASEAN, which represents more than 600 million people. I thank the President of Timor-Leste for attending my statement here in the General Assembly Hall and hope that his country will indeed join our community.

The situation in Myanmar is worrisome, with its direct implications for the security and stability of the whole region, but we must recognize that the crisis is complex and deep-rooted. As ASEAN Chair, Cambodia is fully committed to helping Myanmar resolve the crisis and all our efforts are aimed at seeking a cessation of violence, the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need, and the ongoing building of trust among all parties concerned to enable an inclusive political dialogue, as mandated by the ASEAN five-point consensus.

Over the past two years, the Royal Government of Cambodia has made strenuous proactive efforts to prevent the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) through the introduction of health measures, social and economic interventions and administrative measures. The Royal Government has set COVID-19 vaccination as a key strategic measure. As a result, Cambodia now has one of the highest coverage rates of vaccinated population in the world; in particular, we have achieved strong herd immunity, enabled the country to fully reopen in late 2021, and resumed all socioeconomic activities in the new normal. I take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to all friendly countries that have provided vaccines to Cambodia through bilateral and multilateral frameworks.

In the social sector, the Royal Government has worked with development partners, including United Nations agencies, to launch and scale up a number of important programmes, such as a cash-for-work programme, aimed at improving community infrastructure and providing additional employment opportunities, and a cash transfer programme for poor and vulnerable households to help alleviate hardship and maintain the livelihood of the poor.

In the economic sector, the Royal Government has made unremitting efforts to address chronic structural problems, boost competitiveness and promote economic diversification. In fact, the Royal Government has

addressed major challenges faced by businesses through the implementation of the New Investment Law, the Cambodia Digital Economy and Society Policy Framework 2021-2035, the Strategic Framework and Programmes for Economic Recovery in the Context of Living with COVID-19 in a New Normal 2021-2023, the Law on Public-Private Partnership and the adoption of free trade agreements, such as the Cambodia-China Free Trade Agreement, the Cambodia-Republic of Korea Free Trade Agreement, and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Overall, the Cambodian economy is estimated to achieve a growth rate of 5.4 per cent by 2022, supported by a strong recovery in manufacturing, tourism and agriculture.

With respect to the democratization process, the recent communal election held in June reflected our continued efforts as more than 80 per cent of registered voters cast their ballots in a free, fair, peaceful and transparent manner. The appreciation and full support of the Cambodian people for the unremitting efforts of the Royal Government of Cambodia in preserving peace, political stability and socioeconomic development and in the successful fight against the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an overwhelming majority vote in favour of the ruling party.

Furthermore, with regard to peacekeeping missions, Cambodia has continued deploying thousands of its peacekeeping forces to missions in countries in crisis. More than 15 per cent of Cambodian peacekeepers serving in United Nations missions are women. They are role models, inspiring women and girls in societies that are often male-dominated to exercise their rights and participate in the peace process.

On cooperation with the United Nations, I wish to note that just yesterday, the Supreme Court Chamber of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia issued a judgment upholding the life sentence of former Khmer Rouge Head of State for genocide, crimes against humanity and grave violations of the Geneva Conventions. That historical moment highlighted the outstanding cooperation between Cambodia and the United Nations, through the hybrid court, in bringing justice to the people of Cambodia, who suffered the heinous crime of auto-genocide. We can tell the world that the truth that has been revealed and justice served, and broadcast far and wide that this crime must never happen again in human history. I take this moment to express appreciation to all donors for providing a supporting budget and to our Cambodian compatriots

for their cooperation in consolidating the national reconciliation process.

In conclusion, despite many challenges impacting our political, social, and economic progress, we remain as committed as always to attaining the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development goals.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia for the statement he has just made.

Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, 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 Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Development and Youth Economy of Saint Lucia .

Mr. Philip Joseph Pierre, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Development and Youth Economy of Saint Lucia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Philip Joseph Pierre, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Development and Youth Economy of Saint Lucia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Pierre (Saint Lucia): Let me join in the congratulations to Mr. Csaba Kőrösi on his election to lead this organ and assure him of Saint Lucia's support as he presides over our deliberations at one of the most critical moments in the history of this Organisation.

I address the General Assembly with the democratic permission of the people of Saint Lucia, a small but proud State in the Eastern Caribbean. We insist that our history and present circumstances place upon us the responsibility of serving as voices of redemption and hope at times of crisis.

I agree with the theme under which this seventy-seventh session is being conducted — “A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges” — because, given the morbid developments in the contemporary global political environment, it is

reasonable to conclude that we have deviated, to our detriment, from the course that the framers of the Charter of the United Nations set for us. It is for that reason that we have arrived at a watershed moment in history.

We have arrived at this watershed moment in history because, we, the Members of the United Nations, have not adhered to the rules and principles of the Organization that we created seventy-six years ago as a multilateral answer to the human propensity to use arms against our fellow humans, instead of joining with them to turn those weapons into tools for peace and development.

We have arrived at this watershed moment because we have failed to adhere to the agreements we have negotiated multilaterally to solve the problems that have confronted us — problems invariably of our own making.

We have come to this watershed moment because small developing countries continue to suffer from an inequitable world order in which the rich and powerful do not right the wrongs they commit against the weak.

Despite our small size; despite our deliberate desire to be a source of peace and friendship to all; despite our democratic traditions; and despite our earnest efforts to make the development of our people our primary objective, we find ourselves in a world stacked against us and frustrating our development at every turn. Sadly, a survey of the global political economy of the past four decades reads like a cascading series of crises and a frustrating tale of arrested development and dashed hopes for the people of the Caribbean.

In every decade since 1980, we have faced the ill winds of a harsh and global environment, to which we have been forced to change course without reward and with little to show for our efforts. In the 1990s, it was the entry of the United Kingdom into the European single market that removed any lingering protections from which we had benefited and that placed us at greater exposure to a world of liberalized trade, with no consideration for our specific historical circumstances. Then came the decade of the 2000s, in which the World Trade Organization was formalized and with which came an even harsher reality of trade liberalization that has not lived up to its promise of cheaper goods and services for all.

Instead, we have mostly witnessed declines in the demand for our primary commodities, such as bananas,

sugar and rum. If anything, the new rules of trade have taught us harsh lessons on how global arrangements are designed to punish us when we are accused of wrong, but fail to reward and protect us when we are wronged. The experience of Antigua and Barbuda is instructive in this regard.

In the year 2001, we witnessed the terrorist attack on the United States of America, which brought with it another round of negative economic circumstances. 9/11 was followed by the global financial crisis of 2008 — a crisis not of our own making, but one for which we in the Caribbean were amongst the hardest hit. Our tourism industries suffered tremendously as the financial losses in the main source markets resulted in a reduction of tourism traffic to our countries.

This tale of frustrated development continued in 2016 with Brexit and was worsened by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Presently, the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine has brought with it unseen hikes and uncertainty in the price of oil and has wiped out all of our hopes for a smooth recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, 20 years after the first International Conference on Financing for Development in 2002, the mechanisms and global frameworks we established through the United Nations financing for development process tell a damning story of gaps and short falls, commitments not kept, systematic barriers reinforced and negative challenges. Had all our partners lived up to their commitments, our current circumstances of economic distress may not have been as dire.

Our diversification into financial services is also threatened by an uneven regime of negative regulations. And, overarching all of this are the continued challenges of climate change, with its fierce occurrences of floods, droughts and hurricanes, adding yet more uncertainty to our economic projections and aspirations.

It is no longer breaking news or a matter of debate that climate change is one of the biggest crises facing humankind today, but the solutions to the universal climate change emergency are not mystifying. From the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change, in which we agreed that limiting global warming to below 1.5° C would help us stay alive, to the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Glasgow, we have followed the science, negotiated, compromised and agreed upon the solutions.

The problem is that these agreements have been broken or simply ignored. Those who are the biggest perpetrators of the climate crisis and who were supposed to take the corresponding greatest action have not followed through on their commitments. The quantum of financing for climate justice, needed by developing countries and agreed upon by the developed countries, has not materialized. Other issues of the Paris rule book are still to be implemented. The multilateral development financial institutions have yet to change their systems to make it easier for developing countries to access the financing required to adapt to climate change and build climate resilient economies.

Developing countries, already saddled with debt, must be given the means to be able to deal with climate change. We must act together to save our people and our planet. It is regrettable, therefore, that recent political differences between two of the biggest polluting countries have led to a halting of cooperation between them on climate issues. The future of our planet must never be held hostage to the politics of super-Power rivalry.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government and the people of Grenada on the appointment of their former Environment Minister Simon Stiel as Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The appointment of someone from a small island State is, we hope, a signal that the world is listening to the pleas of the most vulnerable for positive and urgent action in this climate crisis. We urge the developed world to act upon the solutions to climate change that they have agreed upon.

For decades, we have called on global financial institutions to carve out a special regime that takes into account our smallness and vulnerabilities to climate change. This is not an unreasonable demand. We have insisted that many of the challenges that we face have come from the external environment and are not of our own making. Given our small size and miniscule levels of industrial pollution, we are among the least responsible for global warming, but given our small size and vulnerable economies, we are among the most defenceless to the ravages of climate change. A single hurricane that destroys our entire agricultural crop or destroys our tourism plant and infrastructure can set us back by decades.

We are simply asking that these vulnerabilities be considered when our financial obligations for

development assistance are being negotiated. That will result in the mutually beneficial solution of ensuring that the wheels of the global economy keep on turning, while at the same time allowing us the breathing space to participate meaningfully, with a renewed sense of faith, in the legitimacy of the global financial system and its institutions.

For three decades, from the adoption of Agenda 21 through several General Assembly resolutions and the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Accelerated Modalities of Action, known as the SAMOA Pathway, there have been calls for the adoption of a multidimensional vulnerability index for SIDS. The index would replace the unreliable and unfair gross national income index that precludes SIDS from accessing badly needed low cost and concessional financing for their development. The work on the multidimensional vulnerability index by the United Nations and other institutions, such as the Caribbean Development Bank, must now be accelerated and finalized.

A reform of the regime can no longer be ideological or political. We need to include the vulnerabilities of small States like Saint Lucia when calculating the value of their economies. This is a matter of survival for our people.

We are disappointed that in another area of vital importance to small island developing States — ocean governance — we have failed to adopt the first-ever multilateral maritime biodiversity treaty, stalled in August, because the developed countries of the North were once again unwilling to accommodate the needs of the developing world of the South. Protecting the oceans is an imperative, and agreement on the sharing and sustainable use of the marine resources that are beyond national jurisdiction is essential. Bearing in mind that these areas do not belong to one country but are the heritage of all humankind, Saint Lucia therefore calls for the urgent resumption of the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, so that the treaty's text can be finalized, taking into account the special circumstances of small island developing States.

Articles 2 and 33 of the United Nations Charter are unambiguous in binding Member States to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State and to negotiate

and settle all international disputes by peaceful means. In the Declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, Heads of State and Government reaffirmed those principles when they said: "We will promote peace and prevent conflicts ... We will abide by international law and ensure justice" (*resolution 75/1, paras. 9 and 10*).

The war in Ukraine has not only unleashed death and horrendous destruction, but has plunged the world into an economic crisis of runaway inflation and shortages of food and energy supplies and worsened a global supply chain crisis that had been triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. The world could have been spared this humanitarian and economic agony if once again countries and their leaders had respected and adhered to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We therefore call upon all parties involved to immediately end the conflict in Ukraine by undertaking immediate negotiations to permanently settle all disputes in accordance with the principles of the United Nations.

The billions and billions of dollars being spent in Ukraine on wanton destruction and war could have transformed for the better the economies, the livelihoods and the lives of millions and millions of people in the developing countries of the world if spent on poverty reduction and economic transformation.

It is from this perspective that Saint Lucia also laments the recent escalation of military tensions in the Taiwan Straits that threatened regional and international peace and security. Saint Lucia therefore calls upon those responsible to observe the United Nations rules on peaceful settlement of disputes and respect for the territorial integrity and political independence of all countries.

The people of Taiwan have freely determined their political status and ought to be allowed to continue on their chosen path to economic, social and cultural development and to confirm their right to self-determination. Saint Lucia calls for the meaningful participation of Taiwan in the organs and agencies of the United Nations.

Further, in the interest of peace and stability in the contemporary global political environment, we continue to call for the reduction of tension and the normalization of relations with our regional neighbours Venezuela and Cuba. In this regard, in keeping with the Charter of the United Nations on a people's right to

self-determination and political independence, we once again call for the immediate removal of the inhumane economic embargo against Cuba.

Given the devastating impacts of the sanctions on the Venezuelan people, coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic and compounded by the expanding crisis of the world economy arising out of the war in Ukraine, let us also use this moment as a watershed for lifting the painful sanctions against the people of Venezuela. Let us work together to open up a new period of prosperity for Latin America and the Caribbean.

In that vein, Saint Lucia wishes to register its grave concern over the continuing deterioration of the situation in Haiti. We will continue to engage with the rest of the Caribbean Community family and the global community to facilitate a process towards normalization and, ultimately, the holding of free, fair and credible elections.

While Saint Lucia and the rest of the Caribbean are not manufacturers of conventional weapons, our countries have been plagued by a proliferation of illegal small arms and light weapons, resulting in a surge in criminal activity and gun violence. Saint Lucia has always been a strong advocate of the international frameworks, such as the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects and the Arms Trade Treaty, which are two examples of multilateral instruments aimed at mobilizing international cooperation to curb the illicit trade in conventional arms and ammunition. Saint Lucia calls on the major manufacturers, exporters and importers of conventional weapons in our hemisphere to live up to their commitments, under these instruments, to lend the necessary expertise and technical assistance and cooperate in good faith to stem the tide of unregulated conventional arms and ammunition.

In his report *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982) on the future of global cooperation, the Secretary-General has proposed several significant initiatives with regard to the youth of the world. The report recommends more meaningful and effective engagement with youth, including better political representation, transforming education, skills training and lifelong learning; and it proposes the establishment of a United Nations youth office and the appointment of a special envoy for future generations.

Saint Lucia welcomes these recommendations and is encouraged by the adoption of resolution 76/306, establishing the United Nations Youth Office, as they are in keeping with one of the key priorities of my Administration, which I highlighted in my inaugural address to the General Assembly — the creation of a youth economy (see A/76/PV.14, annex I). I said then that this novel youth economy, which would be formalized in a new Government department under the purview of the Prime Minister, would be a catalyst for propelling our young people to turn their talents, skills and hobbies into economic enterprises for their own empowerment. I am therefore pleased to announce that the legislation establishing our Youth Economy Agency has been passed and will be formally launched this year.

As we call upon Member States to support the United Nations Youth Office and the Secretary-General's other proposals on youth, we once again invite the international community to discuss and engage with Saint Lucia on mutually beneficial relationships and projects to promote the youth economy.

In the face of today's drastic interconnected crises, let us all together harness the immense energy, enthusiasm and creativity of our young people; let us capitalize on their resourcefulness; let us see them as assets and not as problems to be solved; let us consider their aspirations, for the future is theirs, not ours.

In this watershed moment, as we have described it, of interlocking challenges, we must all accept the truth that it is the ordinary people of this world who matter, the young in particular. It is about the people whom we serve, who made us their leaders. It is they, the people, who must come first in all that we do.

And so, we have gathered at this seventy-seventh session under the theme "A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges" — a lofty and noble theme, indeed, pregnant with hope and towering expectations. If we truly think of the people of this world, if we truly dedicate ourselves to serving them, then our words, our decisions and our actions will deliver better health care, decent employment and decent housing.

As world leaders, let us practice servant leadership by faithfully adhering to and fulfilling the obligations of the Charter of the United Nations to which we all agreed to abide when we became its Members. Let us truly be nations united. Let us transform our attitudes

and approach to the less privileged. The more powerful among us must honour international obligations and responsibilities.

Despite our small size, Saint Lucia stands here with the self-confidence of a people assured that our history and our own struggles for freedom have earned us the right to be a voice for all the developing and oppressed peoples of the world, and we are confident that we have something to share with the world at this time of crises.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Development and Youth Economy of Saint Lucia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Philip Joseph Pierre, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Development and Youth Economy of Saint Lucia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Alexander de Croo, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium

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

Mr. Alexander de Croo, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Alexander de Croo, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. De Croo (Belgium): I want to begin with the story of Karina, 22-years-old.

Eight years ago, Karina — a teenager — was forced to flee Donetsk when Russia invaded eastern Ukraine. In spring this year, the family was once again forced to flee, but this time, Karina — now in her early twenties — did not follow her parents. For the first few days, she stayed in touch by phone, but soon things went quiet.

After the Russian barbarians retreated from Bucha, Karina's horrible fate was revealed. Her body was found, and her stepfather shared with *The Kyiv Independent* what had happened to her:

“There were cuts and lacerations. There was a piece of flesh torn off from her ribs. Half of her

nails were torn off. Her leg was shot. They tortured her and most likely raped her.”

These are haunting and horrifying words; and sadly, this is only one of thousands of stories that mark that we are living in one of the darkest moments since the birth of the United Nations. Out of the destruction and devastation of the Second World War, the United Nations emerged “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”, as the Preamble of the Charter of the United Nations begins.

Never again war in Europe — that was the mission. Never again were schools to be bombed on the European continent. Never again were hospitals to be hit. Never again were cities to be cut off from food and medicine. Today we are witnessing all of these in Ukraine. The mass graves and torture chambers in Izyum are the latest signs of the utter brutality of this unnecessary and illegal war — all gross violations of everything the United Nations stands for.

Faced with this Russian aggression and, indeed, war crimes, the United Nations is challenged to fulfil its calling. Everyone in this Hall, the representatives of every single country, will be asked one day: “What did you do to stop this? What did you do to protect the people of Ukraine? Did you look away, or did you act?” In this conflict, there is no room for neutrality.

It was the late Mikhail Gorbachev who said: “The victor is not the one who wins battles in a war, but the one who makes peace.” To win this peace, we must place the principles of the United Nations Charter at the forefront again — the principles of territorial integrity and national sovereignty. Indeed, if today the world is less stable and less secure, it is because of the sheer scandal that one of the founding Members of this United Nations has trampled on these principles and unleashed a war that reminds us of Europe's darkest hours.

The statements of the past days and the threat to launch a nuclear war against an independent country have demonstrated Russia's ruthlessness once again. It is reminiscent of medieval barbarism, much more than of Russian greatness.

We should be clear — this war will not go without consequences for those who are waging it. There will never be peace without accountability. That is why Belgium has always supported the International Criminal Court (ICC) and that is why we support the ICC in fully investigating and prosecuting all serious crimes committed in Ukraine. There is no room for

impunity — not for the butchers of Bucha and definitely not for the leaders in Moscow who are calling the shots and bear the ultimate responsibility.

I specifically want to highlight the importance of the fight against sexual violence, one of the most destructive weapons of war, punishable under international law. Women who are exposed to acts of sexual violence suffer irreparable damage. And let us not forget that boys and men, too, are victims. They all deserve truth, justice and reparation.

(spoke in French)

This war is not just about Ukraine. It sows instability, famine and poverty all over the world. We have all seen the images of blocked Ukrainian ports, bombed grain silos and even looted Ukrainian grain. Those images speak for themselves of a chaos sown by Russia, and by Russia alone, that endangers the lives of hundreds of millions of people in Africa, Asia and Latin America — as if the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic were not enough.

In the midst of this chaos, the Black Sea Grain Initiative, signed in July in Istanbul, appeared as a beacon of hope. It showed the convening power of the United Nations, and I want to especially thank its Secretary-General António Guterres and Türkiye for making that agreement possible. I would also like to commend the positive role played by the African Union, whose leadership and mediation were decisive in the conclusion of the agreement.

We European countries have spared no effort in addressing this food crisis. We have maintained food exports. We are helping Ukraine through solidarity corridors, and we are providing emergency aid to the most vulnerable in the most affected regions. Belgium has considerably increased its humanitarian budget in recent years and will continue to work hand in hand with its humanitarian partners to meet the most urgent needs.

Yes, this food crisis forces us to look into the structural weaknesses of our agri-food systems. If we are to keep our promise and achieve zero hunger by 2030 — our second Sustainable Development Goal — we must design sustainable and resilient food systems, systems that combine the traditional knowledge of local farmers with the scientific knowledge produced by research. and innovation.

(spoke in English)

Along with this food crisis, the Russian war is also causing a deep energy crisis with global fallout. People, also in Belgium, have difficulty paying their bills, small businesses are forced to pause because of spiking energy prices, and workers are losing their jobs. How should we deal with this?

First, we must continue to support our families and businesses. That is why the Belgian Government is releasing unprecedented support plans. After all we have done to cope with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, once again we stand ready to protect our people. We are not leaving anyone behind.

But that is only part of the answer. We should also be honest. We live in wartime and Governments by themselves will not be able to absorb the full weight of this war. I know that this is a tough message, but it is the only honest one. We will have to bear the weight of this war together, in solidarity.

Equally important is the action we take. We need to disconnect from unreliable energy suppliers. We must strengthen our energy independence, diversify energy supplies and transition faster to locally produced green and fossil-free energy. And that is what we are doing.

Belgium is one of the world leaders in offshore capacity and, with other European partners, we are investing to transform the North Sea into Europe's biggest green power plant, quadrupling wind power in the North Sea. We are building a hydrogen hub in the heart of Europe for the import and transit of green hydrogen, and we are reaching out to partners in Africa and the Middle East to team up. Energy transition is a common challenge that needs common answers, from the North and the South. And we keep investing in nuclear energy, safer than today with less waste than today. If we want to bolster our energy independence and deliver on the promises of a green and sustainable world, we will need all of these.

Belgium brings innovative solutions and expertise to the table with universities and research centres that are world leading and that will help us to change and to adapt. It is this spirit, this can-do mentality, that we will take to twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Last year in this Hall, I spoke about the deadly floods in my country (see A/76/PV.13). This year, along

with many other countries, Belgium again suffered the effects of climate change and global warming, with persistent drought that endangered drinking water and destroyed crops.

War in Europe should not make us look away from the big challenges of our time — first and foremost, climate change. We cannot let one autocrat's warmongering distract us from our common agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals — an agenda that has not become less relevant, but quite the opposite. Our generation faces a gigantic task, but I remain confident that with we will succeed.

To destroy progress, you only need one man. That is what we have learned this year. But to achieve progress, you need many hands. Never before, has cooperation — international cooperation — been so important. Regardless of all the obstacles, of all the pain and struggle, we have today perhaps the greatest opportunity humankind has ever had to create an inclusive community in which every citizen has a say and a stake — in which progress is attainable for all. Let us embrace this opportunity instead of destroying it with bombs and hatred.

This brings me to my final point, a fight close to my heart — the fight for human rights and liberal democracy.

On the eve of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we see human rights under increasing pressure. It is for that very reason that Belgium is running for a seat in the Human Rights Council for 2023-2025. Our candidacy reflects our commitment to multilateralism and our support for the international order based on the rule of law and on respect for human rights, without distinction.

A stronger focus on human rights is urgently needed. Let us take for example, women's rights. After years of steady progress, we are fighting an uphill battle again. I am sickened to see the fate of women and girls in Afghanistan. What we all feared has become true. Despite all the promises, Afghan women and girls have been systematically excluded from public life over the past year. Girls are no longer allowed to go to school. They are forced to get married at an age when children should still be playing with their friends. Their mothers no longer allowed to go to work.

But as one young Afghan woman wrote, "I am heartbroken, but hopeful". When this woman, whose rights are being crushed, does not give up then we too

must keep fighting, for going to school is not a privilege; it is a right of each and every child, of boys and girls. The Transforming Education Summit was a clear reminder that we must continue to fight for accessibility and quality of education for all, just as we must keep fighting for the right of women to equally participate in all domains of decision-making and public life. There will never be sustainable stability, let alone peace, when women are forced to take the back seat.

Not only human rights are under pressure; democracy itself is targeted. The Russian bombs and missiles directed towards the people of Ukraine are also aimed at causing conflicts in other countries. Just recently, it was exposed that Russia has spent \$300 million to influence foreign officials; to replace their free will with Russia's will; their own interests with Russia's interests. This is a new form of colonization. In Africa, for example, ever more countries are becoming targets and victims, such as in the Sahel or in Central Africa. I want to make it clear to our partners that we will remain on their side. But is also happening also in Europe, where Putin is financing his puppets to carry out his agenda of division, mistrust and unrest, organizing disinformation campaigns, cyberattacks and illegal interference in free elections.

It should be clear — we will not back down on democratic principles and individual rights. We will not allow Russian trojan horses to undermine our democracies with disinformation and fear. When the fight for democracy is to be fought, we will and we shall stand up.

A founding Member of the United Nations, a permanent member of the Security Council, is waging a hybrid war on the international community. We cannot standby. We cannot look away. We must protect the people of Ukraine. We must do everything we can to help Ukraine win this war, and we will. We will also protect our own people, who are struggling to heat their homes and pay their bills. And we will work hand in hand with the Global South.

That is our mission today. For millions of people all over the world, the United Nations remains a beacon of hope, not least for the younger generations. Let us respond to their call and act. People are counting on us.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alexander de Croo, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, was escorted from the rostrum.

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

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra.

Mr. Xavier Espot Zamora, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Xavier Espot Zamora, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Espot Zamora (Andorra) (*spoke in Catalan; English text provided by the delegation*): After two years of absence due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, it is an honour once again to take part in person in the General Assembly. I would like to start this address by congratulating His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session.

I also thank him for the motto he has chosen — “Solutions through solidarity, sustainability and science” — which we shall assume as our own and which is aligned with the principles applied in Andorra, from both a domestic and an international political perspective. He may rely on Andorra’s loyal support for the seventy-seventh session, and we wish him every success.

Please allow me also to express my acknowledgement of the presidency of Mr. Abdullah Shahid and of the innovative and action-oriented initiatives he has encouraged over the course of a year, in which there has been no shortage of challenges. These have once again emphasized the essential role of the United Nations and the multilateralism it embodies.

A year ago, when the COVID-19 pandemic was still very much determining the social and economic policies of many countries, Secretary-General António Guterres warned us that the global and multidimensional crisis generated by COVID-19 once again underlined global fragilities and structural inequalities. Global governance neither knew how to respond nor provided the appropriate means for vaccines to reach all countries, which left millions of people in a situation of extreme

vulnerability. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary-General on his excellent work in what remains a very delicate context, which, unfortunately, has many points in common with the reasons for which the United Nations was founded,

Indeed, today the world continues to experience a succession and accumulation of different crises, accentuated by the devastating impact on the planet of an economy that is nearing the end of its cycle and that has based its productivity on excessive use of raw materials. The planet is exhausted, and the symptoms are all too evident. The climate emergency is being felt in the form of heat waves, wildfires, water shortages and extreme phenomena that lead to catastrophes. The planet’s triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution affects everyone. We now have the last opportunity effectively and forcefully to address the climate crisis, which is the most global and important challenge we are facing.

Unfortunately, climate change is not the only transnational challenge besetting us. Just as we were starting to discern an improvement in the circumstances created by the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, a clear violation of the United Nations Charter, has exposed cracks in the international order and corroborated the loss of respect for the common values that sustain our peaceful coexistence and that are the essence, or the *raison d’être*, of this Assembly. The conflict is having a devastating impact on the civilian population and causing one of the worst refugee crises on the European continent since the Second World War, which is why Andorra has once again shown its solidarity by welcoming numerous Ukrainian families, to whom it has given the chance to live and to work in our country. That is also what we did in 2018, during the humanitarian crisis caused by the war in Syria.

As I explained in the political orientation debate held last week in the Consell General — our Parliament — although our voice in the world does not have the backing of a large population, armies, natural resources or a strategic geographical location, it is sustained by the fortitude of principles and values. Those values inspire our model of society and the order by which we would like international relations to be governed.

The impact of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, moreover, is not limited solely to our region. The threat of a food crisis due to a shortage of distribution of agricultural resources on other continents has required negotiations to prevent it. The

energy crisis and rising prices are also generating economic difficulties beyond Europe, which need to be rectified.

The situation is not hopeful, yet we should not allow it to bring an end to real politics — politics that make what is necessary possible. We cannot allow unilateralism to prevail over multilateralism. This is how we understand it in Andorra, because a world without international rules or consensus would be a world governed by the law of the strongest. Our adherence to multilateralism is based on the conviction that tackling crises, challenges and common threats requires a strong multilateral system, based on the universal values that inspired the Organization's founding document,

One may wonder what a country of just over 80,000 inhabitants and a mountainous territory half the size of New York City can do for a planet that will soon have a population of over 8 billion. It is our belief in our ability to set an example and in our role to face global and common challenges based on the responsibility and commitment we assumed 29 years ago when, with the approval of our Constitution, we entered the international scene and joined the United Nations.

Andorra believes in multilateralism, its values and its capabilities as an essential way of engagement and of working, to identify challenges, come up with solutions, propose consensus, promote fresh cooperation and keep lines of dialogue and action open. When we are all in attendance, as we are now at the United Nations, we can listen to everyone's voice and establish truly successful proposals and action.

This conviction means that our country is taking and wishes to take an active part in numerous multilateral organizations, as we understand that recovery and change can be achieved only through a spirit of collaboration and by encouraging synergies among peoples, however far apart they may be, in every sense.

The year 2023 will, in fact, give the Principality of Andorra an excellent chance to celebrate the multilateral order and to reiterate our firm and constant commitment to that order, as it will be the thirtieth anniversary of Andorra's joining the United Nations and UNESCO. This anniversary also coincides with the thirtieth anniversary of our Constitution, which will provide an opportunity to familiarize our fellow citizens with multilateral institutions.

Throughout our history, geography has shaped our character. Andorra is a high mountain region and therefore particularly vulnerable to climate change. We understand that the impact of this change has unleashed an existential struggle that must be overcome if we are to protect our territory. No issue has ever yielded such consensus among our parliamentary forces — a consensus that has made it possible to create a solid framework for action and continuity. We were one of the first parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to submit a national contribution in 2015, and to update it in 2020, with a view to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. The Consell General— our Parliament — unanimously approved the Declaration of a State of Climate Emergency and the Law on Promoting Energy Transition and on Climate Change.

We have indeed acted. I shall cite one example. Advances introduced in eco-taxation have led to the creation of a green fund that is allocated entirely to encouraging ecological transition and ensuring that the economic sectors with the greatest environmental impact contribute most. We have pioneered in introducing a green tax and established a carbon price of €30 per ton, which will lead us towards more sustainable mobility. This has practical and clearly beneficial effects for our citizens, as the green fund has enabled us to finance more and better energy efficiency programmes and to become one of the world's first countries to offer free public transport — a milestone reached just a few months ago, with indisputable success.

Another law recently passed, the Law on Circular Economy, is also a remarkable and pioneering initiative that establishes 2035 as the deadline for changing from the current linear production model to a circular production model in which most waste becomes a by-product that is reintroduced into the production chain. Special emphasis is placed on combating the waste of resources and, specifically, of food.

That is because we carefully monitor the reports of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on the basic issue of the right to food, the second Sustainable Development Goal. We took active part in the 2021 Food Systems Summit, where I had the chance to highlight our fight against food waste and move towards sustainable food systems, which, alongside San Marino, we have had the honour to make a priority policy.

Likewise, to mark the International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development —and since I have already mentioned the FAO — I would like to refer to the Mountain Partnership and its members, which raise awareness and offer insight, tools and action for the development of mountain regions. Andorra has the highest capital city in Europe, at an altitude of over 1,000 metres, and an average altitude of around 2,000 metres. Mountain regions are of vital importance in natural systems, with their water cycles, influence on the climate, natural resources and biodiversity. Meanwhile, they are highly vulnerable environments. In Andorra, we have therefore been committed for years to caring for our natural heritage and make environmental protection a priority.

Most countries have reappraised their actions or observed how some processes of change that were half-heartedly introduced before the COVID-19 pandemic now need to be accelerated, while others require strengthening. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and, over and above that, the common agenda proposed by the Secretary-General are powerful instruments that provide collective and holistic solutions and establish a deadline by which the goals must be achieved in order to build a better world in which human rights, a pillar of the United Nations, are the cornerstone of all of our actions.

Andorra, which is firmly committed to the 2030 Agenda, presented its second voluntary national review in July. The report features a detailed analysis of the 17 SDGs and describes the policies being implemented to guarantee Andorra's sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery, through the Horizon 23 Action Plan, the Government plan that, following the outbreak of the pandemic, we reformulated for this legislative term, and which ends next year.

Globally, COVID-19 has had a negative impact on the progress and achievement of the 17 SDGs. In some cases, we have even strayed from the targets. The achievement of SDG 4, which calls for quality education and the priority objectives of which include the completion of free primary and secondary education for all girls and boys by 2030, is unfortunately far from a reality in many parts of the planet.

The education of almost 90 per cent of students around the world was interrupted in late April 2020, which was detrimental to over 1.5 billion children of school age. Many have not set foot in a classroom

since then. The collateral impacts of the pandemic have therefore been particularly intense in the field of education and have highlighted the need to give fresh impetus to schooling.

I therefore wish to highlight the Secretary-General's role in making education one of the core values of the United Nations system. A good example of this is the Transforming Education Summit, which was held in New York on 19 September. There is certainly no better tool for overcoming discrimination and prejudice than giving all children access to schooling, lifelong education and quality education.

Our country is fully committed to education as an essential tool for achieving a fairer, more responsible society based on ethical values, critical vision and cooperative and supportive attitudes. Andorra's educational structure is one of our country's finest assets, as three plural and diverse public education systems — Andorran, French and Spanish— coexist, thus allowing us to ensure higher levels of tolerance, freedom and democracy in the education of our children and young people.

Specifically, multilingualism is one the characteristic, differentiating elements of the Andorran education system. We therefore wish to give our support and commitment to action promoted by the United Nations on multilingualism as a tool for dialogue, communication, exchange and, in short, as a vehicle for peace.

We share the Secretary-General's view of the need for solidarity with the young generations so that they may be involved in decision-making. All Andorran institutions therefore work with young people so they can take active part in political life and are endowed with the skills they need to manage their futures. As political leaders, we are responsible for creating opportunities for future generations, and that is one of the goals that we work hard to achieve so that our country will be able to offer opportunities for progress to new, increasingly well-trained generations and they need not envision a future a long way from home

In our country, we believe that the creation of these new opportunities for the future is an inevitable step in completing the process of economic diversification that we started in 2012 and that, because of the pandemic, we have wished to intensify by prioritizing key strategic sectors of sustainability and of innovation and research. This culmination is

linked to the strengthening of our relations with the European Union through an association agreement that we have been negotiating since 2015, which has allowed us progressive, structured participation in the European internal market. It will therefore be possible to promote the internationalization of our companies and encourage mobility among our young people and thus also contribute more to global prosperity.

I now wish to mention another global challenge that we have considered and that relates to SDG 5 — achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. Observation everywhere of persistent gender-based violence, a growing number of sexual assaults and murders of women, and increasing job insecurity and wage gap shows that inequality still leads to vulnerability and excludes half of humankind.

Feminism is one of the great challenges of the present moment and it is absolutely essential for us to invest all our effort in developing active, determined measures to build a new reality in which the equality of women and men is not only a right, but also a fact whereby the collective imagination cannot conceive of or accept discrimination against women.

Last spring, the Consell General — our Parliament — approved a law for the effective application of the right to equal treatment and opportunities and non-discrimination between men and women. It is a pioneering law that provides essential tools for breaking down the invisible barrier that still prevents full equality. Some of the aspects regulated by this law — such as co-education as a guiding principle for the entire education system, the requirement to draw up annual records of gender-related data, a determined commitment to eliminating the wage gap and the coordination of equality plans in companies — are the first of their kind.

A year ago, in his report *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982), António Guterres delivered the very clear message that the United Nations ability to fulfil the objectives established by its founders depends entirely on the collective political will of all its Members and their commitment to the pillars of the United Nations. That message has been understood, and Andorra fully supports the road map, which urges us to intensify action to strengthen and coordinate the global health architecture, address the climate emergency, renew solidarity among peoples, provide space for youth, and encourage a new social contract on human rights and an approach to global commons. In assuming our

responsibility, we must now work to achieve all this and now have a — I dare say — historic opportunity to do so.

We come from a very small country, in which years ago we pledged to do things right and in which everyone can express themselves freely, with an over 600-year-old Parliament, the depository of the people's sovereignty and in which, for over seven centuries, we have fortunately known only peace. The United Nations may therefore depend on our help, based on the values that have shaped us over history, to defend, globally, a fairer, more equitable world with a more efficient and sustainable economic development.

As political leaders, we cannot afford to look back and see how our inaction led to catastrophic and irreversible damage to our planet and to humankind. No individual effort will be enough, but it will be necessary, as the struggle facing us and in which we are now immersed requires everyone to contribute. Andorra is willing to take part and to act with determination to be part of the solution.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Xavier Espot Zamora, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted from the rostrum.

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

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for Defense, Home Affairs, and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands, and Territorial Integrity of the Republic of Mauritius.

Mr. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister for Defense, Home Affairs, and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands, and Territorial Integrity of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Pravind

Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister for Defense, Home Affairs, and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands, and Territorial Integrity of the Republic of Mauritius, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Jugnauth (Mauritius): At the outset, let me congratulate Mr. Csaba Kőrösi on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. I wish to assure him of the full cooperation of my delegation in the fulfilment of his important duties.

We are at a watershed moment in human history, when humankind is facing interlocking challenges that threaten peace, increase the level of poverty and are likely to considerably delay the achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At this particular session, the President's proposed motto — "Solutions through solidarity, sustainability and science" — can provide us with some transformative solutions to address them. Multilateralism continues to be under threat, yet there is no other body or entity more representative and likely to strengthen global cooperation than the United Nations.

After the past three years of reeling from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, we were hoping that the availability of vaccines against COVID-19 would stop bleeding our economy and that we would return to normalcy. Instead, the situation has worsened due to the conflict in Europe, which is having far and wide ramifications around the world.

Conflicts and political instability have led to more crises and the human tragedy of war has worsened. Their profound economic impact is slowing growth and exacerbating the cost-of-living crisis. There is uncertainty as to when and how the conflict will end, but what is clear is that the massive influx of funds needed for recovery and reconstruction will necessarily draw from the much-needed assistance to countries seeking to recover from COVID-19. Millions of people will continue to suffer worldwide, and millions more will be left behind.

While we are still confronting an uneven recovery of the global economy, the pandemic recovery gap between countries is widening, creating economic and social reverberations around the globe and injecting more uncertainty into global markets. The rising cost of commodities and energy and, in some cases, their scarcity will further weaken our economies and delay the achievement of the SDGs. Small island developing

States (SIDS) like Mauritius, which are highly vulnerable, will be particularly affected. We make an urgent appeal to all players and the international community as a whole to work towards a cessation of hostilities and seek to resolve differences through peaceful means. This is the time when we should be seriously thinking of saving our planet, slowing down the effects of climate change, preventing a worldwide recession and, most importantly, preventing a nuclear catastrophe.

We are witnessing more and more extreme weather events; higher-than-ever temperatures, droughts, fires and floods are creating unprecedented challenges across the globe and taking a heavy toll on human life and material damage. I take this opportunity to express my Government's sympathies and solidarity to the populations affected throughout the world, especially in Pakistan.

The twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change gives us another chance to globally agree on and commit to yet unprecedented measures to keep the temperature rise below the 1.5°C target. Our responsibilities as leaders and our state responsibility should guide us in ensuring that our own future and that of our children are secure and refrain from any action that is tantamount to ecocide.

Access to climate finance is essential to addressing these existential threats. Mauritius is keen to implement its nationally determined contributions which are estimated to cost around \$6.5 billion. Despite the huge costs to our economy, Mauritius has pledged to finance 35 per cent of the projects. We appeal to the international community to support us for the remaining part.

The financing needs for development projects in SIDS like Mauritius should be demand-driven and based on the prevailing economic conditions, especially in light of the budgeting stress created by the pandemic. We must also address the inequities and, in that respect, the United Nations development systems, together with our development partners, should use a unified compass and a refined and more comprehensive vulnerability index that accurately captures the vulnerabilities of SIDS so as to prioritize allocation of funds and increase the funding of development activities.

Ocean-based economies are being deeply affected. Restoring the health of our oceans is crucial to preserving our biodiversity, community livelihoods

and climate resilience. Negotiations for a binding global treaty to end plastic pollution and the consensus reached on banning harmful fisheries are important steps in the right direction to turn the tide and make our oceans healthy for our sustainable development.

Mauritius is committed to protecting our oceans and, in this context, it announced during the Lisbon Ocean Conference the creation of a marine protected area around the Chagos Archipelago. We invite States, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders to support this initiative and assist in the creation, management and enforcement of the marine protected area which, will be among the largest in the world.

The world is getting increasingly connected digitally and cyberspace is invading almost all areas of modern day-life. However, while it is providing new opportunities, it is also creating new challenges. The pandemic has brought to light the role of information and communications technology as a crucial enabler of economic and social development, but we need to be cautious about the misuse and abuse of this technology as well.

Mauritius' socioeconomic vision and multicultural and societal values take into account and encourage the pursuit of a secure, and safe digital world for all as we strive to undermine disinformation with accurate information. We strongly value respect for and the promotion of human rights, both online and offline. We are equally keen to protect human values, promote tolerance and avoid hate speech. In this respect, we support the efforts of the international community to elaborate a comprehensive international convention on countering the use of information and communications technology for criminal purposes.

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in its totality is to the benefit of all, for today's and future generations. Mauritius strongly believes that we must address the concerns of our Youth for the future. Even though we are constrained by our insularity and limited means, we are striving to increase opportunities for our youth. Providing social protection and promoting social justice remains a key priority of our Government. Despite very difficult economic challenges, we are maintaining our social welfare State, inter alia, by providing free health coverage, free education and basic pension to the elderly.

The economic empowerment of women is at the heart of various policies that we have adopted in Mauritius. Our Government programme is paving the way for a society where gender equality is adhered to, ensuring fairness and equity among all, as well as the human and social development of women. In this respect, Mauritius has made significant progress towards achieving gender equality.

We reaffirm our full solidarity with the Palestinian People and strongly condemn the senseless acts of violence against its vulnerable population.

The recent development on the world scene is again pointing to the need for us to improve our ability to respond to crises, be they manmade or natural. In this regard, we believe that the United Nations system, particularly the Security Council, needs the necessary reforms to make it more representative of the world today and thereby render it more effective. In that regard, we again reiterate the importance of expanding the Security Council with members of the African continent, based on the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, as well as a member from SIDS, amongst others.

The fundamental pillars of the United Nations, such as development, human rights and international peace and security, are grounded in respect for and the promotion of international law. This essential bond among States enables the rule of law and global good governance to flourish, without which there would be chaos. When the United Nations and the institutions that we have created to uphold international law are not respected, democratic governance and our universal values are undermined. International Law cannot be applied selectively. It is universal, indivisible and essential to promote multilateralism, international cooperation and strengthen faith in a fair and equitable global order.

The Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of 25 February 2019, resolution 73/295 and the Judgment of the Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea of 28 January 2021 have confirmed, with crystal clarity that international law, recognizes the Chagos Archipelago to be and to have always been an integral part of the territory of Mauritius. Yet, despite the aforementioned resolution, which required the colonial administration to withdraw within six months of the date of its adoption, that part of our territory remains occupied today. This situation further delays the implementation of our resettlement

programme, especially for those Mauritians of Chagossian origin who were forcibly removed from there in the 1960s.

It ill behoves the United Kingdom to call on Mauritius and other African countries to respond to other allegations of illegal occupation when it is illegally occupying a part of Africa. The new Government of the United Kingdom has an opportunity to place itself on the right side of history and bring to a close this dark chapter of history involving the last colony in Africa and the last colony it ever created, as well as the shameful forcible displacement of people. Such a move would be fully consistent with the values and principles of the beloved late monarch, who we honour today and pay homage to.

What more fitting tribute could there be to the memory of that great monarch who dedicated her life to service and to upholding the values of democracy, human rights and international law, sovereignty and territorial integrity than to bring this history to an end and to do so in a manner that respects sovereignty, matters of security, environment and the fundamental rights of human beings? We urge the new Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to act with statesmanship and work with us to implement resolution 73/295 and support the completion of the decolonization of Mauritius and the resettlement of the former inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago.

I wish to report that there have indeed been some attempts to start such a conversation. We reached a point where it would have been possible to agree on a way forward, but it appears that the United Kingdom is having some difficulty in accepting the proposal that any final agreement must be based on international law. It would be most disappointing if the ability to reach a final settlement were scuppered by its unwillingness to express a commitment to respecting the international rule of law — all the more so that Mauritius has over the years confirmed that it is prepared to enter into a long-term lease to protect the continued operations of the military base on Diego Garcia, given its contribution to regional peace and security.

Mauritius is deeply grateful for the support it has been receiving from other countries and for actions taken by international and regional organizations, including the United Nations and its specialized agencies, to implement resolution 73/295. We are particularly thankful to the United Nations for amending its world map to include the Chagos Archipelago as a part of

Mauritius; to the Universal Postal Union for ceasing to recognize the so-called British Indian Ocean Territory issued stamps; to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for upholding the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion and the General Assembly resolutions; and to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea for proceeding to delimit the maritime boundary between Mauritius and Maldives in the region of the Chagos Archipelago.

Mr. Aidid (Malaysia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I must, however, deplore the decision of the North Indian Ocean Hydrographic Commission, which, at its latest meeting, held in Bali, violated its legal obligations by failing to recognize the legal entitlement of Mauritius, which satisfies all the criteria for full membership of that organization. In that regard, it is with much regret that Mauritius has decided to suspend its participation in future activities of the North Indian Ocean Hydrographic Commission until its legal entitlement to full membership of that regional organization is fully recognized.

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

We have reached a once in a generation moment and we must make critical choices that will determine our future. The vicious cycles of violence must stop; divides and distrust must end. We should not allow the winds of discord to draw the iron curtain closed again; the winds of peace should flow smoothly. Humankind's aspirations and yearnings for peace are resonating strongly on the world stage. Current geopolitical tensions should be de-escalated. It is time for decisive action and stronger international cooperation. More than ever, the promise to leave no one behind must guide our actions and forward path.

It is only by working together that we can begin to weave a stronger and more inclusive global economy and build a better world for our shared prosperity. We can and we must act now.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister for Defense, Home Affairs, and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer

Islands, and Territorial Integrity of the Republic of Mauritius for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister for Defense, Home Affairs, and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands, and Territorial Integrity of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Siaosi ‘Ofakivahafolau Sovaleni, Prime Minister and Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Police, Fire Services and Emergency Services, and Minister for His Majesty’s Armed Forces of the Kingdom of Tonga

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Police, Fire Services and Emergency Services, and Minister for His Majesty’s Armed Forces of the Kingdom of Tonga.

Mr. Siaosi ‘Ofakivahafolau Sovaleni, Prime Minister and Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Police, Fire Services and Emergency Services, and Minister for His Majesty’s Armed Forces of the Kingdom of Tonga, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Siaosi ‘Ofakivahafolau Sovaleni, Prime Minister and Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Police, Fire Services and Emergency Services, and Minister for His Majesty’s Armed Forces of the Kingdom of Tonga, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Sovaleni (Tonga): It is my honour and privilege to address the General Assembly for the first time as Prime Minister of Tonga.

I offer my warmest congratulations to Mr. Csaba Kőrösi on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. I assure him of our delegation’s full support.

May I also thank his predecessor, Mr. Abdulla Shahid, for his leadership of the Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. He led a presidency of hope during unprecedented times.

I also wish to commend the tireless efforts of our Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres. I thank the Secretary-General for his leadership during these most trying times.

Before us is a critical, crucial theme “A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges”. Our shared planet and our people face complex and multifaceted challenges, and we must act now. We have the responsibility and the duty to find common ground. Together, we must deliver the transformative solutions needed to build peaceful, inclusive, healthy and resilient societies — societies looking with hope to their futures because they can live in a planet we sustain in peace and health for current and future generations to come. The President’s theme — our theme — is a timely and relevant theme to guide our work during this session.

The global challenges are vast; they are many; they are interlinked. They all are ultimately about maintaining international peace and security. With urgency we must, among so many other issues, overcome the severe economic, financial and social impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) global pandemic, and accelerate action on climate change, ocean health, energy transformation, the sustainable use of natural resources, cybersecurity — and I could go on.

For this we must unite, and we must be determined to work together for solutions. The very peaceful existence of humankind and that of the planet hosting us are at stake. We must unite to find the way forward in an equitable multilateral system and a cooperation fit for purpose, fit for the future and respectful of our differences but united by our shared desire for an inclusive, hopeful and sustainable future for all.

Earlier this year, Tonga co-sponsored several General Assembly resolutions in support of the people of Ukraine. Tonga continues to urge a peaceful resolution of the conflict to save unnecessary loss of lives and minimize any further devastations. Tonga is far from this conflict, yet its ripple effects are felt by all of us. Tonga, like so many others, is faced with higher costs of fuel, food, and basic supplies. Inflation is double-digit. These are inflation rates that we have not experienced in decades.

More than ever, it is urgent that we progress toward implementing the goals of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development set seven years ago. At half-time, the reality is that the existential threats posed by climate change, pandemics and conflict have increased. This is not some temporary inconvenience. This is about our survival.

Let us admit that situations have worsened since we last met. This is also why we thank the Secretary-General for his *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022*. I believe that it provides a road map out of crisis. The promises of the global agenda we agreed to risks becoming promises we did not keep. We must keep our promises, especially to the vulnerable populations such as those of small island developing States (SIDS). We must focus. There are areas which need immediate action to rescue the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and deliver meaningful progress for people and the planet by 2030.

The successor agreement to the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action, known as the Samoa Pathway, will be critical, notably in regard to the support by the international community for small island developing States. SIDS are and must remain a special case for development. We are not a footnote; we face unique vulnerabilities. Once again, it is with urgency that we call on all States to show solidarity with the peoples of the SIDS. We call on their support especially during the preparatory process for the SAMOA successor arrangement. Only a few short years remain to implement the Samoa Pathway.

Tonga welcomes the Secretariat's work on a monitoring framework for the SAMOA Pathway implementation. Already, three decades have elapsed since small island developing States called for an index recognizing our special circumstances and vulnerabilities. The international financial system has used measures not necessarily adapted to our special circumstances, our challenges and our ecological and economic vulnerabilities. This has limited our access to appropriate financing, debt relief and aid.

Greater responsiveness to our special circumstances has come about over time as the unique factors affecting the entire range of our political, social, economic and environmental development issues have been taken into account. We express appreciation to the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda and the United Nations high-level panel of experts on a multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI) for the release of the interim report on the development of the MVI. We look forward to its finalization and adoption by December 2022.

Tonga, like so many of our Pacific neighbours, faces natural disasters of unprecedented severity and frequency. That threatens our very existence, and certainly our efforts for the inclusive and sustainable development of a small economy like Tonga's.

All Tongans will forever recall 15 January 2022. The Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano erupted. The explosion was of an intensity so great that some research compares it to the impact of a nuclear explosion. We made the news of the world — not the news we looked for. Research documents that the explosion may have created a tsunami almost as high as the Statue of Liberty. Plumes of hot gas, ash and water vapour were projected into the atmosphere, reaching a height of 36 miles.

The ensuing tsunami devastated our economy. Several islands were completely or severely destroyed. People were displaced and then evacuated to neighbouring islands. The volcanic eruption and tsunami cut access to basics for people and cut a precious lifeline for an island nation — our communications. The widespread economic and social damage and, sadly, loss of lives are estimated by the World Bank at 36.4 per cent of Tonga's gross domestic product (GDP).

In our hour of need, we recognize with our deepest appreciation the response of Member States and their peoples. We recognize the support of philanthropic institutions, the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations, development partners, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and individuals. We thank them — *malo 'aupito* — for standing in solidarity with Tonga in our hour of difficulty.

My Government has renewed our national priorities. We must build back better and build national resilience to external threats and risks. We improve the quality of services and affordability to the community and achieve progressive and sustainable economic growth. We are committed to reducing the risks and harmful effects of natural disasters, particularly through risk-informed development efforts and enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response.

In February of this year, after two years of keeping COVID-19 at bay through the closure of our border, Tonga experienced its first community outbreak. Over the previous two years, we had vaccinated our people. We now have 90 per cent fully vaccinated. I must thank Tonga's development partners for providing support, both directly and through the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility. We also acknowledge the support provided by UNICEF and the World Health Organization on infection, prevention, control, risk communication and surveillance. That support was critical to Tonga's preparedness and response plan.

Finally, on 1 August, we were able to again open our borders. We did so emphasizing preventative health measures to mitigate risks and ensure a safe reopening.

Tonga has one of the world's highest rates of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) globally. NCDs, such as cardiovascular disease, cancers and diabetes account for approximately 80 per cent of deaths in Tonga. We must provide continuous support to meet our current goal, in line with the SDG of reducing NCD-related deaths by one third by the year 2030.

Climate change continues to be the single greatest existential threat facing the blue Pacific. The adverse impacts of climate change make Tonga the third most vulnerable country in the world. That threatens our territorial integrity, land, water, health, infrastructure, food security, biological diversity, livelihoods and ecosystems. It threatens our peoples' mental health and sense of nationhood. Climate change is an existential threat to people and our desire for international peace and security. We must limit global warming to 1.5°C.

We reiterate our call for this issue to be a permanent item on the Security Council's agenda. The Security Council must be seized of the matter because of its clear links to traditional threats to international peace and security. Whether it is sea-level rise, loss of territory or the mass migration it leads to, this is a trigger for violence and a threat to peace and security.

Tonga is a small island developing State, but it is also a large ocean State. Some 99 per cent of our sovereign territory is the ocean, and through generations we have borne our serious responsibility to protect the ocean. The ocean is our beating heart; it serves as the foundation of our economy and the lifeline for sectors from tourism to fisheries to ocean transport and international shipping. The conservation and sustainable use of the ocean and its resources are at the forefront of our concerns and interests. Tonga joins Member States that have argued for the importance of the ocean and seas to global sustainable development.

Tonga aspires to play its role in the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities, particularly in responding to mitigating IUU risks. We must achieve the goals outlined in SDG 14 if we are to survive. Anything less is unacceptable, and we must do whatever we can within our available resources. We were pleased to participate in the seventh Our Ocean Conference in Koror, Palau, and in the second United Nations Ocean Conference, held

in Lisbon, and we look forward to continuing such conferences to ensure that the oceans and seas are a priority in the global sustainable development agenda. It is through such engagement that partnerships were formed and resulted in Tonga producing its first-ever Tonga Ocean Management Plan in 2021.

Tonga continues to recognize the importance of the legal mandate provided by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). As a member of the International Seabed Authority, Tonga continuously engages in the work of the Authority. We must expeditiously conclude those exploitation regulations that will ensure that appropriate conservation and environmental management practices are in place when exploitation activities begin.

The conservation and protection of our high seas remain a priority for Tonga. I refer in particular to the negotiations to conclude an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. Tonga is optimistic that the considerable amount of work that has gone into this process, along with further progress on resolving key issues of divergence, will enable us to come to a positive conclusion. Let us conclude this historical instrument to support our obligations under UNCLOS.

Tonga has a large proportion of our people living in diasporas near and far, with two out of three Tongans living overseas. Remittances equal some 40 per cent of GDP. This is why it is of concern to us to find ways to reduce the cost of remittances.

I am honoured to be appointed President of the sixth session of the Assembly of SIDS DOCK. In this capacity, I launched the Global Ocean Energy Alliance (GLOEA) on 29 June in Lisbon. GLOEA is an initiative focused on accelerating the development of ocean energy technologies and projects through partnerships that mobilize technical, human and financial resources and are aimed establishing a global community of shared interest — a community capable of developing a pipeline of bankable ocean energy projects to serve islands, cities and coastal nations.

As the events of 2022 have so cruelly shown us, internet connectivity is a lifeline for Tonga. Our economy and our society are dependent on well-functioning domestic and international communications. The security required to protect such connectivity is

therefore vital to our sustainable development. In this regard, I wish to recognize the work of New Zealand, Australia and the International Telecommunication Union/UNESCO Broadband Commission.

Education is at the core of peace and sustainable futures. Tonga recognizes and welcomes the opportunity to share in the Transforming Education Summit, held earlier this week. The Summit provided an opportunity to once again reiterate our collective call to put education front and centre for inclusive and sustainable development for all. We must build future-proof, sustainable and resilient education systems. To that end, we must scale up financial investment.

Pacific Islands Forum leaders have committed to strong regional action for a shared stewardship of the Pacific Ocean. They endorse the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. The Pacific Ocean covers one third of our planet's surface, and it is our desire to act as one blue Pacific continent. We continue to note with grave concern the threat posed by sea-level rise to our blue Pacific. We commit ourselves to ensuring that climate change-induced sea-level rise does not challenge our maritime zones delineated under UNCLOS, as reflected in the 2021 Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-Related Sea-Level Rise.

We note the invaluable work of the International Law Commission, in particular the Study Group on sea-level rise, for its work in advancing deliberations on this topic with a view to strengthening the UNCLOS framework, particularly in addressing the modern realities of sea-level rise. We further note the high debt sustainability analysis of Forum island countries and emphasize the need for debt instruments to be simple, manageable and implementable, given countries' limited resources, the time-bound nature of debt instruments and the increasingly constrained development finance landscape worldwide. We also committed to revitalizing the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration in 2023.

Our Pacific collective will remain and remains our strength in our advocacy for faster and more action by the international community. Vanuatu's initiative to seek an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the obligations of states under international law to protect the rights of present and future generations against the adverse impacts of climate change in order to clarify the legal consequences of climate change. Tonga has joined all of the other Pacific Leaders in supporting

that initiative, which is a step in the right direction. The initiative of Tuvalu and Antigua and Barbuda to establish a commission of SIDs on climate change and international law that will be tasked with developing and implementing fair and just global environmental norms and practices is also a step in the right direction.

I conclude by reiterating Tonga's support for President Kőrösi's important work. May we show resolve, courage and partnership to meet the challenges before us and turn the needle to hope for present and future generations. May God guide and bless the General Assembly and all its members, observers and staff in our shared journey during this session to the destination of finding solutions through solidarity, sustainability and science.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Police, Fire Services and Emergency Services, and Minister for His Majesty's Armed Forces of the Kingdom of Tonga for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Siaosi 'Ofakivahafolau Sovaleni, Prime Minister and Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Police, Fire Services and Emergency Services, and Minister for His Majesty's Armed Forces of the Kingdom of Tonga, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by the Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic

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

Mr. Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Mitsotakis (Greece): Seventy-seven years ago, the Organization was founded out of the chaos of war with one stated aim: the harmonization of relations among nation States in pursuit of lasting peace and security, the defence of human rights and the inviolability of international law. It was the world's first multilateral response to the aggression of the few at the expense of the many.

And yet, in spite of all its successes, today our United Nations stands at a crossroads. As the theme of this year's General Assembly suggests, we face a watershed moment in world history. We face a choice, and that choice is simple. We can come together to face down the forces of authoritarianism and violence of today, in full cognizance that there is a price to pay for defending our common human values, or we can show indecision, we can waver and, ultimately, we can fold. If we choose the former, however painful in the short term that may be, the values that underpin these United Nations will prevail; choose the latter and the consequences are, I believe, unimaginable.

For our societies to survive and thrive, they have to be willing to fight when faced with unprovoked aggression. Pericles, in his funeral oration, made that absolutely clear 2,500 years ago. At no time since the end of the Second World War have his words echoed more relevantly.

Today the memories of the dark continent have resurfaced after the unprovoked invasion of Russia into Ukraine. What we considered unthinkable has happened. For many years, we believed that international cooperation and a shared commitment to the rule of law had prevailed over guns and armies. We believed that, given the tragic and devastating experiences of the twentieth century, no one would venture to suppress another people's right to exist or alter borders by force. We were wrong.

Nevertheless, as Europeans we have every reason to be proud of our response. We have stood by Ukraine, equipping it with means to defend itself against the aggressor. We have imposed punitive sanctions that are beginning to take a toll on the Russian economy. And the tide is beginning to turn. This clear and strong position against an unjustified war is the reflection of a new geopolitical vision for the European Union. We do not want a world in which power is for the strong State and not for the weak, and where disputes are settled by generals rather than diplomats.

Russia's invasion must not succeed, not only for the sake of Ukraine but also because it is imperative to send a clear message to other authoritarian leaders that open acts of aggression that violate international law shall not be tolerated by the global community of democratic States. That message had been sent loud and clear by many Heads of State and Government who have taken the floor in this year's general debate.

Across Europe, we face the prospect of a difficult winter. The impact of the war in Ukraine has sent the price of gas soaring and has unleashed a spike in inflation, the likes of which we have not seen in more than four decades. Russia has weaponized its natural resources to inflict pain on European societies and destabilize democratically elected European Governments. Again, it will not succeed.

We will support our citizens in coping with high energy prices. We will pool European resources to promote energy efficiency and rapidly diversify away from Russian oil and natural gas. And we will further accelerate the push towards renewables, which are not just the cleanest and cheapest form energy, but are also the safest ones from a geopolitical perspective. Never again must we mortgage our prosperity, only to be blackmailed by those who are willing to exploit our dependencies. That is, after all, what European strategic autonomy is all about.

We know that there is a price to be paid for being on the right side of history, and it is our obligation to keep our societies united but also informed about what is really at stake in Ukraine. The fight against disinformation and fake news must continue with increased vigour. Pericles, in his funeral oration was correct when he said that it is not easy to find the right measure of words when one cannot quite rely on a common perception of the truth.

Ukraine is not the only country in post-war Europe to have been brutally attacked. For nearly 50 years, Cypriots have lived on a divided island as the result of an illegal invasion and a military occupation. Ankara and the Turkish-Cypriot leadership, isolated and alone in the international community, continue to insist upon unacceptable demands for a two-State solution. They refuse to resume negotiations for an agreed settlement on the basis of successive Security Council resolutions. Greece strongly supports both the Secretary-General's efforts to resume negotiations for a mutually acceptable settlement, and the confidence-building measures proposed by the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. Nicos Anastasiades. But the international community must not ignore illegal Turkish attempts to impose a new fait-accompli on Cyprus, in particular in the fenced area of Varosha, as well as new and repeated violations of Cyprus' maritime zones and airspace.

That brings me to an issue even closer to home for my country. I am referring to Türkiye's continued and ever-more aggressive revisionist agenda vis-à-vis

Greece. This is my fourth address to the General Assembly as Greek Prime Minister. Members have heard me say before that I am always open to dialogue and to the settling of differences in an open, respectful manner and in accordance with international law. That is still the case.

Türkiye after all is an important country, a NATO member that can be a partner and ally of Greece and the European Union if it so chooses. Türkiye has a great capacity to play a constructive role. For example, Ankara's recent efforts that led to a successful United Nations brokering of a grain exports deal between Ukraine and Russia was an important contribution to global food security.

But at the same time, Türkiye continues to play a destabilizing role in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East and the Caucasus. It is also the only NATO country not implementing sanctions against Russia. When it comes to Greece, Türkiye's leadership seems to have a strange fixation with my country. Their language is increasingly bellicose. They threaten that Türkiye will "come at night", if it so decides. This is the language of an aggressor, not a peacemaker. Sadly, it is nothing new.

And what of Türkiye's challenge to Greek sovereignty in the Aegean itself? Again, such rhetoric not new. Türkiye has been incrementally building a comprehensive narrative of false claims in the Aegean that stretches from the Imia islet crisis in the mid-1990s to the present day. It has been threatening Greece with a *casus belli* should we choose to exercise our sovereign right to expand our territorial waters in the Aegean. That narrative has, unfortunately, culminated in Türkiye's preposterous challenge last year of Greek sovereignty over the eastern Aegean islands, including islands such as Chios and Rhodes — a sovereignty that was established by international treaties 100 years ago.

What is particularly alarming is the growing intensity of the threat. It is characterized by an escalation in aggressive rhetoric, combined with a massive disinformation campaign, multiple violations of Greece's sovereignty and sovereign rights at sea and in the air, the instrumentalization of migration flows and, unfortunately, a unilateral decision to refuse all high-level contacts.

I ask: Is this behaviour compatible with a well-established international actor, a United Nations Member State bound by the Charter and principles of

the United Nations? Such actions undermine peace and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean at a time when the international community is faced with a war in Ukraine. If President Erdoğan wants to talk about red lines, then I say this: Turkish claims over the sovereignty of Greece's islands are baseless and unacceptable. Questioning the sovereignty of Greek territory crosses a red line for all Greeks. As Prime Minister of Greece, I will never compromise on my country's territorial integrity, security and stability. Greece will not be bullied by anyone.

And yet, it does not have to be that way. There is another path forward. Greek people and Turkish people have a history of peaceful coexistence. Eight years after the tragic events of 1922, Greek and Turkish leaders had the courage to sign a peace and friendship agreement. That is why today, from the United Nations, I would like to address not just the Turkish leadership but also the Turkish people directly with this message — Greece poses no threat to their country. We are not their enemy. We are neighbours. We value the many friendships between ordinary Greeks and Turks. I know that the vast majority in our two countries do not want political conflict and hostility, so let us move forward in a spirit of cooperation and friendship, with mutual respect and in accordance with international law.

Let me also make a specific reference to the migration situation in the Aegean. Türkiye has been instrumentalizing migrants since March 2020, when it actively encouraged and facilitated tens of thousands of desperate people to illegally cross into Greece in order to put pressure on the European Union. I want to be absolutely clear. Greece will continue to protect its borders, with full respect to fundamental rights. Our Coast Guard has saved tens of thousands of people at sea. It did so again yesterday, when we rescued more than 130 people, including many children, from two sinking boats in the Aegean. It would be much more useful for Türkiye to cooperate actively with Greece and Europe on the issue of migration rather than spreading fake news. After all, the boats carrying the same desperate people to whom President Erdoğan keeps referring leave the Turkish coast in broad daylight.

Let me conclude with a point about meeting the momentous challenges of climate change. The green transformation sits at the heart of my Government's reform programme. Our National Climate Law is aimed at mobilizing all sectors of the economy as we establish a road map for our transition to net zero by 2050. The

conversion of a number of Greek islands into green innovation hubs is up and running.

And for Greece there is another fight close to our hearts. It is the battle to protect cultural heritage, not just from climate change, but from armed conflict, illicit trafficking and its interconnection with terrorist financing, and religious fundamentalism. Greece, in partnership with UNESCO and the World Meteorological Organization, has launched the Addressing Climate Change Impacts on Cultural and Natural Heritage initiative, supported by more than 100 Member States, the Secretary General, the Council of Europe and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We invite all Member States to join us in this effort.

I am pleased to say that in our long and continuing effort to reunite the Parthenon sculptures back in Greece, we have received support from the vast majority of Member States, as well as from the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee. We thank them for that support. No matter how long it will take, the Parthenon sculptures will eventually be coming home.

I am immensely proud of the fact that Greece is one of few countries that have not deviated from the United Nations 17 Sustainability Goals for 2030. Let me highlight in particular our commitment to transforming public education, in line with Goal 4. Our efforts have been recognized at this year's Assembly. As the world's leading shipping nation, we understand that the sustainability of our marine environment is of paramount importance. That is why, in 2024, we will be hosting the ninth international Our Ocean Conference, building on our ambitious plans to promote sustainable fishing and protect 30 per cent of our land and sea by 2030. All these initiatives prove that collective

multilateral solutions can make a significant difference in the battle to protect our natural world.

But, as many speakers have pointed out, we are not there yet. Whether it be the terrifying wildfires we witnessed in Europe this summer, or more recently the unprecedented flooding that have affected large parts of Pakistan or the continued loss of critical icecaps, glaciers and rainforests, without multilateral cooperation these events may soon be the norm rather than the exception. Greece is taking the lead in making sure that European countries cooperate more effectively in the field of civil protection through the rescEU programme. As the United Kingdom hands on the baton and the work of the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to Egypt for the twenty-seventh Conference, we have a final chance to get this right. Let us not be asking at the next General Assembly why we are still talking and not acting.

The challenges our world faces are complex and multifaceted. The solutions are far from simple. They require compromise, effort and will. They require resolve and determination. Above all, they require us to work together and stay the course. That, after all, is the spirit of these United Nations. In pursuit of freedom, the preservation of democracy and the rule of law, and the fight against climate change, there is indeed a long road ahead. The next generation will judge us very harshly should we fail to rise to the occasion.

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

Mr. Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.