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President: Mr. Kőrösi (Hungary)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Eyeberdiyev (Turkmenistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 61

Zone of peace, trust and cooperation of Central Asia

Mrs. Ataeva (Turkmenistan) (*spoke in Russian*): On 28 July 2022, the General Assembly adopted resolution 76/299, a historic resolution for Central Asia. It proclaimed our region a zone of peace, confidence and cooperation. We express our sincere gratitude to the States Members of the United Nations for their unanimous support for Turkmenistan's resolution. We thank in particular the cosponsors of this significant document.

Today we are taking the next very important step towards forming and cementing the concept of a zone of peace in Central Asia. In doing so, we are holding our first debate on this topic in the General Assembly. The aim is to convey to the international community our commitment to preserve stability and security in a strategically significant region of the planet.

Before we begin the discussion, focusing on the Central Asian region, we see the need to draw the Council's attention to history and to a global retrospective of the actions we have taken. For many years now, humankind has associated with the United Nations the formation of a reliable mechanism to ensure security. That is a foundation for crafting peace that is grounded in mutual respect, trust and the peaceful

settlement of any disputes pursuant to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

However, as before, we regret to see the relevance of the words of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who said that our political and organizational culture and practice is still much more geared towards responding rather than preventing. The concept of an international zone of peace opens up broad latitude for us to put into effect what the Secretary-General said, particularly the creation of long-term security guarantees using preventive mechanisms and forming "islands" of geopolitical stability, ones that are set out in multilateral legal documents.

I am pleased to be able to stress that, thanks to the efforts of a number of countries, our Organization has not remained in place when it comes to forging such islands of peace and security. Over the past few decades, both within and outside of the United Nations, there have been a number of initiatives that were implemented to establish zones of peace and cooperation in various parts of the world.

Specifically, multilateral political declarations and other international legal documents have been adopted. They have created zones of peace. That has happened in areas such as the Mediterranean, South-East Asia, the Indian Ocean, the South Atlantic and the South Pacific. We are called upon, in this General Assembly debate, to remind the international community that zones of peace can and should be viewed as instruments to promote and strengthen stability in regions that are key for global security. Those zones are an integral part

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of the entire toolkit for ensuring a preventive agenda and for acting early to stop any military presence from growing in those areas. That will ensure that there are no conditions conducive to the creation of conflicts, do not develop into serious conflicts, let alone their escalation.

In that regard, substantial steps have been taken to ensure international recognition in the forming of a legal concept for zones of peace. One such important step was resolution 41/11, adopted on 27 October 1986, which established a zone of peace and cooperation in the South Atlantic. Another step was the adoption, on 16 December 1971, of resolution 2832 (XXVI), establishing such a zone in the Indian Ocean. In that regard, Central Asian States are continuing the approaches and the ideas set out and practically implemented by our friends in Latin America and South Asia.

Central Asia, in historical terms, is a region where the geopolitical and geoeconomic interests of major international players are concentrated. The States of our region are fraternal countries — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and our country, Turkmenistan — that gained independence in the early 1990s. We have made major progress towards crafting our statehood and strengthening our national economies and improving the living conditions of our populations.

That is why, in 2022, the President of Turkmenistan took this initiative in order to stress the importance of strengthening stability in Central Asia as an integral and key part of the contemporary system of international relations. Our country set out key principles for preserving peace and sustainable development in the region, while considering the legitimate interests of all Central Asian States. That was done in the form of resolution 76/299, which sets forth that the territory of the Central Asian States would acquire international legal status as a zone of peace, cooperation and trust.

Looking ahead, I stress that the natural and logical extension of developing and setting out a zone of peace in Central Asia as a legal phenomenon is adopting decisions at the highest State level within the existing mechanism for cooperation among Central Asian States, specifically at the consultative meetings of the Heads of State of countries of the region. The most recent such meeting took place on 21 July 2022 in Kyrgyzstan. In September 2006, five Central Asian States signed an agreement to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in

Central Asia. Together with guarantees from nuclear Powers, that agreement enshrined the non-nuclear status of the region, and it was also one of the most important steps on the path to strengthening peace and security globally.

Those decisions were the logical continuation of our country's firm approach in international relations to move from a culture of reaction to a culture of early warning. The practical realization of that approach has been successfully implemented, since December 2007, by the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. Today our Regional Centre seeks to use preventive diplomacy tools, while making an invaluable contribution to strengthening peace and stability in our region and consolidating our joint efforts to ensure our peacekeeping agenda.

The process of integration and improving confidence in our region is marked by a systematic and consistent approach that is annually boosted by the creation of the critically important institutions required to develop and foster a multi-vector regional dialogue. An outstanding example is the Central Asian Women Leaders' Dialogue, which was established in 2020 and has demonstrated its effectiveness. It is the first platform of its kind in the region aimed at increasing political, economic and social participation of women in inter-State relations. We note with satisfaction that contacts have been established between the Central Asian Women Leaders' Caucus and key United Nations entities, such as the Peacebuilding Commission and the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. We also note the Preventive Diplomacy Academy, where young people learn the tools of early warning and prevention. It was established by the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy and is currently serving as the basis for the creation of a permanent regional dialogue for peace for young people of Central Asia.

Sustaining peace is inextricably linked to socioeconomic development and the promotion of the economy, trade and cultural and humanitarian ties, both at the regional and global levels.

In a relatively short historical period, Central Asian countries, building on a strong resource base and geographic advantages, have developed joint economic competences and have cooperated, both bilaterally and multilaterally, in the areas of energy, transport,

logistics and communications, thereby forming trade and economic integration corridors from the North to the South and the East to the West. Today we have the ambitious but realistic goal of transforming Central Asia into an integral part of the new Silk Road. The cornerstone of those efforts is transport, logistics and the modern infrastructure currently taking shape in our region, which has ensured the interconnectivity of the transport systems of Central Asia, Europe, the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific region. In particular, we are working swiftly to implement projects to ensure transportation via routes from Central Asia to the Caspian Sea and to the Black Sea, as well as from Central Asia to the Persian Gulf.

The Central Asian region, with its massive energy resource potential, provides reliable infrastructure in the heart of the Eurasian continent and guarantees the stable supply and transit of energy to the world's largest markets. We have already jointly implemented a major energy project — a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to China. We are working with partners to increase energy supplies from Central Asia to Europe and to strengthen our transit configuration. Moreover, Turkmenistan today is actively working on implementing a gas pipeline project from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan and Pakistan to India.

We also would like to stress the importance of the participation of Afghanistan in those and other multilateral projects. That is a key factor in rebuilding the Afghan economy and society and, ultimately, achieving sustainable peace and harmony in the country. The Central Asian countries, as neighbours of Afghanistan with historical ties to the country, are key partners in international efforts to ensure stability in that country and lay the groundwork for achieving nationwide harmony through peaceful dialogue, contributing to international efforts to combat terrorism and provide Afghanistan with economic and humanitarian assistance. In that regard, forming a strong and reliable zone of peace, trust and cooperation in Central Asia is the key to overcoming a number of complex geopolitical conflicts in those adjacent regions, which the international community has not been able to overcome for many decades.

Finally, Central Asia, as a cradle of global civilization, forms a unified cultural space through a system of integrated engagement of the cultural communities of our countries, as well as promoting the

rich spiritual and historical heritage of our peoples and the literary and artistic achievements of our time.

Turkmenistan, together with Central Asian countries, has prepared a concept paper and background material in the six official languages of the United Nations for this General Assembly debate. We express our sincere gratitude and respect to the delegations that responded to our invitation to participate in this debate, the main objective of which is to provide an opportunity for Member States to exchange opinions on maintaining peace and strengthening security in Central Asia and beyond; stressing the importance of establishing a zone of peace, trust and cooperation in Central Asia to form a more stable international order, based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations; and reaffirming the need to develop and strengthen internationally recognized zones of peace that have been declared in General Assembly resolutions in various parts of the world. We look forward to a constructive and useful debate.

In conclusion, the success of the Central Asian countries in maintaining and further developing a stable and lasting peace in the region depends on the support of the international community and on the will of the United Nations Member States to ensure a peaceful and secure future for succeeding generations. We call on all countries to work together to establish a sustainable zone of peace, trust and cooperation in Central Asia, as well as to ensure respect for the national unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all States of the region in strict compliance with the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Rakhmetullin (Kazakhstan): At the outset, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to all Member States for their unanimous support for resolution 76/299, entitled “Zone of peace, trust and cooperation of Central Asia”.

Kazakhstan views Central Asia as the main strategic vector of its foreign policy. Together with our regional partners, we are committed to strengthening our political interaction and deepening economic ties to move our region forward. We coexist peacefully as good neighbours and are diversifying our cooperation based on our shared centuries-long history, economic background, human capital and common advantages and challenges.

Located at the crossroads between East and West and South and North, we are jointly addressing the pressing

regional agenda which includes climate change, the Aral Sea, transboundary water management, combating terrorism and extremism, economic and social development and many other issues. To coordinate our joint national efforts and those of the United Nations, we plan to establish the United Nations Regional Centre for the Sustainable Development Goals for Central Asia and Afghanistan in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The hub will streamline the United Nations inter-agency regional and interregional coordination and management to transform Central Asia into a zone of peace, security and sustainable development, with a spillover effect into Afghanistan, which is much needed in the current challenging times.

Kazakhstan sees the future Afghanistan as a truly independent, neutral, united and prosperous nation, living in peace with its neighbours. Therefore, we support the difficult process of nation-building in the country, including lifesaving humanitarian assistance.

Kazakhstan, as the world's seventh largest grain producer, is committed to utilizing its agricultural potential to overcome global food insecurity in the region and beyond.

My nation suffered immensely from nuclear weapons testing. We very clearly understand the danger of escalating tensions between nuclear Powers. For that reason, nuclear disarmament remains a key part of Kazakhstan's foreign policy. We will continuously struggle for a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site in 1991 kicked off the closure process of other test sites around the world. In 2006, countries of the region established a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. In addition, Kazakhstan was one of the first parties to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Against the backdrop of the existential biological threat aggravated by the coronavirus disease pandemic, we initiated the creation of an international agency for biological safety, which would be accountable to the United Nations. A consultative process is already under way. We urge the international community to join this process.

Kazakhstan is a strong supporter of international anti-terrorism efforts. With the support of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, we in the region

are actively implementing the United Nations global counter-terrorism strategy in Central Asia.

Kazakhstan considers peacekeeping to be an important component of strengthening regional and international security. Starting in 2014, more than 600 Kazakhstan troops and military observers have served in United Nations peacekeeping operations in Western Sahara, Côte d'Ivoire, Lebanon, Mali and the Central African Republic. The Kazakhstan Peacekeeping Training Centre is being used for various United Nations peacekeeping courses for local and international participants.

My country will continue to advance regional cooperation on the empowerment of women and youth, including through financial support for the regional programme for Central Asia in Afghanistan focusing on educating Afghan students, with an emphasis on girls, with the support of the European Union. We are also implementing the United Nations-led Spotlight Initiative and Generation Equality Forum, and we are chairing the Central Asia Women Leaders Caucus in 2023.

Kazakhstan is a home for over 120 nationalities and ethnic groups. It has invested significantly in promoting freedom of religion, mutual respect, inclusion and social cohesion. Our national model of interethnic and interreligious accord is based on the principles of unity and diversity. Last September, the seventh Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions once again highlighted the importance of religious tolerance, dialogue and mediation. We are ready to build bridges and provide platforms for dialogue whenever needed.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that Central Asia has already become a region of vast opportunities for international cooperation. With the rising importance of Central Asia regionally and globally, the C5+ format is bringing new opportunities to expand cooperation with our partners. As the leading economy of Central Asia, Kazakhstan will further contribute to regional and global development and to creating bridges between countries, cultures and nations.

Let me now continue in my capacity as the representative of the Kazakhstan chairmanship of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA).

On behalf of the Kazakhstan Chairmanship of the CICA, it is a great honour to address this high-

level meeting of the General Assembly with a view to highlighting the importance of Central Asia as a dynamic, growing and important region in the global context. From the very first day of its existence, CICA has considered the establishment of confidence-building measures, peace and dialogue as the primary basis for broad cooperation aimed in turn at achieving the goals of sustainable development and socioeconomic well-being for the vast Asian continent.

I would like to note that resolution 76/299, entitled “Zone of peace, trust and cooperation of Central Asia”, affirms a clear link between the strengthening peace, trust and cooperation in the region and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, which can be considered the motto of all CICA activities. CICA very much focuses on Central Asia, and the region thereby benefits greatly from the comprehensive mandate and objectives of the organization, which converge fully with the Charter of the United Nations, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New Agenda for Peace and all other global processes and policies set forth by the international community.

Like the rest of the world, the Central Asian region is facing unprecedented existing, new and emerging challenges. Our forum comprises 28 States with eight observers. It is interesting to note that the entire perimeter of the region is bordered exclusively by CICA member States with which we interact closely. CICA is also a platform for Central Asian efforts to reach out to other parts of the Asian continent, in particular its neighbouring subregions. Central Asia stands to gain considerably from CICA’s multifaceted, multidimensional portfolios. One of the important priorities of CICA is strengthening connectivity aimed at acceleration, regional growth and development.

In his remarks at the sixth CICA summit last October, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev of Kazakhstan proposed the idea of establishing a CICA council on sustainable connectivity. Convenient and accessible routes for transporting goods are an important factor in the sustainable growth of our economies. It is also important to address water management, poverty reduction and energy and food insecurity, as well as illegal migration flows, terrorism, extremism and cross-border crimes. In the age of rapid acceleration of digital information and communication technologies, our region is devising greater security measures against the possible negative impact of these developments.

CICA is entering a new phase in its development, and its proposed transformation into a full-fledged international organization will be beneficial for Central Asia, giving it a new, higher profile. Furthermore, the recently established CICA Fund will provide assistance to countries in need. We are confident that CICA will continue to maintain and promote constructive cooperation in accordance with principles and objectives that contribute to peace, security and stability in Asia.

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

In conclusion, Central Asia has achieved much social cohesion and political synchrony, of which we can be truly proud. As the CICA Chair, Kazakhstan is committed to building forward with accelerated momentum to make our region a model zone of peace, progress and prosperity.

Ms. Squeff (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank Turkmenistan for taking the initiative to hold today’s discussion within the framework of resolution 76/299 of 28 July 2022. We also welcome the establishment of the zone of peace, trust and cooperation of Central Asia.

The Charter of the United Nations calls upon all members of the Organization to maintain international peace and security, promote friendly relations, achieve international cooperation in solving international problems and settle disputes by peaceful means. In developing these purposes and principles, the international community recognized that the establishment of zones of peace in various regions of the world could contribute to strengthening economic development and peace.

In that regard, Argentina actively participates in the zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic (ZPCSA) out of the conviction of the importance and transcendence of the zone, which is an initiative that was created in 1986. On 18 April 2023, ZPCSA held its eighth ministerial meeting in Mindelo, Cabo Verde. As a result, a ministerial declaration and a plan of action were adopted. In addition, the member countries reaffirmed the active commitment of both coasts of the South Atlantic to the social and economic development of the southern hemisphere, unrestricted respect for human rights and international law, and the universal values of international peace and security. Of singular importance is the status conferred upon the zone, not only as one of peace and cooperation but also as a zone

free from nuclear weapons — an effort included in the ideology of peace and security that gave rise to the United Nations itself, as well as the various regional and subregional organizations to which the States of the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone belong.

Based on the experience of the South Atlantic countries, Argentina commends the initiative for the Central Asian zone of peace, trust and cooperation. The effort to promote peace, trust and cooperation in Central Asia and other regions is more vital now than ever before. The countries of Central Asia have enormous potential for cooperation and development. The success of the initiative will depend on the joint work and determination of the States members of the zone, as well as the support of the international community. Today's debate is a demonstration of that commitment and a promising sign for the consolidation of that initiative.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): The delegation of Pakistan once again thanks Turkmenistan for the historic initiative that led to the adoption of resolution 76/299 last year, declaring Central Asia as a zone of peace. We welcome this important debate to consider steps to consolidate the zone of peace.

In a world in which conflicts and tensions have proliferated in several regions, the creation of zones of peace in critical parts of the world can serve as a vital instrument for stability and an avenue for regional and cross-regional cooperation. Pakistan has made consistent efforts to promote peace and cooperation in its own and adjacent regions. Pakistan actively advocated the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia for more than two decades. That was thwarted by the nuclear explosions initiated by our neighbour. Pakistan has also supported the creation of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean, in accordance with the declaration of the General Assembly contained in resolution 2832 (XXVI).

We are concerned that the Indian Ocean is being drawn into a geo-strategic construct that implies renewed great Power rivalry and the emergence of new military alliances. Those developments could destabilize large parts of Asia, the Pacific and even Africa. In the face of those steps to escalate great Power military and political competition, it is all the more vital to preserve Central Asia as a zone of peace. A peaceful Central Asia can be a bulwark against the extension of conflicts from Europe to Asia and serve as

a bridge of peace across the Eurasian landmass. Located at the juncture of South Asia, Central Asia, West Asia, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, Pakistan has a vital stake in the preservation of Central Asia as a zone of peace. With the Central Asian States, Pakistan shares membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, as well as the Economic Cooperation Organization. Those two coterminous organizations can form a critical component of endeavours to build security and prosperity across Eurasia.

Both Pakistan and Central Asia also accord the highest priority to ensuring durable peace and stability in Afghanistan. The platform of Afghanistan's six neighbours and Russia, which includes three Central Asian countries, is a vital forum in which to promote peace, stability and economic development in Afghanistan. In turn, once it is stabilized, Afghanistan will serve as the critical connection for regional cooperation between Central Asia, Pakistan and all countries committed to the early implementation of shovel-ready connectivity projects, including the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan gas pipeline, the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project (CASA-100) electricity grid from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan railway.

Last week, at the trilateral ministerial meeting between Pakistan, China and Afghanistan held in Islamabad, it was agreed to extend the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan, which will further reinforce the close connection between Central Asia and Afghanistan, Pakistan and China. Such economic integration within Central Asia and with its adjacent regions will unleash the vast productive potential of those regions. Their prosperity will in turn consolidate peace and security, including in the Central Asian zone of peace.

Mr. Hikmat (Tajikistan): My delegation, as one of the main co-sponsors of resolution 76/299, welcomes the convening of today's General Assembly debate and commends the efforts of the Permanent Mission of Turkmenistan in spearheading this meeting.

For Tajikistan, in line with its open-door policy, the consistent development of comprehensive relations and the maintenance of trust and dialogue among Central Asian countries is a priority. Today, when the world is experiencing simultaneous crises in security, health, economy, politics and climate change, the countries of

Central Asia demonstrate constructive and predictable inter-State relations. That is facilitated primarily by the format of the annual consultative meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia launched in 2018.

Tajikistan recognizes the significance of economic and social development for the prosperity of its people and the region. We have made notable strides in recent years by focusing on infrastructure development, energy projects and economic diversification through several reforms and strategies implemented in those fields. As a water-abundant country, we have great hydropower potential. We seek to harness that potential to drive economic growth and create employment opportunities. We stand ready to cooperate with the countries of the region in that regard. The increasing trade turnover of Tajikistan with Central Asian countries, which amounts to almost \$3 billion, is a vivid example of our commitment to doing just that. For instance, Kazakhstan is considered one of the leading trade partners of Tajikistan. In recent years, trade turnover with Uzbekistan has doubled. With Kyrgyzstan, we continue working towards the implementation of the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project (CASA-1000), aimed at providing electricity to the hungry markets of South Asia. We are also confident that Turkmenistan will soon become one of the leading foreign economic partners of Tajikistan. The outcome of the Tajik-Turkmen intergovernmental negotiations held on 10 and 11 May demonstrated that Dushanbe and Ashgabat have all the necessary prerequisites for that.

Mitigating climate change, addressing waste and water pollution and ensuring environmental sustainability are the world's most pressing issues. To that end, it is very important to maintain an ecological balance in our planet's natural environment and conserve natural resources to support the well-being of current and future generations. As a country blessed with beautiful landscapes, including mountains, rivers and lakes, Tajikistan is committed to preserving and protecting the environment for future generations. Therefore, we have undertaken several global initiatives to address climate change, promote sustainable water management resources and conserve biodiversity. For example, the International Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development" 2018–2028 and the International Year of Glaciers' preservation, 2025 (resolution 77/158) both paved the way for important global processes.

The former gave birth to the historic and successful United Nations 2023 Water Conference, which Tajikistan was honoured to co-host with the Kingdom of the Netherlands in March. The latter conferred the mandate to host an international conference dedicated to glaciers' preservation in Tajikistan in 2025. As a water champion and the host of the Dushanbe Water Process Conference, we will continue to advocate actively in regional and international forums dedicated to environmental issues, including water and climate change, emphasizing the importance of collective action and cooperation to mitigate environmental challenges.

Tajikistan places great emphasis on security and stability in Central Asia. As a country that has experienced its share of conflict and security challenges, we understand and value the importance of maintaining peace and stability in the region. Therefore, as a member of several regional and international frameworks, Tajikistan actively cooperates with the international community, in particular the countries of the region, to address shared security threats, such as terrorism, extremism and drug trafficking, mainly emanating from Afghanistan.

Given its strategic geographical location and the importance of Asia-Europe connectivity, Central Asia plays a pivotal role in broader regional security, particularly in the light of recent developments in Afghanistan. Drug trafficking, radicalization and the presence and widespread activity of terrorists and extremist groups in the territory of Afghanistan remain a serious challenge and, as global security issues, at times they threaten not only our region but also the entire international community. To that end, we reiterate the call of President Emomali Rahmon of Tajikistan to build a security belt around Afghanistan in order to enhance further and strengthen regional cooperation and coordination to combat such threats. Tajikistan will continue to provide its well-established platform, known as the Dushanbe Process on Countering Terrorism and its Financing, in order to engage the international community, in particular the United Nations and other relevant partners, in exchanging views and conducting deliberations on the complex issues and multifaceted problems related to countering terrorism and its financing, as well as in strengthening regional cooperation mechanisms.

Last but not least, as we prepare to host the fifth Consultative Meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia in Dushanbe on 14 and 15 September, which

will be chaired by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, we are convinced that the meeting will further strengthen the process of developing regional cooperation and maintaining security and stability in the region.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea welcomes today's debate on establishing a zone of peace, trust and cooperation in Central Asia and congratulates its good friends Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on the adoption of resolution 76/299. It is highly commendable that Central Asian countries engaged with the wider membership to align their regional initiative with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and reflect the views and inputs of other Member States. We are especially pleased to see that the resolution rightly addressed the importance of preventive diplomacy and the active role of women in achieving peace, stability and sustainable development in the region.

In order to address the complex set of transboundary challenges faced by Central Asia, which include climate change, environmental degradation, the threat of terrorism and narcotics, an integrated and preventative approach is crucial. In that regard, my delegation appreciates the work of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA), which was established in 2007. The Centre has actively led initiatives to empower women and young people, in particular through the Central Asian Women Leaders' Caucus. My delegation also encourages the Peacebuilding Commission to continue engaging with the Caucus following its first meeting in 2022, which shed light on the role of local women in addressing the nexus linking climate, peace and development.

In that regard, I would like to take this opportunity to announce that the Republic of Korea will put forward the women and peace and security agenda as one of its priorities in the Security Council, if elected as a Council member next month. As a sponsor of the UNRCCA resolution adopted in February (resolution 77/273), my delegation supports the Centre's proactive role, including the facilitation of the engagement of Central Asian countries in addressing the multifaceted challenges in Afghanistan. The situation in Afghanistan significantly affects peace and stability in the region and beyond. Therefore, coordination between neighbouring countries and the wider international community is

essential to securing a peaceful, stable, prosperous and inclusive Afghanistan.

Another serious matter is the environmental vulnerabilities facing the region of landlocked countries (LLCs) and even double-landlocked countries. The Republic of Korea welcomes the readiness of Central Asian countries to make efforts to reach mutually beneficial arrangements on water and energy management. We also applaud their leadership in water diplomacy, including Tajikistan's co-hosting of the United Nations 2023 Water Conference. However, despite such efforts, the ongoing desertification of LLCs, land degradation and melting glaciers deserve the international community's consistent attention.

The Korean people have maintained contact with Central Asia for more than 1,000 years, and our partnership with the region has exponentially expanded over the past 30 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations. Our trade volume with the five countries has increased several hundredfold, and there has been a growing number of high-level exchanges.

In the light of the close interlinkages between the region's peace and security and sustainable development, the Republic of Korea will expand future-oriented economic cooperation with the Central Asian countries, including through projects on digital government and health infrastructure. My delegation also takes serious note of the climate-related risks in the region and will join efforts to increase environmental sustainability. We will build on our past contributions to address desertification and deforestation.

More recently, the Republic of Korea began to increase green official development assistance to share our smart water management technologies. We plan to combine those efforts with our work on the Security Council for the term 2024 to 2025, during which we will prioritize climate and security.

Last September, my President, Yoon Suk Yeol, outlined in the General Assembly Hall the vision of the Republic of Korea (see A/77/PV.4) to promote global peace and freedom by bridging the digital divide and expanding official development assistance. Under that vision, our strong partnership with the Central Asian countries will be aimed at further consolidating peace, trust, cooperation and friendship in the global community on the way forward.

Mr. Peñalver Portal (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Republic of Turkmenistan and Mr. Rashid Meredov, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, for convening today's high-level debate on the zone of peace, trust and cooperation of Central Asia.

Cuba believes that in order to move towards a world of peace, the diversity of various political, economic, social, cultural and religious systems, as well as the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and a fairer, more democratic and equitable international order must be strictly respected. As the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro Ruz, said, we reaffirm today Cuba's firm aspiration to achieve peace with respect, rights, transparency, independence and security for all peoples of the world. That is the peace for which we must all fight.

The planet now faces a crisis that began owing to the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which we have not yet overcome. However, we do not learn from our mistakes and continue to spend more to modernize and increase our weaponry, including nuclear weapons — spending billions of dollars that could instead be used to promote peace, sustainable development and a decent life for all inhabitants of the planet. We must focus on eliminating hunger, poverty, disease, ignorance, the effects of colonialism and the unjust international economic order, which reproduces the privileges of the rich countries and perpetuates the deficiencies of the poorest countries.

The consequences of climate change are yet another threat to the survival of our species. Promoting peace also entails strengthening international cooperation, in particular North-South cooperation, guaranteeing universal access to education, protecting all human rights and sparing no effort to close the wide gaps that divide societies. There can be no peace without economic and social development, justice and equality for all, within and among countries. Nor can there be peace or a culture of peace without fully respecting the purposes and principles of the Charter and international law, in particular the prohibition on the threat or use of force, non-interference in internal affairs, and respect for sovereignty or self-determination.

Cuba reaffirms its efforts to build international peace by declaring Latin America and the Caribbean a zone of peace. The declaration was signed by the Heads

of State and Government in Havana at the summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States held in January 2014. That declaration, which will soon mark its tenth anniversary, reiterates the principles and standards that we have always upheld in all scenarios, while rejecting political manipulation and double standards.

We fully recognize the role of peace and the importance of promoting a culture and environment that encourages it. For more than six decades, we have faced the effects of the criminal economic, trade and financial embargo, which was imposed by the Government of the United States of America and tightened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Acts of war and subversive agendas against our people were also increased. We believe that promoting peace in all regions of the world is the way to achieve a better, more just and more sustainable world. As long as multilateralism is not upheld and our legitimate differences are not respected, a world of peace will remain a utopia.

Mr. Önal (Türkiye): I thank the President of the General Assembly for organizing today's timely debate.

Today we are faced with multifaceted and intertwined challenges all around the world. The maintenance of peace and security, sustainable development and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms are all interrelated and cannot be taken up in isolation from each other. We need greater international cooperation and the contribution of each and every Member State to address those challenges effectively. In that connection, regional inclusion and ownership are of paramount importance.

Türkiye has undertaken initiatives to contribute to conflict-resolution efforts in various geographies and address disruptions in the food and energy supply chains. The Turkic Council, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, the Central American Integration System, the Astana Platform and the Black Sea Grain Initiative are among the regional mechanisms in which we participate.

We are happy to see similar initiatives being realized in Central Asia. In that vein, I would like to refer to resolution 76/299, entitled "Zone of peace, trust and cooperation of Central Asia", which was adopted last July. Through that resolution, the region of Central Asia was declared a zone of peace, trust and cooperation. That was an important step, demonstrating the collective political will of the countries of the region to bolster

a culture of cooperative and peaceful coexistence in Central Asia. Türkiye was a sponsor of that resolution. Our position is in line with the main tenets of Turkish foreign policy and a natural reflection of our strong bonds of friendship with Central Asian republics.

Initiatives such as those are important, not only for the region itself but also for the wider international community, as Central Asia is key to the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic region. The energy resources of Central Asia are vital for global energy security. The region is also a major hub for trade and transport corridors. As such, Türkiye is pleased to be among the main co-sponsors of draft resolution A/77/L.67, which the General Assembly will adopt later today, which proclaims 26 November as World Sustainable Transport Day. I take this opportunity to thank Turkmenistan for its leadership.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our readiness to continue working closely with Central Asian countries to promote regional peace, stability and prosperity.

Mrs. Kasymalieva (Kyrgyzstan): We believe that today's discussion on agenda item 61, entitled "Zone of peace, trust and cooperation of Central Asia", will contribute to our ongoing efforts here at the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security and in promoting multilateralism. We also thank our colleagues from the Permanent Mission of Turkmenistan to the United Nations for their valuable efforts in facilitating, on behalf of Central Asian countries, resolution 76/299, which declared the region of Central Asia a zone of peace, trust and cooperation.

I would like to note that the format of regional consultative meetings at the level of the Heads of State of Central Asia is a very important platform that promotes cooperation within the region and beyond in ensuring peace and trust. The fourth such meeting, which was held in the Kyrgyz Republic in July of last year, once again confirmed the commitment of the Central Asian Heads of State to maintaining a constructive and mutually beneficial dialogue in the interest of all peoples of the region and constituted an important milestone in regional cooperation. Recognizing the importance of joint efforts to strengthen a zone of peace, trust and cooperation of Central Asia, the countries of the region, following the results of the fourth consultative meeting, launched the procedure of the signing of a treaty of friendship, good

neighbourliness and cooperation for the development of Central Asia in the twenty-first century between the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan. The outcome document of that meeting (see A/76/920) was circulated to Member States.

We attach great importance to the interactions within the Central Asia plus format, which has strengthened cooperation among the partner States of the region and international and regional organizations, as well as the mutually beneficial use of their accumulated experience of multilateral diplomacy.

For Kyrgyzstan, strengthening peace and security and preventing and ending armed conflicts by raising awareness and understanding of disarmament issues among the public, especially young people, is very important. This year, on 5 March, the International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness, which was proclaimed by the General Assembly (see resolution 77/51) on the initiative of the Kyrgyz Republic, was celebrated around the world for the first time. We look forward to commemorating that very important day every year on 5 March.

Furthermore, I would like to note that last year, on behalf of the Central Asian zone, our delegation submitted and facilitated resolution 77/70, entitled "Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia", which the General Assembly adopted on 7 December 2022. Kyrgyzstan supports the initiatives of United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia in strengthening the role of women and young people in promoting sustainable development and maintaining peace and security in the region.

We believe that the Central Asian Women Leaders' Caucus will continue to promote women's active involvement in policymaking and to support their participation in the socioeconomic life of the States of Central Asia. Coordinating joint efforts to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Goals is very important for the Kyrgyz Republic. In that context, we would like to highlight that the Heads of State of Central Asia, at their fourth consultative meeting, approved the road map for the development of regional cooperation for 2022–2024, the framework for the interaction among the Central Asian States within multilateral formats

and the Regional Green Agenda Programme for Central Asia.

Recognizing the urgency of the environmental threats and in order to give a new impetus to the international community's efforts to address the challenges and problems of mountain countries, the General Assembly, on the initiative of Kyrgyzstan, decided to proclaim the period 2023–2027 as Five Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions. We invite Member States and international organizations to further enhance support for sustainable mountain development, including by participating in that initiative.

I would like to inform the Assembly that Kyrgyzstan is aiming to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 44 per cent by 2030, and that it will try to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, which will be made possible primarily through the development of hydropower. We have therefore proactively started building small and medium-sized hydropower plants throughout the country over the past two years and adopted appropriate regulations for granting preferential terms to investors. The largest construction project, the Kambarata-1 hydropower plant, which will have a positive impact on water issues in the region, has been launched. We are firmly committed to developing the green economy and therefore invite our development partners to an effective and mutually beneficial swap of our country's external debt for green initiatives.

We indeed recognize that the region has great geographical potential, making Central Asia an important transit zone for commercial markets and trade between Russia, China, South Asia and Europe. In that regard, Kyrgyzstan has reached an agreement on the construction of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway. The realization of that project will provide us an access route to the sea via a transit railroad.

In conclusion, I would like to note that in January of this year, we completed the process of the delimitation of the Kyrgyz-Uzbek State border. Together with our brotherly country, Uzbekistan, we have demonstrated our readiness for dialogue and the search for mutually acceptable solutions on border issues. That is truly a historic event, which will make a huge contribution to regional cooperation based on trust and mutual respect.

Mr. Hermida Castillo (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the convening of today's debate on a zone of peace, trust and cooperation of Central Asia.

We commend Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on successfully steering the consultations process in order to reach a consensus on draft resolution A/77/L.67, which Nicaragua is pleased to co-sponsor.

The Charter of the United Nations calls on all States Members of the Organization to maintain international peace, foster friendly relations, promote international cooperation and settle their disputes by peaceful means. In developing those purposes and principles, the international community has recognized that the establishment of zones of peace in various regions of the world can contribute to the security of the States in those areas and to international peace and security as a whole. By declaring Central Asia as a zone of peace, trust and cooperation, we continue to advance towards multipolarity, thus promoting political, social, economic and cultural integration among the brotherly countries and peoples of the region.

We recognize the important role played by the countries of Central Asia in ensuring peace, stability and sustainable development in the region and in promoting regional and international cooperation, as well as their determination to preserve their independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, developing their relations in peace and freedom.

We support actions such as the creation of mechanisms for unconditional solidarity cooperation, greater investment and trade liberalization towards non-traditional markets, as well as the consolidation of the positions of developing countries on issues that should guide the agenda of the international community, such as the fight against poverty, the prevention of war, the climate crisis, food security, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, energy cooperation, comprehensive sustainable development and peace.

In our own region, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in 2014 declared Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace, based on respect for the principles and norms of international law, including the international instruments to which the member States are party and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. CELAC also declared the commitment of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean to foster friendly and cooperative relations among themselves and with other nations, regardless of the differences between their political, economic and social systems or

their levels of development, to practice tolerance and to live together in peace as good neighbours.

Nicaragua, in its culture of peace with the international community, continues to defend multilateralism, building relations based on respect, equality, solidarity and mutual cooperation. Unfortunately, there are still countries that do not apply this culture of peace that is so necessary for the peoples of the world. Instead, those countries use unilateral coercive measures to attack sovereign, free and independent countries and peoples.

We reject those unilateral measures, wrongly called sanctions, as well as the intention to apply them, to countries in Central Asia. These aggressions undermine the efforts of our peoples to achieve true and sustainable peace. We must therefore continue to call for their total elimination.

Nicaragua recognizes the need to continue strengthening the bonds of friendship and partnership, sharing the principles and values that we uphold in defence of independence, sovereignty, self-determination and non-interference in the affairs of States, their people and Government.

We join and support all initiatives that promote unity, solidarity and respect in order to prevail over those who have always used the weapons of division, abuse, authoritarianism, degradation, arrogance, supposed superiority and the desire for control to continue with their perverse logic as masters of the world.

Ms. Leendertse (Germany): I want to thank Turkmenistan for its introduction of today's topic and the speakers before me for their valuable insights. I also want to congratulate Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan for establishing a zone of peace, trust and cooperation of Central Asia.

Central Asia is facing serious challenges such as climate change, water scarcity, geopolitical tensions and the threat of terrorism. At the same time, Central Asian countries has made significant progress in building up their statehood, strengthening their economies and improving their standard of living for their population. We are confident that stronger regional cooperation will accelerate those trends and further promote economic prosperity and environmental sustainability. Regional cooperation will deepen intra-regional trade, expand the use of renewable energy and protect natural

resources. Germany strongly welcomes these positive developments and stands ready to support these regional aspirations.

In particular, the zone of peace can create positive momentum to deepen ties and foster regional cooperation on a range of important topics. It can serve as a strong foundation for maintaining peace and security, bringing forward sustainable and green development and promoting human rights. We also very much welcome the explicit recognition in resolution 76/299 of the important role of women and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia in that regard.

As a nation in the heart of Europe, Germany enjoys the benefits of close cooperation with its many neighbours. After centuries of being ravaged by conflicts, we, together with other European nations, have managed to build the European Union, a strong community in which we have achieved a high degree of economic, political and social integration. We therefore strongly welcome efforts by other regions around the world that also strive to foster peace, trust and cooperation and do our best to actively support them.

For example, Germany is supportive of the Green Central Asia initiative, which focuses on joint regional projects in the fight against the climate crisis. Within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), we are cooperating with all Central Asian States to strengthen comprehensive security in the region, and we are a partner in multiple OSCE projects to foster long-term stability, resilience and prosperity for young people in Central Asia.

In conclusion, we wish our Central Asian partners all the best in reaching the goals of the resolution, harnessing their full potential for socioeconomic development and strengthening cooperation among the States of the region. We are looking forward to continuing our cooperation and support and to further deepening our ties as the zone of peace brings the region even closer together.

Mr. Ibragimov (Uzbekistan): At the outset, my delegation would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this debate and Turkmenistan for leading the discussion on zone of peace, trust and cooperation in Central Asia.

The countries of Central Asia have great potential for cooperation and development. They share common

spiritual, cultural and historical heritage, and they are brought together by the unity of faith, closeness of the languages and the peoples' mentality. The countries of the region also have common transport-communication networks and economies that complement one another. Therefore, in Uzbekistan, we strongly believe that Central Asia, in the heart of the Eurasian continent, can once again play an important role as a main intersection of interregional transport-transit corridors connecting the East with the West.

In recent years in our region, thanks to the political will of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, which was embraced by the leaders of all Central Asian States, within a relatively short period of time, we created a fundamentally new political atmosphere, raised the level of political trust and strengthened traditionally friendly and good neighbourly relations among ourselves.

The important outcome of all that work is the settlement of such acute issues as demarcation of borders, management of water resources, joint use of transport communications, among others. In addition, a visa-free regime has been introduced for the free movement of our citizens in order to promote active cultural and tourist exchanges.

At the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan, consultative meetings of the Heads of State of Central Asian countries have started to be convened. Such meetings serve as an excellent platform for our leaders to exchange opinions on a broad range of regional and global political issues and discuss ways to further advance regional and multilateral cooperation and promote economic, trade and investment and cultural collaboration.

As a result of that positive shift in relations among Central Asian countries, mutual trust was strengthened, which opened myriad opportunities for the implementation of various large-scale industrial and investment projects, creating efficient value chains and developing transport and energy infrastructure. We are convinced that our strong political will and common creative spirit will further contribute to advancing close collaboration among our countries and peoples.

One must underline the growing importance of a consolidated Central Asian region in maintaining regional peace and security. In Tashkent, we strongly believe in the importance of further strengthening practical cooperation with our neighbours in

confronting the traditional threats of extremism and terrorism, organized crime and drug-trafficking.

Special attention should also be paid to new challenges, such as illegal activity on the Internet, which is currently rife. Today there are no borders for those threats which penetrate through the web. Therefore, our law enforcement bodies and other relevant agencies have closely interacted in confronting those threats.

We also believe that further consolidation of the region as a zone of peace and cooperation can be assured through ensuring long-term peace in Afghanistan, which can play an important role as a natural bridge connecting Central and South Asia. Uzbekistan stands ready to cooperate with interested Member States on involving Afghanistan into regional economic processes, expanding humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people and promoting important social and infrastructure projects.

In that regard, I would like to recall the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan on establishing, under the auspices of the United Nations, an international high-level negotiating group to develop and agree with the de-facto Government of Afghanistan on a road map for the gradual implementation of the obligations of the parties.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the Central Asian region has enormous opportunities and tremendous potential. Uzbekistan remains committed to advancing with its neighbours and all United Nations Member States mutually beneficial cooperation to further forge regional collaboration to maintain peace, stability and prosperity in Central Asia.

Mr. Yoshino (Japan): At the outset, allow me to note that Japan is very pleased that resolution 76/299 was adopted by consensus last year. Given our long history of close cooperation with the Central Asian countries, Japan gladly joined the consensus and truly appreciates today's debate with our fellow Member States. In that regard, once again we would like to express our deep respect to the Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and, particularly, Turkmenistan, which has been leading the way on the resolution.

The year 2022 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and the five Central Asian countries. Japan established its cooperation mechanism with the region,

the Central Asia plus Japan dialogue, which dates back to 2004, when no other countries had such a framework of cooperation.

Last December, the ninth Foreign Ministers' meeting of the Central Asia plus Japan dialogue was held in Tokyo. There, we reviewed the achievements of cooperation between Japan and the Central Asian countries over the past 30 years in areas such as economic infrastructure improvement, health and medical care, the environment, border management, agriculture and human resources development. We presented a new model with a particular focus on investing in people and the quality of growth to achieve sustainable development in the region, amid the drastically changing international situation.

In addition, we reaffirmed the importance of mutual cooperation as partners in maintaining and strengthening a free and open international order based on the rule of law and agreed on the importance of upholding the Charter of the United Nations and other fundamental principles of international law, such as the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries and the peaceful settlement of international disputes.

Japan once again salutes the enormous efforts of the relevant organizations and individuals dedicated to ensuring a more prosperous Central Asia. Among many entities, we commend the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia for its contribution and commitment to preventive diplomacy and the Central Asian Women Leaders' Caucus for its efforts to advance the women and peace and security agenda.

Japan is working together with Central Asian countries to tackle a variety of challenges they face. We also continue to cooperate with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Development Programme. Last year, we decided to provide \$4.1 million in grant assistance to empower youth and strengthen social cohesion in countries across the region. Japan also continues to provide financial assistance for a project to strengthen border control capacity in Central Asia through the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

In conclusion, building on those achievements, Japan will continue to support peace, stability and sustainable development in the Central Asian region.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): The United States commends Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on resolution 76/299 declaring Central Asia a zone of peace, trust and cooperation. The intent to establish the region as a zone of peace creates a foundation for greater cooperation. It reinforces the interconnected pillars of a peaceful and prosperous society: sustainable development, peace and security, human rights and the rule of law.

Central Asia's commitment to the principles of preventive diplomacy strengthens the security of States within the region, and it is vital to maintaining international peace and security.

Even so, we were disappointed that last year some delegations fought vigorously to prevent the resolution from reaffirming the mutually reinforcing relationship between human rights and the rule of law in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Just as the resolution notes the important role of sustainable development in advancing peace and security, it should also note the same of human rights and the rule of law.

The idea that no country or region can flourish without respect for the human rights of all or for the rule of law is enshrined in the preamble of the Charter of the United Nations. It is our responsibility as a General Assembly to continuously reaffirm our commitment to those principles.

We were delighted by the resolution's acknowledgement of the critical role women play in the promotion of peace, security and sustainable development. Let us not forget that women must always — always — meaningfully participate in policy leadership, development and implementation. Their involvement in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution and at all levels of decision-making will ensure we can move quickly and comprehensively to address shared challenges.

Here today, the United States again reinforces its strong commitment to each Central Asian country's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as to supporting a prosperous, secure and democratic Central Asia.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank Turkmenistan for initiating today's important discussion.

Let me start by highlighting the United Kingdom's continued support for a stable, secure and prosperous Central Asia, as envisaged by resolution 76/299. We

are firm advocates of the work of the United Nations in support of this goal, including through the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventative Diplomacy in Central Asia. Given the security challenges the region faces, cooperation and mutual support between the five Central Asian republics and their global partners are ever more critical, whether due to the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan or the economic uncertainty caused by Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine.

We encourage the Central Asian republics to continue to work with the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission and the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, which offer important tools for managing and preventing regional conflicts. Political stability, long-lasting reform and sustainable economic development are necessary for Central Asian States to fulfil their potential. The United Kingdom is strengthening trade links with all five Central Asian States and continues to work closely with the region bilaterally and through our regional programming to support long-term reform and stability.

Today's debate also rightly addresses the environmental challenges that Central Asia faces. Temperatures in the region are expected to rise faster than the global average. This is already affecting water patterns and driving water scarcity and food insecurity. It is crucial that we find sustainable solutions to these challenges. We welcome the success of the recent United Nations Water Conference co-hosted by Tajikistan and the Netherlands as an example of how the United Nations can provide support. I hope that together we can do more in this area.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the initiative of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the General Assembly adopted a resolution in July 2022 declaring Central Asia a zone of peace, trust and cooperation (resolution 76/299). This reflects the firm determination and solemn commitment of Central Asian countries to enhancing mutual trust and cooperation and achieving common development. China fully supports the establishment of such a zone in Central Asia and stands ready to work with other countries to explore and contribute to the promotion of cooperation for peaceful development in Central Asia.

The world today is now entering a new period of turbulent changes and is facing multiple challenges to international peace and security. More than ever before,

we need to enhance trust, strengthen solidarity and promote cooperation. China and Central Asian countries have always developed strategic partnerships based on the principles of mutual respect, good-neighbourliness, reciprocal benefit and win-win cooperation.

The China-Central Asia summit will be held in Xi'an, China on 18 and 19 May, that is, starting the day after tomorrow, with the participation of Chinese President Xi Jinping and the Central Asian Heads of State. This is an important action taken by China and Central Asian countries, with a view to building a closer China-Central Asian community with a shared future. It will open a new chapter in China-Central Asia relations and bring new opportunities and impetus to the development of each and every Central Asian country and the strengthening of regional cooperation.

China will work with Central Asian countries to firmly defend the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, practice genuine multilateralism, embrace the concept of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, explore a path to security and development well-suited to the common interests of all countries, jointly build a zone of peace, trust and cooperation in Central Asia and contribute to the promotion of regional peace, stability, prosperity and development.

First, China is committed to good-neighbourly ties and firmly supports the sovereignty, independence, security and territorial integrity of Central Asian countries. We welcome countries of the region working to enhance political mutual trust and jointly address regional security and development challenges through dialogue and cooperation. China opposes the interference by external forces in the internal affairs of Central Asian countries under any pretext, as such moves create chaos and turmoil and turn Central Asia into a battleground for geopolitical games.

Secondly, China will work with Central Asian countries to scale up the fight against the three forces of terrorism, separatism and extremism. Under the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, we will support Central Asian countries in strengthening cooperation in border control, law enforcement and security, preventing and combating transnational organized crime and cybercrime, and stepping up communication

and cooperation on the question of Afghanistan, so as to jointly maintain regional peace and tranquillity.

Thirdly, China and the Central Asian countries have achieved positive results through the Belt and Road cooperation. China will further enhance economic trade, investment and financing cooperation with Central Asian partners, build a modern regional connectivity network, expand people-to-people exchanges, enable the smooth transportation of goods, expand cooperation in agriculture, new energy, e-commerce, the digital economy and other fields, and enhance cultural and local exchanges to inject strong momentum into regional cooperation.

China will continue to expand all-around cooperation with Central Asian countries, elevate bilateral relations to new heights and make new contributions to the peace, stability, development and prosperity of the region and the world at large.

Mr. Pérez Ayestarán (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is pleased to participate in the debate on the item entitled “Zone of peace, trust and cooperation of Central Asia”, which was included in the agenda of the seventy-seventh ordinary session of the General Assembly, following the adoption by consensus of resolution 76/299, which our country is pleased to have co-sponsored. We also take this opportunity to recognize Turkmenistan’s efforts, including within the framework of this General Assembly, aimed at promoting initiatives that seek to enhance the value of dialogue, tolerance, understanding, cooperation, confidence-building and neutrality as necessary means to ensuring peace, especially in the current international situation. We also thank the Turkmen delegation for its efforts in preparing a number of elements, reflected in document A/77/859, to guide our deliberations today.

In recent years, the Central Asian region has set important examples of commitment to peace: from the entry into force of the Treaty of Semey, which established the region as a nuclear-weapon-free zone, to the establishment of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, which is mandated to facilitate both the addressing of existing and emerging threats to stability and the promotion of dialogue and cooperation among the Governments of the countries of the region, to the recent signing of the Treaty of Friendship, Good-Neighbourliness and Cooperation for the Development

of Central Asia in the Twenty-first Century, which we hope will soon enter into force. A new step forward was taken last year when, in full compliance with the tenets of the United Nations Charter, including the principle of good-neighbourliness, and based on the political will of all parties, it was agreed to declare the Central Asian region a zone of peace, trust and cooperation. This further strengthens the basis for integration, peaceful coexistence and the development of win-win relations between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, towards the socioeconomic development and well-being of their peoples, as well as the consolidation of the progress already achieved, inter alia, in strengthening their economies and improving their standard of living.

In that regard, we welcome the efforts of Central Asian countries, not only in promoting mechanisms aimed at preventing conflict and strengthening regional peace, security and stability — aware of the indissoluble link between peace and sustainable development — but also in promoting initiatives aimed at deepening dialogue, integration, solidarity and regional cooperation with a view to addressing, in a coordinated manner, common challenges and threats, including in the area of the environment, as well as defining joint priorities and frameworks for action, especially within the framework of the consultative meetings that are held periodically among the leaders of that important strategic subregion.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela strongly believes that zones of peace can make a valuable contribution to strengthening peace and trust among the Member States of our Organization. Our Latin American and Caribbean region is an example of that, especially in the light of the proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace in the framework of the second summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, held in Havana in January 2014.

We want to take advantage of this special opportunity to speak from the rostrum today, faithful to the tenets of our Bolivarian diplomacy of peace, to once again reaffirm our unwavering commitment to crystallizing Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace, in which differences are resolved through dialogue, diplomacy, negotiation or any other mutually agreed mechanisms that work towards the peaceful resolution of disputes.

Unfortunately, many of the ideals and promises contained in the Charter of our Organization, founded more than 77 years ago, still elude the peoples of the United Nations, who continue to yearn for a more peaceful and prosperous world. Therefore, in the context of today's debate on this important agenda item, which coincides with the declaration of 2023 as the International Year of Dialogue as a Guarantee of Peace — and which should encourage us to mobilize efforts to promote peace and trust among nations on the basis of political dialogue, negotiations, mutual understanding and cooperation — we urge the responsible members of the international community to put an end to continuing their recourse to inflammatory rhetoric and zero-sum games; to taking punitive, divisive and confrontational approaches; to taking actions that are reckless, provocative, unilateral or based on double standards; and to deepening divisions and imposing questionable visions and agendas, bearing in mind that such approaches in no way serve the purpose of achieving lasting peace or preventing the emergence of new conflict or crisis situations that could endanger global peace, security and stability.

We therefore renew our firm commitment to upholding the Charter of the United Nations, both in letter and in spirit, and to facilitating confidence-building measures that will create the conditions for a genuine, good-faith dialogue that is based on mutual respect and includes diversity in all its forms. We are confident that will enable us to work together in the framework of an essential process in which we see each other as equals, recognize the legitimate concerns of all and accommodate different points of view, positions and concerns, so that we can — without pressure or sanctions — forge the necessary consensuses and commitments to achieve the common goal of realizing peace for all our peoples.

Finally, we would like to conclude by expressing our hope that the establishment of a zone of peace, trust and cooperation of Central Asia, anchored in the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter, will bring us closer to achieving that noble goal of peace.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank our Turkmen colleagues for their initiative in convening today's meeting of the General Assembly on such an important topic. Russia is a long-standing and reliable partner of the Central Asian States. For many years, we have supported our neighbours in their desire to follow the path of progressive

development. Within the General Assembly, we have made that evident through our consistent support and co-sponsorship of resolutions on Central Asia, a clear example of which was our support for resolution 76/299, on the establishment of a zone of peace, trust and cooperation of Central Asia.

Russia and the Central Asian States continue to systematically strengthen cooperation. On 14 October 2022, Astana hosted the first Russia-Central Asia summit, and on 14 April, the sixth meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Russia and the Central Asian States was successfully held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. And the participation of the leaders of the Central Asian States in the celebration of Victory Day held in Moscow on 9 May was symbolic in reflecting the strength and maturity of our relations with the States of the region.

For our country, the geopolitical importance of Central Asia as a neighbouring region and a good neighbour is extremely high. That fact is also reflected in Russia's new foreign policy concept, which states that ensuring stable, long-term good-neighbourly relations with the Commonwealth of Independent States member States, including the Central Asian ones, is the most important thing for the security, stability, territorial integrity and socioeconomic development of Russia and the consolidation of its position as one of the influential centres of world politics.

The member States of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) are the guarantors of the security of the Central Asian region. The 201st Russian Division military base in Tajikistan and Russia's joint military base in Kant, Kyrgyzstan, are also key elements of stability. As for the CSTO itself, the high demand for its work is regularly reflected through the General Assembly's adoption of resolutions on cooperation between the United Nations and the CSTO, the most recent of which, resolution 77/13, was adopted on 21 November 2022.

The situation in Central Asia has always been a priority on the CSTO agenda, not least because of the situation in Afghanistan. Invaluable support for the region has been provided by the specialized structures of related regional organizations, namely, the Anti-Terrorism Centre of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. We support a peaceful

resolution of the remaining issues among our Central Asian friends.

Russia also remains a key trading partner of the Central Asian States, with a high level of participation in their economies and as one of the main consumers of goods produced in the region. Our participation in the Commonwealth of Independent States and the membership of Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in the Eurasian Economic Union are catalysts for deepening trade and economic ties. The transport and logistics corridors that run through Russia, including the International North–South Transport Corridor, play an important role in the region’s economic development. The absence of visa barriers, as well as the existence of a specialized legal framework and the prevalence of the Russian language in the region, make the Russian labour market very attractive for Central Asian citizens who travel abroad to work. For example, the remittances sent to Uzbekistan by migrant workers accounted for 11 per cent of the country’s gross domestic product in 2022, while in Kyrgyzstan the corresponding figure exceeded 26 per cent.

Against the backdrop of our country’s consistent efforts to create a zone of peace, trust and cooperation of Central Asia, we are concerned about the desire of some Western countries to undermine the stability and security of the region and weaken its economic development, including through threats of sanctions. Nothing good will come of that. Primarily, this pertains to those who are openly attempting to impose their world view on others — a world view that is very far from a peace-loving one.

We would like to ensure our Central Asian partners that we aspire to cooperation and good neighbourly relations for the sake of our States and peoples.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for convening this important debate on the new agenda item 61, entitled “Zone of peace, trust and cooperation of Central Asia”. We would like to express our deep appreciation to the delegation of Turkmenistan, as well as the delegations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan for this initiative, as a shining example of multilateralism and diplomacy, which reinforces the advancement of the three pillars of the United Nations, namely, sustainable development, peace and security and human rights.

My country, the Republic of Azerbaijan, proudly co-sponsored resolution 76/299, entitled “Zone of

peace, trust and cooperation of Central Asia”, adopted last year.

Declaring Central Asia a zone of peace, trust and cooperation was a historic moment that now significantly contributes to the strengthening of international peace and security and to promoting the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including the principles of sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of all States.

The countries of Central Asia play an important role in ensuring peace, stability and sustainable development in the region, as well as in promoting regional and international cooperation in such areas as science and technology, education, the environment, trade, transport and culture.

Azerbaijan enjoys friendly relations and constructive cooperation with all five countries of Central Asia. We have constructive and close engagement in many areas, including transport, logistics, energy, agriculture and tourism. Azerbaijan attaches high importance to further enhancing our cooperation, focusing on greater connectivity and communication.

In conclusion, I would like to underline that my delegation is delighted about the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the General Assembly and look forward to comprehensively addressing our common challenges together.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 61.

Mr. Wallace (Jamaica), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Agenda item 13 (continued)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Draft resolution (A/77/L.68)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil to introduce draft resolution A/77/L.68.

Mr. Cruvinel Barhenho (Brazil): Good morning. It is an honour to be here today to introduce draft resolution A/77/L.68, entitled “Implementation of the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025)”.

I would like to start by thanking the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Health Organization for their partnership and trust, which enabled the Brazilian delegation to bring this text to a successful conclusion. The long-standing partnership between Brazil and these organizations is a testament to our deep commitment to advancing Sustainable Development Goals 2 and 3. I also take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to the more than 50 Member States that co-sponsored this draft resolution. The cross-regional support for the draft resolution is a reaffirmation of our deep belief that inclusive multilateralism is the only road that can help us reach our aspirations for a better future for current and future generations.

On a personal note, I am deeply grateful to Ambassador Costa Filho of the Brazilian Permanent Mission to the United Nations for allowing the country’s youngest representative to facilitate and introduce this draft resolution. In terms of youth participation, Brazil is talking the talking and walking the walk.

Proclaimed on 1 April 2016, the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition derives from our shared belief that, together, countries are able to set a new ambition and direction in the global nutrition agenda, in line with the right of every human person to adequate food. The bold Work Programme for the Nutrition Decade, to which we are reaffirming our commitment in this draft resolution, encompasses six action areas that clearly illustrate both the complexity and ambition of delivering healthy, adequate and diversified diets to everyone — from the resilience of food production on one end to its sustainable consumption by final consumers on the other — frequently through the routes, challenges and inequities of international trade.

The draft resolution that we are about to adopt upholds the whole-of-society and whole-of-Government spirit of the Work Programme. It not only represents the resumption of the General Assembly follow-up to this process, but it also demonstrates the diversity of views, interests and concerns that Member States have in this area. It recognizes the added value of indigenous peoples food systems’ to healthy diets, but encourages

further technological cooperation to promote resilience and productivity; it urges countries to make food security and nutrition a high domestic priority, but stresses the need for a truly open, fair, inclusive and equitable multilateral trading system; and it emphasizes the importance of building synergy between the Decade and other ongoing processes, while steering clear of the risks of mandate expansion and effort duplication.

The Secretary-General’s report on which this draft resolution is based (A/76/796) reaffirms a well-known fact for everyone in this Hall — consequential action for the improvement of the world’s food security and nutrition indicators is necessary and urgent.

Unfortunately, since the Decade was proclaimed and especially in the past few years, many parts of the world have seen hard-won progress start going in reverse. As projected by the report, by the end of 2022, disruptions related to the coronavirus disease pandemic resulted in up to 16.3 million additional children suffering from wasting and up to 4.5 million additional children facing stunted growth. Such a trend is never positive for our developmental goals, but is especially worrisome when it poses such lifelong consequences.

The Brazilian Government is fully committed to getting nutrition back on the right track of our agreed goals. Since the start of the year, we re-established the National Council for Food Security and Nutrition in order to make our civil society part of the deliberations and implementation of our food security and nutrition policies. In addition, we are fully engaged in soon launching Brazil’s Zero Hunger Strategy, aimed at establishing a new paradigm of policymaking that recognizes hunger as the most extreme and perverse culmination of societal inequities, such as income, regional, racial, social and gender disparities.

However, the challenge does not stop at our borders. We are also eager to pursue a fruitful and substantial agenda for food security and nutrition through multilateral cooperation. We will continue using such spaces as the School Meals Coalition to share our best practices, experiences and capacities in integrated and multisectoral policies aimed at food security and nutrition. We are committed to making food security a priority in our presidencies of MERCOSUR, in 2023, the Group of 20, in 2024, and the BRICS group of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, in 2025, respectively.

As recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, our development challenges are indivisible and integrated, and so our policies to tackle them will also be integrated. In the same vein, food security and nutrition are a fundamental part of human life and development, from the day life starts to the day it ends, and so it must also be a fundamental part of the work of the United Nations. This is our promise and appeal before Member States today.

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to consider the draft resolution.

For the Assembly's information, the draft resolution has closed for e-sponsorship.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to the delegations listed in document A/77/L.68, the following countries have also become co-sponsors of the draft: Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, the Gambia, Germany, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Latvia, Lebanon, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, the Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Senegal, Serbia, Spain, Suriname, Sweden, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam and Zambia.

The Acting President: The Assembly will take action on draft resolution A/77/L.68 entitled "Implementation of the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025)".

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/77/L.68?

Draft resolution A/77/L.68 was adopted (resolution 77/285).

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States, who wishes to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

Mr. Hill (United States of America): I wish to speak in explanation of position on resolution 77/285, which was just adopted under agenda item 13.

On behalf of the Government of the United States, I would like to extend our thanks to the facilitator. We were pleased to join the consensus on the resolution and wish to explain several points in the text.

The United States regrets that the resolution does not state the importance that eliminating food loss and waste has for the global efforts to implement the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition, aimed at reducing hunger and malnutrition, improving food security, creating jobs, spurring economic development and mitigating climate change. Without addressing food loss and waste, many goals of the Decade of Action on Nutrition will not be met. The United States prioritizes the reduction of food loss and waste and encourages States and stakeholders to join us in actively supporting the Food is Never Waste Coalition, launched in conjunction with the United Nations Food Systems Summit in 2021. The United States recognizes the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living, including food, as reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The United States understands that resolution 77/285, including its references to the right to food, does not alter the current state of conventional or customary international law. Neither does it imply that States must implement obligations under human rights instruments to which they are not party. The United States is not a party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the rights contained therein are not justiciable in United States courts.

Furthermore, as the ICESCR provides, each State party undertakes to take steps to achieve progressively the full realization of the rights recognized in the Covenant. We note that countries have a wide array of policies and actions that may be appropriate in promoting that progressive realization. We therefore believe that the resolution should not try to define the content of the rights provided under the ICESCR, including its article 11, or suggest that specific steps are required of States parties to progressively achieve the full realization of those rights.

The United States is also concerned about the undue prominence given to agroecology in the resolution.

Focusing on the advancement of agroecological principles should not be seen as preferential, or come at the expense of other sustainable agricultural practices for producing food, fibre and other agricultural products.

The United States disassociates itself from paragraph 5 of the resolution, to the extent that the paragraph promotes technology transfer or distribution of intellectual property rights — which is neither voluntary nor on mutually agreed terms. The United States firmly considers that the strong protection and enforcement of intellectual property provides the critical incentives needed to drive the innovation that will address the health, environmental and development challenges of today and tomorrow.

The United States understands that, with respect to the resolution in general and paragraph 5 in particular, the references to the dissemination of technology and the transfer thereof or access thereto pertain to voluntary technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, and that all references to access to information or knowledge are made available with the authorization of the legitimate holder. The United States underscores the importance of regulatory and legal environments that support innovation. The language in paragraph 5 concerning technology transfer does not, from the United States perspective, serve as a precedent for future negotiated documents.

We refer the Assembly to our full statement, to be posted on the website of the United States Mission to the United Nations, and to be published in the *Digest of United States Practice in International Law*.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 13.

Agenda item 18 (continued)

Sustainable development

Draft resolution (A/77/L.67)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Turkmenistan to introduce draft resolution A/77/L.67.

Mrs. Ataeva (Turkmenistan): It is my honour, on behalf of the delegation of Turkmenistan, to introduce the draft resolution entitled “World Sustainable Transport Day”, contained in document A/77/L.67.

At the outset, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to all delegations for their productive engagement in and the constructive inputs they brought to the negotiations that led to the substantive text of this draft resolution. We note with appreciation the broad interregional support for document A/77/L.67. I am honoured to announce that more than 50 countries have joined the list of sponsors. Throughout the process of negotiating the text, we made every effort to maintain a constructive atmosphere and reach a broad consensus.

Sustainable transport is essential for a sustainable future. It plays a fundamental role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Transport drives development, links people, connects local communities to the world, builds markets and facilitates trade. In turn, sustainable transport drives sustainable development, and it is fundamental to meeting the demands of people in their personal and economic lives, while respecting the ability of future generations to address their needs.

Sustainable transport and mobility systems focus on reducing the environmental impact of transport while also promoting economic growth and social well-being. It involves a variety of strategies, including the use of public transportation, walking, cycling, electric vehicles, and the development of low-carbon infrastructure. World Sustainable Transport Day would be an opportunity to raise awareness about the benefits of sustainable transportation and mobility. It would be a chance to promote low-emission modes of transportation, such as cycling, walking and public transportation, the use of alternative fuels and energy-efficient vehicles, and to enhance interconnectivity at the regional and global levels. It would also be an opportunity to showcase the progress that has been made in sustainable transportation and to encourage further action.

The lessons learned from the immediate and short-term measures taken by Governments show that the transport sector was not prepared to operate in the conditions that resulted from the pandemic. These measures led to disruptions in logistics chains across the entire globe, which had a significant impact on the delivery of essential goods, such as food stuffs, pharmaceuticals, medical supplies and fuels, especially for landlocked developing countries and other economically vulnerable countries, which often rely heavily on imports to cover their basic needs. The declaration of World Sustainable Transport Day could

play a significant role in reminding the international community of the lessons learned and the challenges that remain with us.

The operative part of the draft resolution requests the President of the General Assembly, in collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, to convene, during the seventy-eighth session of the Assembly, a high-level meeting in New York to promote sustainable transport cooperation. This meeting would be convened in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the New Urban Agenda and the political declaration of the high-level meeting on improving global road safety (resolution 76/294).

The main objectives of the meeting would be to promote sustainable transport, enhance international cooperation on the transport agenda, strengthen sustainable mobility partnerships, share best practices and find solutions.

World Sustainable Transport Day is an essential call for us to make progress in promoting sustainable transportation and mobility. It is a chance to raise awareness, drive policy change and encourage individuals and organizations to take immediate action. Let us work together to make that day a reality and to create a better and more sustainable future for all. I hope that Member States will support our initiative by co-sponsoring draft resolution A/77/L.67 and joining the global efforts to create a sustainable future for all.

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/77/L.67.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/77/L.67 and in addition to the delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become co-sponsors of draft resolution A/77/L.67: Algeria, Angola, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Colombia, the Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Fiji, the Gambia, Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, Israel, Jamaica, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Maldives, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Pakistan, Paraguay, the Philippines, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia,

Sierra Leone, Singapore, Suriname, the Syrian Arab Republic, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Republic of Tanzania, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Zambia.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/77/L.67, entitled "World Sustainable Transport Day".

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/77/L.67?

Draft resolution A/77/L.67 was adopted (resolution 77/286).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 18.

Agenda item 22 (continued)

Eradication of poverty and other development issues

Draft resolution (A/77/L.69)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh to introduce draft resolution A/77/L.69.

Mr. Muhith (Bangladesh): On behalf of Bangladesh and its 62 co-sponsors, as of the last count, I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/77/L.69, entitled "Community-based primary health care: a participatory and inclusive approach to universal health coverage", the first-ever United Nations draft resolution on the community clinic model.

It is my distinct pleasure to thank all delegations for their valuable contributions and support in finalizing the draft resolution for adoption today. And our special thanks go to all the experts for their tireless efforts and flexibility to reach consensus on this landmark draft resolution. We also thank the World Health Organization for its support and contribution to our efforts. Allow me to take this opportunity to also thank the 62 Member States that have co-sponsored the draft resolution as of now, and we sincerely hope that more States will join as co-sponsors before its imminent adoption. It is extremely important for the General Assembly to convey a strong message of universal support for our collective efforts on community-based primary health care and its paramount importance in poverty alleviation and sustainable development.

The draft resolution is a long-overdue recognition of the critical role of community-based primary health care in achieving universal health coverage. It calls for the promotion of a participatory and inclusive approach by providing comprehensive, accessible and affordable primary health care that engages communities, particularly those in underserved areas and hard-to-reach populations in the design, implementation and monitoring of health programmes. It is imperative to adopt a whole-of-society approach to tackle universal access to health in a holistic manner. Given our country's successful experience in implementing community-based primary health care, Bangladesh firmly believes that approach can improve health outcomes, reduce health inequities and strengthen health systems, especially in low-resource settings.

Bangladesh has a pluralistic health system in which both public and private sector providers play important roles. We are committed, in line with the Declaration of Alma-Ata of the International Conference on Primary Health Care, to ensuring health for all and providing all citizens with the right to access quality health care without facing financial hardship in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and universal health coverage. As a part of its existing primary health care system, the Government of Bangladesh has started to establish community clinics — one for every 6,000 people — in rural areas, as part of Sheikh Hasina's initiative for community clinics, which is a unique example of public-private partnership. The Government of Bangladesh has been able to establish more than 14,000 community clinics all over the country, after having made intensified efforts in that regard since 2010. The community clinics have now become the Government's primary strategy for achieving universal health care. Many other countries in the world have promoted and established community-based health services.

Community clinic-based health care services can reduce poverty — under SDG 1 — by increasing access to quality health care for underserved populations, including those who live in poverty. When people have access to preventive care, early treatment and chronic disease management, they are more likely to stay healthy and to prevent costly health crises. In addition, community health-care services can create jobs and stimulate local economies, which can help to reduce poverty by increasing income and improving overall financial stability. By working in partnership with

community organizations and local leaders, community-based health care services can empower communities and help to build strong, healthy and equitable societies for all. Community-based health care services can directly help achieve SDG 3 — on good health and well-being — and its targets by providing preventive and curative health-care services in the community and reducing the burden of disease. They also play a crucial role in achieving other SDGs, namely, Goals 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 10.

The draft resolution before us calls on Member States to allocate adequate human and financial resources and to build synergies with other development priorities in order to support the strengthening of community-based primary health care and to explore innovative approaches in their respective countries. It also invites international financial institutions, multilateral and regional development banks and donors to provide appropriate resources, especially for developing countries, to strengthen community-based health services towards the full implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The adoption of today's draft resolution, on community-based primary health care, would be a watershed moment in the global efforts for universal health coverage. Implementing universal access to health is a global challenge that needs global solidarity and a collective effort.

Let me conclude by calling on the Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/77/L.69 with a strong mandate, which could serve as a road map for strengthening primary health care and advancing universal health coverage globally. By working together, we can ensure that all individuals and communities have access to quality health services that are responsive to their needs and priorities.

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/77/L.69.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/77/L.69 and in addition to the delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become co-sponsors of draft resolution A/77/L.69: Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Brazil,

Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, the Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Fiji, the Gambia, Honduras, Indonesia, Jamaica, Japan, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Lesotho, Malawi, Maldives, Mozambique, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Togo, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Viet Nam.

The Acting President: The Assembly will take action on draft resolution A/77/L.69, entitled “Community-based primary health care: a participatory and inclusive approach to universal health coverage”.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/77/L.69?

Draft resolution A/77/L.69 was adopted (resolution 77/287).

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted, I would like to remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Elshandawily (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of the Arab Republic of Egypt congratulates the delegation of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on the adoption of resolution 77/287, and thanks it for facilitating the related consultations.

We believe that the resolution reflects the successful development experience of Bangladesh in the context of seeking to improve aspects of health care. We consider the resolution as motivation for all Member States to continue developing their national programmes aimed at achieving universal health coverage and achieving Sustainable Development Goal 3. The adoption of the resolution reflects the growing need to increase elements of the support provided to developing countries in order to advance their efforts in developing the efficiency of health systems in accordance with their priorities and in line with the principle of national ownership. My delegation looks forward to continuing to support that work in the upcoming governmental consultations on the political declaration on universal health coverage, which is scheduled to be adopted in September.

The delegation of Egypt would like to explain its position on the resolution's sixteenth preambular paragraph, which was proposed by some delegations during the consultations, although a large number of other delegations had made it clear that it was not

appropriate to include that paragraph in a resolution that primarily concerns the experience of national development — as the text of the paragraph does not pertain to the development of health systems or the provision of health care in general.

Egypt is committed to ensuring the highest level of health care for all and to continuing its efforts to improve the efficiency of our country's health systems, in accordance with the Egypt Vision 2030 and the 100 Million Healthy Lives presidential initiative. We believe that it was not appropriate to limit the sixteenth preambular paragraph to one aspect of health care, especially since the resolution was considered under the agenda item “Eradication of poverty and other development issues”. Accordingly, the delegation of Egypt stresses that our interpretation of the text of the sixteenth preambular paragraph is based on the work programme of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, which was held in Cairo, and is in accordance with what is stipulated in Egypt's national laws and legislation and consistent with the religious and cultural values of our society.

Mr. Aref (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, please allow me to express our gratitude to the delegation of Bangladesh for its hard work and commendable efforts made in the negotiation process leading to the adoption of resolution 77/287. We attach great importance to its dedication and efforts in highlighting the importance of universal health coverage.

In line with the relevant principles of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran and following the implementation of national programmes, remarkable progress has been made in enhancing access to medical care and health coverage for our population. We will continue our efforts to strengthen measures with respect to universal health coverage aimed at enhancing the health and well-being of people.

Despite the tremendous measures we have taken at the national level in addressing universal health coverage and health policies, the promulgation and application of the unilateral coercive measures against my country continue to impede our efforts in that area. Such wrongful acts, which are a flagrant violation of the fundamental principles of international law and the principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, hinder the population's full achievement of economic and social development and negatively affect the enjoyment of human rights, including the right to

health, as well as well-being and access to medicines. It goes without saying that the unilateral coercive measures also impair the allocation of resources and undermine the ability of States to implement health-related programmes and commitments. In the light of that, we emphasize that States must desist and refrain from promulgating and applying unilateral coercive measures, so as to ensure the full enjoyment of all people of the highest attainable standard of health.

Consistent with resolution 77/287, we would like to reiterate that achieving the objectives of the resolution, including health financing, requires global solidarity and collective efforts by addressing the barriers that developing countries face in that area and promoting genuine international cooperation among Member States. In that regard, we underline the importance of adopting concrete measures at the international level to ensure strengthened cooperation among Member States, including financial and technical assistance upon request, and based on the needs and priorities of the requesting States.

The Islamic Republic of Iran highlights that the provisions of the resolution and its implementation are subject to our national laws, regulations and priorities, as well as our cultural, religious and social specificities and contexts.

Ms. Morris Garrido (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Guatemala is committed to community-based primary health-care services as a participatory and inclusive approach to achieving universal health coverage. However, Guatemala dissociates itself the from sixteenth preambular paragraph of resolution 77/287, taking into account that the language contained therein runs counter to our national legislation and public policy on the protection of life and the institutionalization of the family.

Guatemala promotes, defends and protects the human rights of all persons, without discrimination, within a framework of ensuring the conventionality of its laws. My country therefore expresses its reservations regarding the application of terms, conditions and provisions that explicitly or implicitly contradict the Political Constitution of the Republic of Guatemala and its internal legal system, including, but not limited to, issues related to sexual and reproductive rights. We also reserve the right to interpret the term “reproductive rights”, which for the State of Guatemala does not include abortion.

There is no international consensus on the interpretation of reproductive rights, and Guatemala’s national legislation pertains to sexual and reproductive health policies only — and not to reproductive rights, which could be interpreted as the right to abortion or abortion practices, which contravenes my country’s national legislation.

Mr. Gueye (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would first like to thank the delegation of Bangladesh for its excellent work in facilitating the negotiations on resolution 77/287, which is an important resolution.

The General Assembly has adopted it at a crucial time. After barely turning the page on the coronavirus disease pandemic, the world continues to be faced with its many after-effects, which have left indelible marks on our health systems, thereby demonstrating the fragility and limitations of those systems when it comes to the imperative of universal health security.

Undoubtedly, the text we have just adopted, in addition to being a relevant contribution to the various political statements made by Member States at the high-level meetings on health and development issues, will serve as the basis for an articulated response to combat the inequalities that exist in the field of health, both within individual countries and from one country to another. It will also serve as a means for political commitment towards the adoption of action plans and the development of successful multilateral strategies, especially with regard to socioeconomic and environmental factors. It is for these ambitious reasons to effectively address our shared sanitation challenges that my delegation endorses the process and welcomes the consensus that led to its adoption.

However, Senegal did not co-sponsor the text due to the inclusion of the sixteenth preambular paragraph, which we consider very ambiguous and contrary to our consistent position, especially as regards the term “sexual rights”, to which my delegation would like to object. We reserve the right to interpret that paragraph in accordance to the laws and the cultural and religious values of my country.

Mr. Chumakov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We commend Bangladesh for its facilitation of the negotiations process. Russia joined the consensus on resolution 77/287.

The sixteenth preambular paragraph retains a reference to the outcome document of the review conference on the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. This is problematic for our delegation. Pursuant to paragraph 4 of resolution 65/234, the agreements reached on the aforementioned Programme are not subject to repeat negotiations. We also share Iran's view on the negative impact of unilateral measures. On the whole, we express our gratitude for the useful initiative of this resolution.

Primary health care involves comprehensive care for human health throughout the lifespan of an individual. It ranges from strengthening health and preventing diseases to treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care. As noted in the resolution, the concept of primary health care has been heavily influenced by the experience of the development of health care systems in socialist countries.

The resolution adopted today will also give impetus to efforts that Russia is undertaking at the national level. Ever since 2019, we have been implementing the measures stipulated by a federal project for the development of our primary health care system, which seeks to improve the accessibility of primary health care for residents of remote and sparsely populated areas, develop medical airlift services, form a system to protect patients' rights, improve citizens' access to polyclinics and polyclinic departments and introduce standards and rules for a new model for organizing the provision of health care. We are improving coverage of preventive check-ups and other medical examinations.

As of the end of 2022, in the implementation of this federal project, 6.5 million visits were made to new or updated paramedic units, paramedic and obstetric units and outpatient clinics. Mobile medical teams made 300,000 visits, serving some 9 million people. The adoption of this resolution will have a positive impact on ensuring comprehensive health care coverage and will also help to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, including those related to health, poverty eradication, the eradication of hunger, access to water, sanitation, employment and economic growth.

Ms. Pichardo Urbina (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation thanks Bangladesh for submitting this resolution forward to promote and guarantee access to universal health coverage, a right

that our Government recognizes and provides to the whole of the Nicaraguan population.

With regard to the paragraphs that refer to universal access to sexual and reproductive rights, we note that those concepts and their interpretation are governed by the national legislation of each country.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting. May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 22?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 69 (continued)

(d) Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster

Draft resolution (A/77/L.66)

The Acting President: The General Assembly will resume its consideration of sub-item (d) of agenda item 69, entitled "Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster", to take action on a draft resolution issued as A/77/L.66.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/77/L.66.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/77/L.66, and in addition to the delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors of the draft resolution: Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Marshall Islands, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Norway, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden,

Switzerland, Thailand, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/77/L.66, entitled “Persistent legacy of the Chernobyl disaster”. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/77/L.66?

Draft resolution A/77/L.66 was adopted (resolution 77/288).

The Acting President: I have been requested to deliver the following remarks on behalf of the President of the General Assembly.

“This resolution, initiated by Belarus in the past and by Ukraine during this meeting, touches upon

important issues of nuclear safety and reminds us of the environmental and human catastrophe that can occur when nuclear reactors are unsafe. Managing such disasters and their aftermath requires regional cooperation and dialogue. I am pleased to see the broad support for the resolution and its cross-regional co-sponsoring. I call on Member States to continue to work together on issues related to nuclear safety and humanitarian affairs.”

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (d) of agenda item 69?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.