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Chair: Mr. Amorín (Uruguay)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Statement by the President of the General Assembly

1. **Mr. Francis** (Trinidad and Tobago), President of the General Assembly, said that he wished to express his deepest concern over the deteriorating security situation in the Middle East following the Hamas attacks two days earlier, resulting in an escalation that had left hundreds dead and scores more wounded in Israel and the State of Palestine. Violence was not a viable path forward. It offered neither sustainable peace nor prosperity for any of those involved and had proven to lead only to more bloodshed, conflict and tragedy, with innocent victims paying the price in most cases. He called for an immediate cessation of violence, for all parties to exercise maximum restraint and for all stakeholders to engage in diplomatic discussions to de-escalate the situation, protect civilians and chart a path to a two-State solution that offered peace, progress and prosperity for all.

2. Turning to the work of the Second Committee, he noted that the issues that fell under the Committee's purview lay at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and were fundamental to the collective pursuit of global peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all. Year after year, the Committee's responsibilities had continued to grow. While the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic was over, its impacts continued to play out across economies and societies, touching on every aspect of the Committee's agenda.

3. It was clear that world was rife with inequalities. The climate crisis was worsening. Hunger, food insecurity and debt crises continued to increase in many countries, and could be expected to intensify, especially for the most vulnerable countries. All the while, the war in Ukraine and other conflicts in all corners of world continued to grind on.

4. A new way of measuring and tackling inequality was needed, along with new mechanisms for restructuring debt and ensuring a more just international financial system. The Committee should allow the political declaration adopted by world leaders at the recent high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly (political declaration of the Sustainable Development Goals Summit) to guide its deliberations and negotiations. The calls for decisive action outlined in that declaration offered a "to do" list for scaling up progress across the Goals.

5. The plans and tools required for achieving collective resilience already existed; what was lacking

was the political will to fulfil commitments. The Committee was perfectly placed to catalyse action in that regard. He noted, however, that the Committee for Programme and Coordination had been unable to agree on 10 programmes for the current year, which the Main Committees should now consider. He urged the Second Committee to urgently examine the relevant open programmes and share conclusions with the Fifth Committee as soon as possible so that the latter could take that input into account. In the meantime, he had decided to relaunch the board of advisors for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States and expressed confidence that that working collaboratively could strengthen and improve the multilateral system and build capacity for sustainability.

Agenda item 18: Sustainable development ([A/78/80-E/2023/64](#), [A/78/210](#), [A/78/228](#), [A/78/276](#), [A/78/280](#), [A/78/312](#), [A/78/362](#), [A/78/372](#) and [A/78/393](#))

- (a) **Towards the achievement of sustainable development: implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including through sustainable consumption and production, building on Agenda 21** ([A/78/208](#))
- (b) **Follow-up to and implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States** ([A/78/222](#))
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- (i) **Combating sand and dust storms** ([A/78/237](#))

(j) Strengthening cooperation for integrated coastal zone management for achieving sustainable development (A/78/293)

6. **Ms. Tahtinen** (Officer-in-Charge of the Division for Sustainable Development Goals, Department of Economic and Social Affairs), speaking via video link, said that she wished to introduce five reports of the Secretary-General. First, in his report entitled “Agricultural technology for sustainable development: leaving no one behind” (A/78/228), the Secretary-General had recognized that science and technology had the potential to accelerate transformative change in agricultural practices in support of the 2030 Agenda and he had provided an analysis of trends related to technology in agriculture, underscoring that such technology needed to be accompanied by a range of enabling social, political and institutional factors.

7. Second, in his report on cooperative measures to assess and increase awareness of environmental effects related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea (A/78/276), the Secretary-General had conveyed the views of Member States and relevant regional and international organizations, had explored the possibility of establishing a database and options for the most appropriate institutional framework for such a database, and had identified appropriate intergovernmental bodies within the United Nations system for further consideration and implementation of the cooperative measures envisaged in General Assembly resolution 74/213.

8. Third, in his report entitled “Towards the achievement of sustainable development: implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including through sustainable consumption and production, building on Agenda 21” (A/78/208), the Secretary-General had noted that addressing many of the world’s current challenges required a total transformation in the way that business was done. To accelerate the shift towards more sustainable consumption and production, government policy and the regulatory environment would need to create changes in high-impact industrial sectors and value chains and address the financing gap for sustainable development by fostering an enabling environment for private sector investment.

9. Fourth, in his report entitled “Follow-up to and implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States” (A/78/222), the Secretary-General had provided updates on the activities of reporting

Member States and the United Nations system, as well as on the Data Platform for the Small Island Developing States, the work of the High-level Panel on the Development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index for Small Island Developing States, including a summary of its recommendations, and the preparatory process for the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States, including potential areas for further action after the Conference.

10. Fifth, in his report on ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all (A/78/201), the Secretary-General had provided an overview of follow-up to the high-level dialogue on energy held in 2021 and the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All (2014–2024), including relevant recent efforts to inform the review of Sustainable Development Goal 7. He had highlighted that the global stocktaking to further accelerate the implementation of Goal 7, to be held in 2024 and marking the completion of the Decade, was a unique opportunity to mobilize actions, share experiences and catalyse partnerships, finance and investments, such as through energy compacts.

11. **Ms. Meza Murillo** (Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa), speaking via video link, introduced the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (A/78/209, section II). She said that while there was an appetite on the part of international community for a paradigm shift in drought management towards proactive action that better prepared countries and communities for future droughts, more information-sharing, resources and political will were needed in that regard. She invited the General Assembly to encourage its members to join the International Drought Resilience Alliance, launched in 2022.

12. In his report entitled “Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: towards a rescue plan for people and planet” (A/78/80-E/2023/64), the Secretary-General had highlighted that the world had lost at least 100 million hectares of healthy and productive land each year between 2015 and 2019. There was a correlation between areas affected by land degradation, desertification and drought and areas where the poorest and the hungriest people could be found. The intertwined crises of nature-climate-land degradation and conflicts required the mobilization of technical and economic resources at an unprecedented scale to invest in land restoration and drought resilience.

13. **Ms. Mizutori** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction), in a pre-recorded video statement, introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (A/78/267), which included key findings that had emerged from the midterm review of the Sendai Framework and been adopted in the political declaration of the high-level meeting on the midterm review in May 2023. She said that despite the progress they had made, countries were not on track to achieve the expected outcome of the Sendai Framework by 2030. There was an urgent need for accelerated and amplified risk-informed actions and a clear need to strengthen risk governance at all levels.

14. Recent events had shown that disasters could instantly wipe out decades of development, and that any development agenda would be remiss if it did not incorporate disaster risk reduction and resilience-building. That was especially true for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and African countries, as well as middle-income countries facing specific challenges, which suffered more severe consequences of disasters, whether in terms of mortality, affected population or economic impact. Key upcoming processes and outcomes, including the successor frameworks to the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (Samoa Pathway), offered a unique opportunity to endorse and provide guidance towards development which took into account the vulnerabilities and unique challenges faced by those groups of countries. In addition, the year ahead would allow for the taking of concrete steps towards a reinvigorated multilateral system that was better positioned to support a risk-informed approach to development, including at the Summit of the Future in September 2024.

15. **Ms. Noronha** (Director, New York Office, United Nations Environment Programme) introduced the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening cooperation for integrated coastal zone management for achieving sustainable development (A/78/293), which highlighted effective integrated coastal zone management strategies. She said that scaling up capacity-building investments in the form of grants, rather than loans, was critical to increasing the capacity of developing countries, especially small island developing States, to invest in integrated coastal zone management approaches that addressed ecosystem vulnerability in the face of climate change, biodiversity loss and increasing pollution.

16. **Ms. Živković** (Assistant Secretary-General, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States of the United Nations Development Programme), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation and coordination for the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan (A/78/312), said that although 32 years had passed since the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, negative environmental, economic social and humanitarian consequences still persisted. During that period, the Government of Kazakhstan, with the support of the international community, had been working actively towards improving the well-being and livelihoods of the affected populations. A number of national programmes and strategies had been implemented to promote the overall priority of recovery within the region. In 2022, the Government of Kazakhstan had created three new regions, including the Abay Region, whose administrative centre, the city of Semey, had formerly been known as Semipalatinsk. The administrative reform was expected to increase investment in the region, create new employment opportunities and boost infrastructure development.

17. Several United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Development Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the International Atomic Energy Agency, continued to provide targeted support, together with international partners. Despite that support, the affected region’s long-term sustainable development would require continuous collaborative efforts. There were still significant challenges in terms of health care, economic disparities and gender-based violence. The report outlined several priorities for future action, aimed at rehabilitating the areas affected by the test site, which demonstrated that a firm foundation had been laid to that end. The United Nations remained committed to supporting Kazakhstan’s efforts to return the former test site and its surrounding areas to normality.

18. **Mr. Cooper** (Acting Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity), introducing the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (A/78/209, section III), in a pre-recorded video statement, said that the second part of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which had been held in December 2022, had seen unprecedented levels

of engagement from Governments, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, youth, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), business, finance and the scientific community. More than 10,000 delegates from 190 countries had attended the meeting and had adopted 34 decisions, including decision 15/4 on the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which set out four goals for 2050 and 23 targets for urgent action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. Securing an agreement on the Framework had been a triumph for multilateralism and, henceforth, all parties to the Convention needed to move from agreement to action. The Conference of the Parties had also decided to establish a multilateral mechanism to ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources. The development and operationalization of that mechanism would be subject to further negotiations.

19. The world was off-track in its progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the ongoing loss of biodiversity further jeopardized that progress. The implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework would contribute to efforts in that regard.

20. **Ms. Urosevic** (Executive Director of the World Tourism Organization), speaking via video link, introduced the report of the Secretary-General on sustainable tourism and sustainable development in Central America (A/78/210). She said that the tourism sector offered significant opportunities, as a powerful engine of sustainable development. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the global economic downturn had taken a heavy toll on the tourism sector. Nonetheless, Central American States had made major efforts to recover and strengthen the sector, given its importance as a key source of employment and foreign exchange. The focus had shifted to the need to strengthen the resilience of the sector through the greater integration of tourism in societies, sustainability processes and the identification of practical measures for action.

21. The States that had contributed to the report were making substantial strides, through sustainable tourism, towards generating economic and environmental benefits and reducing the sector's climate and environmental footprint. To ensure that tourism further supported job creation, inclusive economic growth and sustainable development, it was vital to promote community participation, especially among women, girls and young people, and to foster a stronger business environment. To that end, States needed support in their efforts to maximize the sector's contribution to economic and social development, particularly in rural

areas. Global challenges, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, required new and innovative policy responses, societal changes and institutional arrangements. Tourism operations needed to be transformed, in order to ensure alignment with international climate action targets and reduce emissions.

22. It was imperative to adopt an integrated, cross-sectoral and holistic approach to building the resilience of the sector, especially for countries that were dependent on tourism. There was a need to bolster the development of tourism infrastructure, support measures and diversification plans, including through public-private partnerships, with a view to supporting local communities and preserving their culture and heritage, as part of the recovery process. In that regard, the World Tourism Organization recommended that the draft resolution resulting from the report be renamed "Sustainable and resilient tourism and sustainable development in Central America", to incorporate the need to fully promote resilience in sustainable tourism and incorporate it into all development strategies. It also recommended that the periodicity of the report be extended, from two to three years, or more, in order to improve the relevance of the reporting results and reduce the burden on national administrations.

23. **Mr. Violetti** (Senior Director of Programmes Coordination of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), speaking via video link, introduced the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on the work of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention (A/78/209, section I). He said that the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which had been held in Egypt, in November 2022, had recognized the latest scientific advice concerning the urgent need to sustainably reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In that regard, the Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan called on Parties to accelerate the development, deployment and dissemination of technologies and the adoption of policies to transition towards low-emission energy systems. Important and impactful outcomes had been achieved in the key substantive negotiations areas of loss and damage, finance, just transition, adaptation, mitigation and agriculture.

24. The Conference of the Parties had also recognized that non-party stakeholders made an important contribution towards meeting the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement under the Convention.

Collaboration between parties and non-party stakeholders should be continued and accelerated. Parties had invited the secretariat of the Convention to increase the accountability of voluntary initiatives through the Global Climate Action portal. In the lead-up to the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties, the General Assembly should urge parties to the Convention that had not yet ratified the Paris Agreement to promptly deposit their instruments of ratification, acceptance, accession or approval, in order to ensure its universality. Parties should respond swiftly to calls for climate action and support, including by reviewing and strengthening their 2030 targets and nationally determined contributions. Lastly, parties that had not yet submitted their long-term low-emission development strategies, national adaptation plans or adaptation communication should accelerate their preparation and submission efforts.

25. **Mr. Li** (Director of the Land and Water Division of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)), in a pre-recorded video statement, introduced the report of the Secretary-General on combating sand and dust storms (A/78/237). He said that the report drew on contributions from several United Nations agencies and highlighted activities and initiatives undertaken during the period from mid-2022 to mid-2023. It also reflected the growing awareness of sand and dust storms as a result of the economic, social and environmental costs associated with them. In the report, developments and activities were organized in four main areas: cross-cutting developments; monitoring, prediction and early warning; impact mitigation, vulnerability and resilience; and source mitigation.

26. The transboundary hazards posed to society by sand and dust storms significantly hampered the achievement of sustainable development. The United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms, under the leadership of FAO, was continuing its efforts to move from the planning to the implementation stage, a process that would be accelerated with increased financial and human resources. The report underscored the growing need to strengthen subregional, regional and interregional cooperation on the issue, and to foster knowledge exchange among Governments and other stakeholders on good policies and practices for addressing the challenges posed by sand and dust storms.

27. **Mr. Minchenberg** (Director of the New York Office of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)), introducing the note by the Secretary-General on education for sustainable development in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for

Sustainable Development (A/78/219), said that progress in education was fundamental to the achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. However, two interconnected crises, one of equity and inclusion and the other of quality and relevance, continued to affect education. Those crises were aggravated by insufficient and inequitable financing for investment in the sector. The report clearly showed that education systems needed to be transformed, with a view to tackling, adapting to and mitigating the challenges associated with climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, by mobilizing collective actions and changing attitudes and behaviours.

28. UNESCO had launched a Greening Education Partnership to deliver strong, coordinated and comprehensive action for accelerating and improving the implementation of climate change education. A total of 80 Member States and over 1,000 stakeholders had joined the Partnership and were working to make schools, curricula, teacher training systems and communities greener. A dedicated United Nations multi-partner trust fund was being developed to ensure synergetic and coordinated country-level implementation and accelerate thematic financing for the greening of education. During the period under review, UNESCO had led the reform of the coordination and monitoring of Goal 4, including through support to the Sustainable Development Goal 4 High-level Steering Committee.

29. The report provided an update on the Global Education Cooperation Mechanism and follow-up to the Transforming Education Summit held in 2022. The Summit had mobilized ambition, solidarity and solutions for achieving Goal 4. More than 140 countries had outlined their national commitments to transform their education systems, and six global partnerships had been launched, including on foundational learning and the greening of education. To monitor progress on national commitments and those made at the Summit, UNESCO and the High-level Steering Committee had launched a dashboard of country commitments and actions. In ensuring accountability among stakeholders, the dashboard would showcase good practices and allow for exchanges among countries. During the period under review, the implementation and recognition of the framework entitled “Education for Sustainable Development: towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals” had remained high on the agenda of the international community. Thousands of partners and education stakeholders had made diverse efforts to accelerate education for sustainable development in countries and communities. Some 93 countries were in the process of developing their own initiatives under the framework, and approximately 50 of them were

expected to launch their country initiatives by the end of 2023.

30. The report stressed the importance of encouraging stronger international and national cooperation, including among educational and environmental stakeholders. The international community should help to empower teachers and train them to address sustainability. Youth engagement should be bolstered and accelerated, and partnerships should be harnessed to promote education responses to sustainability challenges. Quality education was the single most important investment that a country could make for its future and its people.

31. **Ms. Min** (Chief of the Sustainable Development Goals Monitoring Section of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs), introducing the special edition of the report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: towards a rescue plan for people and planet (A/78/80-E/2023/64), said that too much of the early progress made to achieve the Goals was fragile and most of it was still too slow. At the midpoint of the implementation period, an assessment of approximately 140 targets had shown that only 15 per cent of them were on track to be realized by 2030, more than 50 per cent were off-track and some 30 per cent had shown no movement or had regressed below the 2015 baseline.

32. Based on current trends, challenges such as poverty, gender inequality and illiteracy would persist in the lead-up to 2030. Similarly, the escalating war on nature would continue to demonstrate humankind's overall short-sightedness. However, it was still possible to achieve the Goals, with an ambitious rescue plan for people and planet. The report outlined a series of urgent actions for getting the Goals back on track. Heads of State and Government should recommit to seven years of accelerated, sustained and transformative actions, at the national and international levels. Governments should advance concrete, integrated and targeted policies and actions to leave no one behind. They should also strengthen national and subnational capacities, accountability and public institutions to accelerate progress towards achieving the Goals.

33. The international community should recommit to delivering on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and mobilizing the resources and investments needed by developing countries, especially those in special situations. Member States should help to strengthen the United Nations development system and build the capacity of the multilateral system, with a view to tackling emerging challenges and addressing

gaps and weaknesses in the international architecture. With determination, solidarity, resilience and leadership, the worst hardships could be overcome. The report contained practical ideas that could unite the global community in support of Goals and pave the way to a better future.

34. **Mr. Al-Hammal** (Regional Advisor for the Levant Region at the United Nations Development Programme), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the oil slick on Lebanese shores (A/78/280), said that the damage to Lebanon had initially been estimated at over \$856 million. In the absence of new findings or new scientifically meaningful data, the United Nations Environment Programme would not be able to conduct further environmental studies, either to assess past or current operations or to determine the cost of environmental degradation. Requests for the Government of Israel to assume responsibility and promptly compensate the Governments of Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic had not been heeded, giving rise to grave concerns. The efforts by the Government of Lebanon, Member States, regional and international organizations, financial institutions, the private sector and NGOs to begin clean-up and rehabilitation operations on the polluted shores were greatly appreciated. However, since 2017, no further support for recovery or rehabilitation had been provided.

35. Following the agreement of the Lebanon Recovery Fund to host the Eastern Mediterranean oil spill restoration trust fund, the Secretary-General had urged Member States and the international donor community to make voluntary financial contributions to the trust fund. To date, no such contributions had been made. The 2021 oil spill had caused widespread environmental damage to the Lebanese coast, further endangering marine life, biodiversity and livelihoods. The Secretary-General had commended the ongoing efforts by the Government of Lebanon to address the impacts of the oil spills, but remained concerned about the lack of implementation of the provisions set out in the resolutions of the General Assembly concerning compensation by the Government of Israel to the affected countries. He had urged Member States, international organizations, international and regional financial institutions, NGOs and the private sector to intensify their support for Lebanon in that matter, particularly for recovery and rehabilitation activities along its coast.

36. **The Chair** invited the Committee to engage in a general discussion the item.

37. **Mr. Téllez Alonso** (Cuba), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the recently held

Sustainable Development Goals Summit marked the midterm review of the 2030 Agenda. Developed countries still faced multiple challenges and an unjust economic order that perpetuated inequalities and poverty. The reports of the Secretary-General portrayed a sombre reality, since the world was not on track to achieve the Goals by 2030 and would miss more than half of the agreed targets.

38. There was a need to promote global structures and policies aimed at ending inequity and inequality among and within nations, and to enable all developing countries to realize the Goals. Those countries had called for the reform of the international financial architecture, in line with the Goals. Such a reform should entail the sustainable management of sovereign debt, increased concessional finance from multilateral development banks, additional issuances of special drawing rights, reduced borrowing costs for developing countries and scaled up climate finance. Member States should continue to uphold the role of the General Assembly in reforming global governance, in order to ensure that the voice of every nation was properly heard and taken into account. In that regard, the Group called on the international community to follow up on and support the Secretary-General's proposed stimulus for the Goals. It also called on developed countries to fulfil their commitments to provide developing countries with official development assistance (ODA) and the means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda.

39. The Group supported the principles contained in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, in particular those relating to equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, which should guide all discussions on sustainable development. References to those principles should not result in disputes within the Committee. The Group recognized advancements in the environmental area, welcomed the historic decision to establish the loss and damage fund and called for the latter's full operationalization by the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Developed countries should honour their commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity with regard to the provision of means of implementation to developing countries.

40. Small island developing States remained a special category, owing to their unique and particular vulnerabilities. Accordingly, the Group acknowledged the close linkages between the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway. It looked forward to the convening of the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States, which would mark the

implementation of the commitments made in the Samoa Pathway and lay the foundation for further discussions on improving support for those countries.

41. The Group recognized the key role played by science, technology and innovation in sustainable development efforts, especially in terms of South-South cooperation. In that regard, its recent Summit on Science Technology and Innovation, which had been held in Havana, Cuba, and the ensuing declaration had launched an urgent appeal to embark on a pathway of enhanced capabilities, through science, for the achievement of the Goals. Developing countries' efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda should be bolstered by concrete technology transfers and capacity-building, as well as North-South cooperation, in order to foster industrialization and investment in quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure.

42. Unilateralism and protectionism, including unilateral trade protection and restrictions that were incompatible with World Trade Organization agreements, should be eliminated. Unilateral coercive measures were a serious violation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and gravely hindered affected countries' efforts to achieve the Goals. The international community, including the United Nations system, should continue to firmly reject the imposition of such measures and seek their unconditional lifting.

43. **Ms. Adhikari** (Nepal), speaking on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, said that multiple interlinked global crises were affecting lives and livelihoods worldwide. Efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals were largely off-track, with more than half the world being left behind. Overall, many of the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda referred explicitly to the least developed countries, thereby recognizing the importance of addressing their development challenges. Yet, at the midpoint of the implementation period, the least developed countries had made headway on a mere 28 per cent of the Goals and were far from achieving the objectives set in 2015. The progress made by those countries was below average in areas ranging from hunger and decent work to strong institutions and partnerships for the Goals.

44. In a context of widening global inequalities, the least developed countries needed more financial and technical support to sustain and accelerate their development efforts. However, both ODA and foreign direct investment flows to those countries were declining. Furthermore, the target of doubling their share of exports in global trade between 2011 and 2020 had not been met, and that share had remained constant

at 1.05 per cent over the three preceding years. Investments in infrastructure, renewable energies, water and sanitation, food security, health care and education had suffered a significant blow during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, the external debt burden of the least developed countries had risen from 41 per cent in 2011 to 54 per cent in 2022, leading their Governments to reduce the fiscal space needed to invest in the Goals and spend a growing share of revenue on debt servicing. Addressing the debt distress of the least developed countries and providing coordinated and appropriate solutions in a timely manner remained an urgent priority.

45. The least developed countries had been facing severe financing gaps even before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. They relied heavily on external sources of finance, such as ODA, remittances, foreign direct investment and private investment. The adoption of the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries had been a milestone in the commitment and support of the international community, and it was critical for affordable financing to be scaled up, for its proper implementation. The Group urged all countries and financial institutions to take the necessary actions to deliver the stimulus for the Goals of at least \$500 billion annually, with a special allocation to the least developed countries. In addition, developed countries should fulfil their ODA commitments and, in particular, the target of providing 0.2 of their gross national income as ODA to the least developed countries.

46. The Group welcomed the Secretary-General's call for a radical transformation of the global financial architecture. International financial institutions and multilateral development banks needed to enhance specific funding windows for the least developed countries, to better match the latter's needs and capacities. Inequalities in the issuance of special drawing rights should be corrected to allocate a higher percentage to the least developed countries. Since high technology industries tended to be more resilient, innovation and technology transfers should be promoted to the benefit of all countries. The least developed countries needed enhanced support, including in the form of scaled up aid for trade, to build their productive capacities and connect with regional and global production and supply chains.

47. The Group welcomed the renewed engagement of the international community to support the least developed countries on the path to graduation from that category. The least developed countries remained committed to eradicating poverty and reducing inequality, in keeping with the principle of leaving no

one behind. Their efforts should be complemented by adequate support measures from development partners and financial institutions.

48. **Mr. Wallace** (Jamaica), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that, at the recent Sustainable Development Goals Summit, CARICOM leaders had called for increased commitment from Governments and other stakeholders to step up implementation of the Goals. For small island and low-lying coastal developing States with inherent vulnerabilities and challenges, sustainable recovery was intrinsically linked to improved access to affordable, reliable and adequate financing for development. Adopting the multidimensional vulnerability index as a metric beyond gross domestic product was key to making grants and concessional financing available, and both the Bridgetown Initiative and the Secretary-General's stimulus package provided a road map for reforming the international financial architecture.

49. CARICOM was fully engaged in the preparatory process for the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States, at which a successor plan to the SAMOA Pathway would be adopted that addressed climate financing, digital transformation, food systems, disaster risk reduction and ocean governance, among other issues.

50. Keeping the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels was a matter of survival for the Caribbean region. The loss and damage fund must be operationalized by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at its twenty-eighth session, and bold action was needed to implement net zero deadlines for the energy transition and for the delivery of climate pledges, including the provision of \$100 billion per year in climate financing. As custodians of a rich terrestrial and marine biodiversity, CARICOM members were fully committed to the goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

51. With its reliance on tourism, the region recognized the industry's vulnerability to external shocks and was committed to ensuring that the sector was a resilient and sustainable contributor to prosperity and to achieving the Goals. Advocacy should be ramped up accordingly ahead of the commemoration of Global Tourism Resilience Day in February 2024.

52. **Ms. Lora-Santos** (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the 2030 Agenda offered a complementary approach to achieving inclusive, people-centred

sustainable development, rooted in multilateralism and international cooperation.

53. To respond to the natural disasters that had brought about significant fatalities and substantial economic losses in South-East Asia, the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response served as the region's policy backbone as part of the whole-of-ASEAN approach to responding to disasters that also included support for the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management. Furthermore, in tackling climate change, ASEAN upheld the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities in the light of different national circumstances. Developed countries must fulfil their commitments under the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and must collaborate on sharing best practices, experience and knowledge, technology transfer and capacity-building. A coordinated regional strategy was needed to respond to climate change, and the establishment of the ASEAN Centre for Climate Change in Brunei Darussalam would enhance climate change cooperation among member States and make South-East Asia a climate-resilient and low-carbon region.

54. Efforts should be scaled up to tackle environmental challenges by halting and reversing biodiversity loss, preventing loss and damage, enhancing mitigation and adaptation, ensuring the sustainable use and management of water resources and promoting sustainable development. ASEAN was developing plans for invasive species management and community-based action, and promoted nature-based solutions and an ecosystem-based approach to minimize the devastating consequences of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation in line with post-pandemic recovery efforts. In addition, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity assisted member States in mainstreaming biodiversity into development sectors, enhancing resilience against zoonotic diseases and implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, among other things. Recognizing the need to strike a balance between economic growth on the one hand and the sustainable use of natural resources and environmental protection on the other, the ASEAN Economic Community Council had adopted an implementation plan for the ASEAN Framework for Circular Economy to complement member States' climate action and decarbonization efforts.

55. **Mr. Ayestarán** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations, said that, although the COVID-19 pandemic was officially

over, its consequences were still being felt, especially in the global South, where much of the progress made in implementing the 2030 Agenda had been reversed. The policies and practices of former colonial powers, including through military alliances, as well as the many other challenges affecting sustainable development, exacerbated already difficult socioeconomic conditions, fuelled uncertainty and affected the markets for basic products, especially food and energy, often to the benefit of transnational companies. Greater effort was therefore needed as part of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development to promote financing for development, ODA, South-South cooperation, technology transfer and debt relief measures.

56. The conclusion of a legally binding instrument on the right to development, which the Group considered a universal, indivisible and inalienable human right, would help to make it a priority for the international community. Achieving sustainable development required both the strengthening of international cooperation and solidarity and the fulfilment of commitments, especially with regard to nature and the need for current consumption and production systems to become more sustainable. Since climate change threatened the whole of humanity, especially the most vulnerable, as demonstrated by recent catastrophes, there was no alternative but to change course and turn promises and declarations into action. Measures must be taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and developed countries must fulfil their promises based on the best science available and the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities in the light of different national circumstances. Furthermore, international financial institutions must mobilize resources for developing countries in non-political and non-discriminatory ways to advance mitigation and adaptation efforts.

57. The Group believed that the political declaration of the Sustainable Development Summit contained important provisions that should advance common causes for the global South, in particular reform of the international financial architecture and the provision of financing for development by multilateral development banks to support national efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The political declaration did, however, overlook a critical element affecting the daily lives of more than one third of humanity, namely the unilateral coercive measures imposed on more than 30 countries in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, which impeded their full socioeconomic development and undermined national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda.

58. **Ms. Motsumi** (Botswana), speaking on behalf of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, said that progress in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 had been inconsistent and that 32 countries continued to be marginalized from global trade. They faced fundamental shortcomings in approaches to sustainability, including their vulnerability and fragility in pursuit of sustainable development. According to recent estimates, exports and human development in such countries would have been almost one fifth higher were they not landlocked. Average per capita gross domestic product had fallen and poverty levels, despite a decline, were still above the world average. Food insecurity had risen from 43.4 per cent in 2015 to 57.9 per cent in 2022, owing in part to high global food prices. Even though the human development index had risen from 0.587 to 0.605 between 2014 and 2019, it had dropped again to 0.597 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

59. Although trade was a critical driver of economic growth, job creation and poverty reduction in both developed and developing countries, landlocked developing countries had to overcome challenges relating to seamless integration into regional and global value chains and investment networks in order to realize its benefits. High transport costs were also a major obstacle to trade, as they made goods uncompetitive in global markets, and landlocked developing countries faced price fluctuations for primary commodities, which could lead to volatile and unpredictable export earnings. Furthermore, climate-induced disasters such as desertification, drought, biodiversity loss, melting glaciers and floods had a significant impact on landlocked developing countries, many of which relied on natural resources and agriculture. Resilience must therefore be increased to safeguard future development efforts.

60. Lastly, the third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries provided an opportunity to adopt a transformative agenda that reflected the international community's commitment to achieving sustainable development by reshaping the development pathway of landlocked developing countries in a spirit of solidarity and partnership.

61. **Mr. Lautasi** (Samoa), speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, said that small island developing States had been declared a special case for sustainable development at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, yet after three decades and three programmes of action they were now in an even more precarious state owing to the international community's failure to address

fundamental issues such as climate change, debt, access to financing and the management and conservation of the oceans. A new 10-year programme of action to be adopted in 2024 must pave the way towards resilient prosperity for small island developing States, with bold and innovative approaches for economic, social and environmental transformation.

62. Recent crises and external shocks had decimated the economic and social foundations of small island developing States despite originating outside their borders. They had threatened peoples' livelihoods, exacerbated inherent vulnerabilities and compromised the ability to achieve sustainable development. Such a bleak reality did not bode well for the future, unless there was a change of course. Climate change had affected all countries, albeit in different ways, and urgent action was needed to avoid exceeding average global temperatures of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change should mark a shift from business as usual and establish a new basis for international cooperation on climate action, including operationalizing the loss and damage fund and other arrangements that supported the plight of vulnerable countries. A drastic shift away from fossil fuels was also required, with just transitions towards renewable energy, which would be reviewed in a global stocktaking on Sustainable Development Goal 7 in 2024.

63. Climate change had highlighted the need to address the gaps revealed in the midterm review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. The environment and natural resources must be managed, used, conserved and protected in ways that took into account their impact on societies. Working together, the international community could make the changes necessary to achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda.

64. **Ms. Macchiavello** (Peru), speaking on behalf of the Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends for Disaster Risk Reduction, said that the current session, which marked the midpoint of both the 2030 Agenda and the Sendai Framework, was an opportunity to accelerate sustainable development actions by embedding a risk-informed and resilience-building approach into implementation efforts, as set out in the political declaration of the high-level meeting on the midterm review of the Sendai Framework. Risk management must encompass not only natural hazards but also biological, technological, environmental and economic hazards and shocks. It was crucial to mainstream disaster risk reduction into all sustainable development,

climate and humanitarian efforts as well as public and private investments using a gender-responsive, disability-inclusive and human rights-based lens. Doing so would enable Member States to promote risk-informed decision-making, investment and behaviour to build back better and strengthen resilience in a manner that reduced new and existing risks and helped to prevent future crises. In that regard, the Co-Chairs welcomed the development of a gender action plan for the Sendai Framework.

65. The El Niño conditions developing in the tropical Pacific were of serious concern, heralding a surge in global temperatures and disruptive weather and climate patterns that could have far-reaching impacts. Rising sea surface temperatures, prolonged droughts, erratic rainfall patterns, landslides and more frequent and intense storms could disrupt agriculture, exacerbate water scarcity, displace communities and threaten food security. Preparations were crucial to limit the impacts on health, ecosystems and economies and save lives and livelihoods.

66. As the Secretary-General had indicated in his report (A/78/267), strengthening disaster risk governance, enhancing investment in disaster risk reduction and prevention and de-risking investments were key to reducing risks in social, economic and environmental systems and in international financial institutions. Legal and regulatory frameworks must also be updated to bolster risk governance. Several opportunities existed to further mainstream disaster risk reduction and resilience-building into intergovernmental processes, including the successor programmes of action for small island developing States and landlocked developing countries and preparations for the Summit of the Future and its outcome, the Pact for the Future. Furthermore, cooperation was needed at all levels to understand the risks posed by rapidly transforming social, technological and ecological systems, including advancements in artificial intelligence.

67. **Mr. Ladeb** (Tunisia), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the African Union had adopted the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme to tackle poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition by advancing agriculture and agriculture-led development. Investment in agriculture must be socially responsible, environmentally sustainable and beneficial to local smallholders. Cross-cutting issues such as the role of science, technology and innovation, infrastructure and energy gaps, human resources and institutional capacity-building, and productivity gains were also essential for integration into global value chains, which

would raise incomes and lead to more inclusive development.

68. With an estimated \$3 trillion required for climate mitigation and adaptation measures in Africa, multilateral development banks and international financial institutions must reform their practices and priorities, align and scale up funding, and simplify access to climate finance. The banks' operational models and instruments also needed to be capable of addressing the global climate emergency. With its abundant solar, wind and geothermal resources, Africa had an enormous renewable energy potential that greatly exceeded its current energy demands: solar power alone could provide the continent with 10 terawatts of electricity. Increased investment, including in digitalization, innovative technologies and cross-border power systems, was needed for a just transition to clean and affordable energy.

69. Industry was an important driver of economic transformation and growth, job creation and human development, and no country had achieved prosperity or a decent socioeconomic life for its citizens without a robust industrial sector. Manufacturing and industry stimulated entrepreneurship and enterprise development, technological dynamism and efficiency in productivity and were the strongest catalysts for higher economic growth and human development.

70. To address the lack of investment in water and sanitation, countries needed to provide access points for potable water in urban and rural communities, improve sanitation facilities and ensure appropriate waste management. Investing in climate-proof water infrastructure would ensure a sustained water supply, enhance adaptation to seasonal variability in precipitation and build resilience against climate impacts. Governments must strengthen their monitoring, evaluation and reporting on progress in access to safe drinking water, hygiene and sanitation. Lastly, the African Continental Free Trade Area was another key element in efforts to build a prosperous and sustainable future for the continent.

71. **Mr. Abdelaal** (Egypt) said that the crucial global challenge was eradicating poverty. Even amid the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and in the face of the current geopolitical crisis, his country was moving ahead with its Egypt Vision 2030 strategy, and in particular its Decent Life anti-poverty initiative, which targeted over 60 million rural residents at a cost of \$52 billion over three years.

72. Egypt had just hosted the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which had

reached a breakthrough agreement on a loss and damage fund, launched mitigation and fair transition programmes, and stressed the need to mobilize climate finance. Climate discussions should proceed comprehensively on all tracks. He reminded the Committee of the initiative for greater coordination in implementation of the three Rio conventions put forward by Egypt when it hosted the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2018. Egypt had set the goal of getting 42 per cent of its energy from new and renewable sources by 2035. It had just opened the massive Benban Solar Park and was also investing in new technologies such as green hydrogen.

73. **Mr. Al-Kuwari** (Qatar) said that his country had been proud to have co-facilitated – along with Ireland – the consultations for the political declaration of the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, which it hoped would be a transformational document. Qatar was continuing to implement the 2030 Agenda at the national level. Its ambitious Qatar Vision 2030 plan included a number of climate-change-related initiatives and made the right to education a priority. Qatar had led efforts to adopt General Assembly resolution [74/275](#), which had designated 9 September as the International Day to Protect Education from Attack.

74. Qatar provided development and humanitarian assistance around the world and was active in multilateral crisis response agencies. The opening of the United Nations House in Doha was a reflection of its commitment to international partnerships. It had been a founding investor in the United Nations development system accelerator laboratories, to which it had contributed some \$30 million. The Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries had set forth ambitious commitments that Qatar hoped would contribute to realizing the 2030 Agenda.

75. **Ms. Ríos Serna** (Colombia) said that the current sustainable development crisis stemmed from an unsustainable, unjust and unequal economic model that favoured the accumulation of capital over life itself, was based on fossil fuels and unsustainable consumption and production patterns and led to the destruction of nature. Indeed, the effects of the global climate crisis had recently been felt in New York in the form of wildfire smoke, unseasonal heatwaves and flooding. The window for climate action was narrowing, but solutions were possible. Radical transformation of the economic model could give developing countries access to the resources needed to implement the 2030 Agenda and address the triple planetary crisis. With excess debt and the cost of capital hampering the achievement of sustainable development, innovative financial

instruments could increase investment and public financing, provide liquidity and free up fiscal space, including through debt swaps for climate and nature.

76. More robust leadership and commitment were also needed because it was not only resources that were lacking, but also political will. Millions of people, including the marginalized, had called for change. The Government of Colombia was leading by example by taking urgent action to achieve sustainable development, and would ask those who had contributed most to the development crisis to act according to their historic responsibilities. The country would prioritize action on mitigation, adaptation, means of implementation and loss and damage, based on science and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, and called for the abandoning of all fossil fuels, a low-emission, climate-resilient trajectory and a just and inclusive energy transition. Colombia welcomed the recently adopted Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, and called for the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the mobilization of significant resources for that purpose.

77. Risk prevention should be incorporated into all political and planning decisions to increase resilience and preparedness, including in relation to the current unprecedented El Niño conditions and future shocks. Lastly, Colombia would ensure that a focus on human rights, justice, climate and gender was incorporated into all discussions of the Committee.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.