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Official Records

President: Mr. Francis (Trinidad and Tobago)

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

Agenda item 138 (continued)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

Letter dated 13 March 2024 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly (A/78/707/Add.2)

The President: In keeping with established practice, I would like to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/78/707/Add.2, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communication contained in document A/78/707/Add.1, Liberia has made the payments necessary to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I therefore take it that the General Assembly takes note of the information contained in this document?

It was so decided.

Commemorative meeting to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Agenda item 69 (continued)

Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

The President: The General Assembly will now resume its consideration of agenda item 69, entitled “Elimination of racism, racial discrimination,

xenophobia and related intolerance”, to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in accordance with paragraph 54 of resolution 78/234, of 22 December 2023.

We gather once again today — as we do annually — to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which is an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to combating and eliminating racial discrimination in all its forms and manifestations and to standing up alongside those who continue to fight racism and racial discrimination. We must use it as a moment to amplify the voices of anti-racism activists such as Zulaikha Patel from South Africa, who stood up against racism in her high school and hopes to empower young girls through her activism, and Ayọ Tometi, a human rights activist who follows in the footsteps of leaders such as Martin Luther King and uses her advocacy to ensure that race, immigration and gender justice remain at the forefront of global conversations.

Yet millions across the world still endure various forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, which continue to manifest in new and increasingly perverse ways. I therefore open today’s commemoration with a singular message: racism and racial discrimination are a flagrant violation of human rights, dignity and the equality inherent in all human beings. They are morally wrong and have no place in our world and must therefore be roundly repudiated.

The timely and highly pertinent theme guiding this year’s observance is “A decade of recognition, justice and development: implementation of the International

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Decade for People of African Descent” — a theme close to my own heart. The launch of the International Decade for People of African Descent from 2015 to 2024 in resolution 68/237 was a landmark decision of the General Assembly. It calls on the United Nations, Member States, civil society and all other relevant actors to work together with people of African descent under the theme of recognition, justice and development. It led to the adoption of several measures at the national level in multiple countries, including the adoption of national action plans against racism and the recognition of the rights of people of African descent in national constitutions, as well as respect for the diverse heritage, culture and contribution of people of African descent to the development of societies and civilization. As we conclude the International Decade this year, we must frankly reflect on the lessons that we have learned and candidly assess if we have achieved all our goals.

Regrettably, today’s reality is heavily influenced by the legacies of past atrocities and crimes, including colonialism, the slave trade and slavery itself. Those legacies continue to be acutely felt by people of African descent and invariably manifest themselves in the form of systemic racism in many countries around the world. People of African descent face many injustices as a result, as evidenced by disproportionately high levels of poverty and hardship; higher levels of unemployment; a heightened vulnerability to police brutality; and the lack of access to education, health care and social protection. And it is often women of African descent who bear the heaviest burden, as they are confronted by the twin reinforcing evils of gender-based and racial discrimination. Therefore, as the international community honours past victims of racial prejudice and injustice, we must intensify our efforts to dismantle entrenched systems that perpetuate the injustices. Next Monday, we will commemorate the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. With a view to generating actionable outcomes, on that occasion I will convene a morning *gayap* dialogue focusing on the issue of reparatory justice.

Let us recall that the full realization of, and respect for, the human rights of all individuals, without distinction of any kind, is crucial to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and leaving no one behind. It is therefore essential that we strengthen international cooperation and understanding to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by all and redouble

our collective efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination. Concurrently, we must adopt and reinforce national, regional and international legal frameworks, in accordance with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, while ensuring its full and effective implementation.

Let me conclude by urging us all, as the International Decade draws to a close, to effectively leverage the few remaining months we have. While we contemplate our achievements and shortcomings, let us redouble our resolve to do all that we can to address persistent forms of discrimination. Let us dismantle the structures and paradigms that perpetuate modern-day racism and racial discrimination. Let us usher in a world in which racial equality and equal justice prevail.

In accordance with rule 70 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I now give the floor to Mr. Courtenay Rattray, Chef de Cabinet of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, to speak on behalf of the Secretary-General.

Mr. Rattray: On behalf of the Secretary-General, who regrettably cannot be here in person owing to official travel, it is an honour for me to join members today to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. I have the following message from the Secretary-General.

“Racism is an evil infecting countries and societies around the world, a deeply entrenched legacy of colonialism and enslavement. The results are devastating — opportunities stolen, dignity denied, rights violated, lives taken and lives destroyed. Racism is rife, but it impacts communities differently. The theme of this year’s International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination highlights that, while focusing on people of African descent, recognition, justice and development. People of African descent face a unique history of systemic and institutionalized racism and profound challenges today. We must respond to that reality, learning from and building on the tireless advocacy of people of African descent. That includes Governments advancing policies and other measures to eliminate racism against people of African descent as well as tech firms urgently addressing racial bias in artificial intelligence. On

this day, let us commit to work together to build a world of dignity, justice and equal opportunity for every community, everywhere.”

I would also like to add a few words of my own. Today is a day to remember and inspire action. More than 60 years ago today, 69 people were killed, and many more were injured, when South African police opened fire on peaceful protesters in Sharpeville. Those courageous individuals were demonstrating against the pass laws that stood at the rotten heart of the apartheid system. That system was an institutionalization of the racist colonial ideology that had dominated the globe for centuries, an ideology that still shapes the world today, particularly in the form of the racism that permeates communities and societies across the globe. It is high time that we shook ourselves free.

Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance are everywhere around us. They are entrenched in institutions, social structures, policies and practices. They are living, breathing realities for billions of people around the world who face dehumanization, marginalization and exclusion. They violate their dignity and their rights. They deny them and their societies the chance to reach their full potential. They fuel silent discrimination in health, education, employment, housing, the criminal justice system and more. Many people and communities are victims of such injustice and intolerance: Africans and people of African descent, Asians and people of Asian descent, minorities, indigenous people, migrants, Christians, Jews, Muslims and many others. However, every community experiences prejudice and discrimination differently.

This year’s International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination focuses on people of African descent. This is a people who have suffered the horrors of chattel slavery, the cruelty and inhumanity of the Jim Crow laws and much more, people who continue to live with slavery’s legacy. Yet these are a people who have fought back against such injustice over the centuries and who continue to do so today.

Eliminating racial discrimination against people of African descent requires us to recognize its unique characteristics and address its historical roots. The International Decade for People of African Descent, the theme of this year’s International Day, has helped to inspire important action. The advocacy of people of African descent has increased awareness of the

linkages between past injustices and contemporary forms and manifestations of systemic racism and its consequences, and it has driven change. But we have much further to go to eliminate racism against people of African descent. Many parties have a role to play, from technology firms stamping out bias in their algorithms to civil society fighting injustice and ensuring the voices of people of African descent are heard. Action from Governments is also critical.

First, States must comply with their obligations and use the tools that we have. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action are our blueprint for a world free of racism. I call on States to ratify the Convention and implement both documents in full.

Secondly, Governments should put in place robust laws, policies and other measures to address the discrimination faced by people of African descent and others, and they should disaggregate data by race or ethnic origin and publish it to assess whether such measures are working and to help to improve their design.

Thirdly, they must bring people of African descent into decision-making and engage in drafting the United Nations declaration on the respect, protection and fulfilment of the human rights of people of African descent.

Fourthly, they must tackle history head-on. For centuries, men, women and children were ripped from their homes and communities as part of the transatlantic slave trade. They were beaten, raped and brutalized, their humanity denied, treated as nothing more than chattel. We can draw a direct line from the evils inflicted on them and the violence and horrors of colonialism to the systemic racism and discrimination of today. We must look this truth squarely in the eye and act on it.

For myself, I am proud to have played a part in securing a permanent memorial to the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade here at the United Nations, but commemoration is not enough. We need justice. The countries responsible must have the political will and moral courage to deliver reparatory justice. That should include restitution where appropriate. Businesses that profited and secured long-term prosperity from the trade in human souls should also consider the case for reparations.

Eliminating racial discrimination requires action. It requires hard work, but it benefits us all. Equality, I think members will agree, is good for society. It strengthens social bonds, harnesses the untapped potential and creativity of millions who are marginalized, fosters peace and advances the rule of law, and it is long overdue. Racism has poisoned our world for far too long. So, on this day, let us all commit to play our part in stamping it out, redressing the past and building a world of equality, justice and respect for us all.

The President: I thank the Chef de Cabinet of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General for his statement.

Before proceeding further, I would like to consult members on inviting the following speakers to make statements, as mentioned in my letter dated 7 March 2024: Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights; Ms. Verene Alberta Shepherd, Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; Ms. June Soomer, Chair-designate of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent; and Dr. Uché Blackstock, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Advancing Health Equity.

If there is no objection, may I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly, without setting a precedent, to invite those speakers to make statements at this meeting?

It was so decided (decision 78/547).

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Brands Kehris.

Ms. Brands Kehris: It is a privilege to join members today on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted more than 75 years ago, proclaimed in its very first article that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. This was a promise of hope. Yet, dehumanization, marginalization and exclusion continue to affect, and often shape, the lives of Africans and people of African descent, Asians and people of Asian descent, people from minority groups, indigenous peoples, migrants and many others around the world.

Our gathering here today is a solemn reminder of the enduring suffering caused by racial discrimination worldwide. But it is also a crucial occasion to reaffirm

our commitment to combating racial discrimination and to accelerating action to end this scourge. And for that, we meet at a decisive moment. This is the last year of the International Decade for People of African Descent. It is an opportunity to reflect on the past 10 years, take stock of progress and lessons learned and, where needed, adjust course in the long road ahead to achieve the goals of recognition, justice and development.

The Decade has served as a unique platform to facilitate dialogue on how to address the systemic racism and racial discrimination experienced by people of African descent globally, stemming from the legacies of colonialism and enslavement. It offered concrete recommendations to assist States in fulfilling their core human rights obligations, notably under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and commitments in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

It has prompted several States to adopt national legal and policy frameworks recognizing the rights of people of African descent and prohibiting discrimination based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin. And through the five regional meetings held under its auspices, the Decade has also deepened our understanding of the challenges that people of African descent face.

From political participation to employment and housing, education and health and their interactions with law enforcement and the criminal justice system, people of African descent continue in many countries to face historical and social invisibility, including as a result of a lack of data disaggregated by race or ethnic groups. The body of work carried out under the International Decade, as well as that of United Nations anti-racism human rights mechanisms and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, points to the need to adopt comprehensive approaches to ensure the periodic monitoring, assessment and revision of wide-ranging measures to ensure substantive equality and guarantee equal access to opportunities, resources and decision-making power.

The International Decade has also been a much-needed celebration of the histories and invaluable contributions of people of African descent to numerous societies worldwide. Their resilience, strength and struggles against centuries of oppression and marginalization must inspire us all to urgently address the structural and institutional barriers that perpetuate

racial discrimination and inequality today. And I am pleased to say that steps are being taken in that direction. Last December, we marked the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at a high-level event held in Geneva on 11 and 12 December 2023, which resulted in a number of human rights pledges towards the elimination of racial discrimination, including, for example, enacting public policies related to access to social and economic rights and the implementation of national action plans against racial discrimination or national awareness-raising campaigns. Many human rights mechanisms have issued similar recommendations to Member States. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations anti-racism mechanisms, including the recently established Permanent Forum on People of African Descent and the International Independent Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in Law Enforcement, stand ready to work with States, United Nations entities, civil society actors and other stakeholders to deepen the dialogue and collaboration on those issues.

Combating racial discrimination is — and has been — at the core of our human rights work. In response to the murder of George Floyd and the global mass protests that ensued, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights issued the four-point Agenda towards Transformative Change for Racial Justice and Equality of 2021, which lays out not only a vision but actionable recommendations for States to reverse cultures of denial, dismantle systemic racism against Africans and people of African descent in all areas of life, confront the legacies of enslavement, the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans and colonialism and deliver reparatory justice.

Last year, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights unpacked key aspects of that agenda in a guidance note that supports States in fulfilling their obligation to facilitate the meaningful, inclusive and safe participation of people of African descent. Echoing the calls of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the latest report (A/78/317) of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent further recommends that States combine measures such as restitution, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition in order to build societies that are free from systemic racism and racial discrimination.

As we can see, recommendations that chart the way forward are available. Now it is time to act. It is essential that efforts towards recognition, justice and development for people of African descent be pursued vigorously beyond 2024. I joined others in calling for a second decade to be proclaimed. In doing so, we must listen to, respect and secure the perspectives of those impacted by compounding forms of discrimination, marginalization and violence, including women from racial, religious or ethnic minorities.

To that end, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights encourages States to engage in consultative processes and contribute to the drafting of a United Nations declaration on the promotion of, and full respect for, the human rights of people of African descent, as well as the elaboration of complementary standards to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Racism is not abstract. It deeply and directly affects people and further fractures already divided societies. And it is still with us across the globe. It is worrisome that, in some situations, we even witness some political leaders or community leaders enabling and fuelling intolerance and hatred towards specific groups through inflammatory rhetoric, which is then further amplified through social media, artificial intelligence and other new digital technologies. That only reinforces the urgency of the need to take firm and resolute action. It is our collective human rights duty to fight hatred and racism and build inclusive societies in which diversity is celebrated and every individual is treated with dignity and respect. Together, we can ensure that the next decade brings true recognition, justice and development for people of African descent and all those who suffer racial discrimination, marginalization and oppression.

The President: I thank Assistant Secretary-General Brands Kehris for her statement.

I now give the floor to Ms. Verene Albertha Shepherd, Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Ms. Shepherd: I offer greetings on behalf of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which I have the honour of chairing.

Permit me to begin, in this Women's History Month, by paying tribute to the women who were killed in the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, which

gave inspiration to the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, including Maria Molebatsi, Elisa Moletsi, Nora Mbele, Miriam Sekitla and Christina Motsepe. Prior waves of activism on this side of the Atlantic, of course, brought to the fore rebel women such as Maroon Queen Nana and Kitty Scarlet of Jamaica, Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman of the United States of America, and Cécile Fatiman and Marie-Jeanne Lamartinière of our beloved and beleaguered Ayiti. To speak the names of the ancestors is to make them live again and influence our actions today.

The commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination provides an opportunity to take stock of the persistent gaps in the implementation of our shared commitment to protect hundreds of millions of people whose human rights continue to be violated due to racial discrimination. It is also an opportunity to reaffirm our recommitment to fight all forms of racism everywhere — a commitment made in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the Programme of Activities for the International Decade for People of African Descent, the drafting of which I had the honour of leading, and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which is only one of a number of binding international legal instruments that prohibit racial discrimination. The general recommendations of the Committee show how it can be achieved, including notably general recommendation No. 34, on racial discrimination against people of African descent, adopted in 2011; general recommendation No. 35, on combating racist hate speech, adopted in 2013; and general recommendation No. 36, on preventing and combating racial profiling by law enforcement officials, adopted in 2020.

With the Convention's near universal level of ratification by 182 States parties, we should be able to speak about the elimination of racial discrimination as a common goal of humankind. As my Committee monitors the implementation of the Convention by State parties, we are regrettably observing racial discrimination, racist hate speech and racially motivated violence continuing to rear their ugly heads. Too many of us still refuse to believe in human rights and justice for all. Conflicts around the world and impunity for racial discrimination threaten to derail whatever gains we have made.

Indeed, if Jamaican reggae icon and our social conscience Bob Marley were alive today, he would be resurrecting his song "War", because there is indeed war in the East, war in the West, war up North and war down South. And Peter Tosh would be wailing: "everyone is crying out for peace, yes; none is crying out for justice". Well, we may take issue with Tosh, because some of us are crying out for both peace and justice, especially in these days of escalating conflicts. The Committee consistently calls for urgent and concerted action to address racist and dehumanizing public discourses and racial discrimination and for the perpetrators of racial discrimination to be brought to justice. Like Tosh, we want equal rights and justice — the second pillar of the theme of the International Decade for People of African Descent, without which there can be no lasting peace.

As we continue to reflect on the theme "A decade of recognition, justice and development: implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent", we must recognize that not everyone has benefited in the ways promised by its aspirational theme, even as the International Decade for People of African Descent approaches its end. And I should emphasize that the Committee supports the call for a second decade. The central aim of the decade — restoring the dignity of victims of racial discrimination — remains elusive, particularly for the victims of the untold suffering and evils inflicted on millions of men, women and children as a result of chattel enslavement, the transatlantic trafficking in enslaved Africans, colonialism, apartheid, genocide and past tragedies. In that regard, the call for reparatory justice from those countries that colonized and underdeveloped Africa and the Americas, including the Caribbean, extracting their wealth but not ensuring their development, remains largely unaddressed, although I am pleased to note that there is some momentum. Sir Ellis Clarke from Trinidad and Tobago was clear that

"an administering Power is not entitled to extract for centuries all that can be got out of a colony and when that has been done to relieve itself of its obligations".

We call on States to respond to the growing calls for reparatory justice and economic empowerment for people of African descent. It is important for States to commit anew to leaving no person of African descent behind in their efforts to realize the Sustainable Development Goals. Indeed, without a global commitment to justice, the other recommended

activities of the International Decade for People of African Descent will not be realized. As the iconic Rosa Parks said,

“the future of peace and prosperity that we seek for all the world’s peoples needs a foundation of tolerance, security, equality and justice”.

The President: I thank Ms. Shepherd for her statement.

I now give the floor to Ms. June Soomer, Chair-designate of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent.

Ms. Soomer: It is an honour to address the Assembly at this important event. Today marks the sixtieth anniversary of the tragic Sharpeville massacre in South Africa, where peaceful protesters were brutally killed for opposing apartheid laws. This day holds immense significance, as it serves as a stark reminder of the atrocities perpetuated by a system rooted in racial discrimination and the enduring struggle for justice and equality around the world.

In his 1920 Declaration of the Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World, Marcus Garvey noted that discrimination denied the common rights due to human beings for no other reason than their race and colour. More than 100 years later, the veracity of that statement is self-evident, as there is not a place in the world where discrimination against people of African descent does not occur. And may I add the specificity of women of African descent, who remain one of the most marginalized groups in the world.

As we reflect on the theme of the commemoration today, “A decade of recognition, justice and development: implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent”, it is imperative to recognize the significance of the International Decade for People of African Descent. This crucial initiative stands as a beacon of hope and progress in the fight against systemic racism, discrimination, xenophobia, related intolerance and the inequality and invisibility faced by people of African descent.

In commemorating this Day, we must reaffirm our unwavering commitment to upholding human rights for all and tackling the root causes of systemic racial discrimination stemming from the historic injustices of enslavement, colonization, dispossession and apartheid. Effectively addressing those profound inequalities requires concerted efforts to dismantle discriminatory

systems and structures, promote diversity and inclusion and ensure equitable access for all individuals, regardless of race or ethnicity, to opportunities and development justice.

The International Decade for People of African Descent provided a unique opportunity to advance those principles and realize meaningful change. Although the Decade ends in December 2024, it is not too late to acknowledge the historical injustices I mentioned earlier and pave the way for reparatory justice and sustainable development to address the socioeconomic disparities faced by people of African descent, including through access to education, health care, employment and justice, among other human rights.

The International Decade calls for action — and I dare say accountability — and also emphasizes the importance of amplifying the voices of marginalized communities and empowering them to effectively participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives and thereby to build a more equitable and just society for all in which no one is left behind.

Since the proclamation of the International Decade, some States have taken significant steps in developing and implementing legislative measures, national action plans and other policies and programmes to combat the racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance faced by people of African descent. Yet the call for action remains urgent and imperative. States must adopt a proactive stance, aligning their efforts with the pressing demands and aspirations of people of African descent. It is now incumbent upon States to take decisive steps towards reparatory and economic justice, demonstrating heightened political resolve and deeper engagement in promoting the International Decade.

The Summit of the Future presents a crucial juncture to solidify the shared obligation of States in fostering unified endeavours to combat structural and systemic racial discrimination, along with its root causes. It is an opportunity for States to unequivocally pledge to take decisive action towards that end and forge a future of true equality, dignity and justice for all.

The establishment of the Permanent Forum on People of African descent, as well as the ongoing process on the elaboration of the draft United Nations declaration on the promotion, protection and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent, have also been crucial achievements of the International Decade. As we embark on the concluding phase of the

International Decade for People of African Descent, it becomes clear that the journey towards racial justice is far from complete. In that regard, I welcome the latest discussions in the United Nations towards promoting the International Decade, including the regional meetings on the International Decade for People of African Descent for the Asia and the Pacific region, at which the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights encouraged States to proclaim a second decade for people of African descent starting in 2025.

The Permanent Forum in its annual report also urged the General Assembly to proclaim the second International Decade for People of African Descent with a view to taking further action to bring about the full recognition of, and justice and development for, people of African descent. We recognize the critical necessity of centring the forthcoming international decade on reparatory justice, recognition and equity and the address of systemic and structural racial discrimination at the local, national, regional and global levels. The Permanent Forum is ready to support States in those efforts.

I also take this opportunity to inform the Assembly that the third session of the Permanent Forum will be held in Geneva from 16 to 19 April, at which we will discuss, among a number of thematic issues, the expectations for and challenges of implementing a second international decade for people of African descent. I invite everyone to actively participate in the session and to contribute to our global effort to improve the lives and livelihoods of people of African descent worldwide.

The President: I now give the floor to Dr. Blackstock.

Dr. Blackstock: I would like to start off with a story. I am an emergency medicine physician by training. In the spring of 2020, I was working at an urgent care clinic in central Brooklyn, not far from here. At that time, we were the epicentre of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. On a given shift, for about 12 hours, I would see between 80 and 100 patients, most of them with COVID-19 symptoms. I remember one day that I walked into a room, after what seemed like an endless stream of patients, to find a young Black woman. She was there for shortness of breath after having been diagnosed with COVID-19 a few weeks prior. As I walked into her room, I was covered in personal protective equipment from head to toe. My skin could barely be seen. I introduced myself

to her. I said: “Hello, I’m Dr. Blackstock. How can I help you?”. She said: “Can I stop you?”. I said: “Yes”. She said: “Can I ask you a question? Are you Black?”. I said: “Yes”. She let out the deepest breath and said: “Thank you. I am so glad that you will listen to me”. In that moment, I was proud to be the physician that she needed. But it also saddened me that obviously she had had experiences with health professionals who did not listen to her, who minimized her complaints or ignored or dismissed them because she was a Black woman.

The work that I do as a physician and an advocate is around health equity. It is to ensure that every individual, regardless of their racial background, has a fair and just opportunity to attain their highest level of health. We need to recognize the social and political context in which people live, work, love and pray. But achieving health equity requires ongoing societal efforts to address historical and contemporary injustices, to overcome the economic, social and other obstacles to good health and health care and to eliminate preventable racial health inequities.

I am Dr. Uché Blackstock. I am the daughter of Mr. Earl Blackstock, an immigrant from Jamaica who came to this country when he was 17 years old. I am the daughter of Dr. Dale Blackstock. She is the original Dr. Blackstock. She is the descendant of enslaved Africans in this country. My mother was the first person in her family to go to college and that is because of barriers due to systemic racism. After college, she ended up at Harvard Medical School. My twin sister, Oni Blackstock, and I are the first Black mother-daughter legacy from Harvard Medical School. But that happened in 2005 and since then, there has only been one other Black mother-daughter legacy from Harvard Medical School. Again, these are the systemic barriers that racism presents in front of us.

With my organization, Advancing Health Equity, I work with health-care organizations to dismantle racism in medicine. I recently authored a book entitled *Legacy: A Black Physician Reckons with Racism in Medicine* to explain why we still see appalling racial health inequities in 2024. Even though I have college and medical degrees from Harvard University, I am still five times more likely — as a Black woman, as a woman of African descent — to die of pregnancy-related complications than my white peers. In this country, Black infants are still more than twice as likely to die in their first year of life than white infants, and that is a larger gap today than 15 years before the end of slavery.

In this country, we have the lowest life expectancy of many high-income countries, and that is driven by the low life expectancy of Black and indigenous people.

The statistics should make us angry. The solutions are to dismantle both interpersonal and systemic racism, because racism, through its practices and policies, harms and shortens our lives. It leads to a phenomenon that is called weathering — living with the stress of everyday racism causes a chronic wear and tear on our bodies that prematurely ages us and makes us susceptible to chronic diseases. We even know that living with racism has an impact on how our genes are expressed. Therefore, while race is a social construct, racism is a human-made construct. And what that actually can have an effect on is how genes are turned on and off. And that is why we see communities of African descent more likely to carry higher burdens of chronic disease, such as diabetes and heart disease.

We have the solutions, and the solutions require all our health professionals to be trained in culturally responsive care and to recognize their own internal biases and racism. We need to create healthier communities. And we know that health is not just about access to health care — it is about having safe and affordable housing, gainful employment, quality education, green space and access to healthy foods for everybody. We need to centre our communities of African descent, their needs and priorities.

As I said, racism harms people of African descent. It makes us sick. It shortens our lives. We deserve to live long, full lives. We have the solutions, but we need to act swiftly, because this is a matter of life and death.

The President: I thank Dr. Blackstock for her statement.

I now give the floor to the representative of Uganda, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mrs. Nabeta (Uganda): On behalf of the Group of African States, allow me to affirm the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action on the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. We also reaffirm the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, whose purpose is to promote and encourage universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action is clear. Any doctrine of racial superiority

is scientifically false, morally condemnable, socially unjust and dangerous and must be rejected. The Group therefore urges the need for us all to resolve and adopt all necessary measures to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and manifestations, to prevent and combat racist doctrines and practices in order to promote understanding among races, and to build an international community that is truly inclusive, equal and free from all forms of racism and racial discrimination.

This year marks the end of the International Decade for People of African Descent. We therefore welcome today's theme, entitled "A decade of recognition, justice and development: implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent". The African Group reiterates its commitment to the elaboration of the draft United Nations declaration on the promotion, protection and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent and continues to support the work of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action on the elaboration of the draft declaration, with inputs submitted by the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent.

Since its establishment, the Forum has played an important role in the improvement of the safety, quality of life and livelihoods of people of African descent. The Group welcomes its contribution to the implementation of the International Decade of People of African Descent, in close coordination with existing Human Rights Council mechanisms on people of African descent and on racial discrimination. The African Group, in line with the African Union, stresses the need to address the untold stories and sufferings inflicted on millions of men, women and children as a result of slavery, the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism, apartheid, genocides and past tragedies, with the aim of restoring the dignity, integrity and healing of all those who suffered and continue to suffer from the impact of those tragedies.

People of African descent in various countries have for decades called for accountability and redress of the harms suffered due to enslavement, the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism and continuing successive racial discriminatory policies, systems and practices. Regrettably, there have been no comprehensive reparations to date for all the harms suffered, as called for in the Durban Declaration and its follow-up resolutions. It is time to create the solutions and reverse

the lasting consequences of institutionalized racism that many Africans and people of African descent suffer. We should candidly discuss and reflect on the best practices, challenges, threats, available opportunities and solutions with respect to the implementation of the International Decade of the People of African Descent and the provisions highlighted in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action that are relevant to people of African descent. We must not forget to recognize and address on an equal footing the systemic and structural racism that exist in and pervade throughout society, negatively impact on education, development, health and well-being and perpetuate intergenerational traumas.

Colonialism and the enslavement of Africans for decades and continuing successive racial discriminatory policies, systems and practices have had and continue to have negative political and socioeconomic impacts on communities and countries around the world. Historical injustices have undeniably contributed to the poverty, underdevelopment, marginalization, social exclusion, economic disparities, instability and insecurity that affect many people in different parts of the world, in particular in developing countries. There is therefore a need, as recognized by the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, to develop programmes for the social and economic development of those societies and the diaspora, based on the spirit of solidarity and mutual respect, in the areas of debt relief, poverty eradication and the transfer of technology, including digital technologies, to name but a few. Building a future of justice requires mending an unjust past.

The African Union recognizes the African diaspora, which includes people of African descent, as its sixth region. The Constitutive Act of the African Union and the African Union's 2063 Agenda commit to the full participation of the African diaspora as an integral part of the African continent's development. We believe that reparatory justice is crucial to building racial equality. Reparations for slavery and colonialism include not only justice and accountability for historic wrongs but also the eradication of the scars of racial inequality, subordination and discrimination that were built and continue to exist through policies, practices and systems. In December 2022, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted its first resolution on Africa's reparations agenda and the human rights of Africans in the diaspora and people of African descent worldwide, in which the Commission called on States

to establish a committee to consult, seek the truth and conceptualize reparations from Africa's perspective, describe the harm occasioned by the tragedies of the past, establish a case for reparations for Africa's claim, pursue justice for the trade and trafficking in enslaved Africans, colonialism, colonial crimes and racial segregation, and contribute to non-recurrence and reconciliation of the past.

We are pleased by the Governments that have taken initiatives to apologize and redress past legacies, including through the enactment of human rights laws, memorialization, education and awareness-raising. We believe that those initiatives, together with the effective inclusive equal participation of people of African descent in the design and implementation of reparatory justice, could result in meaningful reparations. We look forward to the implementation of positive and affirmative actions, including the return of stolen assets and economic development programmes.

We agree with the report of the Secretary-General that, while some communities undertake significant and commendable local initiatives to redress the harms of racism and enslavement, such initiatives fall far short of comprehensive State responses. Regrettably, we realize that the greatest barrier to reparations for colonialism and slavery may be that the biggest beneficiaries of both lack the political will and the moral courage to pursue such reparations for people of African descent. We appeal to States to actively participate in the ongoing discussions in Geneva on the draft United Nations declaration on the promotion, protection and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent. We are convinced that the draft declaration should contribute to the global framework to redress the continuing systemic racism, racial discrimination systems and practices inherited from slavery, colonialism, apartheid and other tragedies. For we must overcome petty prejudice and owe our ultimate allegiance to the global human community, because we are all part of the human race.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bahrain, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States. Allow me at the outset to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination

of Racial Discrimination. The theme of this year's International Day is timely, as 2024 marks the closure of the International Decade for People of African Descent.

Hundreds of millions of people identifying themselves as being of African descent live in other parts of the world outside the African continent, including in the Asia-Pacific region. Racial discrimination and the legacies of slavery and colonialism continue to prevent billions of people from enjoying their full human rights and freedoms. For centuries, people of African descent have been victims of racism, racial discrimination and enslavement and have been denied many of their rights. They should be treated with fairness and respect for their dignity and should not suffer discrimination of any kind.

In our shared struggle and fight against racial discrimination, we are guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular the core principle that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. The Asia-Pacific Group reaffirms its commitment to combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in support of the successful implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

The Asia-Pacific Group is concerned that despite the efforts being made, instances and various forms of racism and racial discrimination remain widespread. Such acts should be condemned, whenever and wherever they occur. We are particularly alarmed at the global rise in hate speech, constituting incitement to racial discrimination, hostility and violence, and we stress the importance of addressing it in accordance with international law.

We need to promote the values of tolerance and foster a culture of inclusion and mutual respect within the societies of our countries and the world. We renew our appeal to the international community to take concrete action, accompanied by strong political will, to mobilize all efforts at the national, regional and international levels to address all forms and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance through cooperation, partnership and integration. We would also like to reiterate the importance of the full and effective implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

In conclusion, the Asia-Pacific Group remains unwavering in its commitment to the global fight for the elimination of racial discrimination, including

against people of African descent. That continues to be a top priority for the Asia-Pacific States, and we call on all countries to take urgent steps to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Guatemala, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin America and Caribbean States.

Ms. Rodríguez Mancia (Guatemala): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the Group of Latin America and Caribbean States (GRULAC).

We express our deep appreciation to the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Dennis Francis, for convening this commemorative plenary meeting to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

We also thank Mr. Courtenay Rattray, Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris, Ms. Verene Alberta Shepherd, Ms. June Soomer and Ms. Uché Blackstock for their participation in this meeting. Their active engagement with the General Assembly assists us in shedding light on the many challenges that remain ahead.

We continue to remember and honour the victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, who have suffered through past injustices. Yet we also do not forget that we still have work to do, as those injustices — though changed in form — continue to be perpetuated.

Racial discrimination is at the heart of the repugnant views of white supremacist movements and other extremist groups. We are alarmed at the spread in many parts of the world of various racist extremist movements, based on ideologies that fuel racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Discrimination is ever-present in the xenophobia experienced by migrants and refugees and the exclusion faced by persons with disabilities. We must redouble efforts to dismantle structural and systemic racism and racial discrimination.

Almost 60 years ago, the General Assembly adopted resolution 2106 (XX) establishing the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination — one of the oldest human rights conventions. Although we have recorded great progress on some fronts and achieved many milestones in response to the commitments that we, as Member States, have pledged in order to bring to fruition the ultimate goal of that Convention, much remains to be

done to fully eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and manifestations and to prevent and combat racist doctrines and practices.

We recall the third World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, and we reaffirm the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. At the current juncture, in which we observe with concern the persistent spread of racist and xenophobic ideas, the need to implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and its follow-up processes remain just as valid.

We cannot afford to allow the scourges of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance to continue to grow in our societies. Humankind already knows what happens when the dangerous and false idea of racial or ethnic superiority is not fought against. The fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance is key in order to leave no one behind and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In that endeavour, the protection of all human rights is fundamental.

We also note the work that still needs to be done and the ubiquity of discrimination in all forms, particularly against people of African descent, indigenous peoples, migrants and refugees, minorities and women and girls, as well as social and economic and financial discrimination. We therefore unequivocally reaffirm our commitment to eliminating those evils.

The lack of progress made in achieving gender equality and continued violence against women and girls, linked to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, generate multiple forms of discrimination based on gender. We need to do more to empower all women and girls through the elimination of gender stereotypes in every sphere of life, especially in the context of innovation and technological change and education in the digital age. Moreover, we must redouble our efforts to eliminate racial and gender discrimination and, in that sense, promote and adopt gender-responsive approaches to policies, strategies and programmes of action against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

The Latin American and Caribbean States constitute a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual group of countries that, as a region, expresses its diversity through race, colour, descent and national and ethnic origin. Our Member States understand that it is

necessary to adopt effective measures to eliminate and remedy disparities and inequalities, including actions to accelerate social inclusion and close gaps in access to education and employment. It is also necessary to promote access to justice and the effective enjoyment of the rights of people of African descent in the context of judicial systems.

We consider the establishment of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent in 2021 as an important step to eliminate racial discrimination. We continue to affirm our support for its initiatives and its mandate in order to improve the safety, quality of life and livelihoods of people of African descent. In that regard, we urge all Member States, the United Nations system and international and regional organizations to fully commit and intensify their efforts to ensure the functioning of the Permanent Forum, including by supporting its secretariat in order to comply with its mandate, as we advocate for a greater allocation of resources within the United Nations system for the effective implementation of the Programme of Action, the activities of the International Decade for People of African Descent and the Permanent Forum. We look forward to the upcoming third session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent to be held in Geneva in April.

As the International Decade for People of African Descent concludes this year, the Group supports proclaiming a second international decade for people of African descent, starting in 2025, with the aim of maintaining the highest level of political attention to the process and fulfilling our commitments to its recognition, justice and development. Furthermore, we recognize the invaluable role of indigenous peoples and their knowledge and expertise. In that regard, we highlight the importance of implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and stress our commitment to the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. We look forward to the twenty-third session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, to be held here in New York in April. GRULAC member States express their solidarity with all victims of racism and racial discrimination around the world and urge the international community to continue working to achieve a more just and equitable world in which all peoples, without exclusion, without distinction, can live in peace and harmony.

In conclusion, GRULAC member States reaffirm their commitment to act against racial discrimination in all its forms against all human beings, since all are born

free and equal in dignity and rights with the potential to contribute constructively to the development and well-being of their societies if given the opportunity.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Ms. Leendertse (Germany): I have the honour to speak today on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Today we come together to also commemorate the International Decade for People of African Descent. We remain concerned that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance are still prevalent and deeply rooted problems in societies across the globe. They can be a factor in intergenerational inequalities, discrimination and marginalization. The rise of nationalist and populist ideologies undoubtedly contributes to the global increase of racism and racial discrimination, threatening the social fabric of our societies. We reject and condemn all forms of racism and intolerance, including their contemporary forms, and remain firmly committed to combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, both within our countries and throughout the world. In addition, we stress the need to also address stereotyping and stigmatization.

We consider it our responsibility to stand up against and fight all forms of racist harassment, hate speech, incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence, whether online or offline. We must dismantle the still-prevailing societal structures that perpetuate systemic racism. In the light of that, we reaffirm our commitment to our obligations under international law. And, as new challenges emerge, we will enhance our response at the national level to combat all forms of racial discrimination. It is also our responsibility to address racism through reliable sources of information, knowledge and accountability. Therefore, it is crucial to renew our commitment to the full and effective implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, which remains the central international instrument to combat racial discrimination worldwide. As States parties, we are striving to advance the realization of the Convention's goal of the complete eradication of any racial discrimination.

We therefore reiterate our call for the universal ratification of the Convention. We note the role of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in monitoring the effective implementation of the Convention, in particular by examining the reports of States parties and, where recognized by States, dealing with individual communications, as well as drafting general recommendations. We also note the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and its follow-up mechanisms. We reaffirm our strong support for the important mandate of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism. We welcome the accountability added by the Special Rapporteur's appeals, the submissions of reports to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly and fact-finding country visits. We also look forward to our participation in the third session of the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent to be held in 2024.

In the shared endeavour to creating societies free of racism and defined by inclusion, tolerance and acceptance, we are guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its core principle that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank you very much, Mr. President, for convening us today as we dedicate ourselves to eliminating racial discrimination.

Some among us may have heard of the famous Montgomery bus boycott, which began in late 1955, after Rosa Parks refused to surrender her seat to a white man. But what many people, including many Americans, do not know is that the first bus boycott of the civil rights movement took place more than two years earlier in my own home state of Louisiana, in the city of Baton Rouge. In June 1953, members of the Black community banded together to fight the segregated seating system on city buses. The boycott lasted just more than a week but served as an inspiration for years to come, inspiring other bus boycotts across the country and empowering Louisianans to mobilize around issues like voting rights. I was just a few months old at the time of the boycott, and therefore I did not know that the world was changing right outside my front door. But I can now

say in hindsight that my neighbours' collective action reshaped the trajectory of my life and the lives of Black Americans across the country.

All these years later, there is still so much work ahead of us, including here in America. And although some may seek to rewrite history, I instead believe that we must face it. We must face it head on. We must reckon with the legacy of chattel slavery, which has resulted in not only lingering systemic racism but real generational trauma on an individual level. We must reflect on policies that attacked Native Americans' rights to self-governance and continue to pose barriers to fully exercising their inherent sovereignty. And we must combat the rise of anti-Asian hate, antisemitism and Islamophobia, as well as vile anti-immigrant rhetoric, including against members of the Latino community. While such work may begin at home, I also know that the United States is not an outlier. Just as I am descended from enslaved people, so too are millions around the world — people from Haiti, Brazil, Colombia and Jamaica, as well as many other countries whose people do not know which country their ancestors are from but only that they were taken from that country by force. And just as I have experienced discrimination and racism, so too have people in every country on Earth. There are no innocents on that account, and, in far too many places, such bigotry has turned deadly. But the ubiquity of racism cannot numb us to it or paralyse us from taking action. Like the Black Louisianans who took a stand in Baton Rouge, we too must commit to rooting out injustice.

For our part, last year, the United States welcomed the appointment of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerances, as well as the establishment of the Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in Law Enforcement, because ultimately, however painful, we must recognize the failures of our past and present to create a more just, equitable future. We have also made good on our commitment to empowering people around the world to combat racism. In 2023, we launched the first annual Secretary of State's Award for Global Anti-Racism Champions. We revitalized the United States-Brazil Joint Action Plan to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Discrimination and Promote Equality. And we championed the various efforts under UNESCO and the United Nations Permanent Forum on People of African Descent because we know that just as hatred spans borders, so too must our commitment to fighting it.

I have long believed that racism is not the problem of those experiencing it; rather, it is the problem of those perpetuating it — whether it is individual, hateful actors, taking individual, hateful actions, or any person, any institution, choosing silence instead of standing up for what is right. Today let us recommit to solving the problem rather than perpetuating it. Let us recognize the intersection of racism with other forms of hatred, oppression, including sexism, ableism and homophobia. Let us tackle shared challenges — from climate change to food insecurity — through the lens of justice, equality and anti-racism. Let us share best practices, elevate good ideas and amplify unheard voices. Let us recognize our history rather than run from that history. And let us make proud the brave freedom fighters who paved the way for me to be here with members today and the brave freedom fighters who are paving the way for the generations to come.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Haiti, who will speak on behalf of the Caribbean Community.

Mr. Rodrigue (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). At the outset, CARICOM aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States. We express our sincere appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening this commemorative plenary meeting to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. We also thank the high-level speakers for their participation in this morning's meeting, including our own Caribbean nationals — Ms. Verene Shepherd and Ms. June Soomer.

CARICOM welcomes the theme of this year's commemoration — "A decade of recognition, justice and development: implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent". In 2023, our stock-taking of the global progress made in eliminating racial discrimination and in implementing the International Decade for People of African Descent in particular included some very promising efforts to right the wrongs of the past politically, institutionally and individually. However, at the end of the first quarter in the final year of the International Decade, we cannot help but acknowledge that there remains a great deal of work to be done.

The ongoing reluctance to acknowledge past atrocities and their legacies, which permeate our daily lives as people of African descent, remains the greatest

obstacle to the pursuit of justice and development today. Basically, we should first accept that to which we must face up. We live in an unjust world — a world that does not seem to be governed by any sense of international morality. CARICOM recognizes that, regrettably, global values are increasingly tradable and transactional. In many circumstances, not limited to people of African descent, one of the main factors determining the balance of those exchanges and transactions is rooted in racism and discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, religion and nationality.

The ability to trade, access to financing for development, climate finance, concessional financing, debt relief, technology transfer, access to health care and the benefits of advances in medicine are just some of the areas in which we draw on systemically discriminating conditions that often cripple the development of the world's most vulnerable countries. Time and again, and almost performatively, we acknowledge the global disparities. On this International Day, CARICOM calls for a definitive levelling of the playing field so that racial discrimination is no longer a factor that affects countries' ability to establish relations with one other in all aspects and sectors of society.

For CARICOM, the failure of the United Nations to adopt a declaration on the promotion and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent within this International Decade is also symbolic of the limited political will to grant such rights the full recognition that they deserve. In addition, the issue of limited resources must be duly addressed, in particular the allocation of financial resources to the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent, so as to ensure that the voices of those whom they serve and represent are properly heard. In a context in which the multilateral system as a whole is working hard to meet the challenges and bridge the gaps underpinning the world that we will bequeath to future generations, people of African descent cannot, and will not, be overlooked or left behind.

It is in that spirit that CARICOM reiterates the call for a second International Decade for People of African Descent in order to embed the values and principles of equity and justice for people of African descent within the multilateral system by which all Member States, organizations and related bodies should be guided in enhancing institutions and policies so as to rebuild trust and strengthen the foundations for sustainable action.

While the recognition of inalienable human rights unites us, the flagrant indignity to which peoples are subjected on the basis of race divides us. As immortalized in the musical rendition of Emperor Haile Selassie I's address to the United Nations in 1963 by the Jamaican reggae legend Bob Marley — and I paraphrase:

“[u]ntil the basic human rights are equally guaranteed to all, without regard to race ... the dream of lasting peace and world citizenship and the rule of international morality will remain but a fleeting illusion, to be pursued but never attained.”
(A/PV.1229, para.27)

CARICOM is committed to combating systemic racism. We call on the international community and Member States to take concrete measures to eliminate racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, which are root causes of social injustice, as that is a necessary path to achieving our common destiny of sustained peace and prosperity.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Kridelka (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Today Belgium has the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. It is a special privilege to address the General Assembly as we commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination today. The European Union rejects and condemns all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Our Union remains strongly committed to combating such phenomena, both within the EU and throughout the world. As you, Mr. President recalled, racism runs counter to the principles of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, upon which our European Union is built. Racial discrimination not only inflicts profound harm on individual victims, but it also damages the very fabric of peaceful and democratic societies.

(*spoke in English*)

In a year in which more than 2 billion voters are set to go to the polls, it remains particularly important to address racial discrimination in the context of elections. Comprehensive efforts are required to safeguard voting rights, enhance diversity in political representation and fight hate speech on the campaign trail.

Our work needs to start at home. While our Union unequivocally prohibits discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin, recent reports from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights reveal distressing levels of such discrimination within our societies. The EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020–2025 calls for the enhanced enforcement of European law and for concrete measures defined in national action plans. Those plans include policy measures and funding to combat racism and discrimination in areas such as access to employment, education, training, health care, social protection and housing. In addition, EU member States have stepped up efforts to prevent discriminatory attitudes by law enforcement authorities — the police — and to boost the credibility of law enforcement work against hate crimes. Alongside the full and meaningful participation of our European civil society, the EU Anti-Racism Coordinator remains essential to that joint work.

The EU has also intensified its fight against racist and xenophobic hate speech and hate crime not only by strengthening the implementation of laws already in place but also by extending the criminal law response at the EU level to face new challenges. Concerted action is needed from all of us to convert our legal frameworks into lived realities, in particular to ensure the full implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The Convention is the bedrock of our action. It is a living instrument, which is able to address both new and emerging challenges. Our focus should remain on realizing universal adherence to the Convention and on encouraging its full and effective implementation. The EU is fully committed to the primary objectives and commitments undertaken at the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

In the light of the theme of this year's observance — “A decade of recognition, justice and development: implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent” — the EU supports all efforts to eradicate all forms of discrimination against people of African descent. We also support the activities currently undertaken under the programme of activities of the ongoing International Decade for People of African Descent.

We support all efforts to eradicate all forms of discrimination against people of African descent and the activities currently undertaken under the programme

of activities for the implementation of the ongoing International Decade for People of African Descent.

People of African descent are an integral part of the social fabric of our member States in the European Union. It is imperative to accelerate the pace of action if we want to bring about a world in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality prevail. In far too many places, racial discrimination continues to erode the foundations for peace and security by fuelling conflict, inequality and injustice. Every member of society benefits when racism is eradicated.

On this day, let us renew our commitment to standing together against racial discrimination in all its forms. As the United Nations, As the United Nations, it is our common duty to combat the scourge of racism. We can do that effectively only by overcoming our divisions and addressing in a consensual way how we can achieve genuine progress towards our common goal, which is a world free of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): My statement is aligned with that made by the representative of Uganda on behalf of the Group of African States.

On behalf of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, allow me first of all to congratulate you, Mr. President, and express my appreciation to you for having included this very important, crucial and deplorable issue of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance as item 69 of the agenda of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly and for having convened this meeting to discuss it. Allow me also to begin this statement with a strong message of resounding condemnation of all forms and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, including modern forms and those carried out through the Internet, highlighting our deep concern at the existence of discrimination and structural racism, which continue to be observed in societies that are set up in such a way that advantages and opportunities are granted preferentially to those of one race and not to those of another, in particular in the area of health. We all experienced and suffered that as a result of the coronavirus disease pandemic, with the marginalization of an entire continent, which only because of the determined support of certain countries

and the use of traditional preventive methods did not suffer the ravages already anticipated worldwide for that continent — Africa.

Everyone has the right to health. There should therefore be no justification for discrimination against certain groups of patients on the grounds of their colour, ethnicity, religion, race, gender, et cetera. We also unequivocally and firmly condemn hate speech, that is, speech that incite violence, discrimination, hatred and animosity towards a person or groups of persons on account of their religion, gender, disability, nationality, and so on.

This year will mark the twenty-third anniversary of the Durban Declaration — an anniversary that should highlight and reaffirm the international community's common commitment to preventing, combating and eradicating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance throughout the world. While we can acknowledge the success of various programmes, actions and measures undertaken by the United Nations, the African Union, States and even civil society, we nevertheless cannot, and should not, be complacent as long as victims of such blatant actions continue to exist and to be documented, particularly the blatant cases of discrimination that Afro-descendants in the diaspora still experience. May the International Decade for People of African Descent be a strengthened and renewed fight against such inhuman practices.

Now more than ever, the international community, every State and civil society must redouble their efforts and continue to work together to fight the scourge of racism, systemic and structural discrimination and xenophobia and create a strengthened partnership among States, United Nations agencies, national human rights bodies, civil society and the private sector, making women and young people an integral part of that partnership.

Like at the start of my statement, on behalf of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, I conclude it with another message appealing that it is time to put an end the impunity that perpetrators continue to enjoy at all levels; it is time to hold them accountable. We owe that common effort to all victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, especially Afro-descendants, throughout the world,

Mr. Van Schalkwyk (South Africa): South Africa associates itself with the statement of the Group of African States delivered by the representative

of Uganda, and we would like to add the following additional perspectives in our national capacity.

Today is a national holiday in South Africa. Every year, we commemorate Human Rights Day. It is also a significant international day on the United Nations calendar and the reason that we are here today. That is not a coincidence, as both days have the same origins in the same heinous event — the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa on 21 March 1960. That single act shocked the world to such a degree that it determined to declare the day to eliminate racial discrimination and to commemorate an annual day towards that goal.

In 1965, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination was concluded and opened for signature. It remains the only active legal instrument on racism and racial discrimination. There have been no additional protocols negotiated for it. We have since developed another mechanism — the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action — to serve as soft law in the fight against racism that provides the world with an action plan. Working through the Durban Declaration, we created the International Decade for People of African Descent, which ends this year, and we established the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent. Sadly, the Decade for People of African Descent has seen increased events of structural and systemic racism, experienced by people of African descent on a daily basis. We continue to witness racist acts being committed by the authorities against people of different race groups.

Unfortunately, the international system has not challenged the status quo but has largely allowed it to continue to actively seek to counter action against racial discrimination. Unfortunately, the anti-racism agenda is still being undermined. Instead of committed action, the mechanisms are politicized, and their purpose misrepresented. It is abundantly clear that our efforts in fighting that scourge remain incomplete.

As we look to mark the end of the International Decade for People of African Descent, let us reflect on our commitment towards fighting racism and racial discrimination. We need to do better. The past points the way, and we know what the problem is and what needs to be done. Racism and racial discrimination undermine the universality of human rights and the gains made by humankind. South Africa stands ready with the global community to fight that global scourge.

Mrs. Asaju (Nigeria): My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Uganda on behalf of the Group of African States. I would like to deliver this statement in our national capacity.

I would also like to commend the efforts of Member States in earmarking 21 March every year in commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other related intolerance remain major challenges to fundamental human rights and freedom in our world today. Racial discrimination represents a blatant attempt to erode our commonality as a member of one family.

It is imperative to note that, despite the efforts made at the national, regional and international levels in addressing the issue of racism and racial discrimination, challenges persist to many more people being victims of the menace in various forms. The continuous rise in the incidence of racism and racial discrimination deprives people of their rights and undermines democracy and the legitimacy of Government. Moreover, such vices pose a threat to our collective abilities to work together to achieve internal cooperation in the furtherance of human rights and fundamental freedom, as well as the realization of the core objectives of maintaining global peace, security and stability as a fundamental role of the United Nations.

As this year marks the end of the International Decade for People of African Descent, the challenge before us is to examine how far we have gone in achieving the objectives contained in that solemn proclamation. In the face of the new force of domination, effective self-determination is a mirage for many Africans and our descendants. A great deal still needs to be done to ensure that there is due recognition, justice and development for people of African descent. Indeed, as the most populous Black nation in the world, Nigeria is decidedly Afro-centric in its foreign policy.

Nigeria cannot be said to be fully developed when fellow African brothers and sisters, both on the continent and in the diaspora, suffer hunger, deprivation and different forms of discrimination. In that regard, and in line with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, which sowed the seed for the International Decade for People of African Descent, we call on the international community to join forces in fighting discrimination against Africans and people

of African descent, especially migrants, who are reminiscences of the horror of the slavery and the slave trade of yesteryears.

In the same vein, we reiterate our support for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which all of us should support to represent our political efforts as major sway for providing safeguards for legitimate migrants in a way that prevents racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other related intolerance.

In conclusion, we must not only condemn such aberrations, but we must also work together to combat them in order to make our world a better place, where no one is left behind, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See.

Archbishop Caccia (Holy See): The Holy See welcomes the holding of this meeting and takes this opportunity to unequivocally reiterate its strong condemnation of racism and racial discrimination. Racism takes many forms. It can be seen in deliberate, overt acts at both individual and group levels. For example, people of African descent are often targeted by racial profiling and selective immigration enforcement practices, while also facing discrimination in hiring practices, access to housing and educational opportunities.

Racism can manifest itself in thoughts and actions that we may not even think of as racist, but which come from the same place of prejudice. Consciously or not, such an attitude of superiority fuels a throwaway mentality that leads to contempt for, and the abandonment of, the weakest and those who are seen as useless. Racism can also manifest itself in the form of omission, when individuals and communities remain silent and fail to act against racism when they encounter it. Furthermore, racism can take a different, but no less insidious, form when certain countries seek to impose their views on other States. Pope Francis has strongly criticized that phenomenon, labelling it as “ideological colonization”.

We cannot remain indifferent to the seriousness of such phenomena. The fight against racism should begin at its source. We should be aware that the roots of racism lie in ignorance and prejudice, often the result of inadequate or poor education. In fact, the role of education is crucial.

Many migrants or refugees of African descent who have left, or have been forced to leave, their homelands face racism, xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance

in the countries of destination rather than the support that they need. We are at a key juncture where we can choose either the culture of humanity and fraternity or the culture of indifference. As members of the same human family, every individual deserves a place to call home. That means having food, access to housing, health care and education and dignified work. It also means having a place where one is understood, included, loved and cared for and where one can participate and contribute. Refugees and migrants can never be seen as mere objects in need of assistance, but as human beings with equal dignity, carrying rights and duties.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in this commemorative meeting. The Assembly has concluded its commemorative meeting to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 69.

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/78/L.49)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America to introduce draft resolution A/78/L.49.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I am proud to stand before members and, in truth, to stand with them in proposing draft resolution A/78/L.49, on safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence (AI) systems for sustainable development.

Today we stand at an inflection point. Artificial intelligence poses existential, universal challenges. AI-generated content, such as deepfakes, holds the potential to undercut the integrity of political debates in a year in which more than half of the world's population will elect their leaders. Algorithmic bias may deepen societal divides and worsen discrimination against those who are already marginalized. And with its promises of improved efficiency, generative AI could disrupt the labour force in nearly every industry.

But AI also holds profound, universal opportunities to accelerate our work to end poverty, save lives, protect our planet and create a safer, more equitable

world. We have already begun to see those benefits. AI is being used to detect and diagnose disease earlier and more accurately. It is helping scientists to better predict earthquakes, floods and hurricanes, allowing vulnerable communities to prepare for, and respond to, natural disasters. It is enabling farmers to more accurately monitor their soil, helping them to produce more food more sustainably. It is strengthening democracies, encouraging young people to voice their ideas for social change and empowering members of civil society to document human rights abuses. And it is expanding access to education, health care, job training and social services. Simply put, AI is proving to be an engine for us all to make up lost ground and even meet the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

The truth is that we have a lot of ground to make up, and we need every tool in our belt, including AI, to help us achieve such goals. All told, for all the unknowns surrounding AI, this much is clear — the technology has the potential to unlock more progress on more issues for more people. But in order to ensure equitable access to those benefits and mitigate risks for communities across the globe, we must approach the technology as a global community, leaving no one behind. That was the guiding principle behind this draft text and our process of drafting it.

Over the past few months, we have engaged with more than 120 countries, representing every part of the world and every level of development. We have received valuable input from valued partners and edits from a diverse collection of negotiators. We have drawn from the United Nations foundational texts, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which reaffirms the fundamental freedoms and dignity of every person, everywhere. Together, we crafted a draft resolution that cements a global consensus, both on common elements of safe, secure and trustworthy AI systems and on common goals for its usage.

Adopting this draft resolution would reaffirm the consensus that we must focus on capacity-building and closing digital divides around the world so that everyone can access the benefits of AI, that no Government or other actor should use AI to undermine peace or repress human rights, that even the most well-intentioned people need help to catch and root out vulnerabilities and bias and that private companies driving the rapid spread and evolution of that technology must be responsible when it comes to designing and launching new capabilities.

This draft resolution is hardly the start of the global conversation around AI. It builds on work within our individual countries, including a half-billion-dollar effort led by Vice-President Harris to empower women in the digital economy across the world. The draft resolution also builds on a diverse group of international initiatives, including the Bletchley Declaration of the United Kingdom Safety Summit, the Global Partnership on AI, led by India, the Group of Seven's Hiroshima AI process, spearheaded by Japan, and the Group of 20's Principles for Trustworthy AI, as well as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development AI Principles.

It is our hope that this draft resolution does not represent the end of our collaboration around this critical issue either. Indeed, the draft resolution was designed to amplify the work of existing United Nations entities, including the International Telecommunication Union, UNESCO and the United Nations Human Rights Council. We intend for it to complement future United Nations initiatives, including negotiations towards a global digital compact, and the important work of the Secretary-General's High-level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence. What is more, we expect that it will open up the dialogue among the United Nations, civil society, academia, research institutions, the public and private sectors and other communities for collaboration, facilitating continuous innovation and building capacity to close digital divides. Of course, as expressed in the draft resolution, we recognize the importance of knowledge sharing and technology transfer that is on mutually agreed terms, which the United States understands to mean a voluntary basis.

Finally, we hope that the inclusive and constructive dialogue that led to this draft resolution will serve as a model for future conversations on the challenges of AI in other arenas, for example, with respect to peace and security and the responsible military use of AI autonomy. I could continue listing the many, many virtues of this resolution but, at a time when the world is seen to be agreeing on little, perhaps the most quietly radical aspect of this draft resolution is the wide consensus forged in the name of advancing progress.

The United Nations and artificial intelligence are contemporaries; both born in the years following the Second World War, the two have grown and evolved in parallel. Today, as the United Nations and AI finally intersect, we have the opportunity and the responsibility to choose, as one united global community, to govern

that technology rather than let it govern us. Let us therefore reaffirm that AI will be created and deployed through the lens of humanity and dignity, safety and security, human rights and fundamental freedoms. Let us commit to closing the digital gap within and between nations and to using the technology to advance shared priorities around sustainable development. Let us answer the call to leverage AI for the good of all people in the only way that we can — together.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/78/L.49.

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

Ms. Sharma (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 on the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/78/L.49: Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malawi, Malaysia, Malta, the Marshall Islands, Monaco, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Moldova, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, the United Republic of Tanzania, Ukraine, Uruguay and Viet Nam.

The President: The General Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/78/L.49, entitled "Seizing the opportunities of safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems for sustainable development".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/78/L.49?

Draft resolution A/78/L.49 was adopted (resolution 78/265).

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

Agenda item 14 (continued)**Culture of peace****Draft resolution (A/78/L.47)**

The President: Before we proceed to take action on draft resolution A/78/L.47, I should like to inform members that the Assembly will hold a debate on this item at a later date to be announced.

I now give the floor to the representative of Turkmenistan to introduce draft resolution A/78/L.47.

Mrs. Ataeva (Turkmenistan): It is my honour, on behalf of the delegation of Turkmenistan, to introduce draft resolution A/78/L.47. I would like to convey our gratitude to all delegations for their active participation and valuable contributions during the negotiations. During the negotiation process, we consistently worked to foster a positive atmosphere and achieve a widespread consensus. Allow me to briefly describe the main purpose of this draft resolution.

The Charter of the United Nations calls upon all Members of the Organization to maintain international peace, develop friendly relations, achieve international cooperation and settle their disputes by peaceful means. Currently, our world faces a trust deficit disorder, described by the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, as a primary global challenge (see A/73/PV.6). In order to overcome the current mistrust, as a neutral country, Turkmenistan considers it necessary to strengthen the existing dialogue platforms on critical issues of the global agenda and to develop new ones, based on preventive diplomacy, early warning and a mediation toolkit. Trust-keeping and trust-building are becoming essential for responsible, non-confrontational diplomacy. They unlock opportunities for mutual understanding and a balanced approach to complex issues.

In that regard, promoting the philosophy of trust-based international dialogue, Turkmenistan submitted the draft resolution, which declares 2025 as the International Year of Peace and Trust. It is not a spontaneous step but the result of a long-term strategy, based on the declaration of the International Year of Peace and Trust every five years, in accordance with resolution 76/299, and inspired by the successful implementation of a trust-building campaign in 2021 within/ the first International Year of Peace and Trust. We are convinced that, through the adoption of such a consensus document, States Members of the United

Nations will affirm the principled commitment to a peaceful, negotiated way of resolving conflicts, no matter how difficult they may be.

We believe that, in a rapidly changing world, the task of building and maintaining good relations among countries, strengthening the spirit of partnership and mutually beneficial cooperation, is becoming essentially relevant, and that initiative will make a significant contribution to the development of an equal, mutually respectful and trustful dialogue among nations and peoples.

In conclusion, we express our gratitude to the delegations that sponsored this draft resolution, and we look forward to seeing additional sponsors, as well as members' support for its adoption by consensus.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/78/L.47.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. Sharma (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 on the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/78/L.47: Afghanistan, Algeria, Austria, Azerbaijan, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Georgia, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Hungary, Indonesia, Jordan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Maldives, Mongolia, Montenegro, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Suriname, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

The President: The General Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/78/L.47, entitled "International Year of Peace and Trust, 2025". May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/78/L.47?

Draft resolution A/78/L.47 was adopted (resolution 78/266).

The President: Before giving the floor for explanations of position after adoption, may I remind delegations that explanations of position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Ms. Curzio Vila (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would just like to clarify that my delegation asked for the floor to speak on agenda item 13 and the consideration of draft resolution A/78/L.49. I request your indulgence, Mr. President, in order to deliver the explanation of position that my country wanted to make regarding this draft resolution. With your permission and your consent, I will now proceed to make my country's explanation of position on draft resolution A/78/L.49.

The President: I regret to have to interrupt the presentation of the representative of Mexico. However, as a matter of procedure, our consideration of that matter had been closed, and so it is not appropriate to engage in that discussion in the midst of having given consideration to another agenda item.

I therefore cannot allow the Mexican representative to proceed. Are there any other requests for the floor?

Ms. Curzio Vila (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Just for the record, Mexico asked for the floor during the consideration of agenda item 13, and we were not given the floor. I regret that we had to take the floor during the consideration of another agenda item, but only because we were not given the floor during the consideration of the relevant agenda item, I would like to put that on the record.

The President: The advice that I have is that the request for the floor was made post the conclusion of the item, and my decision therefore stands.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 14.

Agenda item 4 (continued)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The President: I now invite the General Assembly to turn to draft resolution A/78/L.45, circulated under agenda item 107, entitled "Crime prevention and criminal justice".

Members will recall that the General Assembly concluded its consideration of agenda item 107 at its 50th plenary meeting, on 22 December 2023. In order for the Assembly to take action on the draft resolution, it will be necessary to reopen consideration of agenda item 107. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen consideration of agenda item 107?

It was so decided (decision 78/504 B).

Agenda item 107 (continued)

Crime prevention and criminal justice

Draft resolution (A/78/L.45)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Italy to introduce draft resolution A/78/L.45.

Mr. Massari (Italy): I thank you, Mr. President, for including this draft resolution on the agenda of this session of the General Assembly.

On behalf of its main sponsors — Austria, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Hungary, Japan, Morocco, Peru, Saudi Arabia and my own country, Italy — I have the honour to present to this Assembly draft resolution A/78/L.45, entitled "International Day for the Prevention of and Fight against All Forms of Transnational Organized Crime". Italy stands united with our partners in the core group in addressing that critical issue, which threatens all Member States in various ways.

The recent open debate on "Threats to international peace and security: transnational organized crime, growing challenges and new threats", held in December 2023, highlighted the serious concerns expressed by the Security Council regarding that escalating threat. The passionate intervention of the Ecuadorian President, speaking both as President of the Council and as a representative of a country deeply affected by organized crime, resonated with us all and was a grim premonition of what followed earlier this year. In reaffirming our commitment to the fight against that scourge, we echo the sentiments expressed by the Secretary-General on the same occasion:

"[t]ransnational organized crime is a vicious threat to peace, security and sustainable development wherever it operates. And it operates everywhere — in all countries, rich and poor,

North and South, developed and developing.”
(S/PV.9497, p.2)

As also highlighted in the Security Council presidential statement (S/PRST/2023/6), strengthening cooperation and prioritizing prevention are paramount to effectively addressing that complex issue.

The proposed International Day for the Prevention of and Fight against All Forms of Transnational Organized Crime serves as an important platform to raise awareness and promote coordinated efforts to combat transnational organized crime. It also provides an opportunity to highlight the continued relevance of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime — the most effective international legal instrument in that fight, which last year celebrated the twentieth anniversary of its entry into force.

Our draft resolution proposes 15 November as the designated date for the International Day, in line with the adoption of the Palermo Convention by the General Assembly. That symbolic date reminds us of our collective commitment to upholding the principles enshrined in the Convention. The International Day is also a solemn occasion to pay tribute to the victims of transnational organized crime, including the brave public servants who have dedicated their lives to the cause. Their sacrifices must not go unnoticed, and this day provides an opportunity to pay tribute to their unwavering commitment and bravery.

On behalf of the main sponsors of this proposal, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the representatives of all Member States that actively participated in the consultation process and provided valuable insights that contributed to the refinement of the draft resolution. I would also like to thank all the delegations that co-sponsored it, and I invite those that have not yet done so to consider co-sponsoring the draft resolution.

The proclamation of this International Day is not merely symbolic; it is a tangible manifestation of our unity in confronting the scourge of transnational organized crime with unwavering determination. The adoption of this draft resolution will mark a significant step forward in our common quest for a safer and more just world.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/78/L.45.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. Sharma (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 on the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/78/L.45: Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Croatia, Cyprus, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Indonesia, Israel, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Maldives, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Myanmar, the Netherlands, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Paraguay, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Suriname, Tunisia, Uruguay, the United Arab Emirates, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uzbekistan.

The President: The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/78/L.45, entitled “International Day for the Prevention of and Fight against All Forms of Transnational Organized Crime”.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/78/L.45?

Draft resolution A/78/L.45 was adopted (resolution 78/267).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 107?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 115 (continued)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

Note by the Secretary-General (A/78/785)

The President: In connection with this item, the Assembly has before it a note by the Secretary-General issued as document A/78/785 concerning the extension of the appointment of the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security. Members will recall that the consideration of this item was postponed at the 60th plenary meeting, on 5 March 2024, in order to give delegations additional time to consult on the matter.

Members will also recall that, in its resolution 59/276, of 23 December 2004, the General Assembly decided on an exceptional basis and without setting any precedent that the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security shall serve for one non-renewable term not exceeding five years.

As indicated in document A/78/785, on 30 May 2019, the Secretary-General announced the appointment of Mr. Gilles Michaud of Canada as Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security for a five-year term that, which began on 1 July 2019 and is due to end on 30 June 2024.

In the light of the strategic need to ensure continuity in security leadership at this moment of simultaneous crises and given the ongoing reforms of the Department and their potential impact on the United Nations security management system as a whole, the Secretary-General proposes that the General Assembly approve, notwithstanding paragraph 22 of section XI of resolution 59/276, the exceptional extension of the term of Mr. Gilles Michaud as Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security by two years, until 30 June 2026.

May I therefore take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to approve, notwithstanding paragraph 22 of section XI of resolution 59/276, the exceptional extension of the term of Mr. Gilles Michaud of Canada as Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security by two years, until 30 June 2026?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 115 (continued)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(g) Appointment of members of the Board of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly, by its resolution 67/203, of 21 December 2012, decided to establish the 10-member Board, consisting of two members from each United Nations regional group. In its decision 67/564, of 16 September 2013, the Assembly decided that regional groups shall be authorized to nominate new members of the Board. Furthermore, by its resolution 69/214, of 19 December 2014, the Assembly decided that the duration of subsequent terms for members of the Board shall continue to be two years, starting on 16 September of every second year, and that the United Nations regional groups may renominate

one of their existing two members of the Board for one consecutive term, while ensuring that no Member State is eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms and taking into account the importance of ensuring continuity and rotation in the work of the Board.

Members will also recall that, in its decision 76/418 A, of 15 March 2022, the Assembly decided that the two-year term of the members of the Board should begin on 15 March 2022, taking into account resolution 69/214. The Assembly subsequently appointed members of the Board for terms ending on 14 March 2024. Consequently, the Assembly needs to appoint 10 members of the Board for a new term of office. Bearing in mind the provisions of resolution 69/214 as outlined, I propose that the two-year term of the members of the Board shall begin on the date of their appointment, that is, today, 21 March 2024.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to proceed accordingly?

It was so decided (decision 78/413 A).

The President: The Secretariat has received the nominations of Brazil, Finland, the Russian Federation, Senegal, South Sudan and the United States of America as members of the Board for a term beginning on 21 March 2024 and ending on 20 March 2026.

May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to appoint Brazil, Finland, the Russian Federation, Senegal, South Sudan and the United States of America as members of the Board of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns for a term beginning on 21 March 2024 and ending on 20 March 2026?

It was so decided (decision 78/413 B).

The President: Members are reminded that the following vacancies remain to be filled for a term beginning on the date of the appointment and expiring on 20 March 2026, as follows: two members from the Group of Asia-Pacific States, one member from the Group of Eastern European States and one member from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

The General Assembly will resume its consideration of this agenda sub-item to act on those vacancies once additional nominations are received by the Secretariat.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (g) of agenda item 115 and of agenda item 115 as a whole.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.