



# General Assembly

Seventy-eighth session

**64<sup>th</sup>** plenary meeting  
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Official Records

*President:* Mr. Francis . . . . . (Trinidad and Tobago)

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

## Statement by the President

### Agenda item 138 (continued)

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

##### Letter dated 21 March 2024 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly (A/78/707/Add.3)

**The President:** In keeping with established practice, I would like to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/78/707/Add.3, 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.2, Dominica 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.*

### Agenda item 118

#### Commemoration of the abolition of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade

**The President:** In accordance with resolution 73/345, of 16 September 2019, the General Assembly will hold a commemorative meeting on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

**The President:** Let me at the outset recognize and welcome among us here today our keynote speaker, Sir Hilary Beckles, Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, and youth speaker Yolanda King. Their presence is very much appreciated.

Today we gather in solemn observance of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. This day holds profound significance, uniting us in a shared commitment to honour the memory of those who endured unimaginable suffering during one of the darkest chapters in human history. On this sombre occasion, we pause to reflect and remember the tens of millions of enslaved Africans who were trafficked and sold into bondage, not to mention subjected to namelessness, relentless violence and the most callous forms of dehumanization imaginable. In their memory, we still feel the painful brutality that they endured in their struggle for freedom.

I also take this moment to pay homage to the countless souls who perished on the harrowing journey of the Middle Passage, the desolate graveyard of the Atlantic. Those millions of people — human beings like any one of us — were not merely robbed of their physical freedom, but of their identity and dignity. The transatlantic slave trade — one of the most heinous crimes against humanity, spanning more than four centuries — introduced an abominable and abhorrent system of slavery that was not only commercialized, but was racialized.

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It is inconceivable that the enslaved were cruelly regarded as mere commodities for sale and exploitation and — together with their children, born into slavery, perpetuating the vicious cycle of bondage and suffering — endured untold horrors at the hands of their oppressors. Yet, despite centuries of intergenerational trauma, the enslaved and their descendants have demonstrated remarkable resilience and dignity, courageously defying the dehumanizing conditions of their bondage. We pay tribute to those revolutionaries — figures such as Samuel Sharpe, Sojourner Truth, Gaspar Yanga and countless others — who waged brave battles for freedom. From political life to the arts, those leaders paved the way for abolitionist movements, catalysing scores of independence movements and inspiring the drive for emancipation, towards alternative ways of thinking about anti-racism, justice and equality. As we reflect on the manifold contributions of people of African descent — from architecture and urban design and the graceful dynamism of capoeira to the soul-stirring melodies of African-American gospels, through to the poignant poetry of political activism embodied by leaders such as Aimé Césaire — we see that their contributions have remained indelibly etched in our memories and the world around us. The profound value of their art and endeavours must be acknowledged and celebrated, as they rightfully deserve. We must also recognize the urgent need for accountability and reparations as an intrinsic part of the pursuit of true justice.

The purpose of this annual commemorative meeting is to continue to shine a spotlight not only on the atrocious acts committed but also on the unrelieved racism and prejudice that continue to plague our societies even today. These are the legacies of slavery that still loom large despite its abolition more than a century ago. People of African descent continue to experience systemic racism, discrimination and enduring disparities in healthcare, education, housing, employment and economic opportunities. It is incumbent upon States, institutions and individuals to acknowledge their roles in perpetuating those legacies of injustice and take meaningful steps towards reparatory justice.

As my contribution to fostering candid conversations here at the United Nations on the important matter of reparatory justice, tomorrow morning I will convene a morning *gayap* dialogue featuring a small number of

cross-regional groups of Permanent Representatives. The global reparatory justice movement continues to gain momentum, signalling a growing recognition of the need to address and redress the impacts of enslavement. As the first International Decade for People of African Descent draws to a close, let us ask ourselves: have its goals been achieved? The answer is, I believe, not yet. I therefore encourage everyone to consider the call of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent for the proclamation of a second international decade, focusing on reparatory justice, recognition and equity.

As I conclude, it is worth recalling that, in 1802, while imprisoned by his captors, Toussaint Louverture inspiringly declared that

“[i]n overthrowing me, you have cut down, in Saint-Domingue, only the trunk of the tree of liberty; it will spring up again from the roots, for they are numerous, and they are deep”.

It holds immense significance to me to draw on the words of an abolitionist revolutionary from what is now Haiti — a nation that, regrettably, continues to grapple with the vicious cycles of violence. In Haiti, the vestiges of slavery are deeply woven into the tragic fabric of poverty and violence, marking the real-life and contemporary repercussions of a centuries-long crime against humanity. And they simply must be addressed, because justice delayed is justice denied. The longer we delay the pursuit of justice, the longer we deny the achievement of peace. It is high time to right the wrongs of systemic racism and injustice. Let us also continue to educate present and future generations about the history and enduring legacy of slavery, accurately and truthfully. Let us reclaim and write the true stories of Africans and people of African descent, forging a future filled with justice, equality and dignity for all — an ambition upon which our invited speakers today will no doubt expound.

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 make a statement on behalf of the Secretary-General.

**Mr. Rattray:** I am honoured to be here to commemorate the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

Allow me to read a message from the Secretary-General marking this important annual commemoration.

“For 400 years, enslaved Africans fought for their freedom, while colonial Powers and others committed horrific crimes against them. On the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, we remember and honour the millions of Africans who were trafficked and enslaved. Their lives were ruled by terror, as they endured rape, floggings, lynchings and other atrocities and humiliations. Many of those who organized and ran the transatlantic slave trade amassed huge fortunes. Meanwhile, the enslaved were deprived of education, healthcare, opportunity and prosperity. That laid the foundations for a violent discrimination system based on white supremacy that still echoes today. The descendants of enslaved Africans and people of African descent are still fighting for equal rights and freedoms around the world. Today and every day, we reject the legacy of that horrific crime against humanity. We call for reparatory justice frameworks to help to overcome generations of exclusion and discrimination. We appeal for the space and necessary conditions for healing, repair and justice. And above all, we resolve to work for a world free from racism, discrimination, bigotry and hate. Together, as we remember the victims of the transatlantic slave trade, let us unite for human rights, dignity and opportunity for all.”

On this important day of remembrance, we also recall the courage of generations of enslaved Africans and their descendants who stood against oppression and subjugation. From the time of the first abductions, to the door of no return in Africa, to the cities and farms where they were forced to work, enslaved Africans resisted their captors, revolted against their masters and worked to escape their bonds.

The resolute resistance of Queen Nanny of the Maroons in my own country of Jamaica forced the British Empire to the peace table. In Brazil, the leadership and struggle of Zumbi dos Palmares is celebrated annually as a Black Consciousness Day. The skilful diplomacy and military prowess of Nzinga Mbandi of Ndongo and Matamba, in present-day Angola, thwarted Portugal’s colonial ambitions. In Saint-Domingue, in present-day Haiti, Toussaint Louverture’s heroism transformed a slave rebellion into a revolutionary movement. Here, in the United States, Harriet Tubman made a death-

defying run for freedom and helped others to win their liberation on the Underground Railroad. And, on a slave ship on the way to the American state of Georgia, a group of Ibo people from what is now Nigeria rose in rebellion and drowned their captors, before tragically committing mass suicide, refusing to give up their dignity and freedom.

This evening, I will attend the opening of a new United Nations exhibition that tells the story of that tragic event. The heroic struggles of those and many other leaders inspired generations of activists. But they are not over. Descendants of enslaved Africans and people of African descent around the world are still fighting for their rights and for their freedoms.

The original lie of white supremacy, which animated and justified the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade, the Jim Crow laws and the apartheid system, continues to poison communities and societies. Today, as we recall centuries of injustice, it is our duty to reject and dismantle racist oppression, end the spread of hatred and lies online, and confront slavery’s lasting legacy of marginalization and impoverishment. We must reverse the consequences of generations of exclusion and discrimination that led to gross inequities in healthcare, education and social and economic opportunities — inequities, as we know, that continue to this day.

In the many countries affected by the transatlantic slave trade, everyone, and all parts of society, have a part to play in the work of healing and repair. From acknowledging and seeking forgiveness for the egregious crimes of the past to creating mechanisms for redress and rejecting hatred and discrimination in all its forms — all can help to heal the intergenerational trauma and repair fractured and segregated societies.

Today, as we remember the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, let us redouble our efforts to confront the legacy of slavery in our own communities and societies. Together, let us resolve to learn the lessons of history, and build a more just, a more equal and a more prosperous world for all of us.

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

Before proceeding further, and as indicated in my letters dated 26 January 2024 and 7 March 2024, I would like to consult members on inviting the following persons to address the Assembly at this

meeting: Sir Hilary Beckles, Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West Indies and Chairman of the Caribbean Community Reparations Commission; and Ms. Yolanda Renee King, youth activist.

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

*It was so decided.*

**The President:** I now invite Sir Hilary Beckles, Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West Indies and Chairman of the Caribbean Community Reparations Commission, to take the floor.

**Sir Hilary Beckles:** It is a privilege and a joy to address this body knowing that you, Mr. President, are an alumnus of the University of the West Indies, the number one university in the Caribbean, which I have the honour to lead.

We are gathered to reflect and to project, on this day that the United Nations has set aside in remembrance of this greatest crime against humanity in this, our modern era, and indeed, arguably in any era of human development — the transatlantic trade in the enchained, enslaved, commodified, chattelized, dehumanized African bodies. This evil enterprise by which Europe and their colonial empires devised a strategy to convert this criminality into capital, the blood of African women and men, girls and boys, into a financial bonanza for the high street banks, for Governments, families, churches, universities, royal families and common families, has left us to navigate and to negotiate a legacy of human wounds still unhealed.

It is now the burden of all of humanity, which we must carry. It is a burden that continues to yoke all black folks who continue to suffer the aftermath of this tsunami of economic marginalization, social and cultural oppression, and political victimization, and their struggle for freedom with justice, and now the struggle to legitimize the reasons for reparatory justice.

As I speak, we are calling for justice for the people of Haiti, who should have been held aloft for being the first nation to end the evil of slavery. They should have been held aloft for being the most noble exemplars of freedom and the celebration of democratic possibilities in western modernity. Instead, for their audacity of action, they were punished by the western world and demonized rather than deified. Driven by France

and supported by all of Europe and the United States of America, they were forced to pay blood money in the form of reparations for having defeated their enslavers. Such examples of duplicity and mendacity in our modern world are endless in the bid to end man's inhumanity to man.

Today we are called upon to bear witness once again to the methods of military barbarity and ideologies of ethnic hatred, not only in our Americas, not only against the African people, but as we gaze upon the cruelty in Gaza. We know all too well the narrative and the tools of terror. We know these narratives, we know these institutions, and the discussions today are about colonization, racism, genocide, apartheid, infanticide, forced starvation, the animalization of images of human beings. These are all tools that we see before our very eyes as we gaze upon our televisions. These tools and narratives were hewn in the cradle of Caribbean history, where the invention of the chattelization of Africans took its first root.

I was born on the island of Barbados, which became known as the first colony in the Americas where Africans were the majority. Barbados was also the home to the first slave code, the Slave Code of 1660, in which Africans were defined by law as non-humans, as property, as chattel and as real estate. These tools were never buried, nor were they abandoned. Human decency has not been spared. History continues to haunt us in the present. And we must unite today, as our fore-parents united in the nineteenth century, to end this barbarity of enslavement. We must unite today, all people of goodwill, all people with a passion for humanity at its finest, to end all massacres of innocent people whose only sin is the demand for freedom and for justice. We in the Americas and the Caribbean, we know all too well how a few hundred desperate enslaved people would rebel to preserve their dignity, but in response, the enslavers would massacre thousands for this audacity. The principle we know very well is that a few will act, but the majority will pay.

As a result, Mr. President, I lay this fundamental truth upon your table this day. I do so with respect to you and to this noble institution. It is this: that until the western world deploys its considerable wisdom and agrees to pay reparatory justice to those who have been enslaved and colonized, to pay reparatory justice for those who continue to suffer the legacies of colonization, apartheid and slavery, those who have survived this African Holocaust; until men and



women of good conscience bring to closure the crime of enslavement in the form of apologies and development compensation; until the western world, in which we are all deeply embedded, comes to realize and accept that the Black people have carried for far too long the moral conscience of modernity, expressed in our time in the super-humanity of Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Madiba Mandela; until it is recognized and accepted that only a reparatory justice framework for development can secure sustainable economic, social and moral development, this twenty-first century, threatened as we know it is, will take us back to the sixteenth century, when these crimes against humanity were conceived and concretized. This is our fear, but we are future-focused.

It took us all of the nineteenth century to uproot slavery from our civilization. Beginning with Haiti in 1804, to Brazil in 1888, it took all of that long nineteenth century to rid humanity of chattel slavery. Then it took us all of the twentieth century, all of the long twentieth century to achieve civil rights, human rights and nationhood for the descendants of the enslaved. But this twenty-first century will be the century of reparatory justice. It is this century that will find and create the greatest political movement, that is, the movement for reparatory justice, as an approach to inclusive economic development, financial and economic reform, that will turn the world economy the right way up.

Therefore, we will not, with our silence, allow the all-persistent inequality and the barbarity it has bred to find a new beachhead for the launch of further crimes against humanity. I wish to celebrate all of my colleague prime ministers of Caribbean Community (CARICOM), who in their wisdom have established the CARICOM Reparations Commission with a mandate to create a dialogue for the world and how to proceed and pursue reforms to our financial institutions so that we can not only have justice for historical crimes, but a level playing field for the future. That is what we asked. That is what we expect.

When I hear Prime Minister Mottley of Barbados and Prime Minister Gonsalves of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines making this moral plea for global reform and supporting the concept of reparatory justice as a development paradigm, I feel proud to be a descendant of those enslaved people who have survived.

I take this matter very seriously. In my home island of Barbados, the British imported 600,000 enslaved

Africans — a small island, with 600,000 enslaved Africans over 200 years. At emancipation, there were only 83,000 remaining. How do you reduce 600,000 people to 83,000 over 200 years? Because on that island, slavery was also genocidal.

This is therefore the moment for all good and humane citizens to join the reparatory justice movement, to come together and to heal the historical wounds that fester before our very faces. The Caribbean remains one of the few places in the world where there are still colonies. Many of the islands of the Caribbean are still colonies. Britain has colonies, France has colonies, the Dutch have colonies. Why do we have colonies remaining at this time in our history? I urge the United Nations, therefore, as part of its reparatory justice programme, to recommit to the agenda of decolonization, so that this crime against humanity, which began in the Caribbean, can finally come to an end with the ending of colonization. The payment of moral and development reparations for the crimes against African people will, at the very beginning, represent the formation of a new and more equitable global order that will represent a break from historical backwardness and lay the future for the dawn of a dignified dispensation for all of humanity. This is the movement that will signal, finally, the collective victory of humanity, of good over evil.

**The President:** I now give the floor to Ms. King.

**Ms. King:** I would like to express my gratitude to the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Dennis Francis, for the invitation.

It is a great honour for me to join the General Assembly in commemorating this International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. I stand before you today as a proud descendant of enslaved people who resisted slavery and racism. Like my grandparents, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King, my parents, Martin Luther King III and Arndrea Waters King, have also dedicated their lives to putting an end to racism and all forms of bigotry and discrimination. Like them, I am committed to the fight against racial injustice and to carrying on the legacy of my grandparents, who championed social justice and equality. I am here today, inspired by my grandparents, to be a change-maker, to make the world a better place and to help realize my grandparents' dream. I am a proud youth activist. I am dedicated to confronting issues that challenge our

world. It is up to all of us to make the world a better place, and I use my voice to encourage young people to get involved, to get informed and to do whatever they want to make some change.

I am appreciative of the opportunity to observe this Day with you, as it serves as an important reminder of the transatlantic slave trade and the suffering that arose from it. As a descendant of enslaved people in the family trees of both my father and mother, my ancestors were among the lucky ones who survived. March 25 is a day of reflection, to remember the millions of men, women and children who suffered and perished as a result of slavery. We are here to honour the estimated 7 million enslaved people who died aboard ships, making it one of the darkest chapters in our world history.

Earlier this morning, I visited the Ark of Return, a powerful memorial that offers an opportunity to reflect on the legacy of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. It was a deeply moving and thought-provoking experience, as memorable as my first visit back in 2019. The tour reminded me that my grandfather wrote about the historical legacy of slavery in his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”. His writings are an eloquent summation of the slavery experience in the United States. They also provide a compelling testament to the faith and commitment of the victims of slavery and their descendants to rise up and claim their humanity while making their voices heard.

As my grandmother, Coretta Scott King, who was an alternate United Nations delegate herself, said back in 2004, when she spoke at the Harriet Tubman Museum, “the sons and daughters of the African diaspora have a moving, important and powerful story to tell and will be heard.” She went on to say,

“Our African ancestors came to these shores in shackles, and we were brutalized, oppressed, and suffered unspeakable cruelties for centuries. But we had something our captors could not destroy, try as they did. We had a mighty spirit that somehow overcame this terrible legacy and found noble expression in our arts and our creative efforts in every field of human accomplishment.”

Her words capture the stories and struggles of our ancestors, whose resilience and resistance paved the way for future generations.

It is critical that we shine a light on the past to raise awareness about the historical impact of slavery and,

more importantly, its lasting effects on our society today. It is a striking reminder that we are still struggling to eradicate the systemic racism, inequality, violence and poverty that continue to affect communities worldwide. Regrettably, we cannot even say that slavery is a thing of the past. In fact, the United Nations has estimated that as many as 50 million people are victims of slavery worldwide today, and broader definitions of slavery place the number at more than 100 million. As we recall the past, we should keep our focus on the present and the work that lies ahead. There is much work to be done. Regrettably, we are still fighting the same challenges that my grandfather gave his life fighting for, and that my parents have dedicated their lives to resolving.

Silence is not an opportunity for my generation. We must continue combating racism, prejudice and discrimination in all forms by reaffirming our commitment to promoting human dignity, equality and justice for all. My grandfather had a dream, not just for the United States, but for making the entire world a better place. He talked about creating a beloved community, in which people of every race, religion and nationality can live together in peace and harmony and work together for the common progress of humankind. In his last book, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?*, he talked about the “world house”. His vision of global interconnectedness and unity in the face of challenges is still relevant today. His dream resonates deeply within me. That is why I am committed to raising my voice to combat racism, poverty and violence.

While my family and I, still to this day, talk about the correct way to be an activist, everyone can lend their own unique talents to stand up and speak out for what they believe in, to fulfil my grandparents’ vision of a better world. I call on young people to lead the way. We must connect via the Internet and organize across national boundaries around the world. This will open up new possibilities for global campaigns to advance human rights and social justice in all nations. I hope that my family’s legacy of social justice advocacy will inspire my generation to action and to confront issues affecting our world today. With this shared commitment, let us today affirm the bonds of interdependence that unite freedom- and justice-loving people everywhere. And all the young people in the world should embrace the future with hope, optimism and radiant assurance that we shall overcome, as sisters and brothers of all races, religions and nations, united and determined. We will build the beloved community for all of humanity:

a world house. With this vision, we can put an end to the triple evils of poverty, racism and violence, and go forward into a more hopeful future, with a fearless dedication to create a more just, compassionate and peaceful world. The hearts and souls of millions are surely with us in this effort as we join together in common cause to create a beloved world community, where peace, harmony and goodwill will reign supreme among all creation.

*(spoke in Spanish)*

In conclusion, I would like to share my final words in Spanish. Millions of hearts and souls will certainly be with us in these efforts, as human beings united under a common cause, to create a community with love, where peace, harmony and good faith prevail throughout creation.

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

**Ms. Gurhan** (Uganda): Today, as we solemnly observe the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, we are called upon to reflect on a profoundly grievous period in our shared history. This day is dedicated to honouring the countless individuals whose lives were irrevocably altered or extinguished by the barbaric transatlantic slave trade.

The Group of African States unites in empathy with the descendants of those who suffered through the abomination of slavery. We recognize the persistent legacy of anguish, oppression and inequity that continues to affect communities worldwide. This commemoration compels us to face the harrowing realities of our history and to ensure that the narratives of the victims persist in our collective memory. It is imperative that we educate succeeding generations regarding the heinous acts of slavery, fostering a culture of tolerance, comprehension and harmony throughout all humankind.

As envoys of the African continent, we renew our pledge to eradicate the contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons. We urge the global community to intensify its endeavours to eradicate the fundamental causes of these flagrant human rights abuses and to extend support and restitution to the survivors and their progeny. On this day of remembrance, let us reaffirm our dedication to the tenets of equality, respect and justice for every individual. In unity, we commit to

venerating the memories of the victims of slavery by aspiring to a future devoid of such inhumanities. The legacy of the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism has bequeathed a profound and enduring imprint of racism, which continues to affect the lives of many descendants of the enslaved.

Despite their significant contributions to the formation of societies and nations, numerous individuals of African heritage remain marginalized, hindered by racial stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination that curtail their advancement in various facets of life. They encounter barriers to equitable access to opportunities, resources and influence, as aspirations of liberty remain intangible and the quest for justice endures. As the United Nations gears up to implement measures aimed at bolstering global governance at the forthcoming Summit of the Future, it is incumbent upon Member States, intergovernmental organizations and civil society actors to also undertake initiatives that promote equity and impartiality in decision-making. Such efforts are crucial to affecting transformative change that will contribute to the eradication of racism, the advancement of justice and the realization of freedom for all.

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

**Ms. Alalaiwat** (Bahrain): I have the honour to deliver the statement on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

At the outset, I would like to thank His Excellency Mr. Dennis Francis, President of the General Assembly, for convening this plenary meeting to commemorate the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

The Group of Asia-Pacific States joins the Assembly once again this year to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. The transatlantic trade in trafficked and enslaved Africans represents one of the most horrific and traumatizing errors in human history. Today the legacies of racism and prejudice left behind by slavery and the transatlantic slave trade persist and continue to affect people of African descent. The theme of this year's observance, "Creating global freedom: countering racism with justice in societies and among nations", underscores that justice is crucial to acknowledging the fundamental dignity, equality and rights of people of African descent.

The international community must step up its efforts to address social and economic inequalities, hatred, racism and prejudice, to advance the cause of global freedom. To that end, the Asia-Pacific Group reaffirms the importance of educating and informing current and future generations about the causes, consequences, lessons and legacy of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, as well as the right to seek just and adequate reparation, remedy or satisfaction. We acknowledge the efforts made to date to raise public awareness on the subject, but more needs to be done.

The permanent memorial to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade here at the United Nations, the Ark of Return, serves as a reminder that we must remain committed to our responsibility to promote tolerance, justice and human dignity. The Asia-Pacific Group stands in unity to strive for the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in all its forms, as well as the eradication of modern-day slavery.

The Asia-Pacific Group remains concerned by the scourge of modern slavery and, in reaffirming its commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, calls on the international community to redouble efforts to eradicate forced labour and end modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour in all its forms. We must continue to act in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which declares that no one shall be held in slavery or servitude, and that slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms. It is also important to renew our commitment to our obligations under international law, including international human rights instruments on combating racism and racial discrimination.

In conclusion, as we honour the memory of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, let us remind ourselves of our greater commitment to social justice and human dignity.

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

**Ms. Rodriguez Mancía** (Guatemala): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Latin America and Caribbean States.

At the outset, allow us to express our gratitude to you, Mr. President, for having convened this important commemorative plenary meeting, which provides the

unique honour of reinforcing the value of protecting the international community today and in the future from the wrongs of the past. We also wish to thank Mr. Courtenay Rattray, Chef de Cabinet, Professor Sir Hilary Beckles and Ms. Yolanda Renee King for participating in this meeting.

Today we are called to reflect on the abolition of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade through the prism of the theme “Creating global freedom: countering racism with justice in societies and among nations”. In doing so, we honour and remember the more than 15 million African women, men, young people and children who were brutally forced from their homes, families, communities, countries and way of life. This is also an occasion to address the intergenerational legacies that remain from that hideous and dark period of human history. Today we commemorate the victims of a global system of exploitation and dehumanization, which engendered unprecedented wealth for many nations, while begetting death and intergenerational trauma. May we also honour the Indigenous Peoples, who also suffered and lost their lives owing to the immoral and unforgettable slave trade. We cannot forget the history of colonization and the legacy of colonialism in our region.

The damage wrought by such institutionalized exploitation, based on racism, exploitation and torture, continues today in the form of racism, hate speech and malignant prejudices in beliefs and actions from subtle to grotesque forms of violence and microaggressions, which continue to adversely impact the people of African descent across the world today.

As this year’s theme centres on access to justice, ensuring accountability and the promotion of truth, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence are critical to combating one of the legacies of slavery and racism and to uprooting racial and false narratives. We echo the call of the Secretary-General for reparatory justice as a crucial element in realizing racial equality and atoning for the enduring repercussions of centuries of enslavement and colonialism (see A/76/PV.62). Moreover, we call for further efforts by Member States to incorporate a comprehensive understanding of the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade into educational curricula. We must educate and raise awareness on the history of the slave trade system as a means to addressing its legacy and fighting racism today. Much of who we are as a people and a society is owed to the generations of people of African descent who shaped the



communities and formed the identities of the peoples of the Americas and of the Caribbean. Today we pay tribute to their immeasurable contributions to our region.

Despite the abolition of slavery, people of African descent across the Latin American and Caribbean region and the world at large continue to grapple with the racial, ethnic, gender, economic, social and political hierarchies established in its institutionalization. Even worse, numerous forms of slavery still exist today, experienced by millions of people across the world, such as forced labour, domestic servitude, debt bondage, child, early and forced marriage, sexual slavery, the recruitment of child soldiers and human trafficking, including the trafficking of persons for the removal of their organs.

After four centuries of the transatlantic slave trade, currently, there is still a high number of people in modern-day slavery. Estimates by the International Labour Organization revealed that forced labour and forced marriage have increased significantly in the past five years. Ten million more people were said to live in modern slavery in 2021 as compared to the 2016 global estimates, bringing the total to an approximate 50 million worldwide. That number translates to nearly one in every 150 people in the world. Unfortunately, the scourge of modern slavery has by no means been relegated to history. Women and children remain disproportionately vulnerable to exploitation through modern forms of slavery.

We must take collective action to dismantle the transnational criminal structures that sustain those and other forms of exploitation and subjugation. We consider the establishment of the Permanent Forum for People of African Descent in 2021 as an important step in that regard. We continue to affirm our support for its initiatives and mandate in order to improve the safety, quality of life and livelihoods of people of African descent. We look forward to the upcoming third session of the Permanent Forum in April 2024 in Geneva.

There is still much work to be done to achieve the full equality of every individual in our region and globally. It is imperative that we take progressive steps towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

As the International Decade for People of African Descent concludes this year, the Group reiterates its support for proclaiming a second International Decade

for People of African Descent, starting in 2025, with the aim of maintaining the highest political attention to our commitments of recognition, justice and development, assuring the promotion and protection of human rights for all.

The lessons of yesterday should urge each of us to address the evil of modern-day slavery today. In doing so, we must always remember to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, while also embracing this momentous occasion as a dynamic call to protect our communities from contemporary forms of slavery today.

**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.

**Mr. Zahneisen (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 of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

Today we remember the millions of people — men, women and children — who became victims of slavery and did not survive the unfathomable brutality of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. The transatlantic slave trade remains an unparalleled tragedy, which lasted for more than three centuries and involved unspeakable atrocities and the enslavement of millions of Africans, of whom many died during the horrific journey across the Atlantic.

We pay tribute to the countless victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, and we pay respect to their descendants. The stories of those who were forcibly abducted from their homelands and sold as slaves and the stories of those who fought bravely against their oppressors and against the cruel practices of slavery must not be forgotten. We need to continue to educate everyone on the history of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade and about their devastating consequences and long-lasting impacts. We also consider it vital to shed light on the rich heritage and important contributions of people of African descent, and we pay tribute to their many achievements in all areas of our societies.

The wrongs of the past cannot be undone, but we can learn from them for the present and the future and try to redress the still continuing effects by acknowledging and addressing the trauma caused by them. We also

need to remove barriers and tackle disparities, which still represent an obstacle to the equal participation in all spheres of society by the descendants of those affected by the monstrous and utterly dehumanizing acts of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Racism against people of African descent is, in part, a lasting legacy of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. We stay committed to addressing its root causes and to taking concrete action to prevent and eliminate racial discrimination and to fight racism, xenophobia and related intolerance. To that end, we renew our commitment to the full and effective implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and take note of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

This day should also remind and encourage us to act in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which provide that no one shall be held in slavery or servitude, and that slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

But even today we see traffickers exploit and profit at the expense of adults or children by forcing them to perform labour or engage in commercial sex. While women and girls account for the majority of identified victims of those horrible practices, many more individuals, including men and boys, are also impacted by those too-often hidden crimes.

It is essential that we comply with our obligations under international law, including the Convention to Suppress the Slave Trade and Slavery. We call on States that have not done so to ratify the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Trafficking Protocol and to implement them effectively.

We welcome the current efforts to consider a Rome Statute amendment that is inclusive of the slave trade, as well as a distinct provision in the draft articles on prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity. We must increase our efforts to eliminate all forms of trafficking in persons, as committed to in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to ensure justice, accountability, dignity and freedom for all persons.

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

**Mr. Rodrigue (Haiti):** 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 the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Dennis Francis, for having convened this commemorative plenary meeting to mark the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. We also thank Professor Sir Hilary Beckles — a son of Barbados — and Ms. Yolanda Renee King for their contributions to this meeting.

For many years, Caribbean voices have echoed throughout the chambers and halls of the United Nations in honouring the victims of those past atrocities, as well as raising awareness of, and advocating against, the legacies of slavery and systemic underdevelopment of people of African descent. Not only is that our right, but it is also our solemn duty so long as inaction and indifference to the wrongs committed in the past persist.

As the United Nations contemplates the theme of this year's commemoration — "Creating global freedom: countering racism with justice in societies and among nations" — CARICOM is compelled to assess the concept of freedom comprehensively. Slavery in the Caribbean was abolished first in Haiti, in 1804, and across the wider region 30 years later. The history books will say that, by virtue of that decree, slaves were granted freedom, from which their descendants benefit today. Yet for a great many citizens of the Caribbean Community who are people of African descent, there are constant reminders of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, as the residual effects are manifested in our daily lives, including in the form of high national debt, poverty and institutional deficiencies and inefficiencies. After almost 200 years since our ancestral freedom, it is clear that not all are granted the essential freedoms to achieve the inalienable rights of every human being. The artificial barriers of racism and discrimination between and among nations continue to propel injustice and underdevelopment.

Indeed, there is something fundamentally wrong with a global economy that is hinged on a system of self-perpetuating poverty — one that stipulates that the more indebted one is, and the poorer one is, the more expensive it should be to meet one's needs.

For that reason, CARICOM is of the view that the key to successfully combating injustice and truly attaining freedom is equity. To achieve equity, there must be a reform of the international financial architecture to include the private sector, where the bulk of opportunities for investment currently lie. The complete reform of global governance is also necessary to prevent the use of unilateral coercive measures and to allow all nations, big and small, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and fulfil the human rights of their citizens. Such reforms are welcomed avenues towards achieving global socioeconomic equity, even as we CARICOM countries continue our pursuit of reparatory justice and to engage the international community on the pragmatic ways in which that can be achieved.

CARICOM is intent on profoundly addressing the issue of reparatory justice within our region and, most certainly, within the context of the United Nations. We therefore call on all Member States to join in such efforts to acknowledge the embedded institutional, human and emotional harm caused by slavery and the need for restoration. On this commemorative occasion, CARICOM also calls on the international community to demonstrate, through the way in which we address the challenges in Haiti, that we are able to rise above the shackles that have held us, as a global community, back in the past.

*(spoke in French)*

I would now like to continue my statement in my national capacity.

It is with a sense of pride that I take the floor today at this commemorative meeting of the General Assembly on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade to commemorate the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. This event is of the utmost importance to my country, Haiti, the first Black republic in the world, born of the only successful slave revolt that radically changed the course of human history. It symbolizes not only the relentless struggle of our ancestors for freedom, equality and human dignity, but also their invaluable contribution to the abolition of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, which constituted the largest forced displacement of people and decimated the nations of Africa, and the legacy of which continues to manifest itself in our societies in racism, xenophobia and prejudice of all kinds.

For Haiti, this day is not only a time to remember our ancestors, victims of the barbarity of slavery and the slave trade, but also a reaffirmation of our unwavering commitment to respecting human dignity, the self-determination of peoples and individual freedom, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For us Haitians, it is also a moment of reflection and inspiration, reminding us that, despite the current challenges, our country has the foundations to overcome the adversities that we face and build a prosperous future for future generations.

We stand before Member States today not as victims resigned to accepting our deplorable condition, but as witnesses to strength and our ability to change our destiny and aspire to a better world. Haiti today faces trials of all kinds that test our resilience, our unity and our humanity. Nevertheless, the fighting spirit of our ancestors resonates stronger than ever within us. It reminds us that, against all odds, in the face of the greatest of adversities, Haiti rose to become the first bastion of freedom in the New World and the first to break the chains of slavery and proclaim its sovereignty and independence. Our country also helped many peoples to free themselves from the colonial yoke.

Today that spirit of courage, ingenuity and determination lives on in all of us. As descendants of those valiant revolutionaries, we carry within us the flame of rebirth and renewal. Just as our ancestors rose to forge a new future for our nation, we too will rise to rebuild our country, ravaged by armed gang violence. Haiti will rise from its ashes, not despite its trials, but through them, drawing on the strength, perseverance and resilience that define our people as the springboard to enable us to emerge from that crisis.

The world needs to know that Haiti is not just a nation that struggles; it is a people who aspires, dreams of a better tomorrow and fights relentlessly to achieve that goal. The legacy of our founding fathers and their unshakeable faith in a better destiny fuel our quest for justice, equality and prosperity for all Haitians. In solidarity, in unity and with the support of the international community, Haiti will therefore rise once again, bearing witness to the indomitable strength of our determination to achieve feats such as those of our predecessors. May God help us to do that.

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

According to UNESCO estimates, between 15 and 20 million Africans were abducted and transported from Africa to North, Central and South America and the Caribbean against their will. A great many died during their transfer to the Americas. That mass deportation and the subsequent enslavement are considered one of the worst human rights violations in the entire history of humankind. According to some experts, its effects are still felt in African economies, and its racist legacy continues to have an impact on people of African descent around the world to this day.

The commemoration today, 25 March, of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, whose theme this year is “Creating global freedom: countering racism with justice in societies and among nations”, should be a day of deep reflection and a retrospective examination of the sad and shameful centuries-long treatment of Africans, that is, the slave trade — a gross violation of human rights, which became a lucrative multinational operation. Some practices of the treatment of Black people were even legalized in some countries.

The transatlantic slave trade caused untold suffering. The millions and millions of individual victims each had a story, a family, dreams and hopes. Indeed, the slave trade was at the heart of deep economic and social structural inequalities. Those injustices and inequalities still continue to affect Black people and people of African descent around the world today, as we have seen and see in the major crises taking place in the world. Black people are always treated in a discriminatory way, and that in a world in which there is constant talk about the obligation to respect human rights and humanitarian rights.

The human beings who succumbed under the yoke of slavery had little refuge. They were left with their beliefs, their drums, their invincible will not to die. They were in danger of losing their identity and their reason for living.

On this International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea pays the most heartfelt tribute to the courage of the nearly 5 million Black men and women who fell under the yoke of slavery. We celebrate their fearlessness. We pay tribute to Toussaint Louverture, to Aimé Césaire, to the Maroons and to the brave fighters of Jamaica, those of Haiti and of Peru

and those of the entire African diaspora who stood up to ignominy, as Aimé Césaire rightly said in his epic poem *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*.

On this International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, we also pay tribute to the memory of those who fought against that terrible crime, grave intolerance, base injustice and flagrant violation of human rights. We pay tribute to those who, through their creativity, contribute to the struggle. Thus, we pay tribute to the architect Rodney Leon, who designed and built the Ark of Return, a permanent memorial in honour of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, which stands in the Visitors' Plaza of United Nations Headquarters and for whose construction the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, His Excellency Mr. Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, made a significant contribution.

Finally, during the 37th ordinary session of the African Union Assembly, held in Addis Ababa from 17 to 18 February, His Excellency Nana Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, presented the international conference's report on building a united front to advance the cause of justice and reparations for Africans. Among some of the recommendations of that report, it is worth highlighting, first, declaring 2025 as the Year of Justice for Africans Through Reparations; and, secondly, the fact that African States continue to face the repercussions of transatlantic slavery, colonialism and apartheid through the persistence of neocolonialism and dependence on former colonial Powers. TheyWe therefore call for immediate, just and comprehensive reforms of the prevailing architecture of multilateral institutions by fully realizing related African Common Positions, particularly with regard to the composition and working methods of the Security Council and the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as ensuring an equitable and just international system through concrete measures, including, inter alia, special and differential treatment, common but differentiated responsibility and loss and damage mechanisms, debt relief, curbing illicit financial flows and the return of African cultural property.

I conclude this statement by pointing out that we are all part of the same family — one large family, and that is the family of humankind. In that large family there must be no place for, nor should there be, any humiliating or discriminatory treatment of any of its members. All of us from the Caribbean, from Africa



and from everywhere, let us say together, let us shout together and let us sing together: never again, never again, and let us put an end to racial discrimination, supremacy and the treatment of Blacks as inferior beings. We are all part of the great family of humankind.

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

**Ms. Carty** (United States of America): I thank the members of the King family for being here with us this morning. Dr. King's legacy continues to inspire us all. I also thank you, Mr. President, for convening us to mark the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

Today we reflect on one of the darkest chapters in human history, when women, men and children were ripped from their homes in Africa and sold into chattel slavery — tens of millions of people exploited and dehumanized, beaten and brutalized, over the course of centuries.

Here in the United States, we often see slavery just as a problem of the South, but slavery was also a fixture of the North — of this very city. New York City was used as a port in the transatlantic slave trade, and, by the mid-eighteenth century, roughly one in five people in Manhattan was enslaved. When one walks down Broadway, one is walking down a street that was cleared and cut by enslaved people, and when one is on Wall Street, it is very possible that one will pass the very spot where a slave market once stood.

We must remember the full history of slavery — here in New York, across the United States, across the hemisphere and around the world. But today cannot be just about remembering. It also has to be about reckoning — about reckoning with the lasting, pernicious legacy of the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism; about reckoning with the devastating, often deadly, consequences of anti-Black racism; and about reckoning with the ways in which systemic racism undermines development, peace, democracy and the rule of law.

We must face such painful realities head on. That is the only way to remove the rot of systemic racism from our societies. The Biden–Harris Administration is fully committed to that work at home and abroad. On day one, President Biden signed a historic executive order that acknowledged the unbearable human costs of

systemic racism and directed our Federal Government to advance equity for those who have been historically underserved, marginalized and affected by persistent discrimination, poverty and inequality. In December 2022, President Biden also established the President's Advisory Council on African Diaspora Engagement, which seeks to advance inclusion, belonging and public awareness of the diversity, accomplishments, culture and history of the African diaspora. Here at the United Nations, we are proud champions of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent. We were the only country that made a voluntary contribution to support the historic launch of the Permanent Forum last year.

The legacy of the transatlantic slave trade is very much still with us, and it can be felt around the world. We all therefore have a responsibility to reckon with the hard truths and together forge a better future. For our children, for our grandchildren and for the generations yet to be born, let us recommit to stamping out systemic racism in every corner of the world.

**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 make the following remarks in our national capacity.

Nigeria underscores today as a sober reflection and poignant reminder of that dark chapter in human history and its lasting effects on our societies worldwide. It is a day to honour the resilience and culture of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, as well as to recommit to combating racism, prejudice and other related intolerance.

People of African descent are disproportionately impacted by the burden of poverty, driven by the transatlantic slave trade, slavery and colonialism. Those have led to structural and institutional discrimination, including many human rights-denying actions, such as segregation and limited access to education, other social services and employment. In that regard, understanding the past is crucial to preventing future injustices and to promoting harmony.

Nigeria is concerned about the alarming manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other related intolerance against people of African descent. The problem manifests locally, nationally and globally. As such, each level has clear responsibilities for restitution. It is imperative to emphasize that only people of African descent were

not given the required reparation, as was given to other races. We call on the United Nations, as a multilateral platform, through the reparative framework to demand the appropriate reparation for the people of African descent for the pains of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

We are convinced that resolution 75/314, which institutionalized the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent for improving the safety and quality of life and livelihoods of people of African descent, as well as an advisory body to the Human Rights Council, helps to protect the human rights of African people. It is fully in tandem with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and reaffirms the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. It is a promotion of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We need to have disaggregated data so that we can have better clarity on systemic racism, its causes and its consequences and to be able to better monitor the effectiveness of policy measures. In that regard, Member States are encouraged to use appropriate disaggregated data to ensure that policies are better designed and monitored for their inclusivity. It is imperative to state that perpetrators of racism and racial discrimination must be held accountable. Beyond the law enforcement approach, however, dealing with the foundations of such a sociopolitical economy of racial discrimination in a holistic manner is crucial to finding lasting solutions to the situation.

As a matter of universal importance, multilateral cooperation in dealing with the threats posed by racial discrimination and related intolerance is required. We call on States Members of the United Nations to consider innovative ways of destroying the structural foundations of racism, racial discrimination and other related intolerance, which have proved to be obstacles to the enjoyment of human rights by people of African descent.

In conclusion, the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade is more than a day of remembrance; it is a call to action. It challenges us to confront our past, learn from it and build a future, grounded in respect, dignity and equality. Collaboration between Member States and the

United Nations is vital. Nigeria stands ready to work with all in that regard.

**The President:** We have heard the last speaker in this commemorative meeting. The Assembly has thus concluded its commemorative meeting to mark the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 118?

*It was so decided.*

#### **Agenda item 14 (continued)**

##### **Culture of peace**

##### **Draft resolution (A/78/L.53)**

**The President:** Before we proceed to take action on the draft resolution, 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 Viet Nam to introduce draft resolution A/78/L.53.

**Mr. Hoang Giang Dang (Viet Nam):** On behalf of Bulgaria, El Salvador, Kenya, Jamaica, Luxembourg and Vietnam, I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/78/L.53, by which the General Assembly would proclaim 11 June as the International Day of Play, to be commemorated every year.

Play is not merely a leisure activity, but a vital component of human development across all ages that contributes to the holistic growth of individuals across cognitive, social, emotional and physical domains. It serves as a universal language that transcends age, culture and social barriers, embodying the essence of exploration, problem solving, a sense of responsibility, learning and connection. The act of play stimulates brain development, enhances social skills, helps to regulate emotions and promotes physical health and fitness. It also fosters resilience, creativity and innovation in individuals. For children in particular, play helps to build relationships, impose control and overcome trauma and problem solving. It helps children to develop the cognitive, physical, creative, social and emotional skills that they need to thrive in the rapidly changing world.

Restricting opportunities for play directly impedes a child's well-being and development. In educational settings, play-based learning has been recognized as an effective approach to engaging students actively in the learning process. It helps to make learning more enjoyable and relevant, thereby enhancing motivation and the retention of information. Furthermore, play is considered to have a positive impact on promoting tolerance and resilience and on facilitating social inclusion, conflict prevention and peace-building.

In recognition of that, under article 31, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has enshrined play as a fundamental right of every child. Therefore, the proclamation of 11 June as the International Day of Play will mark a significant milestone in our efforts to preserve, promote and prioritize play so that all people, especially children, can reap the rewards and thrive to their full potential. It is our hope that it will recognize the role of families and communities in advocating for play learning and play-based programmes.

Through such a proclamation, Member States commit to raising global awareness, galvanizing political action, encouraging innovation-play-friendly policies and provisions, while underscoring the overarching significance of play throughout the human lifespan. It would also contribute towards the achievement of our international commitments, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

On behalf of the members of the core group, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to all delegations for their constructive and valuable proposals and flexibility. We look forward to working with UNICEF, UNESCO and all relevant stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, to mark today in a meaningful way.

I would like to pay tribute to all the States that co-sponsored this draft resolution and invite others to join this initiative as co-sponsors. It would equally be an honour to be able to count on the Assembly's unanimous support so that draft resolution A/78/L.53 can be adopted by consensus. With the adoption of the draft resolution, we strongly believe the proclamation of an International Day of Play will serve as an annual reminder of the urgency to ensure and promote play across all ages. Going forward, each year 11 June will provide a platform to advocate for the adoption of

policies and practices that promote awareness of the vital benefits of play for creativity, learning, physical health and emotional well-being.

**The President:** We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/78/L.53.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Ms. De Miranda** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to the delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/78/L.53: Algeria, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, the Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Eswatini, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malawi, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Sweden, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Türkiye, Uganda, the United Arab Emirates, the United Republic of Tanzania, the United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Zambia.

**The President:** The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/78/L.53, entitled "International Day of Play".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/78/L.53?

*Draft resolution A/78/L.53 was adopted (resolution 78/268).*

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

#### **Agenda item 125 (continued)**

#### **Global health and foreign policy**

#### **Draft resolution (A/78/L.50) and draft amendment (A/78/L.55)**

**The President:** I give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation to introduce draft amendment A/78/L.55.

**Mr. Chumakov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation has submitted draft amendment A/78/L.55, which objects to the use of the word “crisis” in relation to antimicrobial resistance. Further consultations took place with a view to reaching compromise language. I understand that that will be announced later today.

In that regard, in the interest of finding a consensus, as well as to ensure that antimicrobial resistance would be a unifying agenda, the Russian Federation withdraws the draft amendment.

**The President:** As announced by the co-facilitators yesterday, in order to come to a consensual outcome, I would like to make an oral revision to draft resolution A/78/L.50, as follows.

In operative paragraph 4 (b), under “Panel 1”, replace “antimicrobial resistance crisis” with “global risk of antimicrobial resistance”. Therefore, the revised text would read as follows:

“Panel 1: Addressing the urgent global risk of antimicrobial resistance across the human, animal, plant and environmental sectors through equity, access, building awareness and innovation”.

Accordingly, the representative of the Russian Federation has withdrawn draft amendment A/78/L.55, as members have just heard.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/78/L.50, as orally revised.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Ms. De Miranda** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I will first deliver an oral statement of programme budget implications in connection with draft resolution A/78/L.50, as orally revised. That oral statement will be followed by an oral statement of meeting scheduling implications of draft resolution A/78/L.50, as orally revised.

The present oral statement is made in the context of rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and will also be distributed to Member States. Under the terms of operative paragraphs 1, 4 and 13 of the draft resolution, the General Assembly:

“[d]ecides that the one-day high-level meeting on antimicrobial resistance to be convened by the President of the General Assembly shall be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 26 September 2024 during the general debate of the Assembly at its seventy-ninth session, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and shall consist of an opening segment, a plenary segment for general discussion, two multi-stakeholder panels and a brief closing segment;

“[d]ecides that the organizational arrangements for the two multi-stakeholder panels will be as follows:

(a) Two multi-stakeholder panels will be held in parallel to the plenary segment, one from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and the other from 3 to 5 p.m.;

(b) The multi-stakeholder panels will address the following themes:

Panel 1: Addressing the urgent global risk of antimicrobial resistance across the human, animal, plant and environmental sectors through equity, access, building awareness and innovation;

Panel 2: Addressing human health, animal health, agrifood systems and protecting the environment to tackle antimicrobial resistance, through surveillance, capacity-building, sustainable resources, financing and investment;

(c) Each of the two multi-stakeholder panels will be co-chaired by two representatives, one from a developed country and one from a developing country, to be appointed by the President of the General Assembly from among the Heads of State or Government attending the high-level meeting, in consultation with Member States, taking into



account gender balance, level of development and geographical representation;

(d) The President of the General Assembly may invite parliamentarians, local governments, the heads or senior representatives of relevant United Nations entities, including the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Environment Programme as well as the World Organization for Animal Health, and international financial institutions, development partners, civil society, the private sector, academia, medical and scientific associations, Indigenous Peoples, representative organizations of people affected by antimicrobial resistance, persons with disabilities and community organizations to serve as speakers on the panels, taking into account gender balance, level of development, geographical representation and the representation of youth and older persons;

“[d]ecides that the proceedings of the high-level meeting and the multi-stakeholder hearing shall be webcast, and encourages the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General and the Director-General of the World Health Organization, the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme and the Director General of the World Organization for Animal Health to give the highest visibility to the high-level meeting, through all relevant media platforms and information and communications technologies.”

Should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/78/L.50, as orally revised, while that would represent an addition to the meetings workload for the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Office of Information and Communications Technology, every effort will be made to meet the requirements within their capacity, and there would be no programme budget implications for 2024. In that regard, the Secretariat wishes to inform the General Assembly that its ability to implement the new mandate will depend on the availability of adequate cash resources.

I will now read an oral statement of the meeting scheduling implications of draft resolution A/78/L.50, as orally revised.

The following statement is made pursuant to paragraph 20 of resolution 77/335, of 1 September 2023, in which the General Assembly requested the Secretariat to draw the attention of the General Assembly and its subsidiary organs to overlapping high-level meetings of the Assembly prior to action on proposals that mandate the holding of meetings of the Assembly on specific dates.

Under the terms of operative paragraph 1 of the draft resolution before it, the Assembly would decide to convene a one-day high-level meeting on antimicrobial resistance, to be convened by the President of the General Assembly on Thursday, 26 September 2024. That meeting would overlap with mandated meetings of the General Assembly. On Thursday, 26 September 2024, the General Assembly will hold the third day of its general debate at the seventy-ninth session from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., as well as the high-level plenary meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

**The President:** We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/78/L.50, as orally revised.

The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/78/L.50, entitled “Scope, modalities, format and organization of the high-level meeting on antimicrobial resistance convened by the President of the General Assembly”, as orally revised.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/78/L.50, as orally revised?

*Draft resolution A/78/L.50, as orally revised, was adopted (resolution 78/269).*

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

**Ms. Mendoza Elguea (Mexico) (spoke in Spanish):** Mexico joins the consensus today and appreciates the efforts of the Permanent Representatives of Malta and Barbados as co-facilitators in this process. We also highlight their important work and commitment up to hours before this adoption in order to achieve consensus on the modalities text. However, we are concerned about the lack of transparency in the last-minute agreement, since that was not communicated to all negotiators except with less than 24 hours before

adoption, which did not allow for adequate consultation with our authorities in Mexico City.

In addition, while we agree that the text focuses on the organization of the meeting, and not on the substance, as Mexico had requested, we cannot ignore the most important procedural limitation that my country identifies: the mention that the outcome document of the high-level meeting must be adopted by consensus.

Historically, Mexico has maintained a consistent position with regard to a consensus. For my country, consensus is a desirable aspiration rather than an end in itself or an ultimate goal. As the rules of procedure and the Charter of the United Nations establish, decisions of the Assembly must be taken by a majority of the members present and voting. Consensus does not mean unanimity. It means the will expressed by a large majority of the members present. Consensus can mean in practice the granting of 193 vetoes, diminishing the democratic character of this Assembly and affecting the process regarding such important issues as combating the urgent risk posed by antimicrobial resistance.

Accordingly, Mexico regrets once again the unnecessary limitation in resolution 78/269, which was adopted today. Nevertheless, my country will work proactively to reach an ambitious outcome with a view to achieving a positive and action-oriented impact.

Mexico reaffirms its commitment to the successful holding of the high-level meeting on antimicrobial resistance in order to achieve outcomes that go beyond the text and meet the urgent global health challenges. It is our obligation to commit to a healthier and more prosperous future.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer.

**Mr. De Maesschalck** (Belgium): I have the honour to deliver this explanation of position on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

We welcome the adoption of resolution 78/269, on the scope, modalities, format and organization of the high-level meeting on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) convened by the President of the General Assembly. We also thank Barbados and Malta for their leadership and efforts in trying to bridge positions.

Since penicillin was first discovered in 1928, life-saving antimicrobial medicines have revolutionized our society and economy. Previously deadly diseases had become routine ailments, requiring little more than a brief treatment. Those achievements are now at risk due to the excessive or inappropriate use of antimicrobial medicines, which has led to the increasing emergence and spread of resistant bacteria. There are also structural challenges to access such life-saving medicines in many parts of the world.

This is a global health crisis. Without effective action to reverse current trends, we face the threat of a return to the pre-antibiotic era, seriously undermining progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In that context, we stress the importance of the high-level meeting, which should strengthen our political will to address the issue and deliver an action-oriented outcome, including measurable goals.

We strongly regret that we could not find consensus on introducing One Health in the themes of the panels. Among global health problems, AMR is the one that most clearly illustrates the One Health approach through the connected effects of the excessive use of antimicrobial medicines in agriculture, livestock and human medicine. The importance of the One Health approach to tackling AMR is globally recognized, central to the United Nations response, and should be at the core of our discussions. We also regret the fact that some delegations negotiated in bad faith and did not transparently announce their red lines during the informal consultations, creating unnecessary obstacles after the silence procedure was concluded.

However, Mr. President, you can rest assured that the EU will engage constructively in the negotiations of the political declaration for this important high-level meeting.

**Ms. Castonguay** (Canada): I take the floor on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

We take this opportunity to once again express our support for the upcoming high-level meeting on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and to sincerely thank the co-facilitators, Their Excellencies Ambassadors Frazier and Jackman, from Malta and Barbados, respectively, as well as their experts, for facilitating this modalities resolution (resolution 78/269). We are

confident that their continued leadership will ensure that we adopt an action-oriented and ambitious political declaration that befits the current circumstances.

While we are pleased to join consensus on this resolution, we would like to note our disappointment at the lack of a stronger reference to One Health in the tenth preambular paragraph. Implying a One Health approach is absolutely critical to combating AMR, as it recognizes the interconnectedness of human, animal and environmental health. By understanding how antimicrobial use in one sector affects other sectors through shared ecosystems and microbial transmission pathways, interventions can be better designed to reduce the emergence and spread of resistant bacteria. Implementing holistic strategies, such as antimicrobial stewardship programmes, surveillance systems and improved infection prevention and control practices across human, animal and environmental domains, can help to preserve the effectiveness of much-needed antimicrobial medicines for future generations.

Our group underscores its position that AMR can be fully addressed only through a robust One Health

approach, and we look forward to seeing language commensurate with its importance in the final outcome document. We also reiterate our commitment to working constructively with all delegations over the summer to see our collective priorities fully addressed.

**The President:** We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position following adoption.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to His Excellency Mr. François Jackman, Permanent Representative of Barbados to the United Nations, and Her Excellency Mrs. Vanessa Frazier, Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, who ably and patiently conducted the discussions and complex negotiations in the informal consultations on resolution 78/269. I am sure that members of the Assembly join me in extending our sincere appreciation to them.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 125.

*The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.*