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Official Records

*President:* Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki . . . . . (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

*In the absence of the President, Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.*

## Agenda item 11

### Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

#### Report of the Secretary-General (A/64/372)

#### Draft resolution (A/64/L.12)

**The Acting President:** I give the floor to the representative of Qatar to introduce draft resolution A/64/L.12.

**Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar)** (*spoke in Arabic*): I am honoured to speak under agenda item 11 to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/64/L.12, entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies".

Since the draft resolution was introduced, the following countries have joined as sponsors: Estonia, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lithuania, Madagascar, Mali, Malta, Morocco, the Netherlands, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Arab

Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The International Conference of New or Restored Democracies (ICNRD) has taken on an important role in strengthening democracy. Governments, parliaments and civil society organizations participating in the New or Restored Democracies Movement are determined to use the Conferences as a source of inspiration and a forum to exchange experiences and best practices.

Based on its commitment to implement systematically the recommendations and follow-up to the Conferences, the State of Qatar hosted the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies in November 2006. Qatar has begun work to establish an international advisory board with members from various regional groups.

Since 2007, the Advisory Board of the Sixth International Conference has held four important meetings in Doha and in New York under the chairmanship of Mr. Mohammed Bin Abdullah Bin Mutib Al-Rumaihi, Deputy Foreign Minister of Qatar, and has helped to ensure implementation and follow-up to the meetings of the Movement for the years 2007-2009 and to assess the progress made in achieving the goals set at the Conference.

The New or Restored Democracies Movement is an important factor in promoting international dialogue on the concepts, principles and basic values of democracy and in strengthening a culture of partnership with Governments, parliaments, the

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International Civil Society Forum for Democracy and the United Nations. We have also set up a national secretariat and chairmanship with a database of information on democracy to provide electronic and other information on progress being made on the Movement's programme of work.

Within that framework, Qatar has also set up a structure to ensure implementation of the Movement's programme of work that can be used by future Conference chairs. It has also led meetings at the expert level to address methods of coordination and information exchange, and another meeting that has succeeded in developing national committees of the democracy Movement and supplying all of its members with reference documents.

In the context of General Assembly resolution 62/7, adopted in November 2007, the first International Day of Democracy was celebrated on 15 September 2008. Qatar, as Chair of the Sixth International Conference, is working to ensure systematic implementation of the recommendations made at the Conference and to ensure conditions favourable to the future of the New or Restored Democracies Movement through various mechanisms set up for that purpose.

Qatar has encouraged meetings among member States to exchange points of view on that topic because we consider it important to take action outside the framework of the Conferences. Thus, Qatar has also organized meetings of States members of the New or Restored Democracies Movement on the margins of United Nations sessions.

Qatar held a ministerial meeting of the New or Restored Democracies Movement on the sidelines of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly under the chairmanship of Mr. Khaled bin Mohamed Al-Attiyah, Minister of State for International Cooperation, to consider ways to strengthen the Movement as an institutional movement akin to other political and regional groups at the United Nations. Participants at the meeting addressed initiatives to ensure the Movement's future sustainability as an institution, agreed to ensure a more effective and efficient follow-up to the recommendations of the International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies, and engaged in discussions on the institutionalization of the Movement.

The draft resolution before the Assembly today (A/64/L.12) welcomes the work carried out by the

follow-up mechanisms of the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies and the efforts of the Chair to make the Conference and the follow-up thereto more effective and efficient, and in this regard takes note of the outcomes of the four meetings of the Advisory Board of the Sixth International Conference, particularly the implementation of the programme of work of the Conference for 2007-2009 and the convening of the ministerial meeting of the New or Restored Democracies Movement on the sidelines of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

In addition, the draft resolution renews its call to follow up on the work of the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies by inviting interested parties to inform the Secretary-General of measures taken to that end.

Qatar attaches great importance to the Conference and urges effective and efficient follow-up of its recommendations. The draft resolution notes the achievement of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, under the chairmanship of Qatar, of the establishment of the International Day of Democracy on 15 September. In addition, it reaffirms the central role of parliaments and the active involvement of civil society organizations and media and their interaction with Governments at all levels in promoting democracy.

The draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to take necessary measures for the observance of the International Day of Democracy and urges him to examine options for strengthening the support provided by the United Nations system for the efforts of Member States to consolidate democracy and good governance, including the provision of support to the President of the Sixth International Conference.

Qatar has achieved many successes during its chairmanship of the Conference, which is to expire shortly, and the sponsors of the draft resolution welcome the decision of the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to host the Seventh International Conference of New or Restored Democracies in 2010.

The draft resolution invites the Secretary-General, Member States, the relevant specialized agencies and bodies of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations to collaborate in the holding of the Seventh International Conference.

We take this opportunity to congratulate the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on its decision to host the Seventh International Conference of New or Restored Democracies and affirm the need for follow-up efforts to systematically implement the recommendations of previous Conferences.

The Government of Qatar has held two informal consultation meetings with Member States on the draft resolution before us today. I take this opportunity to thank Member States that participated in the discussions. Qatar, as Chairman of the Sixth International Conference, thanks all Member States that sponsored the draft resolution and hopes to gather the greatest number of sponsors. We urge adoption of the draft resolution by consensus.

**Mrs. Dunlop** (Brazil): Before Brazil became independent in 1822, many political movements fought for our independence. In 1789, one of these movements adopted a Latin motto taken from Virgil's first *Eclogue*: "*Libertas quae sera tamen*", which means "freedom albeit late". When Brazil became a Republic in 1889, the motto was engraved on the flag of one of the states of our federation. Two hundred years later, Brazil is very proud to be a consolidated democracy. Not only in our country, but all over the world, these ideals of freedom and democracy have inspired many visionaries.

As Brazilians, we fully understand the importance of democracy and fundamental freedoms and are fully committed to their implementation. Hence, we strongly support all the efforts made by the United Nations, regional organizations and Member States to strengthen programmes devoted to the promotion and consolidation of democracy, taking into account innovative approaches and best practices.

I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report on support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies (A/64/372). We appreciate his continued efforts and the assistance provided by all United Nations bodies to new or restored democracies in their commitment to the rule of law and to the universal core values and principles of the United Nations.

We have welcomed the designation of 15 September as the International Day of Democracy, as we firmly believe that the marking of this day will

serve as a reminder of the importance of democracy. Moreover, we value the report of the Secretary-General and his recommendations aimed at improving the role of the United Nations in democracy assistance.

We would also like to recognize and commend the leadership of the State of Qatar as Chair of the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies. We appreciate all the progress achieved in the past few years, particularly the process of the institutionalization of the Movement. The commitment of the Qatari Government was pivotal to promoting the goals of the International Conference.

Brazil is honoured to be a sponsor of resolution 62/7 and of draft resolution A/64/L.12, which has been introduced today.

Last but not least, I would also like to congratulate our South American neighbour, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, for taking the lead of the Seventh Conference. We sincerely wish great success for its chairmanship.

As President Lula once reminded us, Brazil is a democracy that is proud of its multi-ethnic population, which draws on rich and varied cultural heritages but shares a strong sense of national identity. We live in peace at home and with neighbouring countries, and this is something we will not surrender. Indeed, with over 100 million voters, all our representatives are elected by secret ballot at all levels of Government. The press and media work freely. Moreover, in the most recent presidential election, the undisputed results were announced just a few hours after the polls closed, as Brazil has developed an electronic secret voting system that allows their prompt release.

Our Parliamentarians therefore follow elected mandates. Our judges undergo public examinations to be appointed. The Brazilian Constitution of 1988 recognizes all fundamental freedoms, such as the freedom of speech and the freedom of assembly.

We fully support the General Assembly in its role to encourage Governments to strengthen national programmes to promote and consolidate democracy, including through increased bilateral, regional and international cooperation. More importantly, in view of the special meaning of democracy and freedom to Brazilians, we will continue to uphold all efforts of the United Nations system towards the development of democratic governance and the building and promotion

of inclusive national dialogue and reconciliation in countries where they may be necessary.

**Ms. Ochir** (Mongolia): My delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies (A/64/372). As seen in the report, Member States have made good progress in promoting and consolidating democracy, in collaboration with regional and intergovernmental organizations. As democracy represents a key principle and core value of the United Nations, underpinning much of its work, the support by the United Nations system is vital to new or restored democracies.

Since 1994, when the General Assembly adopted its first resolution in support of new or restored democracies (resolution 49/30), United Nations support and assistance in the area of democracy promotion have increased in both scope and content. They range from electoral assistance, supporting constitution-making processes, strengthening democratic governance institutions and the rule of law, promoting human rights and anti-corruption initiatives, improving gender responsiveness and women's empowerment, enhancing civic engagement in democratic processes, and providing good offices in overcoming political crises and preventing their escalation.

My delegation commends here the establishment last year of a standby team of mediation experts within the Mediation Support Unit of the Department of Political Affairs on a wide variety of issues, including power- and wealth-sharing, constitution-making and natural resource management. That team could serve the needs of Member States as a powerhouse of high-calibre expertise in relevant areas, to be deployed promptly at the request of Member States.

Mongolia has been enjoying solid and fruitful cooperation in consolidating its democratic gains with the entities of the United Nations system, in particular the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and its Oslo Governance Centre, the Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations Democracy Fund, as well as with the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA).

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the onset of Mongolia's democratic revolution. For us, these have been demanding yet rewarding years of

learning and doing marked by the building of solid institutions of democracy and by a relentless effort to simultaneously reform the nation's political and economic systems. We believe that the democratic system of Government is the best model to ensure a framework of liberties in which to seek lasting solutions to the political, economic and social problems that our society faces. It is therefore our belief that democratic consolidation must come through pursuing sustained economic reform aimed at ensuring better living standards for the people. The goal of human development is high on the agenda of the Government of Mongolia and was reaffirmed yet again by our Prime Minister in his inaugural address on 29 October.

Our steadfast drive towards the consolidation of democracy at home has been duly recognized by the international community. Mongolia successfully hosted the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies (ICNRD) in 2003 and chaired that international movement until November 2006. We are proud to serve currently as an Advisory Board member of ICNRD. Mongolia is also a member of the Convening Group of another international movement for democracy, the Community of Democracies, and was humbled by the Community's decision to have Mongolia serve as Chair from 2011.

We are also grateful to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for selecting us to serve on the Advisory Board of the United Nations Democracy Fund. As one of the main sponsors of resolution 62/7, Mongolia celebrated the International Day of Democracy on 15 September this year with days on which Parliament opened its doors to the public and with a special thematic debate with youth organizations on democracy and political tolerance issues and future directions of democracy in Mongolia. We also kicked off a three-month nation-wide campaign on democracy education.

Since Manila, ICNRD has grown into a truly global movement. We welcome the emphasis placed by Qatar, as Chair, on ensuring a systematic follow-up on and implementation of the decisions of the Sixth Conference, reflected in the relevant programme of work. The productive outcomes of the four meetings of the ICNRD Advisory Board have proven the usefulness of that mechanism. We also commend the efforts of the Chair in setting up a national secretariat, a website and the ICNRD democracy databank to facilitate the

exchange of experience and expertise among States on their democratization efforts.

As we discuss the multifaceted support provided by the United Nations family organizations and other relevant stakeholders to the efforts exerted by the new and restored democracies, let me share some ideas in relation to the recommendations and observations outlined in the Secretary-General's report.

First, on ensuring continued momentum and support for the International Day of Democracy, based on the widespread support expressed globally over the past two years for celebrating this important occasion, it might be advisable to designate a specific theme each year so that the United Nations system organizations and Member States can harness their efforts in a more systematic manner. In 2010, when we will focus on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the international community may choose to celebrate the International Day of Democracy by highlighting the deliverables of democracy, specifically in poverty reduction and the attainment of other MDGs.

Secondly, my delegation welcomes the recommendation of the Secretary-General to encourage complementarity between the ICNRD and the Community of Democracies. During its chairmanship of the ICNRD from 2003 to November 2006, Mongolia attempted to bring the two global democracy movements closer together, *inter alia*, by introducing the relevant recommendations in both ICNRD and Community ministerial outcome documents, conducting consultations and developing a non-paper to that effect.

Today, in our view, momentum is gathering in favour of exploring avenues of possible cooperation between the two global movements for democracy, ICNRD and the Community of Democracies. As we know, the Community's new Chair, Lithuania, has made synergy with ICNRD one of its priorities. The Secretary-General in his report has also suggested providing assistance in this regard. Therefore, we believe that circumstances are conducive to further discussions on possible cooperation between ICNRD and the Community of Democracies.

We also believe that international efforts to promote democracy will further benefit if the ICNRD enjoys robust collaboration and coordination at the multilateral level with other actors, for example the European Union, the Organization for Security and

Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the African Union, the Organization of American States, International IDEA, the Asia-Pacific Democracy Partnership and others.

Thirdly, as to ensuring effective follow-up between ICNRD Conferences, the practices and experiences amassed in the past, especially since the Fifth Conference, should be sustained further. As the Secretary-General's report mentions, the Fifth Conference follow-up was effective in implementing the Ulaanbaatar Conference decisions through a number of pioneering initiatives as a substantive follow-up to the Fifth Conference, which included the development of nationally owned democratic governance indicators, the country information note and a national plan of action to consolidate democracy in Mongolia. Those follow-up experiences were shared with other countries and democracy experts at the International Follow-Up Conference on New or Restored Democracies held in Ulaanbaatar in June 2006, as well as at the Sixth Conference in Doha.

Fourthly, my delegation believes that the institutionalization of ICNRD is essential to ensuring effective and systematic follow-up to the recommendations adopted at each Conference and to revitalizing the movement in the twenty-first century. In order to build sustainable institutional mechanisms to advance the political standing of ICNRD in the world and provide better services to its members, we need a lean and effective secretariat in New York, coupled with a trust fund to support ICNRD activities. We applaud the Secretary-General's readiness to support the Movement's institutionalization in this regard.

Fifthly, with the increased role of the United Nations in fostering democracy and good governance, strengthening United Nations democracy assistance and addressing its coherence and coordination have become important issues in our discussion. In this regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's recent issuance of a guidance note on democracy.

In his address to the General Assembly in September (see A/64/PV.8), the President of Mongolia underlined democracy as inherently woven into the MDGs, noting that Mongolia was the first country to adopt MDG 9 on strengthening human rights, fostering democratic governance and zero tolerance for corruption. That pioneering initiative, supported by the

United Nations Democracy Fund and UNDP, could be a useful tool in ensuring that democracy assistance is more effectively integrated into the work of the United Nations, thus bringing more coherence and coordination to the Organization's efforts.

Here, I would like to reiterate once again the suggestion made by my delegation at the sixty-third session to the effect that it would be advisable to have a study on the inter-agency coordination and coherence of democracy promotion efforts undertaken by the United Nations system. Such a study should, in our view, present concrete proposals and recommendations on streamlining and bringing more coherence into the actions of different United Nations stakeholders in democracy promotion.

My delegation also believes that the General Assembly could take up the issues and recommendations raised in the Secretary-General's report, especially those related to the coherence and coordination of United Nations democracy assistance through a thematic debate. That would not only engage us in a thorough discussion on the United Nations role in democracy promotion, but also effectively contribute towards the implementation of draft resolution A/64/L.12, to be adopted shortly, on support of the United Nations system to the efforts of new and restored democracies.

In conclusion, on behalf of my Government I would like to congratulate Qatar on having successfully chaired the Movement for the past three years, and to welcome Venezuela as a host of the Seventh ICNRD.

**Mr. Valero Briceño** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has been proposed by numerous countries, by way of draft resolution A/64/L.12, to be adopted today, for the chairmanship of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies for the period 2009-2011. We congratulate the State of Qatar and its Permanent Representative, Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, on the advances accomplished during Qatar's chairmanship of the Movement. Among them, we highlight the designation by the United Nations of 15 September as the International Day of Democracy, the successful organization of the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies in 2006 in Qatar, and the ministerial meeting held during the

general debate of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

We also welcome the Secretary-General's report entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies" (A/64/372).

The innovative public policy programmes being implemented in Venezuela have laid the foundation for our efforts to build democracy with social justice. These programmes, which are aimed mostly at the disadvantaged, the poor and those who have always been excluded, have revitalized and rekindled Venezuelan democracy.

The Venezuelan Government promotes social programmes that are intended to address the root causes of the economic, political, social and cultural problems facing society. Significant achievements have been made to that end in Venezuela. According to UNESCO, illiteracy has been eliminated in my country thanks to the concerted efforts of our Government and the unparalleled cooperation extended by the sister Republic of Cuba. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, our country has achieved resounding success in overcoming inequality on our continent.

Venezuela has already achieved the Millennium Development Goal on reducing extreme poverty. *Latinobarómetro*, an organization that conducts public opinion surveys in Latin America, has identified our country as one of the most democratic countries of the region. That organization also ranks Venezuela first in terms of economic and social indicators, such as equality of opportunities, social security, income distribution and employment opportunities.

The 2008 reports of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the United Nations Development Programme confirm the understanding of the men and women of Venezuela that our country's strengthened democracy enjoys broad popular support. Today, all political and social sectors enjoy democratic freedoms and civil and political rights that would have been unimaginable in the past. Over the past 11 years, for example, under the Government of President Hugo Chávez Frias, 12 national electoral processes have taken place, including three presidential elections and five popular referendums, among which was one presidential recall

referendum. We can therefore say that Venezuela holds a world record for elections.

*The President took the Chair.*

In the spirit of the Doha Declaration of the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, held in Doha in 2006, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reaffirms the richness and diversity of political systems around the world and emphasizes the importance of democratic reforms being carried out in accordance with the national, regional, religious and cultural particularities of each country.

Recalling the Doha Declaration, Venezuela reiterates its belief that it is the will of the sovereign people that is responsible for establishing the democratic institutions of a nation and that, as a result, there is no single model of democracy or single set of democratic institutions. There is a rich diversity of democracies around the world.

Venezuela reaffirms the importance of having the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies creatively coordinate the activities of the Governments, parliaments, civil society and social and popular movements of the world to strengthen and bolster democracies around the world. Venezuela again thanks Member States for their support for our assumption of the chairmanship of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, and is firmly committed to promoting this movement with the help of all Member States.

**Mr. Waghmare** (India): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the delegation of Qatar on having introduced the draft resolution (A/64/L.12) on the importance of support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies. We are happy to co-sponsor the draft.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Qatar for its successful stewardship of the Chair of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies (ICNRD) over the past three years, and would like to assure Venezuela of our support during its forthcoming chairmanship of this process.

The ICNRD process has come a long way since its inception, with only 13 countries, in Manila more than 21 years ago. Today, the process enjoys the participation of more than 100 countries in its

activities, and its membership is open to all United Nations Member States. This underscores the importance of the principles and purposes of the Conference and the success of this initiative. We are also happy to note that this process has helped countries to share their experiences of democracy and to identify means to promote pluralistic and participatory democracy. We look forward to the institutionalization of ICNRD activities.

India is the world's largest democracy, and we have been proud to uphold the highest traditions of democracy since our independence more than 60 years ago. We draw particular satisfaction from the manner in which we conduct our elections. In the past few years, we have begun using electronic voting machines. This has allowed our election commission to declare results within hours of the start of the counting process, even though, on average, our constituencies are comprised of over a million voters. A few months back, we elected the fifteenth Lok Sabha, the lower house of Parliament, in a mammoth process that involved more than 700 million voters exercising their franchise to elect 543 members of Parliament.

We are also proud of yet another democratic process at the grass-roots level in India. We have had an institutionalized system of local self-governance in rural India since 1993 through the system of *panchayati raj*. A unique feature of this grass-roots empowerment is the component of gender empowerment, which involves one third of the elected seats being reserved for women. As a result, we have over a million elected women representatives in the country.

Our experience has also shown that democracy is a powerful tool for successfully involving people in meeting the challenges of development. It allows the people to participate actively in and to influence Government actions in the direction of their aspirations. It also ensures a voice for the most vulnerable and weakest sections of society. Our experience also corroborates that implementation of proactive development policies and economic reforms, when coupled with a liberal democratic polity, leads to the overall stability and growth of the country.

As a developing country itself, India is in a unique position to understand the problems that other developing countries face while embracing democracy. We have been sharing our experience, institutional

capabilities and training infrastructure with nations that share our democratic values and beliefs and would like to benefit from the experience of other democracies.

In this context, we are happy to be one of the major contributors to the United Nations Democracy Fund and to serve on its Advisory Board. We have also been offering our expertise bilaterally and through other multilateral forums, promoting democratic ideals and the rule of law. We have also been active supporters of activities of the United Nations Development Programme in the field of good governance.

India is strongly committed to the underlying values and principles inspiring the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies. We would continue to support the Conference and to provide necessary assistance to further consolidate, strengthen and support it.

**Mr. Menan** (Togo) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, it is always a great pleasure for the Togolese delegation to see you presiding over the work of the current session of the General Assembly with such skill, pragmatism and wisdom.

The Togolese delegation is pleased to participate in the debate on the agenda item before us.

The report of the Secretary-General on support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies (A/64/372) notes the numerous activities undertaken bilaterally and multilaterally within the framework of the implementation of resolution 62/7. My delegation welcomes these developments, which demonstrate the vitality of the movement and the commitment of the international community, in particular the United Nations, to seeing it through. My delegation particularly welcomes the celebration of the International Day of Democracy on 15 September 2008, a felicitous initiative adopted at the Sixth Conference of New or Restored Democracies, held in Doha, Qatar, in November 2006.

The United Nations is built on principles that offer special guarantees and protection to the dignity and value of each human being, and establish conditions conducive to the promotion of sustainable peace and development. The remarks we have heard so far confirm, on the one hand, the existence of a growing consensus on the fundamental values that

sustain democracy, and on the other, the need for each nation to proceed with prudence and circumspection as it adapts to the nature and rhythm of the consolidation of its own democratic process. There is no one model, and different democratic practices must respect the specific characteristics of each people and each culture.

Thus, the United Nations cannot but encourage, sustain and reinforce democracy wherever it is worthy of promotion through various forms of assistance. All countries need such assistance, because it is not always clear that democratic principles are observed in their entirety throughout the world. It is also true that the democratic process is a long-term process and eminently perfectable.

For its part, Togo has always enjoyed such assistance from the United Nations. Even before we achieved national sovereignty, this assistance contributed to the organization of consultations that helped to determine our future, and after independence we continued to benefit from assistance whenever we sought it. As a democracy under construction, Togo is firmly committed on the path towards a system of Government based on democratic principles that will, no doubt, lead to the further consolidation of a country that is free, united and prosperous.

In my statement in the general debate on 29 September (see A/64/PV.13), I dwelled at length on the Togolese Government policy of undertaking bold and universally hailed institutional and constitutional reforms aimed at the promotion of democracy, the strengthening of the rule of law and the protection of human rights. Indeed, the strengthening of the institutional framework of democracy cannot be reduced to its basic functioning or continuity through such mechanisms as periodic elections or the multiparty system. It requires Governments to invest more heavily in the freedom of speech, which is essential for democracy and guarantees the rule of law and successful, sustainable development. Thus, the interdependence of these two necessities — democracy and development — has brought Governments and the entire political class of Togo to agree on essential rules that will govern elections and the economic governance of the country.

On this matter, in a speech given on 28 July 2007 in Atakpamé, a city situated in the centre of our country, the Togolese Head of State, His Excellency Mr. Faure Gnassingbé, solemnly proclaimed to the

people of Togo and the international community that he was firmly committed to doing all in his power to ensure that elections in Togo never again lead to sanguinary violence. The successful legislative elections of October 2007, which were certified by international observers as honest, credible, transparent and non-violent, were the most tangible result of the resolve of the Togolese Government.

In the first quarter of the coming year, my country will hold presidential elections in which all citizens who meet the conditions set by the Constitution and the electoral code will be free to vote. To that end, in order to promote dialogue among the political actors of our country and at the instigation of President Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso, the facilitator of the inter-Togolese dialogue, the electoral code was modified by consensus to relax conditions for voter eligibility.

Further, members have been named to our independent national electoral commission tasked with holding and supervising the elections. This mechanism, so critical to the organization in 2010 of credible presidential elections that meet international standards, has elected its bureau and already started its work. As our Head of State emphasized in his speech before the diplomatic corps at the beginning of the year, the Togolese Government plans to spare no effort in ensuring the success of the upcoming presidential election, which will consolidate the gains already obtained by the Togolese democracy.

We all know that the road to democracy is fraught with pitfalls and that the most difficult task is to persuade the citizenry that democracy imposes responsibilities on everyone and that, above all, it is always a work in progress. Democracy is an evolving process that is vulnerable to social imbalances and that we must tirelessly sustain with our efforts, innovation and imagination. That is undoubtedly what makes it superior to other forms of Government. It is the only political system capable of correcting its own dysfunctions. That is why my delegation would like once again to thank Togo's partners, the United Nations and the European Union, for participating actively with our national electoral commission in the preparation of our elections and for assisting the Government financially and materially to that end. It is encouraging that, today, young democracies are growing stronger across Africa, Asia and Latin America. For its part, Togo will collaborate fully with a view to meeting the

targets set by the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies (ICNRD). We invite all member States of the ICNRD Movement to take into account the proposals put forward during the ministerial meeting held in New York on 29 September 2009 in order to breathe new life into the Movement.

It is the profound belief of Togo that the transformation of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies into an organized institutional group, akin to other political groups and regional entities, will contribute to the revitalization of its actions and to enabling the promotion of democracy within its member States.

I cannot conclude my remarks without paying tribute to all the countries and people of good will that are at the forefront of this initiative, in particular the State of Qatar and its leaders, which have held the presidency of the Movement for several years and have spared no effort to further strengthen it.

Our greatest wish is that these various initiatives will enable the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, in the context of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, to fully realize its objectives and thus to preserve peace and security for the benefit of our populations.

**Mr. Mohamed** (Maldives): These solemn words of Mahatma Gandhi resonate in the island communities of the Maldivian archipelago: "The spirit of democracy cannot be imposed from without. It has to come from within."

Just a year ago, Maldivians stood in long queues to cast their ballots in the first ever multiparty democratic election in the history of the country. The election saw a record voter turnout and was won by President Mohamed Nasheed, now the leader of the first legitimate and democratic Government of our island nation. In September this year, President Nasheed stood at this very podium and repeated his pledge for a Government by the people for the people. The election was the culmination of a four-year period of intensive democratic and human rights reform in the Maldives that saw the introduction of a new constitution that separated the three powers of Government, strengthened human rights safeguards, ushered in multiparty politics, promoted free media and created a range of independent oversight bodies and institutions.

The Maldivian election was watched by nations across the globe and by observers from the Commonwealth and the European Union, as well as an Expert Assessment Team from the United Nations. The emerging electoral and democratic processes have also received the continued support and assistance of our partners. In short, the Maldives has worked laboriously to ensure that the winds of freedom and liberty prevail for its people.

The Maldives understands that the election of 2008 is not the final destination of this journey. One democratic election is not enough to declare that a country is democratic. With a modern new constitution in place, the Maldives is mindful of the urgent need to consolidate the infant democratic institutions, as modern history is evidence that there is a trend for new democracies to revert to authoritarian rule. Indeed, the 2002 Human Development Report found that one elected government is overturned by military force almost every year. Our people need the reassurance that the spirit of democracy is here to stay.

Democracy is intertwined with political stability and economic prosperity. Thus, in financial terms, sustaining democracy is expensive. The Maldives, for instance, is experiencing the crunch of the ongoing global financial crisis and severe austerity measures have, therefore, already been introduced to save the country from economic collapse. Legal lacunae exist in important areas, which would strengthen the rule of law and guarantee human rights and fundamental freedoms. Enhanced mechanisms are required to combat corruption and ensure accountability and good governance.

Unfortunately, new democracies are inherently unstable in their infant stages. We are concerned lest the new democracy succumb to the extremist seeds that are being cultivated in deep pockets of our society. If unchecked, those elements pose a grave threat to the smooth functioning of our fledgling democratic system.

In the midst of the economic hardship and emerging social issues, the Government is anxious for assistance and support from the international community to guarantee that we can provide the better life that our people have worked for. The Maldives has always had faith in the goodwill of our international partners. Since the inception of the United Nations Democracy Fund, the Maldives has been an ardent

supporter of it. Reinvigorated funds are necessary to develop the capacity of civil society groups, especially in emerging democracies such as the Maldives. Advanced civil society activities provide the requisite check against the reversal of democracy.

The United Nations Human Rights Council should also be given due support for its ability to address emerging issues. The Maldives believes that the Council strives to perform well and contributes extensively to strengthening human rights worldwide. The special procedures mechanisms have also proven successful for new democracies, such as the Maldives, as they provide an external audit of specific aspects of democracy consolidation. Therefore, the Maldives issued a standing invitation to the United Nations special procedures mechanisms in 2006 and as of today we have hosted four mandate holders.

I wish to express appreciation for the invaluable work carried out by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in assisting the Government to tackle democracy spoilers. In the case of the Maldives, the Office continues to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Government in facilitating the nurturing of the democratic culture in the Maldives.

Though the United Nations has not established a specific treaty on democracy, international law enshrines democratic principles through existing conventions, especially the International Bill of Rights. Norms such as equality, non-discrimination and fundamental rights and liberties, including the right to vote and political participation, are entrenched norms that prescribe democratic standards for all people across the globe. Hence, as responsible members of the international community, we need to work together coherently to ensure that the rights and freedoms we have agreed upon at the global level are fully translated into reality for our people.

Before I conclude, I should like to state that the Maldives has been an ardent supporter of the International Conference for New or Restored Democracies. The Conference provides a crucial forum for countries to share experiences and participate in active dialogue on ways to strengthen fragile democracies. It is for this reason that the Maldives is proud to sponsor the draft resolution before us today.

An active legislature, a free judiciary, free and fair elections and a vibrant civil society are the bulwarks of democracy. All around the world we are

experiencing a renewed embracement of democratic change. And thus, at the end of the day, it is a vital test for the international community to ensure that the winds of democracy continue to blow across our lands.

**Mr. Gatan** (Philippines): At the outset, I should like to convey my delegation's congratulations and gratitude for the very able leadership demonstrated by the delegation of the State of Qatar, in its capacity as Chair of the sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies (ICNRD), in steering the members of the Conference in their efforts to promote and consolidate their new or restored democracies.

The Philippines has sponsored draft resolution A/64/L.12, introduced by the delegation of the State of Qatar, as it has sponsored past resolutions on the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, in keeping with its commitment to the principles and goals of the Conference, which was born in Manila in 1988.

The Philippines convened the first International Conference of New or Restored Democracies after its bloodless revolution of 1986, which ended years of martial rule in our country.

My delegation has continued to actively participate in the work of the Conference and will continue to do so, in view of the necessity of continued cooperation, not only among countries in similar situations but also with the United Nations system. That is required in order for those countries to share their experiences and assist each other in ensuring the durability of their democracies so that they can be counted upon as constructive members of the international community and more ably provide the needed assistance and services to their respective constituencies.

The Philippines commends the delegation of the State of Qatar for organizing the first ICNRD Ministerial Meeting in September on the margins of the general debate of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly. That high-level meeting was historic, as it produced positive outcomes, including the decision to hold the first ICNRD summit and the creation of an ICNRD secretariat in New York so as to be able to more effectively assist the ICNRD Chair and the member countries. We also commend the delegation of the State of Qatar for organizing several initiatives that help to institutionalize the ICNRD and to ensure its sustainability in the future.

Before I conclude, the Philippines wishes to congratulate the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which will assume the chairmanship of the ICNRD next year. In that regard, the Philippines wishes to reaffirm its full support to the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela as the Seventh Conference Chair.

**Mr. Zinsou** (Benin) (*spoke in French*): My delegation is very grateful to you, Mr. President, for convening this plenary meeting of the General Assembly, devoted, *inter alia*, to the consideration of the report of the Secretary-General on the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies (A/64/372).

It is almost a decade since Benin had the honour to host on its soil the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies (ICNRD). The Cotonou event, coming at the dawn of the twenty-first century, was a decisive turning point in confirming the role of the Conference as a forum for thought and dialogue among the Member States of the United Nations on the promotion of democracy.

The strategic approach adopted was firmly based on the embrace of the principles and values of pluralist democracy by developing countries, but also on the pathways to follow and the means of implementation to adopt in order to ensure that that political system took root in the new or restored democracies and to promote a democratic culture in the world, as a way to strengthen international peace and security and boost development.

Since then, other countries have taken up the torch and the successive International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies have rapidly evolved into a movement of effective solidarity among the countries concerned and the development partners, under the auspices of the United Nations. The very informative report of the Secretary-General describes the progress made in that context, in particular since the Sixth Conference, held in Doha at the end of October and the beginning of November 2006.

The emphasis there was placed firmly on institutionalizing the movement with the establishment of an Advisory Board, a high-level annual meeting and a core secretariat to support the Chairman in executing his duties. Here, we welcome the commitment of the Government of Qatar, which has worked tirelessly to give substance to those decisions. One notable

achievement in that area was the General Assembly's declaration of an International Day of Democracy (resolution 62/7), which has already been celebrated twice. In addition to regularly convening intersessional bodies, Qatar has striven to clarify the modalities for institutionalization, so that the next Conference will be in a position to take decisions on specific proposals.

In that context, my delegation would like here to reiterate its support for actions in that direction and its agreement with the establishment of a permanent structure to coordinate implementation of the recommendations of the Conferences, so as to provide robust strengthening of action to strengthen democracy in our countries. Benin has no difficulty in supporting the principle of establishing a secretariat to assist the Chairman here in New York; creating a special Trust Fund to finance the work of that secretariat, using the model of the Group of 77 and China; and of establishing a clearly identified tripartite structure responsible for coordinating implementation of the ICNRD's recommendations nationally, acting as an interface with the secretariat on the basis of guidelines drawn up under the leadership of the Chairman of the Sixth Conference.

Implementing those specific steps would ensure the ICNRD's greater visibility and the mobilization of greater resources, so as to strengthen the follow-up of the recommendations and, above all, to encourage exchange of experiences and the spread of good practices at the level of member States.

The Secretary-General's report underscores the multifaceted action of the United Nations in support of the new or restored democracies. The United Nations has been very flexible in supporting the developments in the new democracies, providing a framework for efforts to restore democracy in countries where it has temporarily overturned or fundamentally challenged, paying particular attention to the crucial issue of unconstitutional changes of Government.

The international community under the United Nations has to a great extent been mobilized through agreed activities and offering good offices, in order to ensure the resumption of dialogue among the parties involved in national political processes, thus facilitating the emergence of a national consensus for a return to order. Some recent slippage has shown the need to strengthen the rapid reaction capability of the United Nations in situations of danger, so as to deal

with developments before countries become involved in violence.

The Secretary-General rightly posed the question in his report of how to tackle political crises and avoid them deteriorating, as one of the main problems facing the United Nations. We should give greater attention to that aspect of United Nations action, which brings us back to the issue of conflict prevention. We should note that United Nations activities in political crises have been more effective in subregions where the Organization's offices are set up to respond quickly, for example, through regional offices that can ensure a regular presence and can liaise closely with regional and subregional organizations.

Overall, cooperation with international and regional organizations has quite often proved to be very useful, not only in dealing with crisis situations, but, above and beyond those situations, as an excellent means of providing specific assistance by using input from all parties and, thus, enhancing effectiveness. As I said, this has been demonstrated not only in crisis management, but also in ongoing support to efforts at promoting human rights, strengthening democratic institutions, empowering women and promoting participation by young people.

So all of this does indeed justify the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report. Benin fully agrees with them, particularly on the issue of ensuring the complementarity between the ICNRD and the community of democracies in order to strengthen cooperation for democracy. We agree this would require some kind of coordinating mechanism and strategic partnerships, so that we can break free from restrictive labels and ensure broader ownership of democratic processes.

First of all, we have to mobilize effective support for local processes leading to democratization and the consolidation of democracy. We must ensure the strict coherence and coordination of assistance for new or restored democracies from the United Nations and its partners.

**The President** (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/32 of 19 November 2002, I give the floor to the observer of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

**Mrs. Filip** (Inter-Parliamentary Union): It gives me great pleasure to address the General Assembly on

the occasion of the debate on the report “Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies”, as contained in document A/64/372.

Please allow me to begin by commending the efforts of the State of Qatar. Over the past three years, the State of Qatar has ensured a substantive follow-up to the recommendations of the successful International Conference on New or Restored Democracies (ICNRD) in Doha in 2006. Let me also express our appreciation for the Secretary-General’s report.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is proud to be part of the ICNRD process. As convener of the parliamentary component of the ICNRD, the IPU looks forward to working with the host of the next Conference, Venezuela, to ensure a strong parliamentary input.

We are supportive of the initiatives considered for the future sustainability and institutionalization of the ICNRD movement. Indeed, there is a clear need to plan for and carry out work in between the conferences. From this perspective, a small secretariat based in New York and with a mission to engage with and bring together all the ICNRD partners on a regular basis could be very effective.

On the occasion of the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies in Doha, each of the stakeholders meetings issued a plan of action by Governments, parliaments and civil society to further promote democracy nationally and internationally. All those who have signed onto those commitments should also be held to account, and there is value, we believe, in an annual review of progress in meeting commitments, not just by the ICNRD Chair, but by all members. A small ICNRD secretariat could provide valuable assistance in this regard.

The tripartite configuration, that is, Governments, parliaments and civil society of the ICNRD movement, has undeniably allowed for an integrated and all-encompassing approach to the promotion of democracy worldwide. We would like to see further progress towards a more systematic articulation among the three components during the seventh ICNRD.

Indeed, the movement draws strength from the constructive engagement of its partners and its inclusive approach. As we move ahead, we would

welcome the development of enhanced modalities for more regular dialogue, exchange and joint action to enable those partners to come together and interact as equals. We have formulated a series of recommendations in that regard.

As we know, we are still witness to public disillusionment with democracy and, as the Secretary-General’s report recognizes, the perception among some that democracy has failed to improve people’s lives. Concerned by that reality and in an effort to further explore and measure public attitudes towards democracy, the IPU commissioned a global survey this year on the critical theme of political tolerance. The overall finding was that, while there is overwhelming support for political tolerance in all regions of the world, in actual practice, there is a widespread perception of a serious lack of political tolerance.

The results of that survey uncovered some problematic areas that will need to be addressed with greater focus. The freedom of political expression, the role of the opposition, protecting the parliamentary mandate and promoting greater representation of minority and indigenous groups in political life will all be mainstreamed into the IPU agenda of work for the months and years to come. We trust that this will have an impact at the level of national parliaments, but also on the other partners active on the democracy front.

IPU is also convinced of the huge transformational role that new information and communications technology (ICT) has for the further development and promotion of democracy worldwide. We are therefore forging a robust partnership with the United Nations in that area through the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament. Just last week, the United Nations and the IPU joined in convening the third World e-Parliament Conference, hosted by the United States House of Representatives on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.

Certainly, modern information and communications technology can help not only to connect parliaments and citizens, but also to strengthen democracy by rendering public institutions more open, transparent, accountable and effective, while improving the delivery of key public services. Last week’s Conference led to a series of recommendations that will guide our work ahead.

IPU remains committed to its efforts to build capacity within parliaments through advisory services,

technical assistance and capacity-building seminars, workshops and training programmes. It is also determined to continue efforts towards promoting the political participation of women, defending and promoting human rights and contributing to the setting of internationally accepted standards in the field of democracy.

IPU also remains committed to ensuring continued momentum and support for the International Day of Democracy. As the Secretary-General's report points out, the response of Member States and, particularly, of parliaments, to the invitation to celebrate the first International Day of Democracy was truly impressive.

Parliaments around the world are using the International Day of Democracy, 15 September, to engage citizens, and particularly young people, in dialogue on the achievements of and challenges to democracy in their respective countries. IPU will continue to work with and encourage action by parliaments aimed at ensuring democratic practices, principles and precepts.

Moreover, IPU is committed to its partnership with the United Nations, notably, through the Peacebuilding Commission, to build strong parliaments in post-conflict societies. Parliaments in countries such as Sierra Leone, Burundi and the Central African Republic need to show strong leadership in their efforts to achieve national healing and post-conflict reconstruction. We have a common responsibility to support them in those endeavours, as that will help people reap the dividends of peace and will mitigate the public mistrust of governing institutions. Indeed, democracy should be seen to deliver to the people.

In light of the above, we look forward to our continuing partnership with the United Nations system and with Member States in our joint efforts to further promote and consolidate new and restored democracies.

**The President** (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with General Assembly resolution 58/83 of 9 December 2003, I now give the floor to the observer for the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

**Mr. Tommasoli** (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance): I should like to commend the State of Qatar for its leadership of the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored

Democracies (ICNRD) and for fostering progress on its agenda in the period from 2007 to 2009. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (A/64/372), the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) has a strong tradition of collaborating with and supporting the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies. We contributed to policy debates in Doha, Ulaanbaatar and Cotonou, based on the Institute's democracy-building experience and knowledge, and we stand committed to continuing to do so at the next Conference, to be hosted by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

This year, we recall multiple anniversaries of democracy's achievements: 30 years since the beginning of the third wave of democratizations in Latin America, 20 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, 15 years since the end of apartheid in South Africa, and 10 years since the first elections of the reform era in Indonesia.

At the same time, we should also remain wary of the shortcomings, insufficient depth and persistent fragility of democracy in many countries. Transition processes have often stalled at the stage of electoral democracy, stopping short of guaranteeing citizens a broader enjoyment of civic and political rights, equal access to justice and full freedom of expression and association. Democratic checks and balances remain weak in many countries, while electoral processes themselves are often riddled with fraud. Attempts by incumbent presidents to change their country's constitution in order to remain in power have proliferated. Formal mechanisms of democracy remain populated by political elites, which do not always act in the interest of their citizens. Finally, both domestic shortcomings and external constraints have often prevented young democracies from delivering a better quality of life to their citizens, thus failing to build the critical amount of trust that is necessary for entrenching democracy and guaranteeing its long-term sustainability.

While the ideal of democracy remains a driving force of political change across the globe, a discrepancy persists between the high value attributed to the idea of democracy and the mistrust of democratic institutions, such as political parties and legislatures, which are often seen as elitist, gender-imbalanced, ineffective, unresponsive and lacking in inclusiveness and representation.

The global financial crisis and the ensuing economic recession are severe and potentially dangerous blows to a number of young democracies, particularly in Africa, as they further reduce their delivery capacity in terms of development and social protection, and consequently increase their vulnerability to authoritarian alternatives.

The financial and economic crisis and the changing political environment should both be seen as opportunities and incitements to address, through broad international, inter-institutional and interregional partnerships, the issue of democracy assistance, with a view to consolidating its legitimacy and credibility and to enhancing its effectiveness.

Efforts to strengthen international democracy assistance should benefit from the rich fund of lessons learned and the new, more effective approaches that these lessons allow us to distill. These lessons point essentially to the need for context-sensitive, long-term and process-based democracy-support policies that help the building of democracy from within and through real partnerships and sharing of knowledge and experiences, not least from the global South, thus overcoming the obsolete and often paternalistic donor-beneficiary relationship.

In this perspective, the ICNRD process has a great potential to foster collaboration and the sharing of experiences in the field of democracy-building. IDEA underlines two issues: the need to ensure effective follow-up between conferences and the importance of sharing experience on democratization efforts.

In terms of follow-up, there is a need to move beyond conferences and link them to actual democracy-building efforts on the ground. The initiative of Qatar to establish the Advisory Board of the Sixth Conference and to implement the three-year 2007-2009 programme of work are steps in the right direction. Another example of follow-up action is the implementation of self-assessments of the state of democracy by member States, which are aimed at identifying areas for action and entry points for policy reforms. The experience of Mongolia, host of the Fifth Conference, is relevant in this respect. At the request of Mongolia, International IDEA provided technical advice to that process, based on the state-of-democracy assessment methodology that IDEA had developed.

The second issue is the sharing of democratization experiences. There is a need for the ICNRD process to make better use of concrete experience-sharing, including in a South-South perspective, on the challenges and successes of democratic reform processes. This could build on a more systematic articulation among the governmental, parliamentary and civil society segments of ICNRD, based on a multi-year strategy with a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of all the actors involved in the new or restored democracies process.

The celebration of the International Day of Democracy has proved an excellent opportunity for further fostering dialogue among national actors, thus contributing to democracy-building on the ground. Such an approach could facilitate strategic and operational links between periodic high-level forums, such as the Conference and the Community of Democracies, and the mainstream work of agencies engaged in democracy-building, including those within the United Nations system. This would enhance the policy and strategic relevance of the new or restored democracies process by taking fully into account the broader issues of how to pursue a revitalized democracy-building agenda at the United Nations and how to increase the effectiveness of the United Nations system in this respect, as indicated in the guidance note recently issued by the Secretary-General.

Effective experience-sharing could be based on the following criteria: how to make best use of and capitalize on existing knowledge bases, practitioner networks and institutional capacity-building tools, in particular those that are already the result of effective partnerships among institutions engaged in the democracy-building arena; and to define focused agendas for the high-level segment of the process, and make sure that action plans originated by them are shaped in clear and measurable frameworks, with responsibilities assigned to relevant actors, both within and outside the United Nations, for funding, implementation and follow-up.

In conclusion, I reiterate International IDEA's commitment to continuing to provide support to the ICNRD process.

**The President** (*spoke in Arabic*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/64/L.12.

The following countries have become sponsors of the draft resolution: Afghanistan, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cape Verde, Congo, Costa Rica, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Guatemala, Luxembourg and the Republic of Moldova.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/64/L.12?

*Draft resolution A/64/L.12 was adopted (resolution 64/12).*

**The President** (*spoke in Arabic*): May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to end its consideration of agenda item 11?

*It was so decided.*

## **Agenda item 49**

### **Culture of peace**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General (A/64/325)**

#### **Note by the Secretary-General (A/64/312)**

#### **Draft resolutions (A/64/L.5, A/64/L.13, A/64/L.14 and A/64/L.15)**

**The President** (*spoke in Arabic*): Today, the General Assembly will consider an agenda item of importance to the United Nations, namely, the culture of peace. Fostering a culture of peace is the core message of the United Nations, which calls for rejecting violence and preventing conflicts through dialogue and negotiations. The Preamble to the United Nations Charter states the determination of Member States “to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours”.

The culture of peace is based on respect for human rights, democracy and tolerance, the promotion of development, education for peace, the free flow of information and the wider participation of women as an integral element in preventing violence and conflicts. Sadly, the many quiet ways in which the United Nations advances the culture of peace are often drummed out by violent conflicts that demand our immediate attention.

At the outset of the general debate, I suggested that we reflect on dialogue among civilizations and multilateralism as ways of strengthening international peace and security and of achieving development. After years of deepening distrust among civilizations, I am

encouraged by renewed calls for dialogue and mutual respect. It is my deeply held belief that civilizations are enriched and evolve through dialogue with other civilizations. Respect for the diversity of cultures and religions is necessary in order to prevent conflicts and to foster peace. In this context, I commend the many initiatives here at the United Nations and among Member States on interreligious dialogue and dialogue among civilizations.

The observance of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World is nearing its completion. Before the Assembly is the report of the Director-General of UNESCO (see A/64/312) on the progress achieved so far and containing further recommendations in this regard. The global financial and economic crisis is taking its toll on investments in education, culture and development everywhere. We cannot let those developments weaken our efforts to strengthen a culture of peace. We owe it especially to the children of the world to educate them about other cultures and religions so they can see the common humanity that underlie all differences.

Fostering a culture of peace and promoting tolerance should not be limited to today’s debate, but should guide all our debates here at the General Assembly. I therefore propose to organize an informal thematic debate on dialogue among civilizations, religions and cultures at the beginning of next year. I look forward to working with Member States to stimulate a lively discussion and bring fresh perspectives to this important issue.

I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh to introduce draft resolution A/64/L.5.

**Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for your lovely introductory remarks on agenda item 49, “Culture of peace”.

It is my privilege to introduce, on behalf of its sponsors, the draft resolution entitled “International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010”, contained in document A/64/L.5, dated 3 November 2009. Since the draft resolution was submitted, the following 46 countries have joined the list of co-sponsors: Angola, Azerbaijan, the Bahamas, Bhutan, Bolivia, Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, Brazil, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chile, Comoros, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Eritrea, Gabon, Guatemala, Guyana,

Honduras, Jamaica, Lebanon, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Montenegro, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Seychelles, Singapore, Solomon Islands, the Sudan, Swaziland, Tajikistan, the United Republic of Tanzania, Togo, Turkey, Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates, Uruguay and Viet Nam.

Since 2001, this draft resolution has been tabled and adopted every year by consensus. This shows the commitment of the entire world community to making the world safe for our future generation.

The culture of peace is a set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts through dialogue among individuals, groups and nations. We firmly believe that a world order that is informed by a culture of peace is conducive to the attainment of our development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. We see great value in the principles of tolerance, respect for diversity, democracy and understanding. Those ideals were endorsed by the Member States in the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (resolution 53/243) in 1999. Bangladesh was privileged to steer the process.

As we near the end of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace, we need to start taking stock of what we have achieved since the beginning of the Decade. I believe that this 10-year exercise has had some impact on our psyche as we strive to make a peaceful world for our future, the children.

We wish to express our profound gratitude to all the stakeholders who have contributed and are contributing to the promotion of a culture of peace. We specially thank UNESCO, the lead agency which has carried out programmes to promote the idea worldwide. Our sincere thanks go to the non-governmental and civil society organizations who take the idea of a culture of peace around the world. In this pursuit, academics and the media also have an important role to play. We need to involve youth in the process and the children as well. We should first listen to them and then take measures accordingly for the betterment of their lives.

There has been no major change in this year's draft resolution on the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010. We added one new preambular paragraph and two new operative paragraphs. In the

new preambular paragraph, we welcome the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children. In that connection, I would like to take this opportunity, as a member of the Bureau of the Executive Board of UNICEF and as next Chair of the Bureau, to assure her of our fullest support in carrying out her activities.

Of the two new operative paragraphs, paragraph 11 refers to an initiative of the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation of the United Nations Development Programme during the 2010 World Exposition to be held in Shanghai. We believe that we should take advantage of such mega-events to promote the idea of a culture of peace. The other new operative paragraph is paragraph 17, in which we request from the Secretary-General a summary report on the activities carried out in the past 10 years by UNESCO and other United Nations entities, Member States and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, to promote and implement the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. I believe that the report will suffice if someone asks what we have achieved in the past 10 years.

Immediately after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, the father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, pursued the policy of friendship to all, malice to none in the conduct of the country's international relations. That principle has always guided us in shaping our relations with countries all around the globe, especially our neighbours. Our peacekeepers have been risking their lives in various parts of the world in difficult terrain in the pursuit of peace. They also carry in their hearts the idea of a culture of peace and put that idea into action. As a member of the Peacebuilding Commission, we are discharging our responsibilities. We believe that a culture of peace holds the key to sustainable peace in post-conflict societies. Even in societies that are in a state of peace or apparent peace, we have to nurture that idea so that no one can think about violating the peace.

In conclusion, I would like to express our profound gratitude to all Member States that have shown their solidarity by serving as sponsors of this annual resolution over the past nine years. Last year, we had as many as 124 sponsors, and I hope that the number will be even higher this year. The increase in the number of sponsors in each successive year has been a source of great encouragement to the delegation of Bangladesh to the United Nations.

**The President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on the representative of Turkey to introduce draft resolution A/64/L.14.

**Mr. Apakan** (Turkey): At the outset, I would like to welcome the report of the Secretary-General on interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace (A/64/325), which highlights activities carried out by the United Nations system and provides an overview of regional and global initiatives taken in this field.

The Prime Ministers of Turkey and Spain launched the Alliance of Civilizations initiative in 2005 in an effort to galvanize international action against intolerance and extremism through intercultural and interreligious dialogue and cooperation. The initiative is intended to respond to the need for a concerted effort by the international community to bridge divides and overcome prejudices, misconceptions and polarization between different cultures. Since then, the Alliance has made substantial progress in moving into the implementation stage and in strengthening its institutional basis. Today, we are pleased to see that the Alliance has a structure that produces concrete projects and solutions.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who has placed this initiative under his auspices since the very beginning. Indeed, his contributions and his leadership have played an important role in the progress that the Alliance has made in such a short time. I would also like to express our great appreciation to High Representative Jorge Sampaio, whose dedicated efforts greatly contributed to the development of the initiative. Today, the number of countries and institutions represented in the Group of Friends has grown to more than 100, and we believe that each country in the Group is now a sponsor of this initiative. That is a reflection of the international community's will for global peace and harmony.

We believe that no one has a monopoly on efforts for dialogue on cultural and religious issues. We are all members of a family working for the same noble cause. In that context, we welcome similar initiatives that complement the work of the Alliance. We are pleased that specialized agencies of the United Nations and other multilateral organizations are showing an active interest in the Alliance. In that regard, we appreciate the role played by UNESCO. We believe that UNESCO

and its new Director-General, Ms. Irina Bokova, will continue to be important partners of the Alliance.

The first Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations, which was held in Madrid in January 2008, was a milestone for the initiative. The Forum initiated several projects and mechanisms and provided an opportunity for the Alliance to conclude partnership agreements with several international organizations. The second Forum, held in Istanbul in April 2009, was indeed another milestone for the Alliance. The Forum made it possible to establish a powerful network of global leaders, heads of international organizations, corporations, media, civil society and youth groups. The action-driven event provided participants with a unique international platform on which to develop joint initiatives and forge partnerships. The success of the Istanbul Forum confirmed that the Alliance had completed its institutionalization phase and was now ready for the implementation of its objectives.

The third Forum will be held in Rio de Janeiro on 28 and 29 May 2010. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Brazil for hosting the next Forum. It will enrich the global scope of the Alliance with the Latin American experience of cultural diversity. We would also like to thank Qatar and Austria for their offers to host subsequent Forums in 2011 and 2012.

We consider national plans and regional strategies to be important instruments for the implementation of the Alliance's objectives. That is why we attach particular importance to the inclusion of those goals in national agendas through the implementation of national plans. The third meeting of focal points, to be held in Rabat on 10 and 11 November 2009 by the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, will be yet another opportunity to promote broader ownership of the Alliance's goals.

I would also like to highlight the importance of regional strategies in creating synergies among various stakeholders. In that respect, we look forward to the approval of the regional strategy for South-East Europe in Sarajevo this coming December.

As sponsors, Turkey and Spain believe that, having made sound progress on the ground, it is now time for the Alliance to have the backing and the recognition of the General Assembly. That is why we have prepared a focused and balanced draft resolution

for the consideration of Member States, and we very much hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

It is therefore my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly the draft resolution on the Alliance of Civilizations contained in document A/64/L.14. The preambular part of the draft resolution before the Assembly reflects agreed language from one of the most relevant documents that the United Nations has produced in the past few years, namely, the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1).

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce an oral revision to the fourth preambular paragraph, so that the role of UNESCO, as one of the main partners of the Alliance of Civilizations, is accurately reflected in the text. To that end, we would like to replace the words “including the programmes led by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in this regard” with the words “and emphasizing the important role of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in this regard”.

The fourth preambular paragraph would thus read as follows:

“Recognizing the importance of intercultural and interreligious and intra-religious dialogue in promoting tolerance in matters related to religion or belief, and emphasizing the important role of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in this regard.”

The draft resolution already has the sponsorship of 73 Member States from all regional groups. I am glad to announce that, in addition to those listed in document A/64/L.14, the following Member States have expressed their willingness to sponsor the draft resolution: Benin, Bolivia, Bulgaria, the Central African Republic, the Congo, Cyprus, the Dominican Republic, Eritrea, Gabon, Haiti, Honduras, Liechtenstein, Mali, Norway, the Republic of Moldova, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Seychelles, Thailand, Togo, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates and Viet Nam. This brings the total to 96 sponsors.

We are encouraged by this broad support. We believe that it shows that the Alliance of Civilizations is a noble cause. We would like to express our thanks to our fellow sponsors, and we very much hope that the

draft resolution will be embraced by the wider membership of the General Assembly.

**The President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Spain, also to introduce draft resolution A/64/L.14.

**Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo** (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): The promotion of a culture of peace is one of the fundamental purposes of the United Nations. In the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1), heads of State or Government and United Nations Member States committed themselves to taking action to promote a culture of peace and dialogue at the local, national, regional and international levels. Furthermore, on that occasion, they welcomed the Alliance of Civilizations and recognized the value of the various initiatives on dialogue among cultures and civilizations, including interreligious dialogue and cooperation for peace.

In that context, it is a great pleasure for me to address the General Assembly to introduce for the first time, together with Turkey, a draft resolution devoted to the Alliance of Civilizations, under agenda item 49, “Culture of Peace”. Allow me to highlight the fact that the draft resolution, contained in document A/64/L.14, with the slight oral revision just made by the representative of Turkey, enjoys the support of almost 100 sponsors. Let me convey to them our sincerest gratitude for their support in the promotion of this draft resolution.

Five years ago, on 21 September 2004, during the general debate of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly (see A/59/PV.4), the President of the Government of Spain, Mr. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, proposed an alliance of civilizations in order to promote greater understanding and cooperation among nations and peoples of differing cultures and religions, as a way to counteract the forces that feed extremism and endanger peace.

In order to achieve that objective, the President of the Government of Spain soon joined his efforts to those of the Prime Minister of Turkey, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Since then, Spain and Turkey have worked hand in hand to strengthen the Alliance of Civilizations as a useful tool in the context of the United Nations.

*Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

Since the beginning, and despite criticism from some quarters and scepticism from others, the Alliance of Civilizations has grown and further developed its goals. It has become a United Nations initiative, thanks to the commitment of successive Secretaries-General, Mr. Kofi Annan and Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who have made this initiative their own.

Furthermore, the Alliance of Civilizations has, in a short time, gained the support and credibility, not only of the entire international community, but also of numerous actors within our societies. That is, to a large extent, due to the fact that the Alliance has been able to identify problems that affect our coexistence and has filled a gap for which there was no instrument before its creation. In just a few years, it has become a platform for action in reaching common goals such as respect, tolerance, dialogue, understanding and peace among individuals and peoples from diverse cultures and religions. It is based on universal values that govern its action and spirit, inspired by the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, among other basic instruments of international law.

As the President of the Government of Spain noted at the opening meeting of the first Forum of the Alliance, in Madrid in 2008, the Alliance of Civilizations seeks to mobilize those great majorities in our societies who want to live in peace and to help prevent the use of diversity for political purposes. The Alliance of Civilizations wants to help fight against extremist and intolerant discourse by those who preach an ideology of hatred and confrontation by invoking supposedly insoluble cultural and religious conflicts.

In our view, the Alliance of Civilizations should work through dialogue and intercultural cooperation to create a propitious atmosphere for reaching political objectives. We believe that that political and cultural orientation, together with the capacity to produce practical results, represents the added value offered by this initiative.

I would like to highlight the extraordinary work done by the Secretary-General's High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, Mr. Jorge Sampaio. He is working very hard to make the Alliance a credible, solid and dynamic initiative, able to produce real results. Thanks to his leadership, commitment and dedication, he has been able to mobilize States, international organizations, representatives of civil

society, the media, the private sector, religious leaders and others, to work together to achieve the goals of the Alliance of Civilizations. The two reports of the High Representative that the Secretary-General has conveyed to the General Assembly (see A/63/336 and A/63/914) describe in detail the many activities carried out by the Alliance of Civilizations in recent years.

Furthermore, the credibility of, respect for and political soundness of the Alliance of Civilizations are due in large part to its sizable and active Group of Friends. The Group now has more than 100 members, including States and international organizations, which is a good indicator of the initiative's political relevance.

The designation of focal points for the Alliance by the States members of the Group of Friends has made it possible to establish a broad and active network of contacts. Tomorrow, more than 70 designated focal points will meet in Rabat to share ideas and proposals. In addition, the adoption of national plans by States is making it possible to promote the incorporation of Alliance objectives into public policies at the domestic level.

With regard to cooperation with international organizations, the Alliance has a full work slate and has entered into a diverse range of cooperation agreements. In particular, I wish to emphasize the important role played by such organizations as UNESCO, whose programmes and activities in the area of cultural cooperation are undoubtedly of value to the Alliance.

I should also highlight the holding of Alliance of Civilizations forums in Madrid in 2008 and in Istanbul this year. At the Forums, States and international organizations met with, inter alia, representatives of civil society, the private sector and the media in an innovative and dynamic format. The Alliance Forums have also made it possible to launch specific initiatives, projects and activities that are now fully operational. Our next meeting will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in May 2010, in a clear demonstration of the spirit of universality pervading and prevailing at the Alliance of Civilizations. We warmly welcome the offers of Qatar and Austria to host successive Forums in 2011 and 2012, respectively, because they ensure that the initiative will continue in the coming years.

Another aspect that I wish to highlight is the regional dimension of the Alliance of Civilizations.

The forthcoming Sarajevo conference, to be held in December, will enable us to lay the groundwork for the development of a regional strategy for South-Eastern Europe within the framework of the Alliance. The objectives of the conference will be to share experiences and promote the adoption of initiatives and projects to enhance intercultural and interreligious understanding, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation in order to help prevent or overcome conflicts in an area of the European continent greatly in need of just such initiatives. Moreover, in the effort to enhance the Alliance's regional aspect, much commendable work is being done by Governments, international organizations and civil society in the Mediterranean region and Latin America.

Given the growth and the potential of the Alliance of Civilizations, we believe, together with Turkey, that the General Assembly must now provide renewed support and momentum to the initiative by adopting this draft resolution. As the Secretary-General recalled in his letter dated 23 June 2009 conveying to the President of the General Assembly the report of the High Representative (A/63/914), the Alliance of Civilizations was established under the auspices of the United Nations, at the initiative of the Governments of Spain and Turkey, to counteract divisions and polarization within and between societies. The Alliance of Civilizations seeks to be an instrument of preventive diplomacy that works to reduce tensions and bridge cultural divides.

I wish to conclude by thanking all sponsors of the draft resolution and by expressing our hope that it will be adopted by consensus by the General Assembly.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Philippines to introduce draft resolution A/64/L.15.

**Mr. Davide** (Philippines): At the outset, let me place on record how pleased we were to note the announcement in the opening statement made by the President of the General Assembly, under agenda item 49, of his decision to convene an informal thematic debate on the dialogue among civilizations, religions and cultures next year. We thank him for that very wise decision. It will enhance all initiatives on the culture of peace.

I have the honour and the special privilege to introduce, on behalf of Pakistan and the Philippines, as the main sponsors, and of the other sponsors, draft

resolution A/64/L.15, entitled "Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace", under agenda item 49, "Culture of peace". It is our modest contribution to the global and collective effort to put an end to the culture of hate, violence, distrust, intolerance and religious and cultural misunderstanding that still plagues many parts of the world, and instead to build a world and civilization of love, understanding, respect, tolerance, harmony and peace. It is a vision inspired by one of the goals enshrined in the United Nations Charter: to practice tolerance and live together as good neighbours. It is a recognition of God's plan for the world as one human family. It is an expression of our fidelity to the opening paragraph of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which affirms that recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace.

The draft resolution updates resolution 63/22, bearing the same title, which the General Assembly adopted last year by consensus. Allow me to briefly highlight the new elements in draft resolution A/64/L.15.

First, let me recall that, in resolution 63/22, the General Assembly invited UNESCO, in consultation with Member States, to play a leading role in the preparations for the celebration of the International Year for the Rapprochement among Cultures in 2010. In that connection, we welcome the decision taken by the General Conference of UNESCO on 23 October 2009 approving the action plan for the celebration of the International Year of Rapprochement among Cultures in 2010. In our draft resolution, we encourage UNESCO, as well as United Nations Member States, other organizations and institutions and civil society, to join the celebration of the Year to demonstrate our firm commitment to interreligious, intercultural and intercivilizational dialogue for peace. We also request the Secretary-General to organize a special event to launch the celebration of the Year.

Secondly, we commend the focal point in interreligious, intercultural and intercivilizational matters in the Secretariat for ably discharging its mandate. At the same time, we recognize the importance for it to interact and coordinate further with the relevant entities of the United Nations system and to coordinate their contributions to the expanding intergovernmental processes on interfaith and

intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace. With the proliferation of interfaith dialogue processes around the world, including at the national, regional and interregional levels, and the increasing interaction of United Nations agencies with faith communities as their vital partners in the pursuit of their respective mandates, the focal point in the Secretariat could more effectively deliver on its tasks if it were adequately empowered.

Thirdly, we call for further work on the proposal for a United Nations decade of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace, for which civil society has clamoured, spearheaded by a coalition of more than 60 religious bodies and multi-faith and values-based organizations representing all the world's faith traditions uniting millions of their faithful across the globe.

The increasing plurality of spiritual and religious initiatives seeking to achieve peace and harmony in the world represents a positive development in expanding the frontiers of our partnerships with all relevant stakeholders. The proposed United Nations decade would thus bring together diverse initiatives and activities around a defined set of shared objectives espoused principally by the United Nations: peace, development and the promotion of human dignity.

Fourthly, we request that the President of the General Assembly, in keeping with one of the priorities of his presidency, to hold an interactive thematic debate on interreligious, intercultural and intercivilizational understanding, inviting leaders of the world's major religions and representatives of faith-based organizations to participate in this event.

Fifthly and finally, we celebrate this year the International Year of Reconciliation, in accordance with resolution 61/17, which was a response by the General Assembly to the urgent need for reconciliation processes in countries and regions of the world that have suffered or are suffering conflicts that have divided societies. This process would rely on such mechanisms as dialogue among opponents as an essential element of peace and reconciliation.

Reconciliation is the pervasive theme of our updated draft resolution. We should not let this International Year of Reconciliation pass by as a mere footnote for the future. We should ensure that there be follow-up on this work, given the sheer importance of

reconciliation not only to our national life but also in our individual and personal lives.

Our draft resolution therefore calls on States Members of the United Nations, following the commemoration of the International Year of Reconciliation in 2009, to further promote reconciliation to help to ensure durable peace and sustained development through such reconciliatory steps as forgiveness and compassion.

Many of us pray daily for forgiveness as we forgive others. There can be no reconciliation without forgiveness and compassion. Let me stress, however, that forgiveness and compassion should never condone injustice. There can be no forgiveness without dialogue. There can be no dialogue without respect and mutual understanding.

Let me conclude by stressing that the United Nations must pursue peace along two separate but parallel routes or means: the political, through the tools of politics, and the faith-driven, through interfaith or interreligious dialogue. This dialogue provides the internal force that can work out a faster and surer formula for building a world of freedom, justice and peace, and a civilization of love, thereby giving life to what the Psalmist envisioned — a world where love and truth will meet and justice and peace will kiss.

Since religions are united in one abiding faith — faith in One God, holy, immortal and sovereign — this interfaith dialogue has internal force no Government can provide. That power can fortify our faith, unite peoples of different religions and cultures and make them understand each other better, deepen humility and erase pride, hate anger and intolerance. It uplifts our hopes in times of crisis. I would thus like to request once more, on behalf of the main and other sponsors of our draft resolution, that we adopt it, after adequate consultations, by consensus, as we have done annually since 2004.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan to also introduce draft resolution A/64/L.15.

**Mr. Sial (Pakistan):** The agenda item entitled "Culture of peace" recalls the commitment made by our fellow brothers and sisters 64 years ago under the Charter of the United Nations to practise tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, to unite their strengths to maintain

international peace and security, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

The General Assembly adopted the Declaration on a Culture of Peace on 13 September 1999 (resolution 53/243) to reaffirm these objectives and to cause a new era of hope and peaceful coexistence to unfold. The Declaration is a set of values, attitudes and behaviours. It is based on the principles of multilateral cooperation in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, respect for life, the ending of violence and the promotion and practice of non-violence through education, dialogue and cooperation, and commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Religions and cultures share a common set of universal values. Concepts of peace, tolerance, equality, sharing and respect for humanity are the core message of all world religions. Therefore, religion and culture must not be allowed to become a source of division, as they are sometimes portrayed in the context of contemporary life. We must cherish the unity and indivisibility of the human race and all humankind, regardless of what religion or particular culture we belong to.

Throughout history, greed and self-interest have resulted in inequities and tension among societies. This ultimately leads to situations of conflict. Conflict can be avoided only through understanding, sharing, sacrifice and dialogue among the parties concerned. We are aware that peace cannot be achieved without dialogue. The challenge we face every day is to replace fear with acceptance, harassment with tolerance, and hatred with respect. Cooperation — and not the clash of civilizations — must be the paradigm for our collective endeavours. The promotion of understanding, harmony and cooperation among religions and cultures is the indispensable avenue through which we can lift the veil of ignorance, misconception and prejudice that has become so tragically pervasive in recent times.

In today's world, the need for interfaith dialogue, cooperation and harmony cannot be overemphasized in the context of ongoing political and security disputes.

The multiple crises of finance, fuel and food have further aggravated the divide. In order to make our world a better place, we must all share the responsibility to highlight and propagate our common values of peace, tolerance, equality, sharing and respect for humanity.

Pakistan fully recognizes the growing need to promote religious and cultural harmony and the necessity of interfaith dialogue. We have taken several important initiatives to promote dialogue and understanding among various faiths and religions at the national level and in all major international forums, including the draft resolution we have jointly sponsored with the Philippines entitled "Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace" (A/64/L.15).

I am confident that the draft resolution, as at previous sessions, will be adopted unanimously by the General Assembly. This in a way will be an affirmation by the members of the international community of their shared commitment to advancing the goals of universal understanding, harmony and peace, as well as security and prosperity among all nations and peoples of all faiths and cultures.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa to introduce draft resolution A/64/L.13.

**Mr. Sangqu** (South Africa): On behalf of the Government and people of South Africa, I have the honour and privilege to introduce draft resolution A/64/L.13 designating 18 July, the birthday of Nelson Mandela, as Nelson Mandela International Day. I do so on behalf of all the sponsors listed in document A/64/L.13, and I thank these countries for their sponsorship and unwavering support. In particular, we would like to thank the heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement for their support for and endorsement of this initiative.

Since the publication of this document, the following countries have joined in sponsoring the draft resolution: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bhutan, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Chad, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Paraguay, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Seychelles, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sweden, Turkmenistan and the United Arab Emirates. The total is thus over 160 sponsors. We thank them all equally.

On 18 July 2009, millions of people from across the globe came together to give 67 minutes or more of

their time in community service, their actions inspired by the life's work of Nelson Mandela. In turn, the actions of these million of people, men, women and youth across the globe and from all sectors of society, have inspired us to introduce this draft resolution to the General Assembly.

During the dark days of apartheid, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela said, "To be free is not merely to cast off one's chains but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others". When the chains of apartheid were severed in our country, he embodied these words, showing that both the victors and the vanquished could live in peace. Mandela's leadership through South Africa's most terrible and triumphant times is enough to make him an enduring hero in our history books.

His legacy however, is even larger than this. Through his extraordinary actions and personality, he has become a moral compass that we can all look up to. Indeed, Nelson Mandela is an international icon and a symbol of hope for oppressed and marginalized people across the globe. He has dedicated his life to the service of humanity and has contributed greatly to the promotion of the culture of peace throughout the world. Nelson Mandela worked tirelessly in the struggle for democracy and for the promotion and protection of human rights internationally. Nelson Mandela's contribution to conflict resolution, reconciliation, the rights of children and uplifting the poor is acknowledged across the world. He has been bestowed with numerous awards and honours, including the Nobel Peace Prize. But even at such times of great recognition, he has been selfless. A memorable example of that was when he dedicated his Nobel Peace Award to "all the courageous people of my country, black and white, who have suffered and endured so much".

Nelson Mandela has become one of the greatest leaders who have supported and steadfastly promoted the ideals of the United Nations. The ideals of the United Nations, represented by the victory of unity over division and of negotiation over confrontation, are the ideals mirrored by Nelson Mandela throughout his life.

Perhaps the only fitting way to pay tribute to this great man is to look back at his public and political life. Therefore, permit me to provide some glimpses of Nelson Mandela through his own words.

On 20 April 1964, standing trial in Rivonia for treason for leading the African National Congress's struggle against the apartheid State, Nelson Mandela spoke for hours in his own defence, knowing that a sentence of death was a possibility. He said,

"I have fought against white domination and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideals of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities; it is an ideal, which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

Upon his release from brutal and inhumane incarceration for 27 years, Nelson Mandela addressed the South African people and said,

"I stand here before you not as a prophet but as a humble servant of you, the people. Your tireless and heroic sacrifices have made it possible for me to be here today. I therefore place the remaining years of my life in your hands."

He had one regret that day, however. There were so many reporters and cameras and supporters around him the moment he set foot from prison that he did not have a chance to say goodbye to the prison staff, whom he cherished because they had been his only link to humanity for so long.

On 10 May 1994, Nelson Mandela stood tall before a crowd of people in Pretoria after taking the oath of office as the first democratically elected President of a free South Africa, and said, "The time for the healing of the wounds has come. The moment to bridge the chasms that divide us has come. The time to build is upon us".

Having decided to retire from public office, Mandela addressed the General Assembly of the United Nations on 21 September 1998 for the final time. He stated that the social ills of the world do not stem from the forces of nature or a curse of the deities, but from the decisions that people make or refuse to make, and he urged that all those in this great Hall

"not allow that any should be denied their freedom, as we were; that any should be turned into refugees, as we were; that any should be condemned to go hungry, as we were; that any should be stripped of their human dignity, as we were" (A/53/PV.7, p. 16).

He went on to say:

“Then would history and the billions throughout the world proclaim that it was right that we dreamt and that we toiled to give life to a workable dream” (ibid.).

Nelson Mandela is not a god or a saint. He is simply a man who has acted in a manner that is a little wiser, a little stronger and a little better than the rest of us. This is evident from his words in his seminal biography, *Long Walk to Freedom*:

“I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can rest only for a moment, for with freedom comes responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not yet ended.”

It is in this spirit that we, the people of South Africa, pledge to work together in reviving *ubuntu*, to create a better society for all and to make a positive contribution to humanity, built on compassion, humility, respect, forgiveness and unity.

The adoption of this draft resolution by the General Assembly should serve as a constant reminder of the need to answer the question Nelson Mandela posed to this Assembly when he said,

“The great challenge of our age to the United Nations is to answer the question ‘Given the interdependence of the nations of the world, what is it that we can and must do to ensure that democracy, peace and prosperity prevail everywhere?’” (A/49/PV.14, p. 8)

It is our hope that the entire membership of the United Nations will support and sponsor the draft resolution before us, and that every year, beginning in 2010, the United Nations and the billions of people represented here will celebrate 18 July as Nelson Mandela International Day. In doing so, we make the moral compass of Nelson Mandela a little brighter and bigger so that we can see it all the more clearly as we strive in this great Hall to realize the workable dream of Nelson Mandela. *Halala, Madiba, Halala.*

**Mr. Lidén** (Sweden): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

Not every generation is fortunate enough to witness the emergence of a figure of unique international standing who has a profound impact on the lives of people across the world. The European Union would like to pay tribute to the extensive personal achievements of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela — a man who has come to symbolize the triumph of hope over despair, of justice over oppression and of peace over conflict.

Nelson Mandela’s incredible story of personal sacrifice and his achievements for South Africa are well known to everyone in this Hall and will forever be remembered with the greatest respect by all democratic nations. As the representative of South Africa just quoted, Nelson Mandela was ready to die for his ideals of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. Fortunately, he has had a long life, and throughout his life he has lived to realize those ideals.

Mandela’s steadfast perseverance and his commitment to these ideals and to living in a democratic and free society continue to stand out for all those around the world who are still denied their human rights and their fundamental freedoms. We hope that all prisoners of conscience, wherever they are, will one day be able to enjoy the freedom that is denied to them and that was denied to Mandela for too many years.

Mr. Mandela’s work to build peace and to promote reconciliation at the national level has rightly been recognized by awards of the most prestigious nature, including the Nobel Peace Prize. The legacy of his struggle for social justice and his efforts to combat HIV and AIDS continue to this day. We salute these achievements.

What sets him apart is also his ability to touch the hearts of ordinary people. Many of us remember the long years of Mr. Mandela’s incarceration, and we were shaped by the example he set for us. His dignity and compassion in the face of seemingly overwhelming challenges have made people realize what an individual and what humankind as a whole can achieve.

**Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt): I have the pleasure of speaking today on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement

in the general debate under agenda item 49, entitled "Culture of peace", to convey the Movement's full endorsement of the initiative to designate 18 July every year as Nelson Mandela International Day, as stipulated in draft resolution A/64/L.13.

Many leaders have changed the future of their countries with their vision, commitment and determination, but few leaders have affected the course of history. From a small village on the outskirts of the city of Umtata, Transkei, in the Kaffraria region of South Africa, the young Mandela learned the meaning of life and freedom. Named Nelson on his first day of school by his teacher, Mandela still proved to be worthy of the name given him at birth, Rolihlahla, which can be translated as Troublemaker.

With the enactment of apartheid laws in 1948, one of the worst forms of racial discrimination in history was institutionalized. It was thus not a coincidence that Mandela joined the freedom fighters of his homeland in pursuit of justice and equality. The price was high, but his sense of purpose was much higher. Despite his initial commitment to non-violent resistance, like many generations in South Africa that were influenced by Mahatma Ghandi's teachings and methods, Mandela was detained for five years on charges of treason. After his acquittal, he found no alternative but to resort to armed struggle against the racist regime. He became the leader of the Spear of the Nation, the armed wing of the African National Congress, only to be convicted of treason a year later.

Mandela's philosophy in life was forged on Robben Island, from which he emerged a mediator, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate and the first black President of South Africa. Twenty-seven years behind bars made him a worldwide symbol of resistance to racism who lives on to inspire ongoing efforts all around the world to eliminate all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Mandela has been one of the Non-Aligned Movement leaders who have played an instrumental and active role over the years on issues of concern and vital importance to its members, such as decolonization, apartheid, the maintenance of international peace and security, disarmament and the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine.

The heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, at their fifteenth summit, held in Sharm el-Sheikh, recognized Mandela's leading role

in and support for Africa's struggle for liberation, self-determination and unity and his outstanding contribution to the creation of a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa. They further recognized his values and dedication to the service of humanity as a humanitarian in the fields of conflict resolution, race relations, the promotion and protection of human rights, reconciliation, gender equality, and the rights of children and other groups in vulnerable situations, and in uplifting the poor and underdeveloped communities.

In an unprecedented move, the heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement unanimously adopted a special declaration at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit, expressing their support for and solidarity with the Nelson Mandela International Day campaign. They called on Non-Aligned Movement member States and peoples to join in the campaign, including by contributing 67 minutes of their time in service to their communities, in recognition of Madiba's 67 years of contribution in service of humanity. The leaders endorsed the call to designate 18 July, Madiba's birthday, as Nelson Mandela International Day and requested that a draft resolution to this effect be adopted by the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session.

Humankind has suffered various social maladies that have, regrettably, been related more often than not to race, colour, sex and religion, and which have resulted in numerous historic atrocities. Despite the serious steps taken by many countries to implement the United Nations Convention on the Abolition of Slavery and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and despite the progress made so far in realizing the universality of the international covenants on human rights, we continue to witness the growth of new forms of bigotry and racism in our world today. Guided by Mandela's vision and struggle, the ongoing deliberations within the Human Rights Council on the development of standards complementary to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination are thus of paramount importance, as they would contribute to rebuilding confidence and combating all forms of discrimination across the globe.

It is indeed necessary to complement our efforts in implementing our common commitments under the 2001 Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the outcome document of the Review Conference in April 2009. Our endeavours in this regard should

avoid any attached conditionalities that seek to impose controversial notions which lack legal grounds, fail to take into account the divergent social, cultural and value systems of different societies, or link such notions to development assistance programmes. The Non-Aligned Movement believes that it will be possible to eliminate these negative phenomena only through the consolidation of the international community's resolve and action in the context of a multifaceted approach, in tandem with our efforts to reinforce the principles of democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Enhancing cooperation at the international level to promote dialogue, mutual understanding and enlightened education is of equally great importance and should be based on a framework of partnership and cooperation among non-governmental organizations, the private sector and national institutions and associations. It is crucial in this regard to continue our

efforts to promote the freedom of expression according to our commitments under existing international human rights instruments in a manner that prevents the exacerbation of the sentiments of hatred and racism and that encourages intellectuals and the media to shoulder their responsibilities in building awareness, educating communities and confronting the trends that promote intolerance and conflict.

The Non-Aligned Movement looks forward to the designation by the United Nations of 18 July as the annual Nelson Mandela International Day. The Movement hopes that the observance of this day will not only acknowledge the history of his great leadership, but also become a reminder of the international community's commitment to exerting its utmost efforts to fulfil its pledge to combat all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and to spread the culture of peace.

*The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.*