



General Assembly

Sixty-sixth session

12th plenary meeting

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New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar)

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

Address by Mr. Porfirio Lobo Sosa, President of the Republic of Honduras

The President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of Honduras.

Mr. Porfirio Lobo Sosa, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Porfirio Lobo Sosa, President of the Republic of Honduras, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Lobo Sosa (*spoke in Spanish*): For Honduras, it is a source of great satisfaction to participate in this important session of the General Assembly. On behalf of the Honduran people, I should like at the outset to express our great pleasure at the re-appointment of Mr. Ban Ki-moon for another term as Secretary-General. I also wish to convey to the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session, Mr. Joseph Deiss, my greatest respect for the contribution he made to this global forum through the fruitful work achieved under his leadership. We also congratulate Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser upon his election as President of the General Assembly.

I congratulate the State of South Sudan on having become the newest Member of the United Nations.

It is also timely to reaffirm my decisive commitment as a leader to this Organization, which represents the best forum for addressing and resolving the problems facing the world in the quest for the common welfare of humankind based on the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. I reaffirm our commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in particular to the principle that we are all free and equal in dignity and rights. This concept includes peoples and nations alike. Over and above geopolitical interests, the self-determination of peoples is inviolable and inalienable. All peoples have the right to their own territory, cultural identity and traditions.

In this context, my Government has recognized Palestine as a State and endorses its legitimate aspiration to become a full member in the concert of nations. Full security for the State of Israel and full international recognition for Palestine are essential conditions for a comprehensive negotiated two-State solution providing for strong and lasting peace through mutual understanding. If we want peace, we must recall that peace is based on respect not only for human rights, but also for the rights of peoples and nations.

With regard to my country, Honduras, I must say that the political crises it suffered and the coup d'état of 28 June 2009 led to a deterioration in the human rights situation. Overcoming it is one of our highest priorities. Since I took office in January 2010, my task has been to build unity and reconciliation among the Honduran people through peacebuilding founded on social justice. That process of reconciliation and

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democracy-building in our country has enjoyed the constructive support of the international community as a whole.

I take this opportunity to express my particular thanks for the mediation efforts of Presidents Juan Manuel Santos Calderón of Colombia and Hugo Chávez Frías of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which led to the signing of the Cartagena Agreement, which in turn facilitated the return of Honduras to the Organization of American States.

We have demonstrated by our actions that there is no State policy to violate human rights in Honduras; on the contrary, we work every day to promote a culture of respect for human rights based on ongoing dialogue with all sectors of society, with special attention to those sectors that have generally been deprived of the right to participate. We are building a participatory democracy, derived from the principle that all social groups have the full and legitimate right to take part in our history.

We have a secretariat for justice and human rights to advise on relevant policies. With the participation of civil society organizations, the secretariat is enthusiastically working on developing our country's first public human rights policy and a national action plan on human rights. It is also following the recommendations made by the Human Rights Council to Honduras during the Universal Periodic Review. In line with those aspirations, in July our Truth and Reconciliation Commission — having worked in absolute legitimacy and transparency — completed its fully independent mandate and presented the people of Honduras with its report and recommendations so as to ensure that such things never happen again and to foment reconciliation within the Honduran family. We are taking the necessary steps to implement those recommendations.

At the same time, faced with the global crisis that resulted from serious problems in developed economies, we have met with trade unions, entrepreneurs, workers, farmers, civil society and political parties to reach an overall national agreement that will enable us to face the challenges that the crisis created in our country. Our Honduran response has been to propose a social pact to establish conditions propitious for economic growth, employment, appropriate remuneration and productivity. The national plan for the next 28 years is under way. We are

empowering our citizens. The optimum Government we can shape is comprised of a people who themselves want to develop within a framework of equitable economic growth.

Alongside that overall national agreement, all sectors and stakeholders in the field of education are reaching agreement on wide-reaching educational reform in Honduras to propel a dynamic education administration guaranteeing equal opportunity for all, especially those who have the least.

In the social sphere, we have a family assistance programme with conditional monetary benefits. More than 400,000 families have received such payments, and by 2013 we hope to reach 600,000 families, representing 50 per cent of families in Honduras. The condition is that children go to school and that parents attend child-nutrition programmes.

In September 2010, along with President Johnson Toribiong of Palau, we called upon heads of State of United Nations Member States to save sharks, stop the traffic in shark fins and put an end to global overfishing of the species. I repeat that plea with the same passion today.

Although our country does not contribute much to greenhouse gas emissions, we have signed many international treaties and conventions that aim to guarantee the planet's security and climate for its inhabitants in the context of the clean development mechanism under the Kyoto Protocol. Beyond those important conventions, today we will sign the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade.

Honduras reiterates its strong approval of all measures to protect and conserve natural resources and the environment, based on the principles agreed upon 20 years ago. We ask the States Member of the United Nations to renew those past commitments and to draw up national policies so that we can build our capacities and establish mechanisms that respond to the needs of the population.

Although it is not enough in itself, my Government has made significant progress in promoting the just historical claims, rights and profile of indigenous peoples and people of African descent. In accordance with the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action, we have adopted public policies to work

towards those commitments. Among them I would mention our ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the institution of an African Heritage Month in Honduras, and the creation and inauguration of a Ministry of Indigenous Peoples and People of African Descent.

I note that the United Nations, through General Assembly resolution 64/169, proclaimed 2011 the International Year for People of African Descent. In that context, civil society members of African descent, in cooperation with the Organization for Ethnic Community Development convened and celebrated the First World Summit of People of African Descent in August, amply supported by my Government, other Governments, international partners and United Nations system bodies. One of my Government's aspirations is to complete our constitutional reform to define Honduras as a multi-ethnic, multicultural country.

My Government joins its voice to those of millions of people of African descent in calling for the United Nations to institute a decade for people of African descent beginning in 2012, create a development fund for people of African descent, and establish a permanent forum for peoples of African descent within the United Nations.

Before concluding, I would like to raise an issue that is one of the greatest and most important challenges that our region faces: citizen insecurity. The most recent analysis carried out by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank show that Central America has become the region in the world with the highest levels of violence and organized crime. Their economic impact has escalated in the past decade to reach, in the case of Honduras, a level close to 10 per cent of our gross domestic product.

Violence and transnational organized crime, primarily evident in the commission of crimes such as drug trafficking, kidnapping, murder, money and asset laundering, people trafficking, arms trafficking, the commercial sexual exploitation of women and minors, among other crimes, are a serious threat to our possibilities to create well-being. Without security, there is no economic growth or development.

The evidence shows that many of those crimes, from the organized crime and lack of security to which

they give rise and that prevail in our societies, have their roots in the use and trafficking of drugs. Owing to their very nature and to the sums of money involved, they have a serious impact on our societies and add to the erosion of our system of values. They steal our young people, destroy conviviality and community life and create parallel economic systems that are true enclaves of crime, violence and degradation.

Today, the countries of the region invest huge amounts of money in combating the production and trafficking of drugs. However, practically the only instances in which the production and trafficking of drugs significantly drop in a region occur as a result of a change in routes or production being in other areas. Given that demand in developing countries has not decreased, the strategy that we follow in the region today, in the best case scenario, has only a partial and limited impact on the trafficking, transport and use of drugs.

For that reason, we note that, first of all, a pilot project that we have put to the United Nations should be launched to strengthen the capacity for the investigation and trial of organized crime in Honduras. Secondly, we need to gather together all the strategies that were discussed at the International Conference in Support of the Central America Security Strategy on 22 and 23 June in Guatemala. We should also point out, and it must be reaffirmed, that consumer countries must act bravely and resolutely in order to reduce or eliminate the use of and the trade in drugs because we must realize that without that, it will be very difficult for our societies to end the scourge. We must succeed in aligning our strategies so as to end the drug scourge and organized crime.

I would like to end by expressing my best wishes for this sixty-sixth session to meet the expectations of all Member States, which, I am sure, are founded on the principle of the sovereign equality of States.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Honduras for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Porfirio Lobo Sosa, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Viktor Yanukovich, President of Ukraine

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Ukraine.

Mr. Viktor Yanukovich, President of Ukraine, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Viktor Yanukovich, President of Ukraine, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Yanukovich (*spoke in Ukrainian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I sincerely congratulate His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on his election to the post of President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. I am convinced that his considerable experience will contribute to the achievement of significant results on behalf of States Members of the United Nations and the entire Organization.

This year, the great family of States Members of the United Nations was enriched by a new 193rd Member. On behalf of Ukraine, I would like to express our support for the Government and people of South Sudan in the process of State-building, and to assure them of Ukraine's readiness to develop equal and mutually beneficial cooperation with a new member of the international community.

This is a special session given the number of high-level meetings devoted to issues of a global scale — nuclear safety and security, the prevention of non-communicable diseases, desertification and land degradation, racism and discrimination.

During this session, the delegation of Ukraine has actively participated in discussions on the issues that are most topical for our State — nuclear security and disease control. With regard to the theme of the general debate, "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes", I note that the issue of preventing armed conflict, and the loss of human lives and the suffering triggered by them, was one of the cornerstones of Ukraine's first membership, as an independent State, of the Security Council in 2000-2001.

Preventive diplomacy and mediation at the regional and international levels, from the frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet space to a peaceful

settlement in the Middle East and the restoration of stability in North Africa, remain an integral part of Ukraine's foreign policy. We pursue that policy in the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, and will continue to do so during Ukraine's presidency of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in 2013.

Regrettably, conflict prevention efforts are often not effective enough, and conflict settlement takes too long. Our main duty in such cases is to save lives and to alleviate the fate of civilians who find themselves in danger. Ukraine will always provide help to those who suffer. In addition to humanitarian efforts, we are ready to support all constructive international peace initiatives and preventive measures.

We believe that, in armed confrontations, top priority must be given to respect for human rights, first of all by ensuring the safety of civilians. Guided by this principle, Ukraine was among the first to carry out a humanitarian mission in Libya at the beginning of this year. The Ukrainian amphibious landing ship *Konstantin Olshansky* was used to evacuate almost 200 citizens of 20 nationalities, more than half of them women and children, from the conflict zone.

Ukraine has just celebrated the twentieth anniversary of its independence. Today, we are assessing the road we have travelled and rethinking some important moments in our modern history in order to find effective solutions to the issues that have remained unresolved for many years. It is precisely for that purpose that I have initiated sweeping reforms in the country, aimed at social and economic transformations and at further strengthening the democratic system and the rule of law in Ukraine.

The foundations of all reform processes in Ukraine are the fundamental democratic values that Ukrainians share with other Europeans. That is why the guiding principles we have determined for the modernization of the country are directly related to the ambitious objectives contained in the future Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union.

The twentieth anniversary of our independence is only an instant in historical terms, yet the roots of our statehood can be traced back thousands of years. Since ancient times, Ukraine has been developing a European spirit and culture, while cherishing the traditions of tolerance and inter-ethnic and intercultural harmony in

our society. We believe that straightforward and frank dialogue based on universal values is the only way to find a common language in each country and in international relations alike.

Ukraine's position on the need to uphold human rights at all times and everywhere as the highest value has always been crystal clear. Examples of that commitment are seen in Ukraine's activities during its two terms of membership in the Human Rights Council from June 2006 to June 2011. We will not lessen our attention to this subject and are planning to rejoin the Council in 2018.

As Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe from May to November this year, Ukraine is focused on the issues of children's rights, the development of local self-governance and the rule of law. We are convinced that the rule of law and respect for human rights, as the bases for building a society, are needed to counter many contemporary threats, including the complex challenges of terrorism.

Recently, the world shuddered from the attack on the United Nations building in Nigeria, which offered yet further proof that the ugly face of terrorism is becoming more repulsive and brazen. The blow was struck directly against our Organization, which is of particular concern and requires increased security for United Nations premises.

As one of the State initiators of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, and as a party to all universal anti-terrorist conventions currently in force, Ukraine resolutely condemns any manifestations of terrorism. We believe that all terrorist acts, regardless of who commits them and where or why they are committed, violate a fundamental human right — the right to life — and therefore constitute a crime against humanity. I pay tribute to the memory of those killed 10 years ago, on 11 September 2001, as well as to all other victims of terrorist attacks.

I am sincerely proud of the significant contribution of Ukraine to the peaceful coexistence of humankind. I refer not only to our voluntarily abandoning nuclear arms and large stockpiles of highly enriched uranium. The awareness of the global scale of the effects of the Chernobyl disaster was the impetus for my initiative to convene the Kyiv Summit on the Safe and Innovative Use of Nuclear Energy in April. The Summit enabled us to enhance international

cooperation in strengthening nuclear safety and in responding adequately to accidents and emergencies. I sincerely thank all the participants in the Kyiv Summit and all of the donor countries that announced their contributions to Chernobyl projects.

We also welcome the holding of the high-level meeting on nuclear safety and security, scheduled for tomorrow. We are committed to jointly working further on this issue. Our country has unique experience in the rehabilitation of the area and the population victimized by the Chernobyl disaster. We are ready to share this experience. Ukraine consistently supports efforts to ensure gradual and irreversible nuclear disarmament for the purpose of completely eliminating nuclear weapons from the world. We continue to insist that security assurances for non-nuclear and non-aligned States should be enshrined in a legally binding international instrument. I urge the leaders of other States to consciously follow the example of Ukraine and its practical actions to promote disarmament and non-proliferation.

Ukraine is actively participating in United Nations efforts to maintain international peace and security. Throughout its 20 years of independence, over 34,000 Ukraine's soldiers and police have taken part in peacekeeping missions in more than 20 operations under the United Nations mandate. Ukraine is a dedicated supporter of United Nations peacekeeping reform, the goal of which is to strengthen the Organization's capacity and eliminate existing shortcomings. Utmost attention should be paid to ensuring the mobility of aviation resources in United Nations peacekeeping, as well as to enhancing legal protection for Blue Helmets. We are grateful to Member States for their support of Ukraine's initiatives in this area, and we hope for effective joint work to be undertaken in this direction.

One year ago, we held a High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals. Ukraine is committed to its obligations in achieving national development goals. Among our main priorities are poverty reduction, ensuring quality education, environmental protection, improving health and reducing child mortality, curbing the spread of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, and ensuring gender equality.

Working on today's immediate tasks, we believe it is necessary to pay greater attention to the

increasingly acute issue of climate change and environmental protection. We endorse the idea of creating an effective international mechanism for the environmental protection of Earth as our common planet — a global environmental organization with universal membership functioning on a permanent basis. We also call upon Member States to study the idea of developing a new universal instrument that could serve as a so-called environmental constitution, give all countries clear guidelines from the cultural perspective, and identify compulsory principles for the sustainable development of the global green economy and the environmental safety of the planet.

We consider it necessary to work on improving global energy security. We encourage the development, under United Nations coordination, of an effective multilateral cooperation mechanism aimed at achieving development goals in the energy field.

In overcoming the impact of the global economic crisis, we must avoid new challenges to the financial sector that affect trade and investment. It is our belief that economic and social development should be facilitated by the further liberalization of trade.

In recent years, we have come to see how vulnerable any one nation can be to various security threats and natural or manmade disasters. All these examples have shown us the need for effective international mechanisms for combating such phenomena. It is high time that the United Nations and its specialized agencies seriously strengthened their role in coordinating international efforts aimed at preventing, responding to and overcoming the impacts of catastrophes and severe humanitarian crises. We look forward to strengthening the specialized United Nations agencies and improving their effectiveness. Ukraine stands ready to continue its active involvement in the practical humanitarian efforts of the World Food Programme. A few days ago, Ukraine decided to provide, through the United Nations, humanitarian assistance in the form of wheat for the purpose of combating hunger in the Horn of Africa.

Ukraine supports the greater involvement of the General Assembly in international life and strengthening its voice in addressing a wide range of global issues. The modern world is presenting the United Nations with new, complex and increasingly difficult issues. We will not be able to improve the effectiveness of our joint work, however, without

comprehensive reform of the Organization and its principal bodies, including the Security Council.

Ukraine is open to discussing all progressive concepts of reform that can bring Member States to the broadest possible agreement. The consideration of the interests of every regional group is an indispensable component of the process of reforming the Council. Ukraine believes that at least one additional non-permanent seat of an expanded Security Council should be given to the Group of Eastern European States.

I am confident that the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly will strengthen the United Nations in the face of global challenges and threats, reliably guaranteed by our strong political commitment and a clear vision of our common goals. I believe in our shared success.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Ukraine for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Viktor Yanukovich, President of Ukraine, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Fernando Lugo Méndez, President of the Republic of Paraguay

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Paraguay.

Mr. Fernando Lugo Méndez, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Fernando Lugo Méndez, President of the Republic of Paraguay, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Lugo Méndez (spoke in Spanish): On behalf of the people of Paraguay, Mr. President, I offer you sincere congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. I also thank Mr. Joseph Deiss for his laudable work as President of the previous session, and congratulate Mr. Ban Ki-moon on his re-appointment as Secretary-General. Throughout his tenure at the head of the Organization for the past five years, he has demonstrated his gift for leadership and his

unwavering commitment to world peace and international security.

The people of Paraguay and their President, in consonance with our extraordinary national history, believe deeply in the human being as the subject and end of and reason for every effort designed to benefit humankind. The centrality of humans in the history of the universe in all their endeavours, interests and conquests will be constantly proclaimed in this forum.

In order to begin to discuss the future of humankind, we must correct mistakes and rethink paradigms that for decades, sometimes even for centuries, have demonstrated their utter uselessness in bringing about change for good. Restoring men and women to centre stage in the concerns of the universe is a fundamental step in order merely to begin to trace a basic outline for a future of certainty that seeks to replace the frustrations of managing the development paradigm with the realities of a world in which well-being is much more tangible.

What good does it do to discuss development plans if the goal of dignifying the human being is not the beginning and the end of the process? At this stage in history, when we are thrilled by the most incredible technological achievements capable of keeping pace with our flights of imagination and our dreams, where does that leave the nightmare of starving children who fight for a crust of bread, smile if they get it — and still want to play? What benefit do we derive from the media hype about these great global and commercial achievements while in complicit silence the other half of humanity is holding out its hand, begging for a little help, for the love of God? What good does it do us to continue supporting a way of creating happiness in the world that has been loudly shown to be a failure over and over again?

Regions that enrich the economy of part of the world with the natural abundance of their waters, their oil, the precious stones hidden in the belly of their soil, continue inexorably to accumulate debt while their daily offerings increase the wealth of rich societies every day. The poor neighbour in today's world possesses riches — those closer to the simplicity of well-being and happiness, such as water, food, forests and renewable energy — that are vital to its rich neighbours. But unbridled wealth cannot be the basis for political dominion and certainly not for wars and

military might. We live in societies because our peoples and other human beings have mutual needs.

Population growth is a serious global issue. Sometimes it seems as though we live in a world that, worse than resigning itself to poverty, resigns itself to inequality, to the pornographic spectacle of scandalous imbalances which reveal the inner workings of an ostentatious world celebrating its shame, as described by Gabriel García Márquez in his tale of *Innocent Eréndira and Her Heartless Grandmother*. As long as that continues, the dialogue between the rich bank that sustains and coordinates the world economy and the poor world that provides the natural resources will gradually become senseless.

My country's growth rate in 2010 exceeded 15 per cent; but tensions made efforts to redistribute that wealth and reduce inequality more difficult than achieving the growth itself.

I think that this is true all over the world. The United Nations needs to discuss measures to enable or assist Member States to work their way through fiscal policies and international market regulations that contribute to the stark reality of the huge fortunes that exist in the hands of just a few in some countries as compared with the inequalities, droughts, humanitarian crises in others.

Solidarity is a ten-letter word that is fine-sounding but sometimes empty: empty of free will, actions and especially results. Solidarity is no longer simply a moral imperative; it is a prerequisite for achieving progress and combating the dark side of ignoring it: violence and crime.

We live in a world which urgently requires a paradigm shift. And we must admit that the world is at a crossroads; because one discourse that has been going on for five centuries in the name of progress and another for six decades in the name of development have only added uncertainty about any improvement in the future lot of broad regions and thousands of millions of people.

The unrepentant incapability of the developed countries to understand a very simple equation in order to set up local development plans as local plans for development means that known errors will be repeated despite the urgent need for profound, convincing and radical rethinking capable of harnessing the mutual trust that can promote progress towards the only

tangible parameter, the only valid outcome, the only genuine reality, which is a good life for all men and women.

Achieving the good life for all should be the paradigm of our time. It clearly entails envisioning a post-development future in which thoughtfulness, objectivity and goodwill coexist in harmony and genuine solidarity reigns without delay between those in the powerful and wealthy world and those who live in poverty elsewhere.

This is not just a moral vision. Of fundamental importance to progress is the sharing of wealth. And that brings me to the main theme of this forum, avoiding future conflict and future violence. But the paradigm of the good life requires plans that focus on the dignity of human beings and the future rather than on resource exploitation systems which almost never benefit the people.

In Latin America — the region to which my Government is committed — we live the daily paradox of poverty in the midst of the best basic conditions for generating wealth. Historically, since colonial times, our wealth has followed a one-way path to other regions of the world, without generating any structural improvements in our economies.

We attend the prestigious world summits of the developed countries where the lot of poor countries has been debated for decades, yet we have had no luck. When will the countries of Latin America realize that we export nature, we export oxygen, we export fresh water, we export food, we export renewable energy? It makes no sense that our countries remain poor, when we have so many assets and products that enrich the rest of the world.

Finally, on this subject, a paradigm shift to ensure that human beings are at the centre of world concerns requires commitment on the part of those who govern the most powerful countries. We in turn must commit to supporting them and not abandoning them if that paradigm shift takes place. And the most intelligent form of support is, as we have just mentioned, to develop an awareness of what we are and the enormous potential with which our countries are endowed.

Paraguay reaffirms its steadfast commitment to multilateralism based on a democratic and egalitarian new world order, an order that will ensure the comprehensive and effective development of our

countries. Paraguay therefore believes both in a stronger and more democratic United Nations, as a truly global organization, and in strengthening progress in the regional integration of peoples. For example, we have the Union of South American Nations — UNASUR — and the future Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, which provide common space for nations that share a common history, common values and common plans for sovereignty and independence.

Global change is picking up speed. The still significant primacy of the central Powers in economic and military terms, and therefore in political and cultural terms, is facing demands for democratization of the world order and progress in multilateralism. The financial, energy, social and environmental crises are proof of the contradictions and conflicts in the strategic interests of the great Powers as well as the weaknesses of the aid-dependent countries and those in the midst of development. We believe in mediation as a remedy to overcome social injustice and as a path towards peace.

Among our peoples' demands for strengthened democracy, we see the spirit of the words of Nelson Mandela when, in the past century, he said that there can be no democracy with poverty and no democracy with social inequality. That is why the theme of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, on strengthening the role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means, conflict prevention and resolution, has taken on greater relevance.

Article 1 of the United Nations Charter states that the purpose of our Organization is

“to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace”.

Thus, in the face of violence and today's wars, whether traditional or silent, short or long-term, there is a demand for mediation as a mechanism for peace, as a tool to overcome global social injustice and thus a necessary foundation for achieving international peace and security.

In that context, we advocate mediation in order to overcome global social injustice and both traditional and silent wars. It must be based on the shared but differentiated responsibilities of all countries, developing and developed, in order to guarantee the

conditions necessary for a peaceful world that relies on the comprehensive and effective development of our peoples. Lastly, it must avoid ruinous hypotheses at all costs, such as those that led to “preventive attacks”, which culminated in the loss of many lives, the destruction of entire cities and vital elements of universal culture, and sowed the seeds for the dreadful mistrust of any subsequent such initiatives.

The self-determination of peoples should not be shaped by the political or economic interests of those who oversee global equilibrium with weapons. It is, and must be, written in stone.

Paraguay plays an active role in United Nations peacekeeping missions. Beginning this year, after more than a decade of uninterrupted contributions of military observers, Paraguay will be contributing a multirole engineering unit to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, the first to be deployed under our national flag.

The General Assembly should adopt the necessary reforms so as to reaffirm its inherent nature as a universal, democratic and equitable representative body. In this way, its powers will be recognized and will take precedence over those of other bodies in the Organization, such as the Security Council, in order to underscore the processes that help to overcome violence and globalized social injustice and build the multipolar, democratic and egalitarian world that we so greatly desire.

In the same vein, democratizing the Security Council is becoming an increasingly urgent task. We urge the Council to fulfil its primary role of promoting world peace and avoiding war, which is why it must be reformed and become more democratic. We must accord greater legitimacy to the Council by making it more representative of the new multilateral and multipolar world order, and by gradually doing away with veto rights.

We must express our concern, here before the General Assembly, regarding the actions taken in Libya under resolution 1973 (2011) of the Security Council and in the context of the responsibility to protect. We believe that the use of force must always be a last resort.

That is why we are concerned about the crisis affecting the United Nations Security Council, which can be overcome only through its reform and

democratization. Thus, we insist and urge that efforts continue to be made to that end so that the Council can once again fulfil its mission of guaranteeing international peace and security.

In terms of foreign policy, Paraguay, as one of the founding Members of the Organization, upholds and reiterates the constitutional principles governing its international relations: national independence, self-determination of peoples, legal equality of States, solidarity and international cooperation, international protection of human rights, freedom of navigation in international rivers, non-intervention, and condemnation of all forms of dictatorship, colonialism and imperialism.

In the 50 years since the embargo was imposed on the people of Cuba, Paraguay has repeatedly expressed its opposition to that economic, commercial and financial blockade, as have the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Paraguay has stood together with those countries and called for the immediate lifting of the embargo. In particular, we deplore the impact of this unjust blockade on the Cuban people, which is a consequence of positive laws that affect free trade and the transparent practice of international trade.

In that respect, Paraguayan legislation does not recognize the extraterritorial application of foreign laws that violate the sovereignty of other States. This practice also violates the principles of international law that we, the Members of the United Nations, defend and strive to uphold.

Paraguay has consistently supported the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at previous sessions which call for the lifting of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. In full observance of resolution 65/6, entitled “Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba”, and before this Assembly, Paraguay once again reiterates its support for the resolutions adopted in that regard.

Consistent with the stance it has taken in international forums, in particular the United Nations, and considering the resolutions that condemn the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, such as Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 446 (1979) and 478 (1980), Paraguay established diplomatic relations with Palestine on 25 March 2005

and recognizes a free and independent Palestinian State based on the borders of 4 June 1967.

We are gratified that the agenda of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly includes the recognition of the free, sovereign and independent State of Palestine. We are convinced that this is a confirmation of the historic debt of the international community to recognize the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to have its own State with well-defined borders. This will be a significant contribution to the peace process in the Middle East.

We believe that urgent efforts are needed to design and build a new international financial architecture, one that responds to the new era in which we live and provides measures for avoiding systematic cyclical crises and for developing regional mechanisms for economic and financial cooperation. Under this new framework, nations with common histories and destinies can create their own spaces for cooperation and economic partnerships.

The countries of South America have focused the actions of UNASUR on this goal. We are confident that, by coordinating and linking our economic initiatives, we will lay the foundation for integration, which will not only protect our countries from crises that are not of our creation, but also guarantee the comprehensive development of our peoples.

Paraguay is among those nation States which, over the course of history, have fallen prey to various vulnerabilities, given their geographic situation and historical experience. Paraguay has been weakened by a historic model of socio-economic development based on the looting of its natural and strategic resources and administered through relations of structural dependence.

That is why, in January 2010, Paraguay became the Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries. In that capacity, we urge transit countries and their main neighbours, as applicable, as well as international organizations and the most developed countries, to increase their commitment to implement the Almaty Programme of Action, addressing the special needs of landlocked developing countries within a new global framework for transit transport cooperation. This will help such countries to overcome their limitations and will facilitate their overall development.

As a complement to beginning the preparations for the Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries, which will help us to overcome the adversities we face, we are promoting the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries, in the conviction that scientific advances in that area will be of great importance in overcoming the obstacles that such countries face.

Regarding the Millennium Development Goals, Paraguay reaffirms its full commitment to achieving those goals and expresses its concern about the extent to which they will be met by 2015. This is why we encourage Governments, civil society organizations and the private sector to work together to achieve them.

Given its commitment to the goal of fully respecting the human rights of our peoples, Paraguay has decided to present its candidacy for the Human Rights Council for the term 2014-2017. We hope to have the support of the international community.

We must express our serious concern for the environmental crisis, which is worsening on a daily basis and even generating uncertainty about the survival of the human race. We fully support strengthening the only legally binding agreement in this area, the Kyoto Protocol, and its further extension. The agreements reached in Cancún are a great support in improving emissions levels but they are voluntary in nature, which contradicts the principle of climate justice that our peoples so favour.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who helped the Paraguayan initiative for the International Day of Friendship to come to fruition. The friendship of individuals, peoples and nations is not exclusively a question of diplomacy, much less a commercial enterprise to make money from the inclination of human beings to join together. Friendship is that bond which must necessarily be based on solidarity, and, in Paraguay, we believe that it is high time for the world to make it happen.

I am pleased that this initiative has become universal. On behalf of the Paraguayan people, we greet all the peoples of the world in the hope that we will find the way to overcome global social injustices and thus guarantee a world culture of peace and friendship based on the well-being and genuine development of all our peoples, without distinction.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Paraguay for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Fernando Lugo Méndez, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Rwanda.

Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kagame: As the world continues to deal with crises, including conflicts across the globe, we need to examine the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution, and the part each one of us needs to play.

The effect of decades of conflict has been an unacceptable loss of life and a reversal of global social and economic progress. What has also become clear is that although most conflicts are now domestic in nature, they continue to have a destabilizing effect on neighbouring countries and the rest of the world.

One needs to look carefully at the dividends of striving towards shared global prosperity, which in turn increases capacity to deal with conflict. By tackling development issues, for example, through the framework of the Millennium Development Goals, established by this body and the Secretary-General, we create conditions conducive to the formation of a more stable world.

Figures from the United Nations itself indicate that about \$7.1 billion will be spent in the period 2011-2012 for peacekeeping purposes. Resources such as these that are consumed by conflicts could otherwise be channelled through the United Nations or other relevant institutions to improve the lives of millions of people.

Thus, while it is appropriate to talk about how mediation can support efforts to prevent and manage conflicts, we should also ask ourselves why, after decades of trying, we are not making the progress we would like to make in this regard.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We know that the likelihood of conflict is high when citizens feel disenfranchised and marginalized, and where Governments do not govern in the interests of their people. If the rule of law is absent and access to opportunity is limited or exclusive, that is a problem which we should address as a global community, consistently and with commitment. It makes good economic and political sense to invest in conflict prevention, thus reducing future outbreaks and avoiding short-term, quick-fix solutions.

Apart from traditional interventions that we employ with varying success, there is one major asset that remains under-utilized, and that is our youth. Younger generations carry less historical and political baggage and are more inclined to get the most out of the global village that we all find ourselves sharing. With social and communication tools, they are key innovators and thought leaders not only of tomorrow but of right now. We have an important responsibility to empower them to believe in themselves and in a better future.

Returning to the topic of mediation and the associated issues of negotiation and reconciliation, these practices are not new ones in Africa, or in my country, Rwanda. They play a useful role, and one that should be strengthened. However, various experiences have shown that if mediation is to succeed, national efforts should be supported in the first place, based on specific cultural and political contexts. In Rwanda, for instance, we have seen national efforts produce long-lasting solutions and tangible results on the ground because they are homegrown.

It is also important to involve in mediation efforts regional and subregional players who have ample knowledge of the often complex regional dynamics of conflicts. These organizations should be supported expeditiously before disputes escalate into intractable conflicts.

Additionally, we need to take a good look at the toll that traditional diplomatic mediation can have on

the lives of people living in conflict areas. Too often, while resolutions are being debated and refined, people are dying. And sometimes when those resolutions are eventually adopted, enforcement is slow, or they only halt the conflict for a short time but with no sustainable solutions.

Let us also remember the limitations faced by external mediation experts who, even when having good intentions, are often unable to foster any lasting change at the root level of the conflict. National ownership remains very critical. Mediation efforts must be based on an overriding desire to help conflicting parties to resolve their differences. But that should not be confused with supporting one side in the conflict or imposing a solution that is in the interests of the mediators.

Let me conclude by saying that the most viable option for preventing conflict is to empower our own citizens, especially youth, politically, economically and socially, so that they have a stake in the management and stability of the nation. Ultimately, long-lasting solutions are the ones that emanate from within.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Rwanda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Željko Komšić, Chair of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Chair of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Željko Komšić, Chair of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Željko Komšić, Chair of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Komšić (*spoke in Bosnian; English text provided by the delegation*): It is my great honour to address the General Assembly today in my capacity as the Chair of the Presidency of Bosnia and

Herzegovina. Allow me, at the very outset, to congratulate Mr. Al-Nasser upon his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, as well as the members of the Bureau, and to express our full support for your future work. Furthermore, I would like to congratulate Mr. Joseph Deiss on the results achieved when he presided over the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, in a period when this body and the international community in general were facing an array of challenges stemming from current global issues.

I am especially honoured to extend congratulations to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his unanimous re-appointment as the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Over the past five years, Mr. Ban has worked tirelessly to address the various issues facing the Organization. We expect that the Secretary-General will continue to pursue these activities during his second term.

Allow me to express my gratitude for all the cooperation and the support we have received during Bosnia and Herzegovina's membership in the Security Council, which will expire in a few months. Speaking of our membership in the Security Council, let me once again reiterate the view that the presence and participation of small States such as Bosnia and Herzegovina in the work and decisions of the Security Council is particularly important for maintaining balance within it. Accordingly, other countries, along with the Security Council's permanent members and the world Powers, also have the opportunity to express their views and participate in Security Council decision-making on important issues of international peace and security. It has been our pleasure and honour to work together with all members of the Security Council during the term of our membership, 2010-2011.

Bosnia and Herzegovina had the honour to preside over the Security Council in January 2011. Although acting as President was only one segment of the two-year experience in the Council, Bosnia and Herzegovina once again proved that it can be an equal partner on the international diplomatic scene and respond to a variety of obligations.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has played a constructive role in the work of the Security Council by contributing to the Council's better, more effective and faster response to situations with the potential to

threaten international peace. Furthermore, Bosnia and Herzegovina has also sought to share its own experiences in post-conflict peacebuilding and contribute actively to better and long-lasting understanding and reconciliation. Through its role in the Council, Bosnia and Herzegovina showed that it can be an equal and competent partner in international relations.

The Security Council thematic debate (see S/PV.6472) entitled "Post-conflict peacebuilding: institution-building", which was initiated by Bosnia and Herzegovina, reached a number of conclusions. I would like to mention some of them.

In the interests of the success of peacebuilding initiatives, priority must be given to institution-building, so as to prevent a return to conflict and ensure the survival, renewed credibility and legitimacy of States. The purpose of institution-building is to progressively reduce dependence on the international community and promote sustainability. Ownership of the reform process is the main condition for the establishment of effective institutions and for ensuring sustainable peace.

Success in post-conflict institution-building depends primarily on establishing partnerships between the international community and post-conflict societies, a partnership that is based on a set of common goals. Bearing that in mind, we would like once again to thank the Assembly for the confidence its members have shown and for the support they have provided during our membership in the Security Council.

Bosnia and Herzegovina also continues to provide concrete contributions to the United Nations peace operations in Liberia, the Sudan, Cyprus and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, we are united in our determination to move towards full membership in the European Union (EU); our unity provides a solid basis for the achievement of this goal.

Bosnia and Herzegovina places special emphasis on regional and subregional cooperation and dialogue between neighbouring countries in the Balkans, with their different cultures and traditions that have been present for centuries. We are committed to future cooperation with our neighbours, based on the principles of mutual respect and respect for sovereignty

and territorial integrity. We are interested in sharing our experiences with others and in developing mutually beneficial relations in post-conflict peacebuilding, based on mutual respect for differences, which, in our opinion, represent an advantage.

I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize that the issues of neighbourly and regional cooperation are closely related to the integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina into the EU and NATO, which is a strategic and high-priority foreign policy objective for my country. We believe that this is the best and only way to ensure stability, security, economic development and prosperity for all citizens of Bosnia.

The strategic goal of establishing formal relations and EU membership is based on the aspiration of Bosnia and Herzegovina to achieve the full functioning of our own institutions and the further development of society, on the basis of the principles of a free market, the rule of law and, especially, the protection of human rights.

Furthermore, my country wishes to improve its relations with the States of Asia, Africa, Latin America, Australia and the wider region, at the multilateral and bilateral level, in accordance with common interests and real possibilities. Bosnia and Herzegovina remains dedicated to the principle of openness in cooperation with all countries of the world.

Many important world events have occurred since the previous session of the General Assembly. Bosnia and Herzegovina is following with great attention, preoccupation and concern the development of the situation in the friendly Arab countries that are affected by deep social and political changes. Bosnia and Herzegovina supports democratic processes aimed at the creation of free, democratic and prosperous societies. However, such processes are often followed by tragic consequences, and we therefore appeal once again for the violence to stop and for peace to be achieved in those societies.

We are deeply concerned by the standstill in crisis resolution in the Middle East. Despite the optimistic announcements and plans made, the peace process has not yet been revived, as had been expected. The only way forward is a solution that is based on the principle of the peaceful coexistence of two sovereign States: a viable and independent Palestine and a stable and secure Israel, with respect for the provisions of

international law and humanitarian law and human rights instruments.

To date, the United Nations has supported and actively participated in the creation of a positive atmosphere in order to reach a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. Bosnia and Herzegovina believes that the conditions for a lasting and just solution can be achieved with additional political will and responsibility on the part of the negotiating parties.

We are witnesses to the fact that the international community's determination to deal with terrorism and, at the same time, create conditions conducive to the peaceful development of Afghanistan has yielded results. However, we cannot but conclude that it will take much greater efforts to establish self-sustaining peace and stability in Afghanistan. In April 2010, as a sign of support for the activities of the international community, Bosnia and Herzegovina issued a decision on the sending of an infantry unit to the International Security Assistance Force mission in Afghanistan.

I would like to emphasize here that Bosnia and Herzegovina is still very concerned about terrorist attacks, which claim innocent civilian lives in many countries around the world. Bearing in mind the fact that the modern world continues to face various forms of international terrorism, I express our support for the full implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the activities of the Counter-Terrorism Committee. In that regard, let me reiterate that Bosnia and Herzegovina is unconditionally dedicated to the fight against terrorism and is particularly active in cooperating with the countries of our region to increase security and enhance preparedness for the effective prevention of terrorist acts. Completing negotiations and adopting a United Nations comprehensive convention against terrorism would be an important contribution in this field.

In addition to the political crisis, this year we are faced once again with many other problems to which the international community still lacks proper and effective responses. Despite signs of recovery, the greatest economic and financial crisis in recent history has, unfortunately, left visible consequences that are having repercussions on global peace and security. It is clear that countries individually cannot cope with this

issue, no matter how efficient their Governments may be. Global crises require global solutions.

In the context of the activities of the United Nations, we must face the fact that the greatest economic crisis since the foundation of the world Organization has to some degree threatened and even begun to bring into question the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, one of the most comprehensive strategic tasks set by the Organization since its establishment.

Therefore, it is necessary to do everything in our power, individually and collectively, in order to prevent any further erosion of this key strategic project. We believe that it is necessary for the international community, especially the United Nations, to redouble its efforts to assist primarily the least developed countries.

The climate change problem caused by human activity is leading to changes in the environment that could have catastrophic consequences for humankind as a whole if the process of reaching agreement on environmental protection is not intensified.

Bosnia and Herzegovina shares the concern of the most States Members of the United Nations at the fact that drought, floods, sea-level rise, lack of running water and food, deforestation and all the other phenomena caused by global warming pose a serious threat to global security, which in future could be a cause of conflict throughout the world. The extremely important issue of climate change therefore requires urgent action by the international community. Bosnia and Herzegovina has expressed interest in joining the countries that support the Copenhagen Accord; thus our country has joined the large number of States Members of the United Nations that consider that Accord to be a necessary step in relation to Kyoto until the achievement of a final, legally binding agreement.

Bearing this in mind, I believe that neither economic nor political interests should stand in the way of achieving a global consensus as the beginning of the global and common struggle to preserve the natural balance of the planet. It is often forgotten that climate change has a direct effect in terms of development, poverty and hunger, and, consequently, global peace and security. I am convinced that it is in our common interest to ensure that future generations inherit the best possible world on our common home, planet Earth.

I hope that all of us who are here today agree that comprehensive United Nations reform is necessary; such reform must be carried out with extreme care, with the broadest possible consensus on the part of Member States. Bosnia and Herzegovina sees the role of the United Nations and its agencies as central to resolving key issues of international significance. Therefore, it supports the Secretary-General's efforts and proposals for reform.

United Nations reform should lead to the efficient and coordinated functioning of all agencies and bodies of the United Nations system, bearing in mind the need to avoid any duplication of activities in the context of a more rational allocation of financial resources.

Regardless of the future configuration of the Security Council, we believe that the Eastern European group of countries must have another non-permanent seat, taking into account the fact that in the past two decades the number of countries in this group has more than doubled.

While presiding over a subsidiary body of the Security Council — the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions — Bosnia and Herzegovina set the consideration of the working methods and transparency of the Security Council as a primary goal. Bosnia and Herzegovina also organized several informal meetings in cooperation with partner countries and the General Assembly, at which States Members of the United Nations expressed their opinions and views and put forward concrete proposals for improving the efficiency of the Security Council.

I wish to emphasize in particular that it is expected that the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, be more active in the area of preventive diplomacy. We believe that in order to make the work of the Council more efficient, greater activity in this respect would provide a starting point for resolving many of the world's problems and crises before they flare up. Providing timely and effective conflict prevention, rather than reacting once the crisis has escalated, is certainly a more efficient and less expensive mechanism for preserving peace and security.

During the six decades of its existence, the United Nations has undergone ordeals but it always was and still is the best framework for seeking and providing adequate responses to the wide range of

global issues that we face. Therefore, I urge Member States to work for the full implementation of all our agreements in order to make the world a better place for our future generations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Chair of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Željko Komšić, Chair of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guyana.

Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Jagdeo: Allow me first to convey to the President my warmest congratulations on his election to guide the work of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. I have no doubt that under his leadership, Qatar will be instrumental in the service of his presidency, and, indeed, in that of the Assembly as a whole, as we face the challenging times ahead. I also recognize the service of his predecessor and wish to record our appreciation for that service. To our Secretary-General, I offer my delegation's congratulations on the renewal of his mandate, an act that bears testimony to the confidence placed in him by the Member States of this body.

This is the last time that I will address this great Hall as President of my country. Before the end of the year, I will be proud to be the first President of Guyana to demit office under the constitutional term limits that I signed into law in the early days of my presidency. Inevitably, that milestone has caused me to look back on the changes that have taken place in this body since I first stood here 12 years ago. Three things strike me

as I reflect on the role of the United Nations over those 12 years.

The first is that the central point that I and others have repeatedly made from this rostrum stays as true today as it was when we first articulated it. The core point is that, while the values that inform the work of the United Nations and our Member States — the values of peace, equality and justice — are timeless, they are of limited use unless we, as the United Nations and as individual Member States, draw on them to catalyse consistent, meaningful and practical responses to the contemporary changing challenges that our peoples face.

The second point that strikes me is how utterly different today's contemporary challenges actually are when compared with those of just 12 years ago, not to mention those of the 1940s, when the United Nations was founded. The rise of China, India, Brazil and other developing countries is transforming the globe for the better. Billions of people have been lifted out of poverty; new businesses are generating millions of jobs, growth and capital; and there is once again genuine intellectual debate about the right way to embed rights and justice at the core of the global governance structure.

However, the emergence of those great Powers is happening in a totally different way to how Powers emerged in the past. They are emerging in a world that is interconnected through instant communications capabilities and globalized trading and financial systems. What we are witnessing is unlike anything that has happened before, and few communities and no country on the planet are not impacted, almost in real time, by those changes as they happen.

That presents the United Nations and its Member States with a great opportunity to realize our values and to secure the global peace, justice and security to which we aspire. But to do so, we must face up to the opportunities of interconnectedness with responses that are interconnected. Our record on international collective action in recent years is not good.

That leads me to my third point, which is that the search for justice and the achievement of rights for all require us to broaden our traditional understanding of security. We must struggle to achieve rights in a new way and, as many have said before me, alongside the physical security challenge, there are many other aspects to human security and the realization of rights.

I think that there are four other elements of security, in particular, that we need to properly understand.

First is the challenge of food security. We are heading for 8 billion, then 9 billion people. Rising prosperity means that those people want greater amounts of, and more nutritious, food. By current trends, we need 100 million hectares of new land by 2020 to meet that demand. How do we do that and avoid excessive price increases and volatility?

Second is the challenge of energy security. As the world gets richer, our demand for energy increases massively. We are likely to demand 36 per cent more energy by 2035. How do we generate the energy needed to meet such demand in a way that helps people everywhere to develop and does not choke off economic growth through high prices caused by energy scarcity?

Third is the challenge of resource security. If we are to alleviate poverty, countries need to develop. And if countries are to develop, they need minerals and other commodities. China alone accounts for more than a third of the demand for many of the most important global commodities, and countries across the world, most notably in South America and Africa, can supply them. How do we help global development by sourcing such minerals and using them efficiently and justly?

Fourth is the challenge of climate security. If we are to avert the biggest economic and social catastrophe ever seen, we must stabilize our planet's climate. At the absolute limit, that means stabilizing global temperatures at a maximum of two degrees above pre-industrial levels. Yet we are on track towards perhaps a four- or five-degree rise, according to the United Nations Environment Programme. The disaster that this could represent is beyond anyone's comprehension. And the fact that we are not treating it as an emergency will be viewed by history as the biggest derogation of responsibility by societies and Governments to ever take place. How can we rapidly change that situation before we run out of time?

Those four challenges represent both opportunities and difficulties. The difficulties are obvious, but they are opportunities in the sense that we have enough land, innovation and human ingenuity to feed the world. We have enough clean energy potential to power future prosperity. We have enough resources to provide the foundations for economic growth. We know that to avert climate change means using fossil

fuels and land in the right way. Once we start realizing those opportunities, we can create new platforms for peace, development and physical security.

That sounds an impossible task, but I would argue that it is not. There are solutions to enable those opportunities to be grasped today, and the United Nations can provide the platform for making the changes that are needed. We can do that if we draw motivation from the realization that the idea of integrated sustainable development, where we optimize our response to the interlinked security challenges, is not some abstraction for environmentalists. It is not a piece of rhetoric about a theoretical better future. Instead, it is an essential and specific call to action that has the potential to be the key global breakthrough of our time. It can change the global paradigm of development in a way that enables us to address the interconnected security challenges we face in the world today.

Pursuing this integrated response to our global challenges presents unparalleled opportunities for peoples across today's developing world. The food we need, the energy we generate, the minerals and other commodities from which we grow our economies, along with our forests and other land that can be the drivers of climate solutions, are all largely in the developing world. With the right international action, the developing world can lead the globe in the creation of the transformational shift we need to see.

Importantly, within the United Nations, we already have many of the entities we need to solve these problems in an integrated way. That realization should motivate us to understand that by next year's United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, we can start to make the progress that is necessary.

But that means consistency in our efforts to address all forms of insecurity. We need to support peaceful peoples everywhere to assert their basic rights to physical security and development. The global response to the Arab Spring and other peace movements across the Middle East has been remarkable for its inconsistency. Guyana supports the right of the Palestinian people to full statehood and urges the acceleration of the negotiations to achieve this. Palestinian rights and blood are as valuable and important as those of people everywhere else. I urge all

Members to support the draft resolution when it comes before this body.

Guyana was delighted to co-sponsor resolution 65/308 that resulted in the entry of South Sudan into this General Assembly. But we need to do much more. Guyana will be supportive of all peoples who struggle for democracy and dignity.

This also means that we need to rapidly upgrade our response to supporting development, food, energy and resource security. We need to see the Doha trade round not as some zero-sum game between the developed and developing world, but as a critical component to enable the world to meet the urgent challenges that an increasingly prosperous, growing population will present. We need to redouble our efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals, and to defeat non-communicable diseases. Guyana therefore welcomes this week's meeting on non-communicable diseases and the adoption of the Political Declaration (resolution 66/2, annex).

Finally, we need to move beyond the global insanity that is our response to climate insecurity. Existing pledges on greenhouse gas emissions under the Copenhagen Accord will not contain global temperature rises within limits that will avert catastrophic climate change, and some States will face extinction. Moreover, the anaemic delivery on financial pledges made at Copenhagen and formalized in the Cancun agreements is leading to a disastrous breakdown in trust between the developed and developing world. The prospects for reaching an internationally legally binding agreement on climate change at the seventeenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Durban, South Africa, would appear rather bleak. There is therefore an urgent need for high-order political leadership to re-energize the climate change process and deliver credible results.

To address these challenges, the United Nations and other international institutions need to modernize fast, and the international system needs to correct the inconsistencies between aid, trade and climate policies as I have outlined. In part, this means making the Security Council more democratic, transparent and legitimate. Fifty-four African countries have no permanent seat on the Council; neither do the 33 countries that comprise the Latin American and Caribbean region. Guyana strongly supports early

reform of the Security Council through an expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories and enhanced representation of developing countries.

Today's developed world needs to catch up with the realization that the world has changed, and it is in its vital national interests to change its approach to development issues. Food security is not just about people in poor countries; prices in Europe and the United States are rising too. Energy insecurity will hit today's developed countries and destroy their competitiveness as rapidly as it will hit the developing world. Resource insecurity is already driving up imported inflation in many developed countries and elsewhere. Climate insecurity could be the tipping point for today's Powers to be relegated to history, with all the suffering that would entail for their peoples.

So the narrative is changing and I hope that we will rise to the challenge. From now on, I will watch the proceedings in this Hall from afar, but for all of my invocations to the United Nations to do better, it remains the place where noble ambitions are pursued. I wish the United Nations and its Members all the best for a secure, prosperous and socially just future. On behalf of my country and people, I express our full support for the Organization and for strengthening its capacity to better fulfil the many mandates entrusted to it.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guyana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Elbegdorj Tsakhia, President of Mongolia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Mongolia.

Mr. Elbegdorj Tsakhia, President of Mongolia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Elbegdorj Tsakhia, President of Mongolia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Tsakhia (*spoke in Mongolian; English text provided by the delegation*): My delegation offers President Al-Nasser its warm congratulations on his unanimous election as President of the General Assembly at the current session and pledges its unconditional support and cooperation in the discharge of his onerous responsibilities.

I wish to extend my sincere congratulations to the Secretary-General on his well-deserved re-appointment and express my deep appreciation for his role in enhancing the role of the world Organization as a promoter of peace, security and development. His unanimous re-election to his high post is a testimony to his outstanding leadership of the United Nations over the past five years and a vote of strong confidence in his future endeavours.

On behalf of the people of Mongolia, I warmly welcome South Sudan as the 193rd Member of the United Nations.

Today the international community finds itself in times of uncertainty. The recovery from the economic and financial crisis has been uneven and sluggish. Its social repercussions have been intensified by persistent unemployment and poverty in many countries. Major natural disasters occur all too often. Unprecedented challenges stemming from climate change continue and remain unaddressed.

The world's population will reach 7 billion next month, and it is a cause of great concern that over a billion still suffer from hunger. The global economic and financial crisis grossly affected our drive to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. A number of international negotiations and mediation efforts on conflict resolution have yet to produce results.

In today's globalized world, these challenges require collective solutions. To this end, the existing governance structure ought to be improved and reformed. The involvement of international organizations is critical to this process. The thematic discussions on enhancing the role of the United Nations in global economic governance and dialogues with the Chairman of the Group of 20, held during the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, were the first important step. What we need to do now is to enhance the role and status of the United Nations, including the Economic and Security Council, in global economic decision-making.

It has also become imperative to ensure full and on-time delivery of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to formulate the post-2015 development agenda. That agenda should help ensure the meaningful integration of developing countries into the world economy, taking into account the vulnerabilities of landlocked least-developed countries and those susceptible to desertification and climate change. The Doha Development Round of multilateral trade negotiations, stalled for the past decade, has yet to produce positive results towards this end.

Every sixth Member of the United Nations is a landlocked developing country whose remoteness from world markets and high transport costs are a major impediment to its development. Along with other members of this group, Mongolia is endeavouring to advance our common interests at the United Nations and in the World Trade Organization. The creation of an international think tank for landlocked developing countries, to be set up in Ulaanbaatar, will unquestionably contribute to greater cooperation in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and our relevant MDGs. I therefore call on all the relevant parties to sign and ratify the multilateral agreement establishing this institution, which will be vitally important to landlocked developing countries.

Last year, we reviewed our progress in achieving the MDGs and agreed to strengthen the partnership. Yet, as was shown in the most recent MDG Gap Task Force report, significant gaps remain in delivering on commitments in the areas of aid, trade, debt relief and access to new technologies. For Mongolia, 66 percent of our MDGs are achievable by 2015. But our goals relating to poverty, environmental degradation and gender inequality are seriously off-track and will require stepped-up action on the part of the Government and the enhancement of our bilateral and multilateral partnerships if we are to meet these challenges.

Mongolia has been implementing targeted policies and activities aimed at poverty reduction. Alcoholism is one of the serious social ills associated with poverty. As President, I initiated a nationwide movement aimed at stopping alcohol abuse, curbing its consumption and encouraging abstinence that has enjoyed wide public support. With a view to encouraging such movements in other countries, it might be useful to look into the possibility of

promulgating an international convention aimed at reducing alcohol consumption.

Climate change, drought, land degradation and desertification have emerged as some of the gravest challenges facing humankind. Yesterday's High-level Meeting on desertification marked an important step forward in finding collective solutions to these challenges. It is a matter of great concern that 2 billion people and about 50 per cent of agricultural land around the globe are affected by desertification, land degradation and drought. We should therefore set up an intergovernmental panel to conduct a comprehensive study on the effects of these phenomena and to identify action-oriented recommendations for affected countries.

We look forward to the seventeenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Durban, South Africa, later this year, to discuss a significant reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the development of green economies. I believe that the global transition to a green economy is critically important for mitigating climate change and halting desertification, land degradation, ecosystem destruction and the loss of biodiversity, and that these in turn will help reduce poverty.

Financial assistance and expertise are vital to developing countries, including my own, in their efforts to develop a green economy through the introduction of green technologies and by building national capacity in energy production, construction and agriculture. I trust that the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development will produce results that can take us further down this road. As a country highly vulnerable to the impact of climate change, Mongolia is supportive of global efforts to combat its negative effects. With that in view, Mongolia will host the Asia-Europe Environment Ministers' Meeting on Sustainable Water and Forest Management in 2012.

The past year has witnessed dramatic transformations. The Arab Spring has brought freedom to millions, but it is far from over. The revolution for freedom is not the hardest social change to make. Building and developing a free, open and fair civic society is even more difficult. That is what our ancestors taught us, and these lessons have been reinforced during our own democratic transformation

over the past 20 years. Let me cite here the visionary teaching of the founder of the great Mongolian State, Chinggis Khaan, who was rightly chosen as the Man of the Millennium. Chinggis Khaan once said that conquering the world on horseback is easy; it is dismounting and governing that is much harder. The revolution for freedom is fought and won by the combined efforts of thousands of people. However, in one way or another, it is each and every person who pays the price for freedom. It is my firm belief that notwithstanding any challenges it faces, freedom is the future of all humankind.

Beginning in July, Mongolia assumed the honourable and responsible duties of President of the Community of Democracies, an organization geared to promoting and strengthening democratic norms and values around the world. During its presidency over the next two years, Mongolia will give priority to promoting education for democracy and good governance, eliminating corruption, building partnerships with civil society and consolidating regional cooperation.

Over the past 20 years of our own democratic changes, Mongolia has fundamentally transformed its former political, social and economic systems and laid down all the necessary foundations for new democratic governance, promoting and protecting a market economy, free elections, freedom of the press and civil society. We feel rightly proud of these accomplishments.

We are fully aware, however, that many things are far from perfect and that a lot more must be done to nurture democratic values in every citizen. Most of all, we must consolidate accountable and transparent governance, free from corruption and secured by an independent judiciary. Such governance should be more responsive to the needs of ordinary citizens, serve them, abide by the rule of law and the principle of impartiality, and have proper checks and balances. In short, we are striving to develop a system of governance that values its people and treats them with dignity and respect.

To address these challenges and threats to democracy and an open society, we are implementing a Mongolia-specific MDG 9 on democratic governance, human rights and zero tolerance for corruption. Within this goal, we are endeavouring to make our governance open and transparent; hence our full support for the

Open Government Partnership initiative. I would also like to call on all Member States attempting to improve their governance at the national level to join the Zero Tolerance for Corruption Campaign.

The Arab Spring will be followed by the Arab Challenge. Although the democratic process is a homegrown phenomenon, it should be supported by international cooperation. Here, I have a message for the industrialized democratic countries: Do not withdraw from the battle. Democratization does not mean Westernization, however. Democracy should develop naturally, in line with the historical, cultural and development specifics of a given country. Nonetheless, respect for freedom, justice and human rights and strict observance of the rule of law are common to all successful and responsible democracies. Bad governance is the worst problem of all, and any aspirations to improve and streamline it should therefore be strongly supported at all times.

Libya has entered a new era as a result of the relentless courage and patience of the rebels, who persevered for many months in their struggle for freedom, human rights and democracy. Colonel Al-Qadhafi called his fellow countrymen "rats" who should be brutally hunted down and exterminated. Now he himself is being hunted like a rat from hole to hole and trench to trench. That is the fate that awaits anyone who represses people's love for freedom and their desire to live in dignity. Respectful of the aspirations of the Libyan people, Mongolia has recognized the National Transitional Council and offers its full support to Libya's transition towards democracy, justice and human rights.

The international community should not shy away from condemning the regime of Syria's Bashar Al-Assad, who has inhumanly and brutally chosen the way of bloodshed to crack down on peaceful, freedom- and justice-craving protesters by using combat vehicles, snipers and military force. Let us unanimously demand that he end his atrocities. We must make the necessary decision to that effect without delay, and help the courageous people of Syria, who are losing dozens of their brave sons and daughters every day.

The love of freedom is the greatest force in this world. No tyranny, not even the cruellest regime, can resist it forever. I direct these words to the authorities

of Yemen and dictators seeking to suppress their citizens' fight for freedom.

It was a timely decision to make "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means" the main theme of this general debate. The main purpose of the United Nations is to settle disputes by peaceful means. We commend the skilful diplomacy of the Secretary-General and his envoys in resolving disputes and conflicts in various corners of the world. Member States need to work together to strengthen the United Nations capacity to that end.

North-East Asia is a region where mediation activities can be vigorously pursued. The region still lacks a formal mechanism for building confidence and strengthening regional cooperation. Therefore, we believe that Mongolia's proposal to set up a permanent mechanism to promote peace and stability in North-East Asia remains valid. We are ready to consult with relevant countries to move forward with our proposal.

On 11 September 10 years ago, terrorists tore down the twin towers, but they failed to tear down the spirit of freedom they represented, and they will never succeed in doing that. Mongolia stands with the international community in its fight against terrorism as a party to all of the United Nations conventions to combat terrorism.

We need to reinvigorate our resolve to attain a world free of nuclear weapons and to exploit nuclear power solely for peaceful purposes. We were reminded of the urgency and importance of strengthening the safety and security of nuclear reactors by the tragic accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant last March.

We commend the Secretary-General's initiative to hold a high-level meeting tomorrow to strengthen international measures for nuclear safety and security around the world. The 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons gave renewed impetus for expanding nuclear weapon-free zones around the world. The proposed nuclear weapon-free zone in the Middle East would contribute to the promotion of world peace.

Mongolia continues to work on further strengthening its internationally recognized nuclear weapon-free status. To this end, we are holding consultations with nuclear Powers. From the highly esteemed rostrum of the General Assembly, I would

like to underscore that there should be no doubt that Mongolia will never accede to the dumping of nuclear waste on its territory. It should go without saying that, in today's world, any attempt to enforce such decisions would undoubtedly fail.

It is of historic importance to us that the observance of the fiftieth anniversary of Mongolia's joining this global Organization coincides with this session of the General Assembly. On 27 October 1961, Mongolia became a full Member of the United Nations. It has opened new frontiers of active engagement with the international community for the global good. Furthermore, this year Mongolia is marking the 2,220th anniversary of its statehood, centenaries of regaining its independence and the establishment of a modern diplomatic service, as well as the ninetieth anniversary of the people's revolution.

Over the past five decades, cooperation between Mongolia and the United Nations has expanded both in scope and substance. Today Mongolia is a party to more than 240 multilateral conventions and enjoys membership in over 110 international organizations. United Nations assistance and cooperation have been instrumental in developing human resources and capacity-building, developing education, health and information technology, reducing poverty and developing an adequate response to natural disasters.

For its part, Mongolia has also endeavoured to contribute where it could to the joint efforts of the international community. My delegation is pleased to recall that, at the initiative of Mongolia, the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Peoples to Peace, the principles and guidelines for international negotiations, resolutions on the annual observance of Disarmament Week, the United Nations Literacy Decade and resolutions relating to cooperatives, rural women and landlocked developing countries. Mongolian troops have courageously served in the blue United Nations helmet in many hotspots around the world, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Western Sahara, South Sudan, Eritrea, Georgia, Sierra Leone, Chad and Darfur.

All in all, over the past five decades Mongolia has been faithful to its obligations under the Charter and striven to be an active Member State. We stand strongly committed to further contributing to the multifaceted activities of the United Nations. I am pleased to announce our decision to present our

candidature for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the term 2023-2024 at the elections to be held at the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, and humbly seek members' valuable support.

The contribution and leadership of the United Nations in maintaining international peace, security and promoting sustainable development continue to grow. In this respect, I call on the General Assembly to develop relevant solutions and decisions at this session aimed at supporting the aspirations of countries and peoples to better livelihoods.

The day-to-day activities of the United Nations are of paramount importance to the cause of creating a safe, free and just life for humankind, in which everyone may enjoy integrity and dignity. We are confident that the United Nations will succeed in its continued reform efforts to this end.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Mongolia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Elbegdorj Tsakhia, President of Mongolia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Zuma: On behalf of the Government and the people of South Africa, I wish to extend our sincere congratulations to Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on his election as President of the General Assembly. We wish him a successful tenure in the stewardship of this body and assure him of our delegation's full support. We also congratulate his predecessor, Mr. Joseph Deiss, for the diligent manner

in which he guided the work of the Assembly at its sixty-fifth session.

I would further like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Ban Ki-moon on his re-appointment as Secretary-General.

It is also an honour for South Africa to welcome the Republic of South Sudan to the community of nations as the 193rd State Member of the United Nations.

This month, the United States and the world marked the tenth anniversary of the horrendous terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, which affected the United States and 89 other countries. That horrific incident united the international community and strengthened its resolve to cooperate in the fight against terrorism. We pay our respects to the victims of the tragedy and their families. We reaffirm our commitment to working with other Member States to eradicate terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

The theme of this session — “The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means” — is timely and well chosen. The Charter of the United Nations mandates the Organization to utilize mediation as one of the tools to prevent and resolve conflicts across the globe. The role of mediation as a tool for the settlement of disputes has renewed relevance today, given the number of conflicts in the world. We should defend the independence and impartiality of the United Nations and promote the principles of its Charter during conflicts and crises. The United Nations should never take sides in any conflict but should always maintain its impartiality. The United Nations must not allow itself to be used by any country, regardless of its history or size. All citizens of the world should feel confident and secure in the knowledge that the United Nations is above all partisan interests and serves only those of the citizens of the globe.

We are of the view that regional organizations play a crucial role in the resolution of conflicts and in regional mediation processes. The Charter of the United Nations itself provides for the role of regional organizations in cooperation with the United Nations. This role of the regions must always be enforced and enhanced, and not undermined. In our continent, the African Union (AU) continues to play a significant role in mediation and the resolution of conflicts, trying at

all times to produce African solutions to African problems, of course with the support of the world.

This year, the world witnessed the so-called Arab Spring in North Africa and the Middle East. With regard to the situation in Libya, the AU played a crucial role in seeking a peaceful solution to the crisis, in line with its mandate of working for peace and stability in the continent. However, it is a matter of record now that the AU efforts were never given a chance. Military actions were preferred over peaceful means.

Nonetheless, the AU continues to be seized with the Libyan conflict, as it should be. South Africa, through the AU and the United Nations, will work with the National Transitional Council, the representative of the Libyan people, as it proceeds to form an inclusive transitional Government that will take the Libyan seat in the African Union. During this period of working towards normalcy in Libya, we call for a cessation of hostilities and an end to the NATO aerial bombardment. We also call for the lifting of the no-fly zone, whose imposition was necessary for the protection of civilians.

The proliferation of arms in Libya is a major concern. The transitional Government will need to be supported in addressing this security issue. It may pose a serious challenge affecting the entire subregion if it is not adequately attended to. We also urge the new Libyan authorities to ensure the protection of migrant workers, especially those from sub-Saharan African countries, who number approximately 2.5 million. Immediate measures should be taken to put an end to the killing, arbitrary arrest and detention of migrant workers and black Libyans.

We will fully support the people of Libya as they go through the transition towards a new, united and democratic Libya that protects human rights, human dignity and freedom.

South Africa continues to support international efforts to assist the people of Palestine and Israel to find lasting peace. The decades-old struggle of the Palestinian people for a sovereign State of their own has now reached a turning point. The Palestinian Authority, backed by the League of Arab States, has stated its intention to seek United Nations membership for the State of Palestine. South Africa fully supports this position. It is a decisive step towards achieving lasting peace, economic cooperation and prosperity for

the millions of people in the Middle East, and we urge that it be viewed favourably.

We also support the ongoing struggle for self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. We urge the international community to support their quest for freedom, human rights and dignity.

We reiterate our call for the lifting of the economic and financial embargo against the people of Cuba in order to help them gain their economic freedom.

All Member States have a duty to safeguard the future and relevance of the United Nations. Recent international developments have made more urgent our efforts to intensify the reform agenda of the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, as well as the Bretton Woods institutions. No reform can be complete without the substantive reform of the Security Council, whose membership must be consistent with the principle of equitable geographical representation. In this regard, we reiterate our call for Africa to be represented in the category of permanent membership of the Security Council.

South Africa is preparing to welcome the international community and all stakeholders to the seventeenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and to the seventh Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, in November and December this year. The success of the Conference is highly dependent on the willingness of all parties to reach an agreement. It does not depend on South Africa alone. As leaders, we are accountable to the global citizenry, the ordinary people that suffer daily from the impacts of climate change. They hold high expectations of their leaders to be responsible and to find effective solutions to the threat that climate change poses to their livelihood, quality of life, dignity and, in many cases, their very survival. We dare not fail them.

We are witnessing the catastrophic effects of famine in Somalia and neighbouring countries. Our response should not be left to the United Nations alone; it requires united action from all of us. South Africa has been humbled to contribute in a small way to the alleviation of human suffering. The people of Somalia still need more support, and we urge the world to focus its attention more sharply on Somalia and its neighbours in the Horn of Africa.

It is commendable that the Millennium Development Goals and their realization by 2015 continue to feature on the agenda of the General Assembly. We now have four years to go before we reach the target date. It is clear that many of the Goals will not be attained on time, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. We call on the international community and the United Nations to redouble efforts to assist countries that are lagging.

At this session, we will be commemorating the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action — the outcome document of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which was held in Durban in 2001. Racism and racial discrimination continue to pose a challenge to humankind and to negate the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We should continue to work together to eradicate the scourge of racism.

On 8 January 2012, the African National Congress (ANC), the oldest liberation movement in Africa, will mark 100 years of existence since its establishment in 1912. The ANC spearheaded the struggle against racial oppression, colonialism and apartheid in South Africa. It inspired many in the African continent to fight for their freedom and independence from colonialism.

The United Nations declared apartheid a crime against humanity and in that way endorsed the struggle against racial oppression in our country. The centenary of the ANC recognizes the immense contribution of the United Nations and the international community in working to eradicate racism and racial discrimination in the world. We will, tomorrow, host a symposium on South Africa's contribution to the fight against racism and racial discrimination.

Working together, let us remain committed to multilateralism and cooperation in this session of the General Assembly and beyond, and promote the realization of a more equitable and just world.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of South Africa for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Andris Bērziņš, President of the Republic of Latvia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Latvia.

Mr. Andris Bērziņš, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Andris Bērziņš, President of the Republic of Latvia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bērziņš: At the outset, I wish to congratulate Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on his assumption of the post of President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. I assure him of the fullest cooperation of the Latvian delegation. I also congratulate the Secretary-General on his re-appointment to his honourable post for a second term. I wish him the greatest success and strength in guiding the Organization and the Secretariat in all their complex tasks.

I warmly welcome the State of South Sudan as the 193rd Member of the United Nations.

Latvia has always supported strengthening the United Nations as the only truly universal international organization. However, the United Nations must change and adapt to the new realities in order to deliver the best results and sustain its influence. The revitalization of the General Assembly and the reform of other principal organs are essential so that the United Nations can keep pace with the modern realities in the world and to make the whole of its work more effective. That will allow consistent adherence to the principles of sound budgetary discipline and a fair distribution of expenses among the Member States.

In the context of the global economic slowdown, we welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General to cut the United Nations budget for 2012-2013 by 3 per cent, and we look forward to a constructive discussion on that matter.

The reform of the Security Council is long overdue. We call on all partners to work sincerely on this important issue. Latvia is ready to assume greater international responsibility and is planning to engage

more actively in the Council's work by putting forward its candidature for a non-permanent seat.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of Latvia's joining the United Nations, after regaining independence. In those 20 years we have undergone a complete transformation. From a Soviet-occupied European country with no trace on the political map, Latvia has re-emerged as a country with stable democratic institutions and membership in the United Nations, the European Union and NATO. From a closed, regulated system we have developed an open, liberal market economy. From a totalitarian regime we have grown into a democratic society where the rule of law and human rights are respected. Now we are able to share our transformation experience by helping other countries in their own development.

Important changes, often called the Arab Spring, have started in North Africa and the Middle East. People have gone to the streets demanding democratic reforms and influence on the future development of their countries. The international community has to support those aspirations and assist in building stable and trusted democratic institutions and establishing the rule of law.

We welcome the timely reaction of the United Nations to the events in Libya, such as the Security Council's decision to provide humanitarian and security assistance and to refer the case to the International Criminal Court. Latvia has recognized the National Transitional Council of Libya and supported the General Assembly decision to allow the Council to represent Libya at this session. Joint action is crucial, and we hope that the United Nations, in collaboration with relevant regional actors, will continue to play a leading role in Libya.

We support the Security Council presidential statement regarding the events in Syria (S/PRST/2011/16) and the Human Rights Council decision to urgently dispatch a special mission to Syria (A/HRC/RES/S-16/1). The message is clear: violations of human rights and the use of force against civilians are totally unacceptable and strongly condemned by the international community. We look forward to an appropriate follow-up on this issue in the Security Council.

Today the international community has a historic responsibility to make the Middle East a safer, more prosperous and more democratic place to live. We must

support the Middle East peace process with the goal of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Latvia strongly encourages both sides to resume dialogue without delay. Sustainable peace is possible only if the Israelis and the Palestinians reach an agreement that takes into account the legitimate interests of both sides. The international community — the United Nations, the Quartet, the Arab League and others — should act together to help both sides to return to the negotiation table.

Turning to sustainable development, I would like to stress that we have a responsibility to future generations for the preservation of the natural environment in the world. That responsibility includes an obligation to ensure that the resources available to us now are used in the most appropriate ways.

In order to address the challenges posed by climate change, joint global action is needed with regard to emissions reduction and global warming. Later this year, the next United Nations Climate Change Conference, in Durban, will take important decisions. Any proposed agreement on climate change action should be a reasonable compromise that is acceptable for the majority of participating Parties and does not exclude any of the major economies.

In order to achieve sustainable development, protecting the environment and preserving a healthy society are most important. However, in the twenty-first century we face a new challenge: non-communicable diseases. We commend the High-level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases and the adoption of the Political Declaration (resolution 66/2, annex). We hope that we will have an effective follow-up process.

The economic crisis has reminded us that we live in an interdependent world. We are deeply worried by the level of uncertainty and volatility in international trade and financial markets. The primary responsibility for prudent governance is at a national level. However, in the current situation the international community must once again act together and find sustainable stabilization measures in order to prevent another downturn in the global economy.

My country, Latvia, was one of those hit first and hard by the crisis but now is among the countries that are steadily recovering. Our gross domestic product is growing again and unemployment is falling. The recovery of the Latvian economy can teach us several

simple lessons. First is the importance of acting quickly and decisively in adopting austerity measures. Secondly, in order to carry out structural reforms, there is a strong need to communicate and to engage with society. The third and final lesson, of course, is the value of international solidarity.

We face a large number of transnational threats, including terrorism. This year, we commemorate the tenth anniversary of the tragic terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. We express our solidarity and sympathy with the victims of 9/11 and others who have been affected by terrorism all over the world.

As we combat terrorism, we must also analyse its root causes. Our aim in Afghanistan is to help to stabilize the security situation and to build local democratic institutions. That will empower the Afghan Government to take over responsibility for security throughout the country by 2014. A sustainable solution in Afghanistan can be found only if regional actors, including the Central Asian countries, are part of the process. Joint action is needed to unlock economic opportunities, to strengthen regional security cooperation and to develop infrastructure and transport corridors in order to connect Afghanistan with the region and the rest of the world.

In addition to the role of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security, the importance of regional organizations is increasing. In that context, we draw attention to the protracted conflicts in Europe in Transdniestria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Regional organizations — in this case, the EU and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe — must continue working to seek peaceful solutions. Good cooperation with the United Nations is crucial.

In that regard, let me emphasize the principled and consistent position of Latvia and the EU in supporting the peaceful settlement of conflicts and values such as democracy, the rule of law and the protection of human rights. Those lie at the core of the EU foreign policy strategy.

This year, we carried out the review process of the functioning of the main United Nations human rights body — the Human Rights Council. Latvia saw that review process as a unique opportunity to improve the performance and credibility of that important body. We took note of the outcome of the review process (resolution 65/281, annex). However, we believe that much more could have been done to enable the Council to live up to the expectations of countries and people.

Latvia believes that members of the Human Rights Council must lead by example through full commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights. Latvia attaches the greatest importance to that commitment by putting forward its candidacy for the Human Rights Council elections in the year 2014.

Challenges to global security, development and human rights can be overcome only by our joint efforts. Latvia looks forward to a fruitful sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Latvia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Andris Bērziņš, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.