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Official Records

President: Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar)

In the absence of the President, Ms. Kamara (Liberia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 114 (continued)

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

(c) Election of twenty-nine members of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme

The Acting President: Members will recall that, at its 59th plenary meeting on 17 November 2011, the Assembly elected 27 States as members of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme. There remained two vacancies from among the Asia-Pacific States to be filled.

Pursuant to resolution 2997 (XXVII), of 15 December 1972, and decision 43/406 of 24 October 1988, the Assembly will proceed to fill the remaining vacancies on the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme to replace those members whose term of office expires on 31 December 2011.

In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, all elections shall be held by secret ballot and there shall be no nominations. However, I should like to recall paragraph 16 of decision 34/401, whereby the practice of dispensing with the secret ballot for elections to

subsidiary organs when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled should become standard, unless a delegation specifically requests a vote on a given election.

In the absence of such a request, may I take it that the Assembly decides to proceed to the election on that basis?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Regarding candidatures, I have been informed by the Chair of the Group of Asia-Pacific States that for the two remaining seats, the Group has endorsed Fiji. Since the number of candidates endorsed by the regional group is equal to or less than the number of seats to be filled in that region, may I take it that the General Assembly decides to elect Fiji as a member of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme for a four-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2012?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I congratulate Fiji on its election as a member of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme.

The Assembly will hold elections for the remaining vacancy from among the Asia-Pacific States upon notification by interested members of that region.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (c) of agenda item 114.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.



(d) Election of two members of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission

The Acting President: Members will recall that, in accordance with paragraphs 4 (a) to (e) of resolution 60/180 of 20 December 2005, the Organizational Committee shall comprise seven members of the Security Council, including five permanent members; seven members of the Economic and Social Council, elected from regional groups; five top providers of assessed contributions to United Nations budgets and of voluntary contributions to United Nations funds, programmes and agencies, including a standing peacebuilding fund; five top providers of military personnel and civilian police to United Nations missions; and seven additional members elected by the General Assembly, giving due consideration to representation from all regional groups in the overall composition of the Committee.

Members will recall that at its 72nd plenary meeting of the sixty-fifth session, on 22 December 2010, the General Assembly elected Benin, Brazil, Indonesia, Tunisia and Uruguay as members of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission for a two-year term of office, beginning on 1 January 2011.

Members will further recall that at its 67th plenary meeting of the sixty-fourth session, on 22 December 2009, the General Assembly elected the Czech Republic and Peru as members of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission for a two-year term beginning on 1 January 2010.

The General Assembly will now proceed to the election of two members of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission. By resolution 60/261, the Assembly decided that members of the Organizational Committee will serve renewable terms of two years, as applicable. Accordingly, the Czech Republic and Peru are eligible for immediate re-election.

Regarding candidatures for the two seats, I should like to inform members that for the Eastern European States, the Group has endorsed Croatia; for the Latin American and Caribbean States, the Group has endorsed El Salvador.

Members will recall that in resolution 60/261, the General Assembly decided that the rules of procedure

and established practice of the Assembly for the election of members of its subsidiary bodies shall apply to its election of members of the Committee. For this election, rules 92 and 94 shall be applicable. Accordingly, the election will be held by secret ballot and there will be no nominations.

However, I should like to recall paragraph 16 of General Assembly decision 34/401, whereby the practice of dispensing with the secret ballot for elections to subsidiary organs when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled should become standard, unless a delegation specifically requests a vote on a given election. In the absence of such a request, may I take it that the Assembly decides to proceed to the election on that basis?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Since the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled, may I take it the General Assembly decides to elect Croatia and El Salvador as members of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission for a two-year term of office, beginning on 1 January 2012?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I congratulate Croatia and El Salvador on their election as members of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (d) of agenda item 114?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 115 (continued)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(f) Appointment of members of the Committee on Conferences

Note by the Secretary-General (A/66/107/Rev.1)

The Acting President: Members will recall that, at its 63rd plenary meeting on 22 October 2011, the General Assembly took note of the President's appointment of the Congo, France, Namibia and the Russian Federation as members of the Committee on

Conferences for a period of three years beginning on 1 January 2012. Members will also recall that there remain two seats to be filled from among the Asia-Pacific States and one seat from among the Latin American and Caribbean States. On the recommendation of the Chair of the Asia-Pacific States, the President has appointed the Philippines as a member of the Committee on Conferences for a period of three years beginning on 1 January 2012. May I take it that the Assembly takes note of that appointment?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Regarding the remaining vacant seats from among the Asia-Pacific and the Latin American and Caribbean States, I urge those regional groups to submit their candidatures as soon as possible.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (f) of agenda item 115.

Agenda item 119

Follow-up to the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/66/162 and A/66/382)

Draft resolution (A/66/L.25)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Guyana to introduce draft resolution A/66/L.25.

Mr. Talbot (Guyana): I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and to introduce draft resolution A/66/L.25, entitled “Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade”, on behalf of CARICOM, the 54 members of the African Group, as well as other States Members of the United Nations that are sponsors of the text.

The initiative of States members of CARICOM and the African Group to erect a permanent memorial to the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade responds to a crying need at the global level to honour the victims of that most tragic chapter in human history, in keeping with paragraph 101 of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

We thank the Secretary-General for the reports contained in document A/66/162 and A/66/382 regarding the status of the United Nations Trust Fund for Partnerships with regard to the permanent memorial and on activities undertaken earlier this year in commemoration of the anniversary of the abolition of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, respectively. We also express our appreciation for the efforts that the Secretary-General and the Organization as a whole have been making in support of that project.

Once completed, the permanent memorial will offer current and future generations the opportunity to contemplate and reflect on the horrors and indignity of the ignoble system of slavery and the untold human suffering that it engendered. It will also serve as a source of inspiration, a symbol of the indomitable spirit of human beings and their capacity to triumph over the worst forms of oppression and bigotry. With that in mind, CARICOM States reaffirm our commitment to the erection of the permanent memorial in a place of prominence at United Nations Headquarters that is easily accessible to representatives, United Nations staff, visitors and the wider public.

It is well established that that inhuman system, which led to the forced removal of millions of people over centuries from Africa to the Caribbean and the Americas, as well as to Europe — indeed, the largest forced displacement of human beings in history — has contributed today to continued economic underdevelopment, social inequalities, racial discrimination and prejudice. Mindful of the historical wrongs done to our peoples, our member States are guided by the imperative to create just societies based on a people-centred approach to development and the rule of law. We stress the continuing need for programmes at all levels aimed at inculcating in future generations an understanding of the history of slavery, its consequences and the lessons to be drawn, lest we forget.

CARICOM commends the permanent memorial committee, under its Chair, Ambassador Raymond Wolfe of Jamaica, for the work done so far in implementation of the decision to erect the permanent memorial. We have noted, for instance, the conclusion of the tripartite memorandum and the launch of the international design competition, on 30 September 2011, as tangible achievements towards the realization of this important project.

The work of UNESCO to address the legacy of slavery while contributing to the restoration of the dignity of the victims of slavery and the slave trade is clearly manifested in the Slave Route Project. We are also equally appreciative of UNESCO's partnership with the permanent memorial committee as it pertains to the international search for a design for the memorial. We have every confidence in UNESCO's ability to successfully undertake this task.

The draft resolution before us today has maintained a very focused approach and contains mainly technical updates reflecting the developments that have taken place over the course of the year. In paragraph 1, having welcomed the initiative for five consecutive years, the Assembly now endorses the initiative to erect a permanent memorial, while paragraphs 9 and 10 take account of new developments, including the conclusion of the tripartite memorandum of understanding, and welcomes the recent launch of the international design competition.

On behalf of the CARICOM group of States, I wish to acknowledge with appreciation the contributions and pledges already received towards the Trust Fund from Member States, while also encouraging other Member States and interested parties to join in this important effort. It is for this reason that paragraph 5 has been retained in its existing formulation.

Following the success of the fourth annual commemorative event held last March under the theme "The living legacy of 30 million untold stories", we also look forward to deepening our collaboration with President Al-Nasser, the Secretary-General and the Secretariat, in particular the Department of Public Information, in the planning and execution of similar commemorative activities during March 2012.

By its adoption of this important draft resolution by consensus, the General Assembly will acknowledge the continuing impact of slavery and the horrific transatlantic slave trade on the African diaspora and the descendants of slaves. In closing, CARICOM thanks the many sponsors of the draft for their support. It is now my honour to invite the General Assembly to adopt this draft resolution by consensus.

Mr. Sefue (United Republic of Tanzania): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group on this important debate on agenda item 119, entitled "Follow-up to the commemoration of the two-

hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade". We thank the Secretary-General for his reports provided under this item.

We convey our appreciation to and commend the States members of the Caribbean Community for their enduring commitment and noble efforts in ensuring that we continue to reflect on and examine the past injustices that have had an adverse impact on our history. But, more importantly, we want to remember the efforts deployed to bring this unfortunate period of history to an end. We should, moreover, celebrate the outstanding physical and spiritual resilience of people of African descent, who for centuries have endured and survived all manner of adversity, injustice, oppression, exploitation, discrimination and suffering. We are magnanimous enough to forgive, but human enough not to forget.

On 28 November 2006, the General Assembly designated 25 March as the International Day for the Commemoration of the Two-hundredth Anniversary of the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Recognizing the long-lasting legacy and enduring effects of slavery in the modern world, Member States acknowledged that slavery was at the heart of profound social and economic inequality, hatred, bigotry, racism and prejudice, which continue to affect people of African descent today. As the largest forced displacement in history, the transatlantic slave trade tore millions of Africans from their homes, dragged them in chains to the Americas and sold them as slaves. Its most salient outcome was the dehumanization of people of African descent, which led to a disturbing legacy of racism and racial discrimination in many countries.

This year the United Nations observed the Fifth International Day to commemorate the victims of the slave trade, which was celebrated under the theme "The living legacy of 30 million untold stories". On that occasion, we recognized the dearth of inquiry into the experiences of enslaved Africans. We recognized a continuing gap in the literature regarding their individual and collective perspectives.

While scholarly literature on the slave trade and slavery has provided deep insights into the magnitude of the brutal treatment and condition of slaves, only a limited number of narratives have addressed their identities, their beliefs, their value systems and their knowledge.

As such, the diversity of skills and technological know-how which they brought with them to the Americas, and their invaluable contribution to nation-building there, have not been sufficiently documented and acknowledged. We know for a fact that they brought with them a lot more than their muscles and their endurance. It is bad enough that they were enslaved; it is unacceptable to sweep their identities, contribution and value addition under the carpet.

In this regard, the African Group feels that more efforts are needed to promote research, education and outreach programmes with a view to filling that gap. That is why we appreciate the work of UNESCO, the Permanent Representatives Committee and the Department of Public Information. We believe that their outreach work, including the establishment of new and continuing scholarships in this field, will make an important contribution to providing a more insightful understanding and evaluation of the history of enslavement and its legacy from the perspective of the victims themselves.

I wish to reiterate the African Group's position in support of the efforts by the United Nations and its Member States in creating awareness on issues relating to slavery and the transatlantic slave trade over the past year.

The erection of a permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the slave trade is an important component of that effort. We welcome with appreciation the initiative taken and the efforts made so far by the States members of the Caribbean Community in this regard. We further recognize the importance and necessity of sustained voluntary contributions in order to achieve, in a timely manner, the goal of erecting the permanent memorial.

The memorial will serve to remind the world, now and forever, that never again shall one people subject another people to such inhumane treatment. It will be a permanent memorial to the heroic actions of the slaves and the abolitionists who, in the face of grave danger and adversity, stood up for what is right and just. It will also serve as an education resource and a statue of lifelong learning, a reconstruction of the past, a moulding of the future and a constant inspiration to justice. Several countries, including some in Africa, have contributed to the Trust Fund for the permanent memorial. The African Group remains firmly committed to this project. We would like to

congratulate all those that have contributed, and we urge other countries to do likewise.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the African Group firmly supports the adoption of draft resolution A/66/L.25 by consensus. We believe that the erection of a permanent memorial will give new meaning to the words of our very distinguished sister, Maya Angelou:

“Out of the huts of history’s shame
 “I rise
 “Up from a past that’s rooted in pain
 “I rise
 “I’m a black ocean, leaping and wide,
 “Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
 “Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
 “I rise
 “Into a daybreak that’s wondrously clear
 “I rise
 “Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
 “I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
 “I rise
 “I rise
 “I rise.”

Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica): My delegation wishes to be associated with the statements made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the 14 members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and just now by the Ambassador of Tanzania on behalf of the States members of the African Group of countries.

In addition to what has been said by previous speakers, I wish to make a few remarks in my national capacity, as well as to share a brief update on the work of the permanent memorial committee during 2011, as we work towards implementing the mandate defined in successive General Assembly resolutions on the permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

Five years ago, the States members of CARICOM embarked on a journey that has brought us to where we are today. That is, following the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of slavery in 2007, we have worked to ensure the establishment of an appropriate annual United Nations international day of remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, in tandem with an initiative to erect, in their honour, a memorial here at the United Nations as a permanent and lasting tribute to their memory. We continue to be appreciative of the strong

solidarity and support of the States members of the African Group in this endeavour.

It is interesting that the question continues to be asked as to why we remind the world about this tragic past when there is a need to look to the future and to address contemporary forms of slavery. However, as the noted, world-renowned Jamaican reggae singer Bob Marley said, "In this great future, we cannot forget the past". We cannot forget the ills of the past because they shape our current realities and will have an impact on our future. We cannot forget the legacies of racism, racial discrimination, bigotry and hatred that continue to manifest themselves in many parts of the world today as a direct result of the lot of our ancestors, who were forced to live, suffer and die under the system of slavery, which, let us remind ourselves, lasted for more than 400 years.

Equally, we cannot forget the horrors of the pernicious system that resulted in the forceful removal and widespread exportation and dispersion of our people, now fragmented across what we call the diaspora. We cannot forget the ruthless system of trafficking in human beings that moulded and shaped the resilience of our forefathers and of successive generations today against abuse, rejection and discrimination on the basis of the colour of their skin.

Some of the gravest historical wrongs against human kind have been addressed but, frankly speaking, others have not. We submit that slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, one of the greatest crimes against humanity, have not yet crossed the threshold of acknowledgement or redemption. While we recognize that other great tragedies of history have been equally horrendous, we make a special case for slavery. Others were not brought here in chains; their children were never sold; their women were never bred like cattle for commercial purposes; their men were never broken by such levels of dehumanization; their families were never torn; the history, traditions and culture of their race were never collectively jaundiced, as was done under slavery.

The life of the black man, and by extension of people of African descent, represents the quintessential case in point, and this is our rationale for continued action at the United Nations and for our efforts to ensure that a lasting symbol in tribute to our forefathers be erected on the grounds of the United Nations. As stated in the theme for the permanent

memorial initiative, we are "acknowledging the tragedy, considering the legacy, lest we forget".

At this point, let me express our appreciation for the reports of the Secretary-General under consideration at this meeting (A/66/162 and A/66/382). I refer in particular to document A/66/382, which contains a comprehensive report on the programme of educational outreach on the transatlantic slave trade and slavery for 2011, organized by the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI). We note that a number of countries, including Jamaica, have taken steps to implement the annual resolutions on slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. In the case of Jamaica, this relates both to the inclusion of the history and lessons learned about the system of slavery in school curricula, as well as remembrance activities. We sincerely hope that the activities undertaken by Member States will be featured in future reports.

With regard to the commemorative activities, we encourage the DPI to ensure that the annual commemorative activities are a fitting and solemn tribute to the victims of slavery, in recognition of the objectives of the remembrance. Through DPI expertise, we hope, inter alia, to continue generating international awareness through media campaigns and the use of other information dissemination mechanisms.

I am delighted to report that during the course of this year, the following countries made contributions to the Trust Fund, and I hope I have included them all: Azerbaijan, Belgium, Costa Rica, Finland, Guyana, Oman, Pakistan, Slovenia and the United Arab Emirates. Additionally, since the publication of document A/66/162, the Governments of Israel and Trinidad and Tobago have also made contributions. Collectively, \$143,063.10 were contributed in 2011, bringing the total amount contributed to \$1,024,325.40. In that connection, I thank the United Nations Office for Partnerships for the report on the status of voluntary contributions provided in document A/66/162 and for its continued strategic guidance and support of the permanent memorial committee.

I also wish to express profound appreciation for the kind generosity of all the Governments of those countries that have already made donations to the permanent memorial Trust Fund. We are thankful for the show of solidarity in acknowledging the legacy of that dark period of history. We envisage that other countries will follow in their footsteps by making

contributions to the permanent memorial Trust Fund to enable us to reach our target of \$4.5 million for implementation.

I would add that, just this morning, when I still felt apprehensive about the level of contributions to the Fund, one of my dear ambassador colleagues, whom I will not name here, came to assure me that, on top of what his country had already contributed, it would be making a further contribution. That is a noble example, and I thank that delegation very much.

I now take the opportunity, as Chair of the permanent memorial committee, to provide a brief update on the activities of the committee in 2011. We started the year by launching a dedicated website for the permanent memorial initiative, which is located at www.unslaverymemorial.org. We subsequently established a presence on Facebook under the name UN Slavery Memorial, in keeping with the growing popularity of social media.

Following the departure of Mr. Russell Simmons, we appointed a new Goodwill Ambassador in the person of rhythm and blues singer Miss Melba Moore, whose function will be to help raise international awareness and assist with media outreach and resource mobilization. The committee also concluded consultations leading to the signing of a tripartite memorandum of understanding which allowed UNESCO to undertake the first phase of the international design competition that was launched on 30 September.

Now that a global search is on for an appropriate design for the memorial, we anticipate the broad participation of artists, sculptors, architects, graphic designers and other visual media experts from all over the world. We are encouraged by the number of enquiries that have been received to date and will no doubt report on the outcome of the competition in due course.

Throughout the year, the committee focused, among other things, on its fundraising drive. Against that background, and with the consent of the donors to the Trust Fund, the committee approved the appointment of a professional fundraiser to secure donations from philanthropists and corporate entities. We have received some encouraging feedback from him on the capital campaign and will seek to redouble efforts to gain traction with private donations, particularly during 2012.

It may be recalled that in paragraph 1 of the draft resolution to be adopted today (A/66/L.25) the General Assembly agreed

“to erect, at a place of prominence at United Nations Headquarters that is easily accessible to delegates, United Nations staff and visitors, a permanent memorial in acknowledgement of the tragedy and in consideration of the legacy of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade”.

In accordance with that mandate from the General Assembly, we must ensure that the permanent memorial is installed in a place of prominence, which, in our view, should be on the visitors' plaza, which is the most ideal location for satisfying the stated criteria and the mandate that was given to us by the General Assembly.

Before closing, I would like to thank the members of the committee — Brazil, Ghana, the Netherlands, Portugal, Qatar, Senegal, Suriname, the United Kingdom and the African Union — and in particular the United Nations Office for Partnerships for their invaluable support, technical advice and assistance towards the implementation of the permanent memorial initiative. The committee also continues to welcome the inputs of the respective Chairs of CARICOM and the ambassadors of the African Group.

In conclusion, Jamaica remains committed to collaborating with DPI, our partners from Africa, the Caribbean Community and other relevant stakeholders to make the permanent memorial a reality. Jamaica is naturally pleased to continue promoting that worthy project with the full endorsement of CARICOM and, indeed, all Member States.

Mr. León González (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We Cubans are proud of our African roots. The identity of the Cuban nation is the result of the process of transculturation produced by the arrival of many ethnic groups to the colonial society of the time, making us a mixture of the Spanish and the African. In Cuba, as in practically all of Latin America and the Antilles, the scars left by the slave trade are very clear. Around 1,300,000 Africans were brought to our island as part of that cruel trade, most of them originating from sub-Saharan Africa.

Our cultural wealth and singularity are also the expression of the cultural heritage of the African

peoples who enriched us with their wisdom, traditions, languages, religious beliefs, music, temperament and rebel spirit. The courage and valour of the slaves who rebelled against exploitation fed the libertarian spirit and the feelings of independence of the Cuban people.

As long as the current unjust and unsustainable political and economic order — in which the few consume almost everything — continues to exist and the majority of the population of the planet is excluded from the so-called benefits of neoliberal globalization, Africa will continue to be marginalized and its colonial inheritance will not come to an end. The former colonial metropolises must honour their historical debt towards those who suffered for centuries under slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. They cannot wash their hands of their past and their responsibilities.

Africa today is forced to spend far more to service its debt than on education and health together. If we pursue our current course, Africa will continue financing the extravagance of wealthy countries, which will make promises of new official development assistance, fail to fulfil most of them and continue charging as debt service hundreds of times more than the amounts of assistance promised.

Cuba supports and co-sponsors the draft resolution that is presented every year under agenda item 119 by the member countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and African countries to the Assembly. In 2009, the first museum of the slave route in the Americas was established in Cuba. It was created to be a living educational instrument at the service of the entire community. The museum has hosted several artistic exhibitions on the theme of the transatlantic slave trade, thereby participating in the educational outreach programme on the subject.

Cuba recognizes the importance of the organization of annual activities in the framework of the United Nations and eagerly awaits the results of the international design competition for the construction of a permanent memorial at Headquarters dedicated to the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. That is the very least that the United Nations can do to commemorate the slave route.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): It is a particular honour to speak today following the introduction of the draft resolution on the permanent memorial in acknowledgement of the transatlantic slave trade

(A/66/L.25). Australia is very honoured again to co-sponsor the draft resolution.

The transatlantic slave trade was, as we know, the largest forced removal of people in history. Tens of millions of Africans were enslaved and removed from their families and their communities. Millions died while being transported, as did uncounted others while resisting the slavers. That was the institutionalized face, lasting over four centuries, of the very worst kind of racism and an almost unimaginable contempt for human life.

We need to recognize the dark side of our own history and bring it into the light. The permanent memorial will be a lasting tribute to all those who died and suffered through the slave trade. It will also be a physical symbol of our common obligation to remember that dark part of our history and to acknowledge that the fight against such savagery is never really won. Racism always threatens and human trafficking exists today — maybe 26 million people or more are enslaved. And it can affect all of our societies.

Educating current and future generations about the transatlantic slave trade and its lasting consequences is essential. The draft resolution stresses this need, and we commend those countries that have taken the initiative to do so. My own country tries to place an emphasis on the consequences of racism and prejudice in our own school curriculums. That will be an increasingly important part of Australia's new national anti-racism strategy, which is currently being developed.

I would like to applaud the efforts of the Caribbean Community and the African Group — championed by the permanent memorial committee under the leadership of Jamaica's Permanent Representative, Ambassador Wolfe — to keep pushing forward the initiative for the permanent memorial. The launch of the design competition adds real momentum to the project, and we welcome UNESCO's involvement in it.

The imperatives of memory and the public acknowledgement of past wrongs are intrinsic and essential to human progress. Every society is affected by this need and must meet it. My own country's history saw the mistreatment of the first, indigenous Australians for far too long. The historic national apology to Australia's indigenous peoples — delivered

by our Prime Minister and endorsed by our Parliament in early 2008 — was a dramatic, deliberate acknowledgement of the many wrongs our own community had suffered.

I have said here before that that was not only a symbolic act for the nation but also deeply personal for indigenous Australians themselves, of course, as well as for other, non-indigenous Australians, many of whom felt a deep emotional release through the public acknowledgement for the first time that our own history had caused such wrongs.

Reflecting our support for the permanent memorial, I am pleased to announce today a further financial contribution of \$50,000, bringing Australia's contribution to date to \$150,000.

We look forward to the adoption of the draft resolution by consensus by the General Assembly.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): Brazil was an early supporter of the initiative to erect, at a place of prominence at United Nations Headquarters, a permanent memorial to remember the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. In this regard, we reiterate our appreciation of the leading role that the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the African Group play in advancing this important project. We very much appreciate in particular the outstanding efforts of Ambassador Raymond Wolfe, Permanent Representative of Jamaica, who has worked tirelessly to bring this project to life.

We are pleased to again co-sponsor the draft resolution entitled "Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade". We hope that by adopting today's draft resolution (A/66/L.25) by consensus, the General Assembly will demonstrate its commitment to honouring in an adequate manner the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade and to call attention to the dangers posed by all forms of racism and racial discrimination.

Brazil also welcomes the conclusion of the memorandum of understanding among UNESCO, the United Nations Office for Partnerships and the permanent memorial committee, as well as the recent launch of the international competition regarding the future selection of the permanent memorial design.

In her first visit to the African continent two months ago, President Dilma Rousseff noted the

profound ties that have united both sides of the Atlantic Ocean over the past centuries. Like her predecessor, President Rousseff also paid tribute to the invaluable historic and present contributions made by African descendants to the economic, social, political and cultural development of Brazilian society. As the national demographic census conducted last year indicated, more than half of all Brazilians identify themselves as African descendants.

Brazil takes great pride in that legacy, which has marked our society and our culture in many different ways, from economy to religion, from language to cuisine. It is an essential part of our historic formation and of our national identity. The recognition of the importance of the African heritage in our very existence as a country has translated into a number of concrete diplomatic initiatives. Since 2003, for instance, the Government of Brazil has opened 19 new embassies in Africa, while 17 African countries have established new diplomatic missions in Brasilia. Commercial activity has also quadrupled, making Africa today our fourth-largest trade partner.

Our shared African legacy has also contributed to strengthening our long-standing ties to our brothers and sisters in the Caribbean. In 2010, a Brazil-CARICOM summit took place for the first time. On that momentous occasion, high-level representatives decided, among other things, to encourage studies on slavery and its impact on the formation of our cultures, so as to assign the proper value to the participation of people of African descent in our common history.

The result was a publication entitled *The African Heritage in Brazil and the Caribbean*. The book features articles written by scholars from Brazil and from each member of CARICOM. Its aim is to analyse the common traits in Brazilian and Caribbean societies, as well as to deepen the understanding and the ties among our countries.

Another clear signal of the importance Brazil attaches to the Caribbean region is the opening of new permanent diplomatic missions in all CARICOM member countries. As with Africa, commercial relations have also significantly intensified, with a tenfold increase since 2005. Together with other important partners from inside and outside the region, Brazil has been deeply engaged in the stabilization and development of Haiti, where we have led the military

component of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti since 2004.

As President Rousseff recently noted, although Brazil formally abolished slavery 123 years ago, its enduring impacts can still be felt in many aspects of our social life. People of African descent continue to disproportionately face challenges related to extreme poverty, unemployment, violence and access to quality education and health care. In the context of initiatives to correct that situation, Brazil decided to convene, in cooperation with the Ibero-American General Secretariat and the support of the United Nations, a high-level meeting to commemorate the International Year for People of African Descent.

The event took place last month in Salvador, Bahia, a city that is symbolic for its significant African heritage. On that occasion, we were pleased to welcome several high-level Government representatives from both sides of the Atlantic, as well as civil society organizations. One of the main outcomes of the meeting was the adoption of an action-oriented document, the Declaration of Salvador, in which participants committed themselves to a number of initiatives.

The first was to establish a statistical data observatory for people of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean, based on data provided by States themselves, with a view to assisting national efforts for the design and implementation of public policies geared towards the promotion of the rights of people of African descent. States also resolved to create a fund for people of African descent, to be managed by the Ibero-American General Secretariat, based on voluntary contributions, with a view to financing projects for the preservation of African practices, traditions and memory in the diaspora. Last but not least, States agreed to establish a Decade for People of African Descent in Latin American and the Caribbean, in order to encourage South-South and triangular partnerships dedicated to the full inclusion of people of African descent in our societies.

The interest generated by the Salvador meeting attests to the renewed attention given to the African diaspora around the world, as well as to the economic and political renaissance of the African continent, to which Brazil is fully committed, not only in the Organization, but also bilaterally and through interregional forums.

Returning to the project that brings us here today, Brazil fully believes that only by building cultures together and creating a true atmosphere of tolerance and mutual understanding will it be possible for the international community to fight the persistent scourge of racism and racial discrimination. The permanent memorial, once completed and placed in its prominent place by the visitors' entrance at United Nations Headquarters, will serve this goal and will alert future generations about the imperative of preventing such crimes against humanity from ever occurring again.

Mr. Meek (United States of America): The United States has commemorated the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade by paying tribute to the millions who were stripped of their human rights and dignity during their enslavement and their fight for freedom.

Our tribute encompasses a continual effort to chronicle the untold stories of those who suffered and to memorialize those who fought for the abolition of that cruel industry. We also support efforts to end modern forms of slavery. We must never forget the full extent of the human suffering involved in that trade. We must remain vigilant in our efforts to combat any attempt to deprive people of their freedom and human dignity.

The United States remains committed to supporting outreach and educational efforts about the history of the transatlantic slave trade. That shameful trade and the struggles for freedom are part of our hemispheric history. It is our duty to raise awareness of the trade and its consequences as we work to eradicate racism and reduce inequality wherever it occurs. We continue to connect American voices to the global conversation about the transatlantic slave trade and its untold stories.

The United States is supporting UNESCO's transatlantic slave trade education programme, "Breaking the Silence". As part of that effort, we engage Governments and civil society organizations alike in programmes that raise awareness about the history of the slave trade and that also highlight the invaluable contributions made by people of African descent in their fields. We also support the designation by the United Nations and the Organization of American States of 2011 as the International Year for People of African Descent. Secretary Clinton has praised that initiative as an opportunity for people

around the globe to celebrate the diversity of our societies and to honour the contributions that our fellow citizens of African descent make every day to the economic, social and political fabrics of our communities.

The United States celebrates African-American history month every February in recognition of African-American leaders who, in word and deed, have enriched our nation by leading reforms and advocating the founding principles we value so highly: freedom, justice and equality. This year, we have focused our outreach on the stories of brave African Americans who fought for liberty during the Civil War. A more apt theme could not have been chosen for the design competition for the United States permanent memorial in remembrance of the victims of the transatlantic slave trade, under the theme “Acknowledging the tragedy, considering the legacy, lest we forget”.

The permanent memorial will serve as a reminder of the tragedy of the transatlantic slave trade and the need to combat the persistent forms of prejudice and inequality that affect descendants of victims today. The memorial will also pay tribute to the courage and determination of all those who fought for freedom and justice. The selection of United Nations Headquarters as the site of the permanent memorial further symbolizes the principles enshrined in the body of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration that all human beings deserve dignity and the protection of their inalienable human rights.

In that spirit, the United States looks forward to expanding our efforts to deepen the partnerships to commemorate the victims of slavery and to combat the lingering consequences of its modern forms. The United States is honoured to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/66/L.25.

Mr. Waxman (Israel): Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel once wrote: “If anything can, it is memory that will save humanity ... hope without memory is like memory without hope”.

Today, we reaffirm the vital importance of memory. Draft resolution A/66/L.25 commemorates the victims of the transatlantic slave trade. It recalls the legacy of 30 million stories, the vast majority of them untold. Those who were forced into bondage by the transatlantic slave trade suffered the gravest of injustices. Yet, among their stories — among those who suffered unimaginable cruelty and persecution —

we find hope. We find so many who showed the strength of the human spirit even in the darkest of places. The Jewish people know well the joys of freedom and the pain of persecution. As a free people, we built and rebuilt our national homeland in Israel. Today, we strive to advance the principles of freedom, tolerance, and understanding that have sustained the Jewish people for millenniums.

Today we join hands with the nations of the world in laying the foundation for a permanent memorial at the United Nations to honour the victims of the transatlantic slave trade. Israel is proud to have recently contributed \$20,000 to support the construction of the memorial, and to have co-sponsored today’s important draft resolution.

The need for such a memorial is clear. It will complement the work of the existing outreach program of the United Nations. It will provide a permanent reminder to all representatives and visitors at United Nations headquarters of the history and lessons of the transatlantic slave trade. The vital importance of this effort is clear. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Yet as we gather here today, many around the world are not free. Millions are enslaved. Many children are taught to hate. The evils of racism and prejudice continue to cause war and violence.

Only through education, through remembrance and through constant vigilance can we ensure that the tragedies of the past serve as clear lessons for the future. The United Nations has a duty to take up this cause with bold and firm conviction. Israel joins with the international community in advancing this work. Together we must extend a promise to our children that freedom must be universal, that dignity is inherent in every human being and that we can never, ever stand idly by when another is enslaved.

Mr. Maes (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first of all to thank, on behalf of Luxembourg, the delegation of Jamaica for its initiative to place the follow-up to the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade on the agenda of the Assembly, and the delegation of Guyana for the draft resolution it introduced today, for the fifth successive year, on the permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. We pay tribute to all member States of the

Caribbean Community as well as to the member States of the African Group for their key role in the promotion of this initiative.

The transatlantic slave trade is undoubtedly one of the darkest chapters in the history of humankind. Millions of people suffered an unthinkable fate. After having been abducted and sold, they had to cross the ocean under the most abject conditions — a journey many did not survive — only to endure a life marked by hard labour and unspeakable pain, finally dying anonymously, surrounded by indifference. What made life easier for some and was a mainstay of the economy of slave societies denied slaves any shred of human dignity. That dark chapter of our history should not be ignored.

Luxembourg fully subscribes to the idea that, from a political and moral point of view, this several-centuries-long human tragedy must be duly commemorated. It must permeate our collective conscience, and our generation and future generations must draw the right lessons from this tragedy, so that it never happens again.

It is for this reason that Luxembourg decided to co-sponsor draft resolution A/66/L.25. We welcome the consensus this text enjoys. It is also for this reason that Luxembourg has regularly contributed, for several years now, to the Trust Fund to ensure the financing of the permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. It is also for that reason that the authorities of my country have decided to provide additional funding by the end of this year. We encourage all Member States to demonstrate their tangible support for the permanent memorial.

Important decisions have been taken this year with respect to the establishment of the memorial. We welcome the recent launch by UNESCO of the international design competition for the permanent memorial, which will further assist the permanent memorial committee in identifying qualified candidates, in order to select the winning design.

Beyond this monument, which will serve as a constant reminder of the transatlantic slave trade here in New York, it is imperative that that time in our history continue to be studied in depth and that adequate resources be made available to researchers so that they can help us to shed light on, and learn the lessons which need to be drawn from, that period. This

is all the more necessary as trafficking in human beings unfortunately continues to exist in various forms to this day.

Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri (India): I would like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his reports under the agenda item entitled “Follow-up to the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade” (A/66/162 and A/66/382).

The transatlantic slave trade is one of the most abhorrent chapters in the history of humankind. The work of the United Nations can never be complete until we emphatically and without any reservation condemn the transatlantic slave trade. It is also necessary that the international community take upon itself the commitment to never let such crimes ever take place again.

Education has a critical role in creating awareness among present and future generations about the history, causes and impact of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

India has supported the various activities and programmes undertaken by the Department of Public Information to commemorate the International Day of Remembrance every year on March 25. We also support the call for regular and adequate financial allocation to the Department of Public Information in organizing these events in New York as well as in various countries through the network of United Nations information centres.

The construction of a permanent memorial will be a fitting tribute by the United Nations to the millions of victims of the transatlantic slave trade. We must all take initiatives to ensure that future generations do not forget the burden of grief and tragedy borne by the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

India, with a contribution of \$260,000, is proud to be among the lead contributors to the United Nations Trust Fund for Partnerships — Permanent Memorial, which has been set up to receive contributions to erect the permanent memorial.

I was gladdened to hear Ambassador Raymond Wolfe mention that there have been some recent increases in the Fund, but I believe that, with total revenues still only slightly above \$1 million against the anticipated expenditure of \$4.5 million for the

construction of the memorial, we still have a long way to go.

The international community must come forward and contribute; it cannot let the idea of this memorial remain on the drawing board.

We firmly believe that there should be a genuine sense of acceptance that these horrific crimes occurred, along with sincere repentance of the same. We therefore strongly urge all countries, especially those that benefited from the transatlantic slave trade, to come forward and generously contribute to this noble cause.

India has been a co-sponsor of the resolution on the “Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade” since 2007. We are happy to do so once again today.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that it is imperative that the international community pay homage to the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. We have a chance to pay tribute to the victims who suffered this by openheartedly contributing to the Trust Fund, and we must all do so.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now proceed to take a decision on draft resolution A/66/L.25, entitled “Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Zhang Saijin (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/66/L.25, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft: Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Mongolia, Montenegro, Nauru, New Zealand, Panama, Peru, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, the Syrian Arab Republic, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Ukraine, the United Kingdom

of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Uruguay.

The Acting President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/66/L.25?

Draft resolution A/66/L.25 was adopted (resolution 66/114).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 119.

Agenda item 126

Global health and foreign policy

Note by the Secretary-General (A/66/497)

Draft resolution (A/66/L.24)

The Acting President: In connection with agenda item 126, the Assembly has before it a note by the Secretary-General transmitting a report prepared by the World Health Organization, circulated in document A/66/497.

I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil to introduce draft resolution A/66/L.24.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/66/L.24, entitled “Global health and foreign policy”, under agenda item 126.

I wish to thank the Secretary-General for submitting, in collaboration with the Director-General of the World Health Organization, the report contained in document A/66/497, prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 65/95, adopted on 9 December 2010. The report sets out important recommendations on improving the coordination, coherence and effectiveness of governance for global health and on addressing the social determinants of health.

The report concludes that health and foreign policy objectives are fundamentally and inextricably linked, as highlighted in the Oslo Ministerial Declaration of 2007. It also recognizes that the potential synergy of actions to address the world’s greatest problems, including climate change, environmental degradation and communicable and non-communicable diseases, offers major opportunities for health and development that should be at the centre of foreign policy concerns.

Indeed, the General Assembly has confirmed time and again the relevance of health issues in international relations by ensuring that special attention is given to health in a number of commitments, such as the Millennium Development Goals. This year, the importance of health issues in the work of the General Assembly was confirmed by the adoption of two milestone documents, namely, the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS (resolution 65/277) and the first Political Declaration on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (resolution 66/2).

Due to its seriousness, persistence and worldwide impact, the debate on global health issues is also taking place in many other different forums, such as the executive boards of funds and programmes, the Economic and Social Council, the Human Rights Council and the World Trade Organization, which plays a central role.

We welcome the creation of *The Lancet* Commission on Global Governance for Health, established in cooperation with the University of Oslo and the Harvard Global Health Institute. Over the next two years, the Commission aims to develop a set of concrete recommendations on how to improve global governance processes for health.

We hope to bring this discussion to the General Assembly in 2013. The Foreign Policy and Global Health Initiative was created with the commitment to apply a health lens to foreign policy processes and actions and look at new ways in which foreign policy could add value to and support global health outcomes.

Our common vulnerabilities and the recognition of the mutual supportiveness between health issues and traditional foreign policy areas, such as human rights, humanitarian assistance and sustainable development, suggest that there is a need to further explore and understand those interlinkages. The interface between foreign policy and global health should also be reinforced with a view to promoting global health and social and economic development, reducing inequity and making globalization work for all.

As a contribution to the preparatory process of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, this year's draft resolution on global health and foreign policy builds on the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, which underlined the linkage between health and sustainable development by focusing on two main

themes: health and the environment and health and natural disasters (see A/CONF.199/20, annex). The section devoted to health and the environment highlights the direct linkages between health and the environment. It calls for more attention to be devoted to health-related issues in the global environmental agenda and to environmental issues in the health agenda.

Member States are encouraged to promote the integration of health concerns into strategies for poverty eradication and sustainable development and to develop policies to limit not only the detrimental impact of human intervention and environmental degradation, but also the current and projected consequences of climate change on health.

In the second chapter of the draft resolution, the General Assembly underlines the crucial role of health in emergency preparedness and response to natural disasters, as well as the need to fully integrate health in strategies for disaster risk reduction and sustainable recovery. The text encourages Member States to strengthen all-hazards health emergency and disaster risk-management programmes, and urges them to intensify efforts to address the social determinants of vulnerabilities to disasters and their current and projected consequences on health. Finally, it underlines the importance of strengthening the preparedness for emergencies of health systems, including through programmes on safe and prepared hospitals and training for health-care workers, as well as the need to strengthen the involvement of communities in disaster preparedness and response.

This year's draft resolution on global health and foreign policy is the fourth to be considered under this agenda item since 2008. It acknowledges international initiatives that impact on health and consolidates the strong relation between health and foreign policy.

I wish to thank the delegations of Australia, Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Indonesia, Israel, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, Senegal, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, Ukraine and Uruguay, and the many other countries that have joined as sponsors since the draft resolution was submitted.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak today, and thank the Secretary-General for his report. I also wish to thank the

Permanent Representative of Brazil for introducing the draft resolution A/66/L.24 and for her country's leadership in the negotiation.

The year 2011 has been especially important for the United Nations in advancing international health policy and establishing vital goals and targets for the international community — in particular in relation to HIV/AIDS and for non-communicable diseases. This year's draft resolution also puts a very necessary spotlight on the linkages between health and the environment, and health and natural disasters. That is long overdue. We look forward to adoption of the draft resolution by consensus.

I will limit my own brief remarks this morning to HIV/AIDS.

Together with the Permanent Representative of Botswana, Ambassador Charles Ntwaagae, I had the honour to co-chair the negotiations that led to the adoption in June of the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS (resolution 65/277, annex), in which the international community has for the first time set itself ambitious, time-bound prevention and treatment targets. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) judges that the Declaration should represent a milestone in international commitment to eliminating the AIDS epidemic once and for all, but that can be the case only if we, the international community, fund the necessary response.

We must remember the threat we face. An enormous amount has been done to control the worst of the original HIV/AIDS epidemic, but it is nowhere near over. Over 34 million people are infected, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa. There were 2.7 million new infections last year and almost 2 million people died, again most in sub-Saharan Africa. There are 7,400 infections daily — 1,000 of those are in babies. Almost 1,000 people will be infected while we meet here today in the General Assembly. Less than half of those eligible for antiretroviral treatment are receiving it. For every new person on treatment, two more are infected. The disease obviously is not defeated.

In the Political Declaration, we have pledged to reduce by 50 per cent, by 2015, sexual transmission of HIV; to reduce transmission by 50 per cent among people who inject drugs; and to reduce tuberculosis deaths by 50 per cent in people living with HIV. We have pledged to eliminate mother-to-child transmission by 2015 and to more than double antiretroviral

treatment to reach 15 million people by 2015. We have also pledged to close the global AIDS resource gap by 2015 and reach annual global investment of \$22 billion to \$24 billion in low- and middle-income countries.

Those targets may seem remarkable but they are attainable. They are attainable because the science of AIDS prevention has been transformed, because we know so much more about the disease, and because we know so much more about how to deliver the health services needed to provide prevention, treatment, care and support. As others have said elsewhere, it is indisputably within our grasp to produce a new generation free of the risk of HIV/AIDS, but we can not do it without the will and the conscience to do so.

Australia has committed itself to doing its part to help meet the ambitious targets. We will build on the \$1 billion we have invested over the past few years. This year, we will provide another \$152 million, including to our nearest neighbours in Papua New Guinea and Indonesia and to regional programmes across the Pacific. That will be part of an increasing health budget over the next five years in development assistance of around \$4 billion.

Each country and each region, of course, has its own unique context and set of challenges. UNAIDS has mapped out a new framework for AIDS investments, focused on high-impact, high-value strategies designed to reach the targets we set ourselves in this year's Political Declaration. The framework was released on World AIDS Day, 1 December. It calls on countries to invest in six basic HIV programme activities and to deliver them to scale, according to the size of the relevant affected populations. We encourage countries to heed this advice in order to maximize their investments. The aim must be to transform the global response to HIV/AIDS. That is within our reach, and we simply must do it.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon): I have the pleasure and distinct honour to deliver a statement on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group on agenda item 126, "Global health and foreign policy".

At the outset, I would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for transmitting the report of the World Health Organization (A/66/497, annex) under this agenda item. Draft resolution A/66/L.24 on global health and foreign policy is the fourth such text to be considered in the General Assembly, and we are pleased to note that the report

has been able to profit immensely from the increased focus that the General Assembly has given to global health.

The report also manages to capture and reflect in a very thoughtful and thorough manner the increasing coordination, convergence and interdependence of the global health and foreign policy arenas. This is reflected in the actions of Governments and in the numerous initiatives, projects, instruments and platforms created and strengthened by the multilateral system. At the same time, the conclusions contained in the report rightfully acknowledge the continued need for the foreign policy arena to address global health issues, strengthened coherence between health and foreign policies, and ever more holistic, comprehensive and multisectoral responses to health and broader socio-economic development issues.

The Asia-Pacific Group has followed closely the negotiations on the draft resolution before us today and would like to express its appreciation to the core group of sponsors — particularly Brazil as facilitator of the negotiations — for their efforts and leadership. Most importantly, our appreciation comes with the recognition of the draft resolution's timely and extremely pertinent focus on the subtopics of health and environment and health and natural disasters.

The draft resolution places emphasis on concrete actions within those areas, in terms of encouraging and strengthening capacity-building, national health systems, universal health coverage, emergency preparedness and response, transfer of knowledge, technology and expertise and the sharing of best practices. Those are important reminders that political commitment in the international arena is a must if we are to reap the concrete benefits of a long-term achievement of global health goals.

The draft resolution also clearly reiterates the important fact that the achievement of global health goals cannot be de-linked from the promotion and protection of human rights, peace and security and sustainable development.

This past year, the General Assembly adopted two historic documents — the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS (resolution 65/277, annex) and the Political Declaration on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (resolution 66/2). The negotiations on the two documents were extensive and ultimately impactful, resulting in the General

Assembly's clear expression through those documents first, of the importance it places on achieving global health goals and second, of its political commitment to playing a crucial role in getting there.

In closing, I would like to assure the Assembly that the Asia-Pacific Group remains fully committed to working with partners in promoting global health. More importantly, we wish to express our continued support for maintaining the General Assembly's active and, we believe, pivotal engagement in global health concerns. We look forward once again to seeing the draft resolution adopted without a vote.

Mrs. Davidovich (Israel): Let me begin by expressing Israel's appreciation to the Secretary-General for transmitting the World Health Organization report on global health and foreign policy (A/66/497). The report makes clear that each and every Government has a responsibility to integrate the goals and objectives of global health into their foreign policy. Those considerations must move to the forefront of the international agenda.

The linkage between health, prosperity and security is clear. Promoting global health helps to reduce poverty and inequality, advances stability and security, and lays the foundation for economic progress and growth. Those issues are at the very core of the United Nations mission.

We must face health challenges together. Diseases do not discriminate; they do not recognize international borders. A health crisis in one country is easily spread to others in its region, and often well beyond. Nations do not always have the capacity to deal with health crises on their own. Many of the greatest health issues that we face today are global in scope and call for global responses.

Promoting good health has always been a priority for the State of Israel. It is one of Judaism's guiding values. Three times a day, Jews around the world pray not only for their own health but for the health of all people. Within the Jewish tradition, there is a clear directive that people must act to improve the health of all those around them.

That principle is clearly reflected in the State of Israel. At the establishment of Israel in 1948, a significant national health infrastructure was already in place. We have focused on developing innovative and effective solutions in order to meet the range of health

challenges facing our diverse population. In fact, Israel pioneered the practice of universal health care, and our system has been used as a model for many other countries.

For decades, Israel has provided our expertise, technology, medicine, and training in the field of health to developing countries. Much of that work is carried out by MASHAV, Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, civil society and the private sector.

Let me provide a few examples of MASHAV's recent work. Last spring, in partnership with the Government of Haiti, Israel constructed an emergency and trauma unit at the Hospital Justinien in Cap-Haitien. In addition to providing all the medical equipment and financial support to create that unique centre, Israel oversaw the specialized training of the health professionals who operate it. The unit has significantly increased the Haitian people's access to high-quality medical care for trauma and other emergency medical needs. It will also provide important surge capacity in the unfortunate case of future disasters.

Israel is closely engaged in reducing child mortality and improving maternal health in Ghana. We administer a network of community-based post-natal and healthy-baby clinics, which were initially developed for mothers and children in Israel. Known as *tipat chalav*, which is Hebrew for "drop of milk", the clinics serve mothers and the babies for the first five years of the child's life. They provide guidance for mothers, ensure that children receive all of their necessary immunizations and monitor their development.

In 2012, Israel will establish a dialysis unit in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The project will save thousands of dialysis patients from having to travel abroad for expensive treatment.

For more than 50 years, Israel has sponsored eye clinics in countries where health facilities are inadequate. Israeli ophthalmologists travel throughout the developing world to treat people who suffer from blindness and poor eyesight as a result of cataracts, malnutrition, trauma and infections. Clinics have been set up around the world — in Liberia, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Georgia, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam, Uzbekistan and many others.

The Israeli Government recognizes that building strong partnerships with civil society is essential to reaching global health goals. Israeli non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are extremely active in improving the health of people around the world. One such organization is Save a Child's Heart, which is accredited by the Economic and Social Council. In the past 15 years, the Israeli NGO has repaired the hearts of more than 2,700 children suffering from rheumatic and congenital heart disease. Those children are brought to Israel from all four corners of the world, a majority of them from the Middle East.

As a sponsor of the important draft resolution A/66/L.24, Israel will continue to play an active role in the debate about the intersection between global health and foreign policy. On that issue, the challenges before us are clear. The need for action is apparent. It is on our shoulders to breathe life into the words of the draft resolution before us. Together, let us pledge to improve the health of every family, every community and every nation, laying the foundation for a more secure, more prosperous and more peaceful planet.

Mr. Takahashi (Japan): Japan endorses the statement just made by the representative of Lebanon on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group. At this time, my delegation would like to make a statement as a follow-up to its statement last year (see A/65/PV.61).

Though little time is left between now and the target date for achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), there remain many challenges in areas such as maternal health and water sanitation that will require more effort on our part in order for the Goals to be accomplished. Our Government has focused on the achievement of the health-related MDGs as one of the main pillars of our diplomatic policy.

The Government of Japan has been actively discussing the acceleration of efforts to attain the MDGs and has been anticipating the need to set goals for after 2015. We organized a follow-up meeting on the MDGs in June 2011 and a ministerial side event on the MDGs at the opening of the current session of the General Assembly in September. At the MDGs follow-up meeting in June in particular, we took up the topic of the global health agenda at one of four breakout sessions and used that opportunity to deepen the discussion on how to narrow the gap between the

present situation and the accomplishment of the health-related MDGs.

Furthermore, we discussed how to deal with non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and how to strengthen health systems. Moreover, in August our country decided to provide a sum of ¥5 billion in loans for polio immunization in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, in cooperation with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. That international development assistance has encouraged the mobilization of private financial resources and the realization of effective and large-scale support for the project. In addition, on World Polio Day, we organized a series of health-related events, including a high-level meeting on global health, in order to accelerate the implementation of such measures as the polio eradication efforts undertaken with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In this way, we have, more than ever before, strengthened our commitment in the field of global health.

For the steady resolution of such issues as NCDs, which were discussed at a previous high-level meeting, it is important for us to share the experience of the developed countries in strengthening health systems. Furthermore, it is useful to tackle health issues such as infectious diseases from the viewpoint of human security, which focuses on individual human beings, as described in last year's report of the Secretary-General on human security (A/64/701).

The world continues to face many challenges in the field of global health and thus requires universal cooperation within the international community. In that regard, it is important for us to continue to deepen the discussion concerning the global health and foreign policy. Japan will continue to participate actively in that discussion.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 126.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/66/L.24. I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Zhang Saijin (Department of General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, in addition to those delegations listed in document A/66/L.24, the following countries have become sponsors of the draft resolution: Albania, Andorra, Argentina, the Bahamas, Bosnia and

Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Madagascar, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Timor-Leste.

The Acting President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/66/L.24?

Draft resolution A/66/L.24 was adopted (resolution 66/115).

The Acting President: One representative has asked to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted. May I remind him that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Mostahkam (Islamic Republic of Iran): The promotion of health and ensuring the right of all people to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health are among those noble ideals that deserve further international attention and cooperation. In that context, my delegation supports the General Assembly in its role of moving forward the agenda of global health.

With respect to resolution 66/115, however, we are not in a position to welcome a text that contains language on issues that contradicts our cultural and religious values. We therefore disassociate ourselves from the fourth preambular paragraph of the present resolution.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 126?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 15 (continued)

Culture of peace

Draft resolution (A/66/L.23)

The Acting President: Members will recall that, at its 34th and 35th plenary meetings, on 17 October, the Assembly held a debate on agenda item 15, "Culture of peace".

I give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh to introduce draft resolution A/66/L.23.

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh): On behalf of the sponsors, It is my privilege to introduce draft

resolution A/66/L.23, entitled “Follow-up to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace”, dated 5 December, at this year’s session. Since the submission of the draft resolution, apart from my own country, the following countries have joined the list of sponsors: Afghanistan, the Bahamas, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Belarus, Cameroon, China, Egypt, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Peru, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Singapore, Turkmenistan, Togo and Viet Nam.

Since 2001, this draft resolution has been submitted and adopted each year by consensus. That shows the commitment of the entire world community to making the world safe for future generations. Here, let me quote from the statement delivered by our Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, at this year’s general debate of the General Assembly:

“I believe that peace is the basis for development. I also believe that peace prevails when justice prevails ... Thus, justice for peace found its place in my Government’s domestic and foreign policy and has contributed to strengthening Bangladesh’s secular, democratic and progressive ideals... I also seek [Member States’] support for Bangladesh’s annual flagship resolution on a culture of peace, which I launched in 2000, when I was Prime Minister for the first time.”
(A/66/PV.22, pp. 40 and 43)

The culture of peace is a set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts through dialogue among individuals, groups and nations. We believe that all conflicts, intolerance, war and misunderstandings emerge from a mindset that is not enriched by the finer values of life and tolerance and a sense of respect for diversity. We firmly believe that a world order informed by a culture of peace is conducive to the attainment of our development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

We see great value in the principles of tolerance, respect for diversity, democracy and understanding. Those ideals were endorsed by Member States in the 1999 Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (resolution 53/243). Bangladesh had the privilege of steering the process. We believe that it is important to continue dialogue and mediation among civilizations and to create a mindset and environment

of tolerance, respect for diversity and cultural values, as most conflicts and wars begin in the heart.

One year has elapsed since the end of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World, in 2010. I believe that the 10-year exercise had some impact on our psyche in making a peaceful world for all, especially for the children, who are our future. We should now strive to transform our mindset so as to build a peaceful world.

I believe that, in the days ahead, we should continue to focus on implementation. The Programme of Action enjoys universal support. I sincerely believe that the draft resolution will advance a culture of peace in eight areas of cooperation.

One of the areas that should be stressed is that of raising public awareness and disseminating public information about a culture of peace. The Department of Public Information should launch a special information strategy to promote it. For that purpose, we believe that the Department should enhance awareness of a culture of peace within its existing resources, possibly by having its representatives briefly touch upon the concepts involved in a culture of peace during their deliberations in various forums. At the national level, individual Governments can work to promote a culture of peace, using both the print and electronic media, in collaboration with the relevant ministries. Proper coordination among the various United Nations agencies is vital. We call on UNESCO and the Peacebuilding Commission to adopt relevant programmes of action at the country level.

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

There has been no major change in this year’s draft resolution on the follow-up to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. We have

added one new preambular paragraph and one new paragraph. Apart from those, we have also modified two paragraphs. In the new sixteenth preambular paragraph, we welcome the adoption of the Programme of Action for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization at its thirty-sixth session.

In the new paragraph 3, the General Assembly invites

“the entities of the United Nations system, within their existing mandates, to integrate, as appropriate, the action areas of the Programme of Action in their programmes of activities, focusing on promoting a culture of peace and non-violence at the regional, national and international levels”.

Paragraph 12 is one of the two modified paragraphs. It modifies the text of the previous paragraph 11. In this paragraph, the General Assembly

“[s]tresses the role of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in mobilizing all relevant stakeholders within and outside the United Nations system in support of cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and a culture of peace, and invites the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to continue to enhance communication and outreach, including through the culture of peace website, in order to promote the objectives of the newly adopted Programme of Action at the regional, national and global levels”.

The second and last amended paragraph is paragraph 14, which merges the texts of previous paragraphs 13 and 14. In the modified paragraph 14, the General Assembly

“[i]nvites the Secretary-General, within existing resources, in consultation with the Member States and taking into account the observations of civil society organizations, to explore mechanisms and strategies for the implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action and to initiate outreach efforts to increase global awareness of the Programme of Action and its eight areas of action aimed at their implementation”.

Immediately after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, the father of our nation,

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, pursued the policy of “friendship towards all, malice towards none” in the conduct of the country’s international relations. That principle has always guided us in fine-tuning our relations with countries around the globe, especially with our neighbours. Our peacekeepers continue to assist United Nations peacekeeping operations, even paying with their lives, in different parts of the world where they work in difficult terrain, basically in the pursuit of peace. They also carry in their hearts the idea of a culture of peace, which they put into action.

Bangladesh continues to discharge its responsibilities as a member of the Peacebuilding Commission. We believe that a culture of peace holds the key to sustainable peace in post-conflict societies. Even in peaceful or apparently peaceful societies, we must nurture that idea so that no one will think about violating peace.

In conclusion, I would like to extend our profound gratitude to all the Member States that have shown their solidarity by sponsoring the annual draft resolution over the past 11 years. Let me also express our thanks to all Member States that have made a positive gesture in supporting the draft resolution. The fact that this text has been adopted by consensus in each successive year has been a matter of great encouragement to the delegation of Bangladesh to the United Nations.

In view of the time constraints, the current draft resolution could not enjoy the endorsement of more sponsors. I request my colleagues from other missions to sponsor the draft resolution by providing their valuable endorsement of it now.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/66/L.23, entitled “Follow-up to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Zhang Saijin (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/66/L.23, in addition to those delegations listed in the document, as well as those mentioned just now by the representative of Bangladesh, the following countries have become sponsors of the draft resolution:

the Dominican Republic, Guyana, the Philippines and Saudi Arabia.

The Acting President: May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/66/L.23?

Draft resolution A/66/L.23 was adopted (resolution 66/116).

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Repkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation has traditionally been a sponsor of the General Assembly resolution on a culture of peace. We are convinced that, in this era of globalization, the main conditions for achieving lasting peace are mutual understanding, respect for the diversity of cultures, traditions and religious customs of peoples, as well as collectively agreed actions in that regard by all relevant members of the international community.

Efforts to strengthen the culture of peace are an important element of cooperation among all cultures and civilizations. In the light of the instability in today's world, interfaith and intercultural dialogue and cooperation are particularly important.

The Russian Federation has often affirmed that ethnic and religious prejudice underpinned by economic, political or other competitive influences can lead to dangerous situations. In that context, there is an increasing need for ideas and doctrines that are based on the unity of all of the traditional values of humankind.

In March, at its sixteenth session, the Human Rights Council, on the initiative of the Russian Federation, adopted resolution 16/3, entitled "Promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a better understanding of traditional values of humankind" (A/HRC/RES/16/3). In introducing the resolution, we proceeded on the basis that human rights belong to humankind as a whole and to each person individually, without discrimination or distinction of any kind.

We are convinced that a key factor in that context is the understanding that we are united by values derived from religions, customs and traditions, moral standards and morality — in other words, the traditional values on which human civilization is based. Those cannot be divided into Western, Eastern, African, Asian or European values. These values include such categories as the right to life, protection from torture, tolerance, a sense of self-worth, responsibility to one's loved ones and hard work.

The list could be made even longer, but it would be difficult for anyone to dispute the crucial importance of those values. This moral foundation for modern life in society is the very cement that binds together nations, peoples and ethnic groups.

The Russian Federation is convinced that recognizing the linkages between human rights and traditional human values will give the concept of human rights greater weight in the eyes of those who share the rights.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of agenda item 15.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I would like to draw the attention of members to the date of recess of the current session. Members will recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 16 September 2011, the General Assembly decided that the sixty-sixth session would recess on Tuesday, 13 December 2011. However, in view of the work that remains to be done for this part of the session, I would like to propose to the Assembly that it postpone the date of recess of the current session to Thursday, 22 December 2011.

If there is no objection, may I take it that the Assembly agrees to that proposal?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.