



General Assembly

Sixty-eighth session

18th plenary meeting
Saturday, 28 September 2013, 9 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda)

The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

Address by Mrs. Portia Simpson Miller, Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Development, Information and Sports of Jamaica

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Development, Information and Sports of Jamaica.

Mrs. Portia Simpson Miller, Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Development, Information and Sports of Jamaica, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Mrs. Portia Simpson Miller, Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Development, Information and Sports of Jamaica, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Mrs. Simpson Miller (Jamaica): I am extremely pleased that a son of the Caribbean — and one with such a wealth of experience and tested diplomatic skills — is presiding over the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. I commend the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his untiring efforts to promote international peace and development, and I thank him for his exemplary leadership.

The theme for our debate, “The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage”, catapults development to the centre of the United Nations

agenda, impelling us to elaborate a meaningful and far-reaching development framework for the benefit of all. Our deliberations and actions during this session must therefore send a clear message of hope to the many millions who, sadly, are still living in poverty and inequity. Let us redouble our efforts to fight against the scourge of poverty. It was the late Jamaican national hero, Marcus Mosiah Garvey, who aptly said:

“Poverty is a hellish state to be in. It is no virtue. It is a crime. To be poor is to be hungry without possible hope of food; to be sick without hope of medicine; to be tired and sleepy without a place to lay one’s head; to be naked without the hope of clothing; to be despised and comfortless. To be poor is to be a fit subject for crime and hell.”

Too many of the world’s citizens are facing that reality. We need to fulfil the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2), which entrusted to us the responsibility to chart a path towards development underpinned by a commitment to eradicate poverty on the basis of a global partnership.

As the deadline for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals draws near, with under 1,000 days remaining, we face many challenges, including the global economic and financial crisis, climate change, natural disasters, high levels of debt and conflict. With the limited time remaining, it is imperative for us to accelerate our efforts. Anything less would be a disservice to our people.

While we contemplate a post-2015 development framework, we must also complete unfinished business

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in the reduction of extreme poverty and hunger, combating HIV/AIDS, halting and reversing the incidence of malaria and tuberculosis and increasing access to reproductive health care. In our deliberations on a post-2015 development agenda, we must determine how best to shape a global compact that is universal and people-centred and that strikes the balance between the need for robust economic growth, job creation and poverty eradication and the equally important need to preserve and protect the environment. Our deliberations have to take into account the special needs of disadvantaged groups of countries, in particular the vulnerable group of small island developing States (SIDS), which are grappling with climate change, sea-level rise and the need to deal with new and emerging economic and social situations.

We are pleased that international attention will be focused on small island developing States in 2014, when the international community will observe the International Year of Small Island Developing States. The success of the Samoa Conference in 2014 will depend on strong international support for and the mainstreaming of SIDS issues in all activities across the United Nations system.

A sustainable approach to development should include people with disabilities in the post-2015 development agenda. It should also provide for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases and additional financial resources to sustain the global fight against HIV/AIDS.

Another major threat to development is the high incidence of road crashes. I call on all countries to take the challenge of reducing injuries and fatalities resulting from road crashes and traffic accidents more seriously as a crucial policy issue.

There is an urgent need for innovative and sustainable financing to underpin our development efforts. Reforms should be undertaken in a manner that will assist middle-income developing countries to deal with the challenges they face. Those reforms must address public debt sustainability and review the classification system of middle-income developing countries with a view to coming up with more relevant and appropriate measures of development.

There is an urgent need for greater focus on job creation, including for unemployed youth. I note that the International Labour Organization has estimated that global unemployment will rise to 202 million

this year. That alarming statistic is overshadowed by estimate of the global working poor, which is in the order of 869 million, almost 400 million of whom live in extreme poverty. Growth in joblessness is reflected in rural and urban pockets of poverty and social deprivation. Increased investment in developing countries with a focus on job creation is an avenue that must be actively pursued.

We need to provide more assistance for people to cope with daily life, as growth and prosperity are unevenly distributed and the most vulnerable are at risk of falling through the cracks, being overlooked and failing to achieve a decent quality of life. Social protection schemes should work effectively to provide for basic needs and encourage target groups to pursue self-advancement while facilitating empowerment and fostering greater inclusiveness. As countries like Jamaica implement strategies to deal with indebtedness and also encourage growth and investment, it is critical that international financial institutions and multilateral and other development partners recognize the importance of social protection mechanisms.

As we forge the agenda for development for the next decade and beyond, we do so in part on behalf of a group that is very close to my heart — our children. The future we want, the future we craft, the future we achieve will be our legacy to our children. We must redouble our efforts to safeguard their rights and enhance their development. Despite limited resources, Jamaica continues to make every effort to meet its obligations to its children. We condemn violence and abuse against our children and reaffirm our commitment to safeguarding and promoting the rights of children everywhere. We must leave no child behind.

The issue of human trafficking is of paramount concern. I am always mindful of the horrors and evils of slavery, both in history and in its modern-day form. I am particularly moved by the knowledge that young girls and boys are torn daily from the bosom of their families, taken to strange lands, placed in subhuman conditions and forced to perform unspeakable acts. We must unite in our efforts to eliminate that transnational scourge and bring an end to human trafficking among our women, men and children. We must ensure that in these modern times we do not have a re-enactment of slavery. We must stamp it out wherever it exists and bring the perpetrators to justice. We must protect our future generations. Never again should anything resembling slavery be tolerated anywhere.

Jamaica is proud to lead the efforts, in collaboration with the countries of the Caribbean Community and members of the African Union, to have the permanent memorial to the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade erected here at the United Nations. The unveiling of the winning design of the permanent memorial earlier this week signals an important chapter in our journey to honour the memory of the millions of men and women who were subject to untold atrocities. When I attended the unveiling I was reminded of the words of our reggae icon, Bob Marley:

“Old pirates, yes, they rob I;
Sold I to the merchant ships,
Minutes after they took I
From the bottomless pit.
But my hand was made strong
By the hand of the Almighty.
We forward in this generation
Triumphantly.”

We are grateful for the generous contributions towards the erection of the memorial, and we encourage the international community to continue to show financial support for that important initiative.

Jamaica supports the call for an international discussion in a non-confrontational manner on the question of reparations. We fully support the initiative to proclaim a decade for people of African descent.

The quest for development will not be complete without requisite attention being paid to peace and security. My heart goes out to the families of the victims of the horrific attack in Kenya. Transnational organized criminal enterprises wreak havoc on economies and challenge the capacity of States to deal with those threats. No country is immune to the direct or indirect effects of the scourge of transnational crime. Increased collaboration is necessary in confronting such threats to human development. To that end, we welcome the recent opening for signature of the landmark Arms Trade Treaty in June of this year, which represents one of many steps that the international community must take towards defeating terrorism, crime and violence. Jamaica is currently embarking on the process leading to ratification of the Treaty.

Bilateral and regional cooperation through information-sharing, capacity-building and assistance are integral to dealing with crime, violence and security issues.

We remain deeply concerned about the suffering of the people in Syria and join the international community in condemning the use of chemical weapons. We welcome the recent positive steps taken by the Security Council. Jamaica remains firmly committed to a just, lasting and peaceful solution to the situation in the Middle East.

Turning closer to home, the trade and economic embargo against our neighbour Cuba has caused its people untold hardship. It has no place in the twenty-first century. We reiterate our call for an end to the embargo against Cuba and to extraterritorial measures that target third-party countries.

Jamaica has never lost faith in the influence for good that exists here at the United Nations. We are fully aware that the expectations and aspirations of peoples rest in our hands. At this pivotal moment in history, let us revitalize the partnership on which this great institution is built. I draw on the words of the civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., when he said,

“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”

The challenges and expectations of our time are indeed great. It falls to our generation to take a stand. Now is the time to act.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Development, Information and Sports of Jamaica for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Portia Simpson Miller, Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Development, Information and Sports of Jamaica, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms of the Republic of Mauritius

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms of the Republic of Mauritius.

Mr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms of the Republic of Mauritius, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Ramgoolam (Mauritius): As we meet this morning to address global concerns and seek ways to ensure progress and lasting peace, the people of Kenya are emerging from a terrorist attack that has cost them many lives and shaken the continent. In expressing our solidarity with the Government and the people of Kenya and with the families of the victims, Mauritius would also like to express its unreserved condemnation of that abominable and dastardly act of terrorism. The Nairobi attack should also compel us to revisit regional and global responses to national and international security threats, including extending support to countries, particularly those on the African continent.

Mauritius commends you, Mr. President, for the theme you have proposed for the sixty-eighth session of the Assembly, namely, “The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage”. The goals we set ourselves for the sustainable development of our national and global economies will shape the lives of generations to come. I would like to say at the outset that Mauritius welcomes the report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development*, and in particular the recommendation that deliberations on a new development agenda must be guided by the vision of eradicating extreme poverty for all in the context of sustainable development. We also welcome the Panel’s view that one of the transformative shifts for the post-2015 agenda should be to bring a new sense of global partnership into national and international politics.

Climate change should be one of the top priorities for the global agenda. The report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis*, released only yesterday, is unequivocal. It provides clear scientific confirmation

that we humans are responsible for global warming, and that it is up to us to take appropriate measures to try to save our home planet. We cannot and should not any longer ignore the evidence that we humans are putting life on Earth in jeopardy.

In our region, we have recently seen an increased and unprecedented intensity and unpredictability of weather events. In March, my country experienced unprecedented flash floods that caused losses of human life and heavy economic losses. No country is safe from natural disasters and the damaging effects of climate change. But for many small island developing States (SIDS), the foreseeable consequences of climate change threaten us even more dramatically, in terms of both human and economic development. For some SIDS, they pose an existential threat.

We fully support the Secretary-General’s proposal to convene world leaders to a climate summit in New York in 2014. We hope that that meeting will provide an opportunity for world leaders to focus political attention on climate change and take meaningful action to mitigate its effects. We must start putting the interests of our home planet above everything else. The world needs a global, legally binding agreement on climate change by 2015. At the Paris meeting of the twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, we should adopt a treaty that is universal and ambitious and that concretely addresses the concerns of all, including those of the most vulnerable States.

The international community should also pay more attention to disaster risk reduction and adopt a more concerted and accelerated approach to reaching the goals set out in the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 (see A/CONF.206/6). The time has come to address disaster risks and climate-change adaptation through an integrated approach, and to adopt resilience as a common and shared vision. Mauritius welcomes Japan’s decision to host the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in early 2015 to review the implementation of the Hyogo Framework and chart an ambitious post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction.

In that regard, the holding in Samoa next year of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States could not be more timely. We hope that the Conference will be a landmark in the history of a more active and collaborative partnership among SIDS and between SIDS and the international community.

Furthermore, it could be an opportunity to give new meaning to the concept of global concerns, issues that are, or should be, the concern of the global community at large, and not only of those who are more vulnerable and more at risk. That would be in line with the spirit of the global partnership that the High-level Panel has called for.

The prospects for growth in the global economy remain uncertain, largely as a result of the multiple challenges faced by developed countries. In such an interconnected and interdependent world as ours, no nation is immune to external shocks. Small developing countries are very concerned about the slowdown in global growth, declines in international trade, decreasing job opportunities and rising inequality. Small States are particularly susceptible to external shocks, as they are heavily dependent on foreign markets for trade, tourism and investments. They are also concerned about energy and food prices, which are subject to high volatility.

My Government believes that the post-2015 development agenda should include a road map for an interconnected world economic system, premised on the assumption that the global economy could very well be as weak as its weakest links. Of course, the specificities of some countries or regions and the pace at which the transformative shifts are implemented may not always be appropriate for universal targets. But the conceptual approach to, and the design of, the post-2015 agenda should, more than ever before, start with the shared conviction that economies are interdependent.

Eradicating extreme poverty, empowering more women, providing wider opportunities to young people for education and jobs, improving health care and the management of energy, water and food are all universal concerns. The conventional divides of the past are no longer valid. We need a common development framework but with differentiated milestones and implementation strategies, given the existing disparities in the levels of development. Actions taken at the national level are not sufficient; there should also be reinforced cooperation and partnerships at the regional and international levels. It is therefore imperative that the weaknesses and the inequity of the current global economic governance should be addressed urgently.

We are at a juncture where we have no option but to revisit the existing global economic governance mechanisms. An overhaul of the current economic

governance is clearly long overdue. We must have a more participatory system of global economic governance, where developing countries would be more involved in international economic decision-making and norm-setting. The voice of all nations, big or small, should be equally heard and taken into consideration.

Mauritius has, on several occasions, reiterated that the United Nations Economic and Social Council needs to play a more prominent role in global economic, social, and environmental issues. We cannot overstate the importance of coordination and synergy for avoiding duplication among parallel United Nations processes and initiatives so as to ensure optimal benefit for all.

My Government is of the view that all the processes initiated in the Rio+20 Conference last year, including those relating to strengthening the Economic and Social Council, sustainable development goals and sustainable development financing, should converge towards a single post-2015 development agenda that should be adopted during a high-level development summit in 2015. The post-2015 development agenda should complete the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals. However, it should also go beyond them and provide for a systemic change and a new global economic governance. The guiding principles enshrined in the Declaration on the Right to Development, adopted in December 1986 (resolution 41/133), are still relevant today and should not be overlooked in the formulation of a post-2015 development agenda.

My country will follow, with particular interest, the work of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, especially since it replaces the Commission on Sustainable Development, which was the primary intergovernmental forum for monitoring the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation.

As we set the stage for the post-2015 development agenda, we must, as global leaders, define a new global vision for the world's oceans. The United Nations system has played a crucial role in formulating, implementing and enforcing a new international order relating to the oceans. Indeed, the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1982 will remain one of the landmarks of the twentieth century.

The jurisprudence of the International Court of Justice and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea has contributed to the settlement of maritime disputes and the promotion of international peace,

security and equity in a manner not always witnessed in other areas of international relations. The establishment of the International Seabed Authority is another significant example of what international cooperation can lead to in other sectors. The International Maritime Organization and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO are also making significant contributions.

I believe that the United Nations must now take the lead in formulating a global vision for the oceans that will, in particular, expand the economic space for small island States while ensuring sustainable use of living and non-living resources. The health of our economies will depend on the health of our oceans. Our vision for the future must also preserve the inherent values of the ocean space, to which we are looking for economic expansion.

Mauritius has taken the initiative of launching a national dialogue on how to promote the ocean economy as one of the main pillars of development. We urge the international community to build on what the world has achieved so far in relation to ocean-related economic activities and conservation, and we propose for future generations a fundamental paradigm shift with respect to economic space. While such a global vision and strategy will be beneficial to all nations, it will be of particular interest to small islands. With limited land areas, the islands can potentially be large ocean States and thus overcome some of their vulnerabilities as small island developing States. As the world realizes the tremendous potential of marine renewable energies, we will see the oceans from a different perspective.

The United Nations has a key role to play in promoting the rule of law at both the national and the international levels. The rule of law at the international level must be an integral part of the post-2015 agenda. Open and participatory democracy, accountability and transparency are not concepts that should be promoted only at the national level. The United Nations should lead by example here. We should focus on reforming our Organization and on making it more responsive to the needs and aspirations of its constituents.

In that context, we should work together on the reform of the Security Council and the revitalization of the General Assembly and on improving the working methods of our Organization. Mauritius believes that a comprehensive reform of the Security Council should include reform in the membership of both the permanent

and non-permanent categories. We reaffirm our commitment to the African common position enshrined in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration. We believe that Africa should not be deprived of its right to permanent representation in the Council. Likewise, we believe that Latin America deserves permanent representation in the Council and that SIDS should also be entitled to a seat on the Council. Mauritius further reiterates its support for India's legitimate aspiration to a permanent seat in a reformed Security Council.

Mauritius also reiterates its firm conviction that the rule of law should prevail in the resolution of disputes, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. We believe that the international community has an obligation to ensure that, in line with the principles of the rule of law, nations should submit their disputes to conciliation, mediation, adjudication or other peaceful means, both judicial and non-judicial.

The dismemberment of part of our territory, the Chagos archipelago, prior to independence, by the then colonial Power the United Kingdom, was in clear breach of international law and left the process of decolonization, not only of Mauritius but of Africa in general, incomplete. Yet, the United Kingdom has shown no inclination to engage in any process that would lead to a settlement of that shameful part of its colonial past. I am confident that the United Kingdom and the United States of America want to be on the right side of history. States that look to the law and to the rules of the comity of nations for the resolution of disputes should not be frustrated by the lack of avenues under international law for the settlement of such disputes.

Tromelin, which is also an integral part of our territory, is the subject of ongoing discussions with the French Government, and pending a final resolution of the issue, Mauritius and France have concluded a framework agreement on the co-management of the island and its surrounding maritime areas, without prejudice to the sovereignty of Mauritius over Tromelin.

In our part of the world, we welcome the rise of a re-energized Africa. The return to normalcy in Mali and the recent holding of elections there show the relevance of international partnerships. The situation in Madagascar and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will, hopefully, be resolved soon through the support of the international community for the initiatives of the Southern African Development Community in that regard.

Earlier this year, Mauritius hosted an African ministerial conference on regional integration. We are convinced that African nations will benefit significantly from a greater focus on regional cooperation, and I am pleased to note that the solemn declaration adopted on the fiftieth anniversary of the African Union supports that view.

The tragic events in Syria over the last two years are of serious concern to the global community. There is also concern about attempts to bypass the Security Council and to initiate action in breach of the United Nations Charter. Respect for the rule of law at the international level entails compliance with internationally agreed norms. Mauritius will support the decisions taken by the organs of the United Nations under the Charter.

We welcome the Security Council resolution that addresses one of the issues in the Syrian crisis. However, the international community needs to go further and address the issue of political dialogue, which will enable the Syrian people to live in peace.

Mauritius also supports a Middle East that is free of weapons of mass destruction. That means that no country in the region should hold nuclear or chemical weapons.

Mauritius is convinced that an essential condition for peace and prosperity in the Middle East is the peaceful coexistence of the States of Palestine and Israel. Mauritius wishes to reiterate its solidarity with the Palestine National Authority and the Palestinian people in their rightful aspiration to win full recognition as a State Member of the United Nations.

Mauritius also supports the peaceful restoration of democracy in Egypt, which has a key role to play in promoting stability and security in the region. But the international community cannot condone the removal by force from office and the detention of a democratically elected leader.

(spoke in French)

The general debate of the General Assembly offers us a unique opportunity to highlight the most urgent challenges that humankind is currently facing. We must take advantage of this opportunity to review recent events and to outline new approaches that will enable us to respond to these challenges in keeping with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We must address those challenges through a

shared vision of peace, security, interdependence and respect for fundamental rights and freedoms.

We must remain staunch in protecting the right to development. We also have the duty to take a differentiated approach so as to ensure that our development model is sustainable and allows us to leave to future generations the values our world holds dear. Our success will depend on the collective will and commitment. If we succeed, we will go down in history as having met today's challenges and expectations in terms of the future.

(spoke in English)

To conclude, let me say that we need to act together, in a spirit of compromise and tolerance. We should constantly remind ourselves that we are of one kind, humankind. There are not, and never will be, ideal solutions that will satisfy all of us. But we, the leaders of our respective countries, need to look beyond the horizon and have the moral courage to look at our common humanity so that we may move forward towards making our world a better, more prosperous and safer place for the whole of humankind.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms of the Republic of Mauritius for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Moana Jacques Kalosil Carcasses, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Mr. Moana Jacques Kalosil Carcasses, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Moana Jacques Kalosil Carcasses,

Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Carcasses (Vanuatu) (*spoke in French*): The Republic of Vanuatu is honoured to participate in this debate under your presidency, Sir, and we wish to associate ourselves with all other delegations in congratulating you and the members of your Bureau on your election to lead us through this sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

On Syria, we have seen internal conflicts transformed into international disputes that require solutions from this body. During this session, there has been intensive debate on the protracted conflict affecting the Syrian people and undermining regional and international peace. We join many other peace-loving nations to call for an end to the conflict and for the United Nations to do more strongly to enforce the international ban on the use of chemical weapons. We also urge the United States of America and the Russian Federation to take a strong leading role in the issue of Syria and in addressing the chemical-weapons issue there.

We are concerned at the fact that such conflicts have often diverted the international focus from addressing much more important issues, such as our common aspirations for the Millennium Development Goals. It is unfair that countries resorting to such illegitimate acts can trigger wars that cost a great deal of money, whereas the rest of the peace-loving countries and their peoples suffer the consequences, as the monies spent could be diverted to better and effective use.

It is here, from this rostrum, that the leaders of our nations have spoken out freely, from their hearts, in an endeavour to find common solutions so as to inspire the community of nations committed to international peace and security. Our main objectives are to take collective decisions so as to address a spectrum of international issues, some of which require urgent action, such as the issue of climate change. It is here that we have called for the recognition of the rights of women, children and persons with disabilities who are caught up in conflicts and violence. It is here that we have called for help for those who have been discriminated against because of their colour, their religion or their political convictions.

For the Republic of Vanuatu, this rostrum is the only international platform from which, year after year since 1981, we have spoken out against colonialism and neo-imperialism in all its forms. Today once again, I speak on behalf of the entire population of our

archipelago to be the voice of those who still live in colonized territories.

We know that decolonization is still incomplete. However, we have seen the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) take more and more positive steps during its 2013 sessions, recognizing the inalienable right of French Polynesia to self-determination. We also applaud the work of the Committee in continuing discussions and dialogue on the question of New Caledonia.

Allow me at this juncture to thank the Government of France for its cooperation in moving the decolonization process forward. It is important to maintain this dialogue with the specific goal of helping the Kanak people to attain their independence. With the greatest possible respect, I encourage all parties to ensure that the process of achieving freedom remains on track. We in the Melanesian Spearhead Group are appreciative of the work of the Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front as chair of the Group.

The Republic of Vanuatu has just emerged from colonialism, having achieved its political independence from the Powers of the British-French condominium 33 years ago. Based on our struggle for independence, we share the journey and the litany of heartaches and dreams of many of our brothers and sisters whose rights to political and civil freedom are still held back by the tentacles of imperialism and colonialism.

I would like to reiterate today our appeal launched last year from this rostrum that the Secretariat should always remain impartial and avoid any selective implementation of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on the rights of all people who desire to be free from colonialism or any form of imperialism.

We can debate issues of terrorism, financial and economic crises and climate change and reach some level of understanding of the seriousness of those challenges and the measures that must be taken to address them. We can talk of good governance and the rule of law and respect for human rights. But when it comes to the issue of the rights of the people of West Papua, our voices fall silent, even from this rostrum.

I wish to congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who, when he visited Asia in 2012, emphasized that the United Nations would do

everything possible to ensure that human rights are respected in West Papua, saying

“whether you are an independent State or a non-self-governing territory or whatever, [that] human right is inalienable and a fundamental principle of the United Nations”.

Now, as Members of the United Nations, we must call for those words to be translated into action.

My Government calls upon the United Nations to appoint a special representative to investigate alleged human rights violations in West Papua and its political status in the light of the controversies surrounding the administration established in the 1960s, the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority. Ever since the controversial Act of Free Choice, the West Papuans have always been consistently denied any sort of recognition by the United Nations. It is clear from many historical records that the Melanesian people of West Papua were the scapegoats of Cold War politics and were sacrificed to gratify the appetite for the natural resources that the country possesses. Today, they are still victims of the ignorance of the United Nations.

If the United Nations representative at the time, Mr. Fernando Ortiz-Sanz, described the West Papuan issue as a cancer growing on the side of the United Nations and that it was his job to remove it, it is very clear today from what we have observed that that cancer has never been removed, but merely concealed. One day it will have to be treated. We must not be afraid. The United Nations has made mistakes in the past. We must admit our mistakes and see that we are the stronger for that, because when we are weak, admit our mistakes and take corrective action, we become stronger and more alive.

As Members of the United Nations, we all subscribe to the principles of democracy, good governance, human rights, accountability and the rule of law enshrined in the United Nations Charter. In this age of technology, when nothing can escape the attention of civil society and Governments, I ask how then can we ignore the hundreds of thousands of West Papuans who have been brutally beaten and murdered?

The people of West Papua are looking to the United Nations as a beacon of hope. We are now deliberating on the issue of Syria. In that same spirit, I would ask that my fellow leaders express support for West Papua.

It is time for the United Nations to move beyond its limits and take action to rectify the errors of the past.

Since our independence 33 years ago, the indigenous peoples of my country have remained concerned that a part of our maritime and cultural jurisdiction, including the islands of Umaepnune and Leka, situated south of Vanuatu, are still occupied by France. Thus, the people of our country are denied the right to the exercise of full political freedom and their inherent cultural rights. The indigenous peoples of the southern province of our country cannot, therefore, fulfil their obligations to protect their culture and traditions that bind them to the sovereign land that has been theirs since time immemorial.

Those two islands are of paramount importance, because they form the basis for the establishment of our unique cultural framework, which brings together our cultural island group known as the Tafea Islands. It is that cultural framework that governed us and defined our identity and our way of life long before administrative colonial Powers began to explore and govern our shores.

Unfortunately, today, our indigenous peoples continue to be denied access to those sacred and cultural islands. My Government therefore calls on the community of nations meeting in the Assembly to uphold the principles of the respect of the rights of our indigenous peoples and their way of life. Further, we call upon the French Government to allow our indigenous people of Tafea to have access to the land of their forefathers, the islands Umaenupne and Leka in the south of the Republic of Vanuatu.

The call by the United Nations to review the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to strategize a post-2015 development agenda compels us to rethink our global partnership structures and our national priorities in order to better achieve our goals in the period after 2015. My country has made some progress in achieving some of the MDG targets. However, the appropriate conditions for economic growth and development must be created. An integrated and balanced approach is required to deal adequately with the social, economic and environmental dimensions.

To that end, my Government has placed emphasis on climate change, renewable energy and the sustainable use of the environment. We have now created a separate Ministry focusing on adaptation to climate change,

energy and the environment so that the Government can address issues in that area. We would therefore welcome opportunities for unconditional partnerships in order to better address those issues.

It is clear that there has been much debate on the issue of climate change. However, the level to which final pledges have been met has been unsatisfactory, considering the fast pace at which climate change is having an impact on small island developing States. We call for more urgent action and decisions on that front.

While Vanuatu supports the shift in the development paradigm, we also recognize that the new development agenda might harbour its own shortcomings and must therefore be given careful consideration when it comes to its final design. It is evident that the new approach must take heed of, first, the complexity that still exists within international aid programmes for development, coupled with the risk of unpredictable financial crises that can affect the delivery of aid; secondly, the challenges faced by countries at present in attaining the MDGs; thirdly, the ambiguities and difficulties involved in setting the priority of goals within an expanded list of priorities; fourthly, the imminent graduation of my country from least developed country status and the benefits accompanying that change; and fifthly, the risk of a reduced level of real aid spending per capita affected partly by a failure to increase global aid for development.

Aware of those issues, Vanuatu has taken measures, partly on its own and with the assistance of its partners, to ensure greater resilience to its own vulnerabilities. Our plan involves taking decisions that lead to quantum leaps in the development of our country's infrastructure in which ports, roads and airports will be built and upgraded to facilitate, inter alia, the large-scale integration of the rural population into the national economy.

I would like to thank the Governments of China, Australia and New Zealand and the Asian Development Bank for their assistance, as well as the Government of the United States for its enormous investment in the two major national highways in Vanuatu. We see that as an investment in the future of my country, where 60 per cent of the population is aged 25 years or under, whereby most of the rural population will gain greater access to markets and economic opportunities throughout the archipelago's islands.

All our development initiatives must be inclusive and not ignore the poor and the marginalized. My country has taken the measures necessary to ensure gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Government's measures include legislation amending laws on sexual discrimination, addressing issues of domestic violence and the submission of universal periodic reports to ensure compliance with the reporting framework of the Human Rights Council.

In conclusion, I wish to thank you once again, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to express my views in this forum. We have spoken a great deal about many things, and we now must translate our words into action. Long live our aspirations for a better and more secure world for everyone!

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

Mr. Moana Jacques Kalosil Carcasses, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania.

Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Rama (Albania): I am the newly elected Prime Minister of Albania. This is my first month in office. It is truly humbling to stand at this rostrum in the steps and the shadows of some of the great figures of history who have stood here and shaped our world, in this forum, which, for all the criticisms of the United Nations, is a living reminder that good must come from bad and that the march of progress through time is powered by debate, ideas, cooperation, argument and agreement.

Albania is no great Power; it is a small country, but with great potential. It has outstanding natural beauty and good and hard-working people. My challenge is to

bring change so that this potential can be fulfilled. It will take time. It will take a lot of effort and perseverance. It will take understanding and support from friends and partners. For my part, I will add leadership. We have a long way to go, but it can be done.

I was reading a study recently that analysed every country in the world, measuring the positive and negative media coverage. Switzerland was at the top; Albania was 161st. In truth, people around the world may not know that much about Albania, but what they think they know is not good. The film industry has not been kind to us — *Wag The Dog*, *Taken*, *Taken 2*. Even I was a bit scared to be in Albania after that. I hope one day Liam Neeson, Dustin Hoffman and Robert De Niro can visit and see what a beautiful country it is and feel the potential that I feel.

But I am not naive. Our problems are not all based in Hollywood. Some are real and damaging, such as corruption, which scars countries in the way the swish of a blade can scar a beautiful face. It deters legitimate investors from investing. It holds back progress. It stops people from believing there can ever be fairness. Corruption can and must be beaten if we are to build the economic rule of law we need, get the investment we need and attract the tourism that our scenery, heritage and warm, welcoming people deserve. It will not be easy, but it can be done, and we are fully committed.

The world has changed tremendously in the course of recent decades, and it is changing now at an even faster pace. We all expect the United Nations to follow suit. United Nations reform is not only necessary; it has become imperative. If we fail to agree and act on that, the role which the United Nations is to play will remain incomplete.

One of the important aspects of change is the ongoing reform of the delivery of development assistance. In the course of a few years, delivering as one has proved to be a valuable achievement, and it represents today an avenue for deeper reform. If we want more effectiveness, better efficiency and coherent action by various United Nations actors and if we aim for better results on the ground and better value for our money, delivering as one is the way to go. We have pledged our support and will continue to do so as we are convinced that is the right path.

Mr. Haniff (Malaysia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The United Nations is beyond any doubt one of the most important world bodies. We joined it in the middle of the past century. But it is not alone; for us, the European Union (EU), which represents the most important political project the world has known to date, is another. We aspire to join it. We know the changes we have to make, and I am determined to make them.

If the EU has turned its attention towards our region, particularly due to past conflicts, together we — Albanians, Serbs, Montenegrins, Bosnians, Macedonians and all the other peoples of the region who have already joined the European Union — should maintain our eyes and our focus on the EU for projects related to our development for a better and more prosperous common future.

Regional cooperation that is not grounded in strategic projects serving the economic revival of all our countries in the process of integration into the European Union as a developed economic area would be completely ineffective. We have neither the time nor the luxury to engage in time-consuming, ineffective projects. No country of the region can afford such a luxury. Consequently, we should create new momentum in regional cooperation by effectively combining the objectives of the South East Europe 2020 strategy with the projects of the Europe 2020 agenda. We should not forget that successful regional cooperation has a direct effect on meeting economic accession criteria. Undoubtedly, meeting such criteria through intense and fruitful regional cooperation is neither an easy nor a simple task.

My vision for Albania is also a vision of the Balkans working together, in defiance of our history of so much war and conflict, although — let us say it loudly and proudly — these are past wars and past conflicts. I want to share my conviction that the remarkable agreement between Kosovo and Serbia launched a new era in South-East Europe. Their dialogue, which was an act of courage and wisdom on the part of both Kosovo and Serbia, with much-appreciated facilitation by the European Union, challenges every country of the region to mobilize its efforts in new and innovative forms of collaboration and cooperation.

Not everything is easy or perfect. There are still a few here and there who continue to think in the past. But the prevailing truth is that Prime Ministers Thaçi and Dačić have shouldered their leadership responsibility to bring their countries into the future they both deserve.

More than anything, in a world interconnected and interdependent like never before, where space and relationships are related and recreated in continuity, it is crucial to live in the new time without prolonging the old one of conflicts and nationalism.

In this regard, Albania is committed to peace and prosperity in the region. This is why it is committed to the irreversible independence of Kosovo, which is already recognized by 104 Member States. This is why it calls upon all countries that have not yet recognized Kosovo to do so. They will not only help Kosovo and its people, but they will join those who, by recognizing Kosovo, have played an important role in strengthening security and stability in South-East Europe.

To those who are sceptical, I say that the people of Kosovo, like all the other peoples that now enjoy fully recognized, independent republics following the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia, deserve the recognition of their sovereignty, particularly as they have demonstrated, more than any other people in the region, their indisputable commitment to human rights, minority rights, dialogue and peace. Without this commitment, it would be very difficult for our region to make progress towards integration into the European Union. But their commitment is obvious and firm, and the region has been making remarkable progress towards its most important goal — integration into the European Union. Croatia has joined the European Union. We are waiting in the queue, as are Serbia and Kosovo.

I have no doubt that, provided that each and every country of the region replaces the politics of division with the politics of cooperation, and provided that we build shared values, beliefs and policies instead of clinging to ancient enmities, we can show how much we have changed and how quickly we can make the further changes needed to take our place alongside others in the modern European family of nations. It will undoubtedly take time and perseverance. It will take the understanding and support of European Union member States. It will take leadership on the part of us all, and as past practice and successful examples show, it can be done.

This is a very serious commitment, and I would like to state here that it is our firm intention to explore every possibility to initiate a constructive debate, develop a real dialogue and foster close cooperation in every possible aspect with each and every country of

the region, including, notably, Serbia. Let the Balkans, which have been known so long for war and bloodshed, now be known for changing its ways and thereby change the world for the better.

I wish that, in this statement of hope, I could avoid having to speak about one of the most terrible human tragedies of our times, which has been unfolding before our eyes for two and a half years now. It has taken more than 100,000 human lives. It is destroying an entire generation and has brought a country to ruin. The recent large-scale use of chemical weapons constitutes a despicable crime against humanity that should not and must not remain unpunished.

Yet even within such a bleak picture, there has been a glimpse of hope. Yesterday, the Security Council finally adopted resolution 2118 (2013), on the removal and destruction of chemical weapons in Syria, which we welcome. It must now be quickly and fully implemented.

As I walked to this rostrum, I felt the extraordinary sense of responsibility that the leadership of a country implies. I felt the power of the historic forces pulsating in this building. I felt the new world it has shaped, the challenges it has met, the challenges it has failed to meet and the challenges we, the family of nations, struggle to meet today in this ever more interdependent and complicated world.

I ran for office on the theme of renaissance, but we all know that words spoken while campaigning are the easy part. What is hard is turning those words into deeds, actions, policies and projects that deliver change. I am confident, but I am humble enough to know I cannot do it alone. I have much to learn, and the United Nations is one of those places where one always finds people, individuals, groups and Governments who can teach with experience and lead by example.

We need support. We need partners and friends willing to be part of our journey for change. Renaissance means a new Albania. Building the renaissance is the challenge we face. It will take time. It will take perseverance. It will take the understanding and support of partners and friends. It will also take leadership, which I am committed to. But I know it can be done.

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

Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Antoni Martí Petit, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra.

Mr. Antoni Martí Petit, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Antoni Martí Petit, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Martí Petit (Andorra) (*spoke in Catalan; English text provided by the delegation*): I should like to begin by congratulating the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, Ambassador John Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda. We are fully convinced that he will be a manifest example of how small States can shoulder the responsibilities deriving from participating in the international community. It is both an honour and a great responsibility to address the Assembly on behalf of the people and the Government of the Principality of Andorra. It is doubly an honour as we are celebrating 20 years since our country became a Member of the United Nations.

In 1993, with the approval of the Constitution and our entry into the United Nations, Andorra's 700-year reality as a sovereign, democratic country that had no army and had remained neutral — few countries can make such a claim — in the heart of the Pyrenees was formally recognized. The visit of the Secretary-General to our country in April on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of our Constitution served to reiterate once again Andorra's commitment to the principles and values of the United Nations. Those principles and values must not remain mere high-sounding declarations and founding charters, but must be translated into greater effectiveness in improving people's lives.

It is particularly worth noting the emphasis that the United Nations has placed on development in recent years. I refer to the Millennium Development Goals adopted in 2000, which are to be assessed definitively in two years' time. It was particularly relevant to directly

link the main principles of peace, democracy and the negotiated resolution of conflicts and human rights with more specific matters of extreme importance, such as the eradication of poverty and hunger, universal primary education and the sustainability and protection of the environment.

At this session of the General Assembly, we have discussed and we will continue to discuss the definition of new goals to be introduced after 2015. However, we must not forget that all reports indicate that we shall reach that date without having accomplished most of the Goals set in 2000. Over the past 13 years we have advanced very little with respect to the sustainability and protection of the environment. Child mortality continues to increase in the poorest regions and countries. Achieving universal primary education by 2015 is totally unviable, and progress towards preventing and treating AIDS in the poorer countries remains inadequate. A great deal of work remains to be done.

It would not, however, be fair to emphasize only what we have not done and to forget all the progress that has been achieved in other areas. Since 2000, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty has been halved. The share of the world's population with access to safe drinking water rose from 76 per cent in 1990 to 89 per cent in 2010. Notable progress has been achieved in the fight against malaria and tuberculosis, and the goal of reducing hunger by 50 per cent in 2015 would appear to be achievable, which would be a great success. Andorra applauds the decision to conjoin the United Nations main principles with specific objectives to solve the great problems faced by humankind.

We must not give the impression that we are just a group of Heads of State and Government who have met in a First World city, full of fine words and good intentions, but completely ineffective when it comes to solving the problems threatening the lives and dignity of millions of people all over the world. Unfortunately, that is the image that we have at times projected to the international community. That is why I said that we applaud the fact that specific objectives have been set, that we evaluate progress towards meeting them and that we come here to explain that progress and shortcomings.

I hope the goals of the post-2015 agenda will be even more ambitious and that we will be able to dedicate even more effort to realizing them. That is because

the citizens of the world need to know that those who proclaim the expansion of democracy and the rule of law are the same people who have striven to reduce poverty, hunger and child mortality and to promote gender equality and universal education, which are so important. Otherwise, we will run the risk of citizens perceiving their institutions and the United Nations as being far removed from their everyday lives and real problems. Even more seriously, we would run the risk of words such as “democracy”, “human rights” and “international law” becoming meaningless.

A year ago, on the occasion of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, we condemned and repudiated the Benghazi attack. Today, one year later, we must all feel that we are citizens of Nairobi. We must stand with those who condemn terrorism and defend the principles of the United Nations. A year ago we used this platform to express our deep concern about the civil war in Syria, in particular the conflict’s devastating effects on the Syrian population. We said then that the conflict was creating a terrible dilemma for the international community — that of finding the right balance between a diplomatic resolution and respect for the rule of law.

The use of chemical weapons against civilians, which we condemn and which is contrary to all the values that the General Assembly upholds, places the international community in a scenario that requires firm and strong answers. The strong reaction to the situation led by the United States and France, along with the pragmatic attitude of Russia, has generated the momentum to advance in the search for that fair balance.

First is the issue of reaching agreement on the evidence and destruction of such chemical weapons; second is the issue of taking advantage of this dynamic in order to make greater diplomatic efforts to achieve a peaceful solution to the conflict. That will require new steps towards furthering the Geneva process. Nor must we forget the humanitarian dimension of the Syrian conflict, which is not only a priority but a terrible loss and a cruel emergency.

The resumption of negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis can also be included in the dynamic of our quest for the right balance, based on a two-State-solution, between the legitimate demand of the Palestinian people for a peaceful and democratic State

and the desire of Israelis to obtain assurances for their existence, safety and security.

Each and every time we are unable to resolve a conflict, we are jeopardizing the principles and values that are most valued by the international community: peace, security, dialogue, human rights and democracy. It is not always easy for the international community to find a fair and effective way of responding, perhaps because we are responding to the problems rather than preventing them. Therefore, I would like to return to what I said at the beginning of my speech. We cannot allow the principles and values of the United Nations to be relegated to high-flown declarations that have no positive impact on people’s lives. Peace, the rule of law and democracy must be accompanied by effective respect for human rights and a substantial improvement in the living conditions of people, which means less poverty, less hunger, more education and more gender equality. An ambitious development agenda that is implemented effectively is the best way of preventing conflicts and ensuring peace and security.

Early in my statement, in recalling Andorra’s admission into the United Nations 20 years ago, I referred to the more than seven centuries of peace in our country, which is a relevant point to make at an event such as this. I am sure that other Andorran representatives have raised this point. We are proud of our country’s peaceful history, but we are also keenly aware that Andorra, a small State, would probably not have enjoyed more than 700 years of peace had there been any great inequalities among its inhabitants, had the laws not been fair or had tyranny reigned instead of a parliamentary regime, since there cannot be peace without justice in Andorra or anywhere else.

All of us who are here today, all of us who have spoken from this rostrum this week, are obligated to ensure peace and justice, democracy and development, human rights and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. All the principles and values to which we are firmly committed must always go hand in hand. It is a long and difficult path, but it is the only way in which a better world can possibly come about.

Referring to what President Obama said a few days ago (see A/68/PV.5), it is obvious that we live in a world of imperfect choices. This difficulty must not be used as an excuse for our failure to act. As President Hollande stated from this very rostrum (see A/68/PV.5),

the United Nations has a responsibility to act, and the worst decision is to take no action at all.

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

Mr. Antoni Martí Petit, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Dato' Sri Mohd Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak, Prime Minister of Malaysia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Malaysia.

Dato' Sri Mohd Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Dato' Sri Mohd Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak, Prime Minister of Malaysia, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Razak: Allow me to begin by congratulating the President of the General Assembly on his election. I offer him Malaysia's full cooperation and support as he seeks to further the cause of peace and prosperity.

Three years ago, I stood before the General Assembly and called for a global movement of moderates (see A/65/PV.19). It was a call to reject extremism in all its forms, because the real divide is not between East and West or between the developed and developing worlds or between Muslims, Christians and Jews. It is between moderates and extremists of all religions.

Much has changed since 2010, when a current of protest and reform surged through the Middle East and North Africa. Out of the heat of the Arab Spring, new questions arose about the pace of democratic change, the role of Islam in politics, and the need for more inclusive development.

But the search for answers to those questions has been put on hold. As authoritarian regimes have fallen, and Governments have been swept away by political change, extremists have tried to fill that space. Motivated by ideology, politics and religion, they have sought refuge from the hard work of development in the unholy practice of violence. Conflicts have spilled across borders, inflaming old tensions and igniting new

ones. All over the world, extremism is claiming lives and crushing opportunity. This affects all of us, but it is one people of one faith who suffer the most. I believe the greatest threat to Muslims today comes not from the outside world, but from within.

The conflict between Sunni and Shia threatens the lives and livelihoods of millions of Muslims. Our religion, which was founded on peace and premised on tolerance, is now being twisted by extremists who are deploying false arguments to foster division and justify violence. Across the Islamic world, extremists are wrapping their perverse agenda in religious cloth, tearing families, countries and the Ummah apart. With each new atrocity, tensions are wound tighter and peace seems further away.

The corrosive influence of extremism cannot be countered easily, but we are not too powerless to act. I believe that moderation in religion and the political process can stem the loss of life and liberty in the Muslim world. Behind the tragic violence, there is a battle being waged for the future of Islam. By reaffirming our commitment to moderation and solving the political problems that drive instability, we can seize back the centre ground. We can marginalize the extremists and advance an agenda for peace, harmony and justice.

Around the world, Muslims have watched in despair as conflict tears into some of our oldest communities. Rarely in our history has the Ummah faced violence on this scale. Right now, the world's attention is rightly focused on Syria. United Nations investigators have concluded that the focus of the war has shifted along ethnic and religious lines and become overtly sectarian. A conflict that began with anti-Government protests threatens to descend into a war of ethnic cleansing.

With fighters from Hizbullah engaging on Syrian soil, the conflict now threatens Lebanon, too. Last month, after car bombs killed dozens in Beirut, 42 people died in explosions outside Sunni mosques. Communities are dividing along religious lines, with hard-line preachers urging violence between Sunni and Shia.

Meanwhile, the security situation in Iraq continues to unravel, as Sunni extremist groups and Shia militia struggle for control. Over the past four months, nearly 3,000 people have been killed. In the past week alone, three funerals have been bombed in Baghdad. Women and children have been blown apart while mourning. Again, the violence is carried out between Sunni

and Shia. In one Iraqi town, four children from one Shia family were slain with knives. In another, local people — neighbours for generations — have built blast walls to keep themselves apart. Forced displacements are growing.

In Pakistan, bombings have wrecked the city of Quetta, killing hundreds. Revenge attacks spread to Lahore and bombs have been detonated in Karachi. In August, militants ambushed buses, dividing the passengers according to belief. Those who answered incorrectly were executed.

Each of these conflicts has a distinct cause, but they follow a darkly familiar path: emboldened by political failures, radical preachers and militant groups turn civil conflicts into wider religious wars. Yet the preaching of such violence is completely counter to the Islamic faith. The Holy Koran not only condemns suicide, unjust war and retribution by force; it also makes clear the Prophet's desire for Muslims to live in peace with one another and their neighbours. It says "And if they incline to peace, then incline to it and rely upon Allah" (*The Holy Koran, VIII:61*) and that "whoever kills a soul, unless for a soul or for corruption in the land — it is as if he had slain mankind entirely" (*ibid., V:32*). It also holds that "there shall be no compulsion in religion" (*ibid., II:256*).

It should come as no surprise that there is no scriptural basis for the atrocities being committed in the name of Islam. Under the six higher objectives of Islamic law, the first and foremost is the protection and preservation of life. Yet even during Ramadan, our holy month, when contemplation, devotion and compassion reign uppermost in Muslim minds, the extremists would not stop. More than 4,400 people died this Ramadan in Syria, 371 in Iraq and 120 in Pakistan. This is a burden we can no longer afford to bear. It is time to end the killing; it is time to concentrate instead on building a common agenda for peace and prosperity.

There are two things we can do. First of all, I believe that peace-loving Muslims — the overwhelming majority of Muslims — should unite against the extremists who use our religion as an excuse to commit violence. And one of the most powerful tools we have to do so is *al-wasatiyyah* — the practice of moderation. The Holy Koran says that "we have made you into a community that is justly balanced" (*ibid., II:143*). This concept of balance and moderation, of social justice within our faith, is a central tenet of Islam. It asks of us

that we hold to the principles displayed by the Prophet Muhammad in the Medina Charter.

Our task therefore is to reclaim our faith by articulating clearly the true nature of Islam as a religion of peace, moderation and tolerance. We should speak that message clearly so that all may hear it and stand firm against the minority who use Islam to further violent and unjust ends. We should not mistake moderation for weakness. To face those baying for violence and call instead for calm is a sign not of frailty, but of strength. Muslim leaders should speak up and condemn such violence, lest their silence be mistaken for acceptance.

Moderation can be practiced at the national level, as it is in Malaysia, by choosing mutual respect and inclusivity and strengthening the bonds between different communities and faiths. All countries should reinforce their commitment to the principles of moderation, not just in religion, but for sustainable development and stable economic growth.

Moderation can also direct regional policy. It sits at the heart of Malaysia's efforts to bring peace to the southern Philippines and to Thailand's restive South. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which endorsed the Global Movement of Moderates, has made a commitment to the peaceful settlement and non-use of force in territorial disputes.

At the international level, moderation can guide our approach to the great global challenges of our age: violent extremism, sustainable development and equitable growth.

Secondly, we should give our all to resolve the political problems that raise tensions in the Muslim world, starting with Syria. We cannot underline strongly enough the need for a Syrian-led inclusive political process. Malaysia is against any unilateral action to resolve the conflict. All sides must come together to work out a political settlement. We welcome the recent United States-Russia framework agreement, condemn without reservation the use of chemical weapons, and call on the international community to intensify its efforts to explore all possible diplomatic options for peace under the auspices of the United Nations.

We must also find the vision and political will to commit to a just solution for Palestine. We fervently hope that progress towards a viable Palestinian State, based on pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, will be made, and that the United States

and other members of the Quartet will continue to play their role as honest brokers in the process. Only with peace can there be development and dignity for the Palestinian people.

Finally, we should continue to focus on building stronger and more prosperous societies predicated on the rule of law and the practice of democracy. The Arab Spring showed that the Muslim world is crying out for change. Governments must answer that call. We must provide good governance to fight corruption, create jobs to tackle poverty, and deliver sustainable growth that builds a world of opportunity for our citizens. We must create economies in which people can fulfil their own aspirations, not those of extremists.

By acting to solve our most difficult political problems, we can bring an end to the immediate suffering in Syria, in Palestine and in the wider world. By committing to the cause of moderation, Muslims can secure something even greater. We can reclaim our religion, choosing harmony and acceptance over division and conflict, and we can broadcast a vision of Islam as it is understood by Muslims around the world — as a religion of peace, tolerance and moderation.

Last month, when militants attacked those buses in Pakistan, a 19 year-old Sunni student named Ghulam Mustafa stood up for such a vision. Confronting the Sunni gunmen, he said killing Shiites was wrong. Ghulam was shot dead, but his life was not lost in vain. With guns to their heads, the Sunnis on the bus refused to identify the Shia passengers whom the gunmen wanted to kill. In their defiance, we see the true measure of courage and the true test of faith. Under unimaginable pressure, facing the greatest possible threat, they chose to stand with their brothers and sisters. They chose unity over division. Faced with unimaginable pressure, and the greatest possible threat, we must summon the will to do the same.

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

Dato' Sri Mohd Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Khil Raj Regmi, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal.

Mr. Khil Raj Regmi, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Khil Raj Regmi, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Regmi (Nepal): Allow me to congratulate the President of the General Assembly on his election to serve during the sixty-eighth session of the Assembly. I repose full confidence in him to steer the deliberations of the Assembly to a fruitful conclusion, and I assure him of our full cooperation in the discharge of his important responsibilities.

I take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to the outgoing President, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, for having successfully presided over the Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his able and visionary leadership and excellent reports on issues before the Assembly.

I bring with me a message of peace and non-violence from Lumbini, the birthplace of Gautama Buddha, the apostle of peace, and the greetings and best wishes of the Government and people of Nepal. Nepal has unflinching faith in the principles and purposes of the United Nations as enshrined in its Charter. Nepal upholds the centrality and indispensability of the United Nations in forging global peace and security, development and human freedom, as well as its role in the promotion of multilateralism, befitting the needs of our age.

It is an irony that one eighth of the world population has to live without enough food at a time when 150 per cent of the Earth's annual regenerative capacity is being consumed, and that nearly 1 billion people will still be forced to live in extreme poverty in 2015. Looking at this unfair and unjust scenario, one can hardly envision global sustainability without a system of economic growth and development that ensures the progress and

well-being of people on this planet in an equitable, inclusive and judicious manner. We can hardly realize sustainable development when pervasive poverty, unsustainable consumption and production patterns, and spiralling environmental degradation are allowed to continue.

Nepal attaches great importance to the full attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, our countries demonstrated the wisdom to take the MDGs forward with greater vigour through universally applicable sustainable development goals. The report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda reminds us that there is a need to build on the foundations of the MDGs, leaving no one behind in global development efforts. Clearly, any new development agenda that does not keep the elimination of extreme poverty at centre stage loses the spirit of sustainability. I therefore call upon all Member States to direct concerted efforts to completing the unfinished tasks of the MDGs before embarking on a post-2015 development agenda and any subsequent sustainable development goals.

The High-level Panel has set forth a vision for shaping a common destiny for the global community through inclusive economic growth, human progress and sustainable development. That collective vision needs to be translated into concrete action with deliverable goals and targets that can be measured globally and locally, based on the Rio principles.

We underscore the need to breathe life into the post-2015 development framework with the principles of universal human rights, equity and sustainability. To that end, we should take into account its global applicability, on the one hand, and regional, national and subnational circumstances and priorities, on the other. We believe that all processes relating to the sustainable development goals should reconcile these fundamental aspects, especially in the interests of the poor and marginalized countries and societies. Nepal is constructively engaged in mainstreaming the concerns of the least developed countries (LDCs) into the new global development agenda.

While no country is immune to the ominous effects of climate change, countries like Nepal disproportionately have to bear the brunt, in stark contrast to their negligible contribution to greenhouse-gas emissions.

Nepal is the fifth most vulnerable country in terms of climate change risks. The risk of multiple disaster in overwhelming proportions and the increased vulnerability we have to face also threaten our fragile mountain ecosystem and fabulous diversity, as well as lives, livelihoods and heritage in Nepal.

We welcome the understanding reached in Doha by the Member States on a firm timetable to adopt a universal climate agreement, during the eighteenth session of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We call on all for an early conclusion to climate change negotiations, with binding emission commitments and guaranteed, enhanced, predictable and easily accessible financing for the most vulnerable countries, such as Nepal, to enable their speedy implementation of suitable adaptation and mitigation measures.

Least developed countries face severe structural constraints and multiple vulnerabilities, and are the furthest off track in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed-on development targets. The Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (A/CONF.219/3/Rev.1) has outlined eight priority areas to be implemented in order to overcome those constraints and enable half of the LDCs to graduate from that status by the year 2020. However, in order to achieve that urgent but ambitious goal, external and internal enabling environments must be created through synergistic efforts on the part of the LDCs and their development partners. Integrating the Programme of Action's priorities into all our relevant plans and programmes and the ongoing post-2015 development discourse in the United Nations is a must to that end.

Nepal has set itself the goal of graduating from LDC status by 2022. The Government is committed to pursuing that goal by mainstreaming the internationally defined priority areas. I ask for genuine partnerships and enhanced cooperation in efforts towards a full, effective and speedy implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and other internationally agreed-on development goals, with sufficient and predictable funding mechanisms for our goal to become a reality.

Nepal's ability to benefit from trade-induced growth is constrained by the structural problem posed by the high transit-transport costs that its landlocked nature imposes. Our remoteness from markets, marginalization

and lack of integration into regional and global value chains all limit the competitiveness of our trade and our attractiveness as an investment destination. Despite the tremendous advances in technology and innovation that global trade has benefited from, Nepal has yet to catch up with that trend, owing to its lack of the basic transport and trade infrastructure that facilitates trade.

We look forward to the 10-year review process of the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries, and to forging a successor plan of action capable of addressing landlocked developing countries' specific concerns and development aspirations.

LDCs are still waiting for results from the Doha Development Round and the full implementation of the decisions of the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Hong Kong and subsequent meetings. Forty-nine LDCs represent less than 1 per cent of world trade. The recent Fourth Global Review of Aid for Trade further confirmed its capacity to deliver and noted that together with the Enhanced Integrated Framework as a vehicle, it helps to address supply-side constraints, enhance productive capacity and promote economic diversification. We will participate in the ninth Ministerial Conference of the WTO in Bali in December, with the expectation that LDCs' core issues — the full implementation of the duty- and quota-free provision, the adoption of simple and flexible preferential rules of origin and the operationalization of a service waiver for LDCs — will be addressed effectively.

The structural deficiency and democratic deficit of globalization must be addressed by making it more inclusive and responsive to the needs of poor and marginalized people around the world. More attention must be given to international migration and its potential contribution to the development of countries of destination and origin, and to ensure that globalization is also fair to the bottom billion of the South. International migration is a cross-cutting developmental issue of common concern.

Migration is significant all over the world, but more so in countries like Nepal, where nearly 1,500 people leave for foreign employment every day. While remittances constitute nearly 25 per cent of Nepal's gross domestic product, Nepalese migrant workers fill

labour-market gaps and contribute significantly to the well-being of the people and the economic development of their destination countries. It is extremely important to keep human values and dignity at the centre of administration and governance related to migration. It is also essential to define the roles and responsibilities of countries of origin, transit and destination in order to ensure the basic rights of migrant populations and show respect for their contribution to development.

North-South, South-South and triangular types of cooperation are becoming more significant than ever before for forging an inclusive development agenda and ensuring that equality and justice prevail in the world. It is vital that the North make good on its commitments for resources to the developing South. Likewise, South-South cooperation should be promoted by sharing development experience and transferring technology, and by exploiting latent synergies and complementarities in developing and integrating trade, investment and infrastructure facilities.

We uphold the view, close to the ideals of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), that an environment of lasting peace and security, conducive to people-centric development, can be created only through strengthened multilateralism. As a distinct multilateral forum and moral voice of the developing world, NAM has a greater role to play in fostering international peace and security at the United Nations and beyond. We believe that NAM should pursue the issues of reforming the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, which shape global social and economic policies in general, and financial architecture in particular, in order to make them more inclusive and responsive to the needs of the developing world.

Nepal reiterates its call for the general and complete disarmament of all weapons of mass destruction — biological, chemical, radiological and nuclear — in a time-bound manner. Our efforts to achieve the goal of total nuclear disarmament must be matched by efforts to achieve the non-proliferation of other weapons of mass destruction. As host this year to the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament for Asia and the Pacific in Kathmandu, we stand for strengthening regional initiatives for peace through dialogue, education and awareness, and for subsequent confidence-building measures. Nepal supports establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, keeping outer space free of weapons and keeping small arms and light weapons out of the reach of illicit hands.

The Arms Trade Treaty is a landmark achievement of this year.

Nepal unequivocally condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations perpetrated anywhere in the world under any pretext. Our hearts go out to the victims of terrorism, most recently in Kenya and in Pakistan, which only strengthens our resolve to fight the menace. We call for the early conclusion of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism to fight that heinous crime against humanity.

As a country emerging from conflict, Nepal underscores the importance of addressing issues of exclusion, discrimination, inequity, corruption and the violation of human rights, and it also supports the strengthening of the rule of law at the national and international levels.

Nepal is concerned about the long, drawn-out peace process in the Middle East. We are overdue in fulfilling our commitment to a comprehensive, lasting and judicious solution to the problem. We support the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to an independent and sovereign Palestine State, based on United Nations resolutions and a solution that enables Israel and Palestine to live as neighbours within secure and recognized international boundaries.

The situation in Syria is of serious concern to us all, due mainly to the violent conflict and its attendant large-scale humanitarian tragedy. We believe the international community should facilitate the easing of tensions and confrontation through diplomacy and dialogue towards a peaceful and durable political solution. We condemn the recent use of chemical weapons in Syria and call for the total destruction of chemical-weapons stockpiles in all parts of the world.

I reiterate my country's principled position that the protracted embargo on Cuba is unjustified and needs to be ended immediately and unconditionally.

Nepal supports the early and peaceful unification of the Korean peninsula through dialogue and negotiations based on the will of the Korean people.

Needless to say, making women partners in all efforts for peace, security and development at all levels, treating them equally without discrimination, and ensuring the protection of their basic rights to unleash their potential have positive implications for the advancement of society as a whole. Moreover, their mainstreaming and empowerment through access to

power and productive resources directly contribute to comprehensive development. In Nepal, constitutional, legislative and institutional provisions ensure equal rights to women and their meaningful participation in and contribution to society, focusing on capacity-building, institutional strengthening, legal protection, empowerment and gender mainstreaming.

We are committed to our national, regional and international commitments and obligations to human rights, despite our protracted political transition, low level of economic growth and capacity constraints. Peace, democracy, human rights and development reinforce each other and impinge upon the people's uninterrupted participation in governance and an inclusive development process. The National Human Rights Commission and several other human rights institutions seek to safeguard the human rights of our people. We are strengthening their institutional capacity to deliver on their constitutional and statutory responsibilities, including ensuring the rights of women, children and persons with disabilities. The current national plan, policies and programmes of the Government are geared towards the empowerment of all the people, regardless of class, creed, gender or ethnicity, and embarking on a path of socioeconomic development that is inclusive, fair, equitable and just for all, in line with the country's national and international commitments.

Nepal is a founding member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and a member of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), through which we are actively involved in forging a synergy of collective efforts in several areas of regional cooperation, including poverty reduction, trade expansion, investment promotion, connectivity improvement and socioeconomic advancement. Nepal is constructively engaged with arrangements such as SAARC and BIMSTEC for peace and prosperity at the regional level and with the United Nations at the global level.

My delegation looks to the United Nations as the repository of our hopes and a true upholder of the universal values of peace, justice, equality, freedom and human dignity. Given that the United Nations mandate and structures were founded nearly seven decades ago, its reform has been a continuous process aimed at meeting the growing requirements of changing times. There are growing concerns that the United Nations

bodies and the Bretton Woods institutions should be made more democratic, accountable, financially stable and responsive to all, as their decisions pervade the social, economic and financial architectures of nation States. Nepal supports the timely re-engineering of those institutions in order to ensure the representation of developing countries in their decision-making.

Nepal holds the view that the reform of the Security Council should reflect changes in contemporary political and economic realities. It should be more representative in composition, transparent in functioning, democratic in character, balanced between the North and South, and above all be capable of taking prompt action when peace is threatened.

For over six decades now, Nepal has consistently contributed to the work of the United Nations, particularly through peacekeeping missions around the world, including in the most challenging situations. More than 100,000 peacekeepers have served so far with distinct professionalism, and 63 soldiers have laid down their precious lives in the line of duty.

My country, Nepal, is in a crucial phase of taking the peace process to a logical conclusion and institutionalizing the gains made in the democratic rights of the people, which came through various continuous movements and struggles carried out over decades. The country-driven and owned peace process enjoyed the support of the United Nations and the international community, for which we express our deep appreciation.

The first Constituent Assembly, elected through the democratic process in 2008, expired in May 2012 without completing its mandate of making an inclusive constitution. In the aftermath of the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, attempts to form a consensus Government, led by leaders of political parties, could not coalesce in the absence of general consensus, even after a series of attempts through dialogue and negotiations. The country started to slide into political uncertainty in the absence of certainty that an election would be held, and more complications appeared imminent.

To overcome the situation, the major political parties were guided by their collective wisdom to work out an alternative outlet that resulted in the formation of an apolitical and neutral Government, under the leadership of the Chief Justice, with the aim of holding free, fair and credible elections to a fresh Constituent Assembly. In view of the demands of the situation to

form a Constituent Assembly that would function as a pivotal institution for the balance of power, I had to accept the responsibility in the larger interest of the nation and the people and as a responsible citizen.

We have made the necessary preparations to hold the elections on 19 November this year. We have been trying our best to listen to the dissenting parties and to bring them on board for the election through the political process. There is no alternative to elections to revitalize the democratic process and ensure political stability. The election will provide a mandate by the people for writing a constitution, advance civil and political rights, ensure people's sovereignty in decision-making in State affairs and institutionalize multiparty democracy, federalism and republicanism. It will be instrumental in completing the remaining tasks of the peace process. The settlement of political issues through the democratic process will ensure political stability and, eventually, will open up prospects for broad-based economic development, to which the people have aspired for so long. I express my sincere thanks to the international community for the moral and material support made available for the elections and would like to convey how meaningful that gesture of goodwill is to us.

The President took the Chair.

It is my hope and belief that, with continuing understanding, support and assistance on the part of all friends of Nepal, we will be able to go beyond the protracted political transition and focus on the consolidation of the political accomplishments made so far, the further democratization of the country and economic development, so that we may graduate from least-developed-country status by 2022. We are fully confident that democracy provides leverage for bridging differences and promoting peace, tranquillity and prosperity.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Khil Raj Regmi, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of the Republic of India

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of India.

Mr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Singh (India): Let me first of all congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. We wish you every success and assure you of our fullest cooperation.

At a time when the world is facing multiple challenges, there is renewed attention to the role of the United Nations in advancing international peace, security and prosperity. However, never has scepticism about the capacity of the United Nations to do so been higher, or the external environment less propitious for multilateralism.

The nearly seven decades of work of the United Nations hold one simple lesson: that we are most successful when we adhere to the letter and spirit of the United Nations Charter, basing our decisions on the widest possible consensus and balancing equitably the needs and responsibilities of nations at different stages and levels of development.

In those seven decades, the world has changed in fundamental ways. Asia and Africa are independent and resurgent. Countries are now not only more interdependent, but also face new, increasingly complex challenges. For multilateralism to remain relevant and effective in the future, multilateral institutions need to be reformed urgently. The place to begin is right here.

The Security Council must be reformed and restructured to reflect current political realities. More developing countries should be included as both permanent and non-permanent members.

The multilateral financial institutions should also enable an enhanced voice for developing countries in their decision-making structures. Multilateral efforts must guide our quest for peace and security, wherever they are threatened, and the centrality and contribution

of the United Nations system to development must be restored.

Those objectives require the building of a new international consensus suited to our time and rooted in today's realities. It is only such a plan of action that will enable the United Nations to meet the twin tests of legitimacy, and effectiveness and efficiency.

We commend your choice of the theme of this session. Setting the stage for the post-2015 development agenda is especially important as we deal with a lingering global economic slowdown and continuing volatility in financial markets. These have imposed disproportionately heavy costs on developing countries and the vulnerable groups within them.

Growth and inclusive development are naturally important for all our countries. They require a supportive international economic environment, enhanced investment flows, including from multilateral development banks, the transfer of technology, and an open multilateral trading regime.

But the problems of the more than 1 billion people living in abject poverty around the world need to be attacked more directly. Poverty remains a major political and economic challenge, and its eradication requires special attention and a new collective thrust. That priority should anchor the post-2015 development agenda, which should be shaped by the Member States so that it enjoys the broadest possible support and acceptance.

Issues of peace, security, human rights and governance are important and need to be addressed. But we will fall short of realizing an ambitious post-2015 development agenda if we focus merely on governance issues at the cost of robust economic growth. This agenda should not be merely about reprioritizing domestic spending, but also about fostering genuine international partnerships between developing and developed countries to bring about change. All of us need the policy space necessary to set our own domestic priorities.

No one knows the condition of developing countries better than the developing countries themselves. It is therefore important that the United Nations set clear and concise goals and provide practical and well-defined means of implementation, including an adequate flow of resources and the transfer of technology, taking the views of developing countries fully into account.

A meaningful post-2015 agenda must place equally high priority on food and nutrition, health, education, infrastructure, water, sanitation, energy and combating discrimination against women. Especially critical is women's equal access to economic opportunities and ensuring that they do not become victims of violence or the targets of prejudice.

In India, we have sought to promote inclusive development in multiple ways. Legislation has broadened access to education and secured rural livelihoods. We are now building the world's largest programme for food security. Digital technology is being harnessed to improve the delivery of public services and benefits to the people.

India is proud of its partnerships with developing countries. Using modest resources, we have built strong ties with Africa and the least developed countries. We are committed to building 100 institutions in Africa and have offered capacity-building support, including thousands of scholarships, and made available over \$9.5 billion of concessional assistance. India and Africa are engaging through the India-Africa Forum Summit process. We also look forward to participating actively in the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, to be held in Samoa in 2014, and to contributing to its outcome.

Climate change is one of the defining challenges of our times. We must summon the political will necessary to craft a robust global response to climate change on the basis of equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

We are deeply concerned about the future of West Asia, a region with which India shares deep bonds of history and one that is critical for our energy security as well as the livelihoods of the nearly 7 million Indians who work and live in the region. Not only is the increasingly lethal conflict in Syria a tragedy for the people of Syria, but it also threatens stability and security in the region and beyond. It has been made worse by the use of chemical weapons. The use of chemical weapons, whosoever may have deployed them, must be condemned in the strongest possible terms. India strongly supports the elimination of chemical-weapons material and equipment in Syria. There is no military solution to that conflict. We must intensify efforts to end the conflict and seek a political settlement. It is essential that the "Geneva II" conference be convened at the earliest opportunity.

We are encouraged that direct talks have resumed between Israel and Palestine. India supports the early realization of a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel. We also remain committed to the Palestinian quest for full membership in the United Nations.

In our own region, Afghanistan prepares for a historic political, security and economic transition. The international community must support the people of Afghanistan through this transition and beyond in combating terrorism, preserving the progress of the past decade and creating a stable, united and prosperous Afghanistan.

Terrorism remains a grave threat to security and stability everywhere and exacts a heavy toll of innocent lives around the world. From Africa to Asia, we have seen several manifestations of this menace in the last few days alone. State-sponsored, cross-border terrorism is of particular concern to India, also on account of the fact that the epicentre of terrorism in our region is located in our neighbourhood, in Pakistan.

From this rostrum yesterday, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan spoke of making a new beginning (see A/68/PV.15). I reciprocate his sentiments and am looking forward to meeting him tomorrow. India is sincerely committed to resolving all issues with Pakistan, including the issue of Jammu and Kashmir, through bilateral dialogue on the basis of the Simla Agreement. However, for progress to be made, it is imperative that the territory of Pakistan and the areas under its control not be utilized for aiding and abetting terrorism directed against India. It is equally important that the terrorist machinery that draws its sustenance from Pakistan be shut down. There must be a clear understanding of the fact that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India and that there can never, ever, be a compromise with the unity and territorial integrity of India.

We need to renew our commitment, especially here at the United Nations, to concerted, cohesive and continuing global action against terrorism. There can be no tolerance for States sheltering, arming, training or financing terrorists. Nor can States absolve themselves of the responsibility to prevent their territories from being used to launch acts of terrorism.

The increasingly complex challenges to international peace and security require a new international consensus to be built, whether it is in the field of cybersecurity, non-proliferation or terrorism. This year, 25 years after Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi put forward a comprehensive action plan for a nuclear-weapon-free and non-violent world order, we must strengthen efforts against nuclear proliferation and pursue time-bound, universal, non-discriminatory, phased and verifiable nuclear disarmament. We must also guard against terrorists and non-State actors gaining access to sensitive materials and technologies.

Two years from now, the United Nations will be 70 years old. Every new State born during that period of 70 years has taken its place in the Assembly not just with pride but also with hope. The year 2015 will be a time to celebrate our successes and ensure that the United Nations is ready for this century, by completing much-needed reforms of the Organization and its Security Council, developing an ambitious and balanced post-2015 development agenda and demonstrating our capacity to cooperate effectively for durable peace and security in the world we live in.

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

Mr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. José Maria Pereira Neves, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde.

Mr. José Maria Pereira Neves, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. José Maria Pereira Neves, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Pereira Neves (Cape Verde) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): I would first like to salute you, Ambassador John Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly. Mr. President, we are sure you will bring all your experience and wisdom

to bear in the conduct of our debates and in carrying out the General Assembly's important tasks.

At the outset, I would like to commend the remarkable work the United Nations has done so that we have the opportunity to advance the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to work together today to set a new post-2015 development agenda. Indeed, that is a global challenge that, besides inaugurating a new era in global development, challenges us to meet the eight Millennium Development Goals. The focus of this session, as was declared by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, is fairness and dignity for all, a task that challenges everyone and requires new attitudes and behaviours, based on the premise that a better world is possible.

Cape Verde, a small island developing State that has been independent for less than 39 years, has already achieved most of the targets envisioned and will continue its efforts to meet all the Millennium Development Goals. Thanks to a transformation agenda that we have been promoting since 2001, when Cape Verde was on the list of least developed countries, our nation has made significant progress in the socioeconomic and political arenas and has improved the people's overall standard of living. Our focus on and investment in access to education, health care, water and food have been clear, unambiguous and systematic, as have our efforts to competitively integrate our economy into the international market, with the support of our international partners.

At the same time, the transformation agenda, which is fully aligned with our MDG commitments and targets, has created the conditions for Cape Verde's historic transition to the realm of middle-income countries, although, owing to the strong impact of the international crisis, which has to some extent put the brakes on the momentum of the country's ongoing progress, it still falls within the lower-middle-income scale. Our indicators show that we have reduced poverty by half, and it is clearly on a downward trend. Our current challenge is the close monitoring essential to preventing any setbacks that might result from the global economic situation and its impact on Cape Verde. In fact, despite our graduation to middle-income-country status, our indicators still show high rates of poverty, inequality and unemployment, as well as insufficient access to many goods and services, and we are still short of our goal of achieving well-being and a high standard of living for all our people.

Cape Verdeans are ready to push for the evolution of the terms of the Millennium Development Goals and replace “reducing” extreme poverty with “eradicating” it, leaving none behind. Moreover, we in Cape Verde are ready to put the issue of economic sustainability at the centre of the country’s development agenda and have already begun to do so. We recognize that “transformation” in Cape Verde is more than a key word; it is an agenda for work stemming from inclusive growth. In addition, we have been creating accountable institutions, open to all, in order to ensure good governance. Based on that perspective, we have refocused our internal policy, and are thus mobilizing our national will while appealing for support from our international partners, towards the goal of reaching advanced-development status by 2030. That is what it means for us to commit to a post-2015 agenda.

We are currently in a transition period. The instruments we have created on our own are not enough to respond to the questions of today or to prepare for a future moving towards advanced development, unless that is a part of a global agenda led by the United Nations and involving intensive international cooperation and partnership at both the multilateral and bilateral levels. Cape Verde is committed to that joint effort. Cape Verdeans are deeply focused on global issues, such as climate change, hunger and malnutrition and the various forms of inequality, as well as the importance of ensuring environmental sustainability and national and international partnerships in support of global development.

Climate change is a pressing problem of our times that must be addressed with urgency and a great sense of responsibility. The world has reached record highs in terms of emissions and the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which is now at about 400 parts per million. That could mean the destruction of our development efforts and, even worse, the serious exacerbation of social tensions, which could potentially open the door to both national and regional conflicts. Similarly, the effects of climate change on global food security should be stressed. Ocean acidification is increasing at a rate that has not been seen in 55 million years. Ultimately, the disappearance of numerous marine species has become inevitable. We must all confront this issue, which endangers our common future, and take the necessary decisions, fulfilling our financial commitments aimed at adaptation, particularly in the most vulnerable countries.

With respect to the post-2015 agenda, the issue of employment dominates the concerns of Cape Verdeans. The subject occupies the top spot among all consulted, who identify employment as essential to achieving economic and human development. Another serious issue has to do with the sustainability of social security. We need a more universal welfare system, and we must create and introduce instruments for that purpose. That is possible only with a more dynamic economy.

There will be no transformation agenda if we do not create solid, sustainable foundations for social protection. To do so, we need to grow and expand wealth, as well as provide a greater number of decent jobs. We need to create a wave of modernization for society and for the competitive factors of our economy, so as to improve the business environment and attract foreign investment. The larger result will be economic growth and the creation of wealth to induce the improvement of indicators that matter. We must recognize that there is room for improvement, particularly in terms of reducing State bureaucracy and increasing competitiveness, as well as in terms of making foreign investment more streamlined and more efficient for entrepreneurship. We urge our citizens to be productive, competitive and prosperous, without losing the vast Cape Verdean capacity for generosity, solidarity and responsibility.

The continuation of the international crisis and its impact on all countries creates serious problems for the entire world community. In the case of Cape Verde, the situation poses serious challenges that we must overcome, namely, obstacles to the acceleration of economic growth, the promotion of employment and the reduction of poverty. At this sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, we reiterate our commitment to peace and dialogue, within the parameters enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Our vision of the United Nations is of a more cohesive and united Organization in which efforts are undertaken for the prosperity of nations. Our vision of the General Assembly is of a great forum for dialogue on the global challenges of our planet and humankind, and our vision of the Security Council is of a body with a more balanced representation that is better suited to the geopolitical developments that the world has known since 1945.

This is a unique opportunity for Cape Verde, a Portuguese-speaking country, to reaffirm its commitment to cultural diversity and, in its quest for

multiculturalism, which is its prerogative, to call for the Portuguese language — the fifth most widely spoken language in the world, connecting States and peoples across five continents — to be recognized as an official or a working language of international organizations, particularly the United Nations.

We wish to make one more comment as we position ourselves, following the report of the United Nations Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic on the alleged use of chemical weapons in the Ghouta area of Damascus on 21 August (A/67/997), which we have studied with close attention. We welcome the progress made towards dialogue, particularly the joint search for peaceful solutions, especially at the United Nations. We are against the use of weapons of mass destruction, and we will continue to align with subsequent initiatives towards their eradication. As we are against war and belligerence, we advocate for the implementation of a global strategy to combat violence.

We wish to express our solidarity with the Government and the people of Kenya, as well as our unequivocal condemnation of the reprehensible acts of barbarism and human savagery that occurred last Saturday in Nairobi.

We urge all the members of the General Assembly to reach a historic agreement in favour of the environment. The main objective is to implement the established Goals in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled “The future we want” (resolution 66/288, annex). We also reaffirm our resolute willingness to cooperate with everyone to reduce regional and global tensions, so as to broaden the understanding of sovereignties, freedoms and human rights.

Finally, we reiterate our preference for the joint definition of new goals that will stipulate the fundamentals for the prosperity of countries and for the welfare of the world’s people, crafting together a post-2015 agenda. Cape Verde is committed to making its contribution to the creation of a new goals scenario to succeed and complement the Millennium Development Goals. Our common commitment is meeting the eight Goals and our shared responsibility is creating a new post-2015 agenda in favour of sustainable development. The manner in which we do it will determine our common destiny. The importance of our decisions and the responsibility to make them within the

United Nations framework are evident. Let us get to work to create a new global dynamic that leads to a joint vision for promoting progress. Cape Verde is firmly committed to the establishment of a post-2015 development agenda; that is also the future we want. We assure the Assembly that we will do everything in our power in the name of a better future, filled with freedom, equality and prosperity. The international community can count on us.

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

Mr. José Maria Pereira Neves, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Leo Dion, Deputy Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea.

Mr. Dion (Papua New Guinea): I am honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of Prime Minister Peter O’Neill and the people of Papua New Guinea. I also wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly. We welcome your overarching theme of “The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage”, advocating a solid global foundation for a results-oriented partnership that is people-centred and inclusive in our common pursuit of sustainable development. Papua New Guinea pledges its support to you as you take on that important task. We acknowledge the contributions of your predecessor and wish him well in his future endeavours.

I take this opportunity to address the Assembly on the state of our economy, highlight the challenges before us and put forward the policies and development plans of my Government.

Papua New Guinea continues to be a vibrant and thriving democracy. However, as experienced by other developing nations, the road has not been easy in terms of the political, economic and social challenges that have confronted us domestically and globally. In the past, our development efforts have been littered with missed economic opportunities. My Government is therefore determined to reset the development and wealth-creation direction for our nation.

We have set a transformative agenda for our country and people under our long-term Papua New Guinea Vision 2050 policy framework and five-year

medium-term development plan. We are determined to achieve those development plans, as they continue to reinforce our work aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals and making progress on the post-2015 development agenda.

Our economy continues to record unprecedented growth levels, which can be attributed to a stable Government with responsible and sound monetary and fiscal policies. Such positive economic growth complements the Government's long-term development policies aimed at stimulating the economy and achieving our development aspirations. Strategies to strengthen economic growth include reinvesting in key enablers, such as infrastructure, health and education, so as to maximize opportunities and improve the lives of our citizens.

My Government is harnessing that positive economic growth to address and improve our social indicators, including low literacy levels and high maternal and infant mortality rates. We have also embarked on a major strengthening of law-and-order enforcement infrastructure. This year, 50 per cent of our budget has been allocated to education and basic health care, law-and-order enforcement, and critical infrastructure improvement.

My Government is committed to a public-private partnership model as an important catalyst for national development. We are also committed to strengthening existing programmes and networks with the private sector, churches, donor agencies and non-governmental organizations through cooperative and mutually beneficial arrangements.

We are equally committed to investing in provincial and local-level government so as to improve service delivery for the majority of our population living in rural areas. We firmly believe that such partnerships will create an enabling environment and empower our people to take ownership of their lives and be proactive in nation-building.

My Government has also embarked on investor-friendly policies, supported by public-private partnerships and prudent economic management, so as to promote growth in key non-mining sectors. In that connection, my Government is reviewing taxation policies with a view to providing incentives and concessions and encouraging strategic investments in areas that are critical to driving our economic growth. Exporting our raw materials is not an option. We

therefore encourage downstream processing through genuinely joint ventures and other acceptable economic cooperation.

My Government is committed to strengthening governance at all levels by combating corruption. We have adopted the principle of zero tolerance. To that end, the Government has adopted a national anti-corruption strategy and established an independent task force with powers to investigate and prosecute. An independent commission against corruption will be established to enhance the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

Given the importance of cross-border security and related issues, a national security policy is in the final stages of completion. The focus of that policy is on dealing with national security issues as contained in pillar 4 of the Vision 2050 policy framework. In line with our national security policy, we are committed to rebuilding our disciplinary forces and institutions as well as continuing our participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

My Government is committed to addressing some of my country's unflattering international human development indices, including those regarding human rights issues. We recognize our development challenges, including gender-based violence, sorcery-related deaths, access to social services and the low level of representation of our women in the public and private sectors. In our assessment, many of those human rights and human development reports are exaggerated and insensitive, with scant attention paid to the positive efforts by the Government to promote and protect basic rights for all our citizens. Over the past six months, my Government has enacted the Family Protection Law and repealed the Sorcery Act of 1971, effectively making domestic and sorcery-related violence criminal offences.

I am pleased to announce that my Government has ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The instrument of ratification has been deposited with the United Nations at this session.

In recent months, there have been many reports about Papua New Guinea's bilateral agreement with Australia on the regional resettlement arrangement for asylum-seekers. Papua New Guinea, as a State party to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, recognizes the importance of addressing that international

humanitarian issue. Our two Governments are jointly working on the issue and call upon the international community to support our efforts. Furthermore, we call upon like-minded Member States and other stakeholders to assist our efforts to address the root causes of the displacement and dislocation of people, as well as to combat human trafficking and people smuggling.

As an emerging economy in the Pacific region, Papua New Guinea will enhance its level of engagement on issues of mutual concern, both within the region and globally. In the spirit of friendship and neighbourly South-South cooperation, we are committed to sharing the benefits of our natural resources development with our Pacific island neighbours. We have embarked on that path by providing development assistance to our neighbours, including the Solomon Islands, Fiji, Tuvalu, Marshall Islands, Tonga and Samoa.

Through the Melanesian Spearhead Group, we are forging dynamic and strong bonds in areas that include trade and investment, education and training, judicial support, sporting and cultural exchanges and visa arrangements to facilitate the movement of skilled persons. To further consolidate such very important partnerships at the regional level, we are collectively reviewing the relevance of the Pacific plan in relation to regional integration. Papua New Guinea is playing a leading role in that review exercise.

Papua New Guinea supports the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), entitled "The future we want" (resolution 66/288, annex), as the basis for the post-2015 development agenda. That agenda addresses balanced human development, including issues relating to eradicating extreme poverty and improving living standards for humanity. We also support inclusive economic growth, while preserving the environment for future generations. We welcome the work of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the creation of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, which succeeded the Commission on Sustainable Development. Both serve as a good starting point for driving the agenda forward.

Papua New Guinea and the Pacific small island developing States call on the international community to support the inclusion of the oceans as a stand-alone sustainable development goal. We are now in the initial stages of preparing a sustainable development policy

and strategy for our country, which is to complement our long-term Vision 2050 policy framework. We welcome support from the international community to enhance that work.

Papua New Guinea is pleased to note that the sustainable development issues of small island developing States are a priority on the General Assembly agenda, further reaffirming the importance of the Rio+20 outcome document and the relevant General Assembly resolutions. Your two visits this year to our Pacific region, Mr. President, underscore your commitment to small island developing States, for which we applaud you. We look forward to the strengthening of that important work during your presidency.

As the global community prepares for the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States in September 2014 in Apia, Papua New Guinea reiterates the call for small island developing States to remain a special case for sustainable development. The adverse impacts of climate change continue to be of serious concern to the global community, but especially for small island developing States. While contributing the least to that threat, small island countries are not only suffering the most from the serious impacts of climate change but also run the risk of being submerged by rising sea levels.

We support the Majuro Declaration for Climate Leadership, recently adopted by Pacific Island Forum leaders. We therefore reiterate the challenge to the international community to accept its responsibilities and its leadership role. We also urge the international community to renew its political commitment to prioritize the sustainable development issues of small island developing States in the post-2015 development agenda. As part of our continued efforts, I am pleased to note that Papua New Guinea has now become a member of the Governing Council of the Global Green Growth Institute.

Papua New Guinea agrees that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), despite their shortcomings, have galvanized the international community's development efforts to shape the post-2015 development agenda. We agree with the view expressed in the Secretary-General's 2013 annual report on the work of the Organization (A/68/1) that we should remain focused and redouble our efforts to consolidate the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for improved outcomes. We also welcome the

outcomes of the recently concluded high-level special events on the MDGs and on disability and development during the sixty-eighth session.

Papua New Guinea is unlikely to achieve most of the MDGs by 2015. However, my Government remains committed to implementing the goals beyond 2015. We have tailored our Millennium Development Goals targets and indicators in accordance with our 2011 to 2015 medium-term development plan and the Vision 2050 policy framework. We are making progress in the areas of universal primary education enrolment, poverty reduction, reduced infant and maternal mortality rates, combating HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other health issues and strengthening gender equality and empowerment.

Papua New Guinea expresses its appreciation for the support it has received from United Nations agencies and other development partners complementing our efforts to accelerate the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

I am pleased to report on the continued progress in the implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement and the successful scaling down of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands. We thank the United Nations, regional partners and the international community for their continued assistance in both instances.

On international peace and security issues, Papua New Guinea remains concerned about conflicts and tensions in various regions of the world, including in the Middle East, North Africa, the Korean peninsula and the South China Sea. We urge all parties involved to defuse the situation through peaceful dialogue.

We join the international community in condemning the use of chemical weapons in Syria and urge full compliance with the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We therefore commend the Security Council for adopting resolution 2118 (2013) with a view to dismantling and eradicating Syria's chemical-weapons programme.

Since October 2011, Papua New Guinea has been contributing to United Nations peacekeeping operations in the Sudan and South Sudan. Earlier this year, we became the 148th State Member of the United Nations to join the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. We are now looking at expanding and increasing our troop contributions. We also pay tribute

to the United Nations peacekeepers serving around the world, often in very trying conditions, and especially those who have made the ultimate sacrifice with their lives.

We express our concern over the lack of progress on disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. As a strong supporter of a nuclear-free world, Papua New Guinea calls on the United Nations and the international community to address that serious lack of progress. We also need to revitalize United Nations disarmament work so as to foster international peace and security. Papua New Guinea welcomes the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty, which will regulate the trade and transfer of conventional arms, including small arms and light weapons.

Finally, Papua New Guinea welcomes the leadership of the Secretary-General in reforming the United Nations system. We encourage robust and constructive reforms in the context of the growing budgetary constraints faced by the United Nations in recent years. A lean, effective and responsive United Nations is imperative so that it can better deliver on its mandate. We also call for the Security Council to be reformed in order to reflect today's geopolitical realities.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Guido Westerwelle, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Westerwelle (Germany) (*spoke in German, English text provided by the delegation*): Exactly 40 years ago, the two German States joined the United Nations. For Germans, that marked our full return to the community of nations. Germany supports the United Nations as the beating heart of a global order rooted in cooperation, peaceful compromise and cooperative solutions.

The world has changed dramatically since then. New centres of economic and political power are emerging. In recent years, Germany has established new strategic partnerships with the new global players in Asia, Latin America and Africa.

The setting of our meeting today is different from the usual one. The United Nations is undergoing renovation, which must not be restricted merely to the buildings. The United Nations must reflect the world as it is, not as it used to be. Only then will it be fit for the challenges of our age. A Security Council without permanent seats for Africa and Latin America does

not reflect the realities of today's world. A Council in which the emerging and highly populous region of Asia is represented by only one permanent seat does not reflect the realities of today's world. Nor does it reflect the reality of tomorrow. Germany, with its partners Japan, India and Brazil, is prepared to assume greater responsibility. In essence, it is a matter of strengthening the United Nations. The authority of the United Nations depends on its being representative.

Mrs. Miculescu (Romania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We are seeking reform of the United Nations so that its power to build consensus, establish global rules and act effectively in response to crises and conflicts can be demonstrably strengthened. This is a call not only to the United Nations itself, but also to each and every individual Member State. Only if we are prepared to compromise and are willing to act together will we be able to make the United Nations strong. Germany remains committed to the United Nations. A strong United Nations is in Germany's interests.

Our cultural differences and diverse traditions are not going to vanish in the age of globalization, but it is not only the world's markets that are becoming ever more closely interconnected: people's expectations, hopes and ideas are globalizing too. The developments in the Arab world have shown us that a country's stability depends primarily not on the stability of the Government but on social stability. The best guarantees for a society's internal cohesion are respect for individual human rights, the triumph of the rule of law over the arbitrary, and broad economic, social and political participation on the part of the people. Germany is committed to democratic change and to respect for human and civil rights, not because we want to take the moral high ground but because we have learned from experience — from the painful experience of our own history.

In Syria the people took to the streets to protest against a repressive regime. For more than two years now, the regime's response has been brutal violence, which has brought countless deaths, immeasurable suffering and terrible destruction on the Syrian people and is now jeopardizing stability in the entire region. The use of chemical weapons, ascertained by the United Nations, is a crime against civilization. Its terrible dimensions have consequences that extend far

beyond Syria. All the facts available to us show that the regime is responsible for the use of chemical weapons.

The use of chemical weapons cannot be allowed to go unpunished. That we owe not only to the victims in Syria, but also to future generations. Those responsible for using such weapons must be called to account before the International Criminal Court, which must at last be able to begin its independent investigations. We welcome the agreement reached in the Security Council yesterday. The chemical weapons in Syria must be completely destroyed in accordance with a firmly agreed timetable. Germany is prepared to provide financial and technical help to destroy those chemical weapons. A world without weapons of mass destruction would be a better world.

We must take advantage of the opportunity for a political process offered by the agreement on destroying the chemical weapons. After all, people in Syria are still being killed every day by conventional weapons. But there will be no military solution in Syria. Only a political solution can bring lasting peace to Syria. That would include an immediate ceasefire. I am pleased that there is at last a timetable for a possible peace conference, details of which still have to be clarified even after yesterday's decision in the Security Council. Only with a substantive political process can we counter the destabilization of the entire region.

To date, Germany has made available more than €420 million to ease the worst of the suffering of the Syrian people. But despite all of the outside help, millions of Syrians are fleeing. Ever more people are at acute risk of starvation, and very soon they will also be at the mercy of the cold weather. They do not have even the most basic medical care. We must seize every opportunity to provide humanitarian access to the suffering population as quickly as possible. Amid all the devastation and hatred, the United Nations and its staff are the face of compassion and, for many Syrians, the only hope. I would like expressly to pay tribute to their work and commitment.

The tragedy in Syria underlines the extraordinary and growing importance attached to disarmament aimed at eliminating weapons of mass destruction and the strengthening of the non-proliferation regimes. Attaining a world free of weapons of mass destruction is our generation's prime task for the future. Disarmament is a crucial issue for the future of humankind.

Iran must allay the international community's doubts about the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. We welcome Iran's announcement this week that it is prepared to do so. The talks with the Iranian Government were encouraging. They open up a window of opportunity. Now it is imperative that we rebuild trust. Germany is ready to conduct negotiations in a constructive manner. However, the new words coming out of Tehran must be followed by deeds, and not at some unspecified time in the future, but right now. But, I repeat: a fresh start has been made.

We welcome the great commitment shown by President Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry in giving fresh impetus to the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian leadership. Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas deserve our respect for their courage in embarking together on that course. They have our full support as they pursue that course towards a negotiated agreement. Only a negotiated two-State solution can reconcile the legitimate interests of the two sides.

This week in New York has been an encouraging one for the world. I am gratified that it was not military solutions but the struggle for political and diplomatic solutions that came to the fore. The international community must continue to follow such an approach.

Beyond crisis diplomacy, the United Nations is the central forum for setting binding objectives for the international community. Just a few days ago, the General Assembly agreed on the next steps for drawing up a new post-2015 sustainable development agenda. Germany wants to make a contribution in that regard with its experience of combining economic prosperity and promoting political participation and sustainable management.

Sustainability and combating poverty are not only key social issues; they are also key foreign policy issues.

In formulating the future agenda, greater attention needs to be paid to human rights protection and good governance than has been the case in the past. The new agenda must incorporate all three dimensions of sustainability and take account of economic, social and environmental aspects. With such a comprehensive approach we can also strengthen the fragile statehood in many countries and eradicate safe havens for terrorists. Social stability is the best protection against radicalization and extremism.

German foreign policy is a policy for peace. It focuses on crisis prevention. We Germans accept our responsibility for international peacekeeping. We focus on personal and social development. We focus on strengthening civil society. We want to contribute to a global process in which we — in the North, South, East and West learn from each other and develop joint solutions by working together. Germany will continue in future to use its economic clout and full political strength to promote peace and the balancing of interests.

The digital age brings with it entirely new opportunities and challenges. We need an Internet in which freedom, security and the protection of privacy are appropriately reconciled. Just as we have to regulate international financial flows in order to prevent global crises, so we need binding rules and standards for global data flows. That is why Germany has submitted to the Human Rights Council an initiative regarding the protection of the right to privacy in the digital age. Everyone using the Internet should be able to be sure that their rights are being respected worldwide vis-à-vis private companies as well as vis-à-vis States. Not everything that is technically possible must be allowed to happen, nor is everything technically possible legitimate.

Germany remains firmly anchored in Europe. Europe is a community of shared cultures, bound together by a common destiny. Close union among the nations of Europe is and will remain the response to our history and to our future in a world of change. German foreign policy is firmly embedded in European foreign policy. Europe will continue to use its clout, its influence and its resources to uphold peace and justice, to encourage development and cooperation and to promote climate protection and disarmament throughout the world.

That is Germany's twin obligation: a strong united Europe in the world and a strong, effective United Nations for the world.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Titus Corlăţean, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania.

Mr. Corlăţean (Romania) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak today on behalf of the delegation of Romania.

First, I welcome last night's adoption of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), concerning the

destruction of Syria's chemical arsenal. We believe that the resolution's adoption by the Council represents a veritable success for the international community regarding the Syrian dossier.

I would like to commend the President of the General Assembly for his well-deserved election, and I wish to assure him of my delegation's full support in the discharge of his important responsibilities. We are convinced that his rich experience as a seasoned diplomat and the responsibilities that he previously assumed in the sphere of international relations are unquestionable assets for the success of this session.

My delegation fully supports the statement made by Mr. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, on behalf of the European Union (see A/68/PV.8).

In my statement, I would like to touch upon a number of matters of interest to my country concerning the positive developments that have occurred in the activities of the United Nations since our previous debate, as well as our expectations for the next period, in the three main areas of activity of the United Nations, namely, peace and security, development and human rights, and democracy and the rule of law.

We believe that the efforts of the international community and the results obtained to date in Mali represent an encouraging trend for that country and for the Sahel region. One year ago, the crisis in Mali was a major concern for the Malian population and for neighbouring countries. Following the positive developments that occurred in the early months of 2013, the Security Council decided on 25 April, through resolution 2100 (2013), that the United Nations would participate in restoring the situation in Mali and in providing support for the democratic transition in that country. Remarkable progress has been achieved in the interim. Free and fair presidential elections were held, with an unprecedented level of participation of the population. Earlier this month, President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita was inaugurated, and the Prime Minister has already established the new Cabinet.

As a member of the European Union, Romania welcomed the adoption of the Security Council resolution establishing the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. Similarly, my country has also supported the participation of the international community in the process of rebuilding the capacities and institutions in Mali and has decided

to join those efforts by contributing a contingent of 10 military experts to the European Union's training mission in Mali.

(spoke in English)

Allow me to refer to other positive developments in the field of peace and security in the past year that confirm the contribution of multilateralism to progress in the field of peace and security. Ensuring peace and security through international cooperation is one of the main tasks of the Organization. Within that framework we have established important goals for ourselves in the past couple of years, and we have proved that working together can lead to concrete achievements and substantial results. That is the case with the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty. We have managed to jointly deliver a concrete tool meant to ensure a safer world and address the challenges affecting the security of all our citizens. We must continue on that path and bring the Treaty into force as soon as possible. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that Romania is currently undertaking legal domestic procedures in order to ratify the Treaty as soon as possible.

Similar progress is expected in other areas of multilateral negotiations. Halfway to the next Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, proceedings at the Preparatory Committee, which is being chaired by Romania and which held its second session in Geneva in April, have revealed that expectations are growing that more concrete results will be attained in reaching the targets established in the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty action plan.

Romania is a strong supporter of all endeavours aimed at achieving comprehensive peace in the Middle East. We support all the initiatives of the Quartet and the full implementation of the road-map vision of two States — Israel and Palestine — living side by side in peace and security. We therefore welcome the recent resumption of direct negotiations as a long-awaited step forward, made possible by the constant and tireless efforts of the United States Administration. We are hopeful that both parties will take courageous steps aimed at finding a durable solution to a problem of supreme concern to their peoples, the region and the international community.

We are gratified that, since our last debate, important steps have been taken to implement the key provisions of the final document of the United Nations Conference

on Sustainable Development, “The future we want” (resolution 66/288, annex). Romania commends the efforts and dedication of Brazil and Italy in facilitating the complex and strenuous negotiations that led to the establishment of the High-level Political Forum and made it possible to convene its inaugural meeting on 24 September. As a member of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, sharing a seat with Poland, Romania is joining efforts in that very important process that will craft a comprehensive and coherent set of goals for effective delivery and results at all levels, in accordance with the Rio de Janeiro Conference decisions. The new framework should reinforce the international community’s commitment to poverty eradication and sustainable development. In that respect, we set up an interministerial ad hoc working group to develop our national vision to frame the future goals we wish to promote, along with our partners, during the ongoing negotiations on this issue.

In our view, the sustainable development goals (SDGs) should be universal and applicable to all States and should provide references and clear suggestions for action and innovative mechanisms for measuring their implementation, in order to ensure sustainable development. At the same time, the goals should be based on national ownership and take into account differing national circumstances so as to provide political space and the right to development for each country, and should address, as cross-cutting issues, the perspective of human rights, peace and security, good governance, gender equality, the rule of law and equity. Not least, we welcome the establishment of the intergovernmental committee to analyse options for an effective sustainable development financing strategy, and we encourage its coordination with the other relevant processes, in particular the Open Working Group on the SDGs.

We strongly believe that the time is ripe to combine efforts to define the global development framework for the coming decades. The current session of the General Assembly represents the best opportunity for comprehensive and multilayered interaction to support those endeavours. The theme of our political debate, as proposed by the President of the General Assembly, “The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage”, is a confirmation of that, and we are committed to contributing actively to that process.

As a current member of the Human Rights Council, we believe that it is our common responsibility to

create appropriate conditions of human dignity and welfare around the world and to make progress towards ensuring equality among all human beings. The Human Rights Council has proved itself up to its mandate, addressing in a prompt manner the situations of grave violations of human rights occurring in some countries, especially in Syria. We fully commend the activity of the Independent Commission of Inquiry on the human rights situation in Syria, which reported on the violations committed in that country.

We highly appreciate the universal periodic review mechanism, which we consider a very useful and successful process. We hope that it will remain universal. We also commend the professionalism of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and we strongly believe that its independence is essential for the fulfilment of the mandates of both the Council and the Office.

Another major area where the specialized structures of the United Nations and their dedicated staff deserve our wholehearted appreciation is that of humanitarian assistance. In the past year, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance reached an unprecedented level. Internal and international conflicts, organized crime, poverty, drought and severe violations of human rights are among the causes of that evolution. In too many situations, the assistance offered by the United Nations system, in close cooperation with international non-governmental organizations and international donors, is the only hope of survival for many thousands of people. We commend and support such activities. Despite limited financial resources, we make efforts to contribute to the process. In that respect, I would like to mention the work of the Emergency Transit Centre in Timisoara, Romania. The Centre has proved to be a refuge, offering safety to persons in urgent need of international protection, thus creating humanitarian space. It is an already well-established link in the global resettlement process. We are pleased to see that similar structures have been replicated in other regions of the world, and we express our readiness to engage and share our experiences with them.

Allow me now to mention some of our expectations for United Nations activities in the year to come. The long-standing crisis in Syria continued over the past year, with increased violence that has claimed more than 100,000 victims and produced more than 5 million refugees. The harsh confrontations between the Syrian army and opposition forces, which ultimately led to the

use of chemical weapons, have triggered the outrage and firm condemnation of the international community.

Romania has continuously stated that it is imperative for the international community to curb the escalation of violence in Syria. We favour a political solution under a Syrian-led transition process, based on the cooperation of all Syrian parties with the international community, with a view to preserving Syria's territorial integrity. With the Security Council's adoption yesterday of resolution 2118 (2013), Syria has been given another chance to return to the right path. We urge all parties to respect and act in accordance with the provisions of that resolution, which creates the conditions for a negotiated peace within the "Geneva II" process. In that new context, we call on all States not yet parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention to undertake the necessary internal measures to join it, in order to make sure that the use of such weapons in future is not only prohibited, but made impossible.

I would like to recognize yesterday's historic call between President Rouhani and President Obama as a major breakthrough. The occurrence of such a one-on-one conversation after more than two decades of silence gives us hope that Iran's nuclear programme will become more transparent and oriented towards energy alone. We await, with justifiable interest, the specific plan Minister Zarif will present in that respect in mid-October in Geneva.

United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions make a major contribution to achieving the goals of international peace, stability and security. We welcome the inclusion in the agenda of this General Assembly session of a new item devoted to special political missions, and we appreciate the report prepared by the Secretariat for that item. Member States will thereby have a possibility to exchange views and make proposals for policy measures in order to better adapt special political missions to the expectations of international, regional and local communities.

Romania welcomes and supports the efforts to coordinate, at the United Nations level, the multidimensional and cross-cutting rule-of-law approach. At the same time, my country supports the gradual implementation of the responsibility-to-protect concept, starting with regional capacity-building and early-warning and preventive functions.

The world is made up of regions, and each and every region faces its own challenges. Efforts to

identify negotiated solutions to protracted conflicts in the Black Sea region — the Transnistrian region, Nagorno Karabakh, Abkhazia and Ossetia — should remain high on our agenda.

We believe that the actions of the United Nations in the field of peace and security could be enhanced through increased engagement with regional organizations. In some regions, we have already experienced the advantages of that kind of cooperation with regional organizations, whose activities are complementary to those of the United Nations system. As a strong advocate of the increased synergies between the United Nations system and regional organizations, I would like to bring to the attention of the Assembly the positive results obtained in recent years in promoting regional cooperation within the South-East European Cooperation Process.

Regional dialogue has time and time again proved to be the most efficient tool for overcoming the persisting differences of opinion among our countries. This is particularly true of South-East Europe, where regional cooperation is now more than ever crucial to further consolidating relations between countries and, at the same time, to developing the region itself.

Meeting the challenges of change and interdependence through regional cooperation represents the overriding priority of the years ahead for all the actors involved. The South-East European Process is the authentic voice of the region, as it is the only regional format that has significantly contributed, over the years, to the improvement of the overall relations among the participating States. Romania, which holds the chairmanship-in-office of the Process, will focus on results-oriented actions aimed at contributing, in the most concrete manner possible, to the development of the region.

As representatives of a country that has since 1990 carried out a complex process of political, economic and democratic transition, we believe that the international community needs to support countries undergoing democratization processes. The challenges that such countries face are complex: promoting democratic governance and the rule of law; addressing specific aspects of past human rights violations; and promoting transitional justice.

In order to make a contribution to that process, my delegation will put forward, during the current session of the General Assembly, a resolution on human rights,

democracy and the rule of law in the context of the post-2015 development agenda. Based on our experience in promoting, during the March 2012 session of the Human Rights Council, a similar resolution, which was widely supported by 127 sponsors, we are hopeful that our initiative will receive the same level of support from the General Assembly.

In concluding, I would like to reaffirm our commitment to the values and principles of multilateralism and to reiterate to the Assembly my country's strong support for all of its efforts to implement the ambitious agenda ahead of us.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Makei, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus.

Mr. Makei (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): I will begin with a simple question: what is the key challenge facing today's world? I believe that it is the fact that humankind's societal evolution has not kept pace with globalization. We are constantly lagging behind. Our failure to adjust quickly and effectively has given rise to a range of political, economic and social problems. That mismatch between technological and societal development has been the norm since the beginning of the industrial revolution, in the late eighteenth century. Furthermore, these days it represents a far more serious threat than ever before. The pace of globalization has been steadily accelerating, and therefore we have had to adapt much more quickly.

We need a mechanism that will enable us swiftly and effectively to address this problem. Such a mechanism could appropriately be called "a new global world order".

Today we can hardly say that we have a global order at all, as the notion of order implies stability, which we do not have at present. The old rules are not being observed, and new ones have not been established. We permanently find ourselves stricken by various global crises. The great Powers seek to provide global governance by means of clubs whose membership is limited to themselves. Other countries wager on regionalism, and medium-sized and small countries see their rights infringed at every turn.

Overall, the current geopolitical situation is characterized by an increasing dynamic of multilevel competition as well as by the global governance crisis. What is even more alarming is that all of this is taking place against a backdrop of increasing global inequality.

It is clear that if we cannot arrive at an order by design, anarchy will come to us by default.

Let me state that Belarus has no clear-cut recipe as to how to build a new global order. After all, this can hardly be done quickly and simultaneously. The great Goethe once said:

"Man is not born to solve the problem of the universe, but to find out what he has to do and to restrain himself within the limits of his comprehension".

Let us try to proceed with precisely this logic in mind. We are convinced of the need to move forward first and foremost in areas where there is a particular urgency to do so.

We believe that we should start by strengthening the role of the State in today's world. The industrial revolution once made the State strong and the idea thereof appealing.

Indeed, the history of the past two centuries has not been a narrative of military power. Rather, it has been a story of the growing force of the principle of self-determination, that is, the aspiration of nations to establish their own States, which can then effectively promote the interests of their citizens. It is no wonder that in times of crisis and uncertainty, the great leaders of the past saw the strengthening of the State's role as a solution. United States President Franklin Roosevelt, faced with the Great Depression, thought that only a strong State could address the problems of the "forgotten man".

Over the past several decades, globalization, especially in its unregulated phase, has clearly reduced the role and importance of the State. We find ourselves in a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, global processes have curtailed State power. On the other hand, tackling the growing transnational challenges sparked by globalization requires strong States. What do we mean by this?

Let us start from the premise that we all live in a very diverse world. States, reflecting this range of diversity, assume very different forms in their domestic and internal organization. History has shown that it is impossible to boil all States down to the same level.

We are convinced that it makes sense to assess States, and let me here resort to philosophy, on their content rather than their form. In other words, a strong State is an accountable State, in both domestic and foreign policy, regardless of its form.

Let us then build relations based on the notion of content rather than form. Indeed, why does the domestic political situation of, say, Belarus or Cuba serve as a basis for some countries to pursue policies of sanctions and persecution — policies that contravene international law — against those States? After all, it was the people of those countries who determined their form and they do not wish another, because their Governments pursue accountable policies. By and large, the people have no objections to them in terms of content.

The call for a strong State, of course, has nothing in common with a call for dictatorship. Franklin Roosevelt said:

“History proves that dictatorships do not grow out of strong and successful Governments, but out of weak and helpless ones”.

State weakness is no longer a humanitarian concern but a problem of international security. It is a guarantee that we will fail to cope with the mismatch generated at the global level by the different paces of the globalization and societal adaptation processes.

We deem the next area of focus to be efforts to ensure global convergence. It is worth pointing out that such attempts have often been undertaken in the past. Unfortunately, the areas of application were inappropriate from the start. Convergence basically occurred in the context of attempts by the mighty of the world to impose their own political and economic models on other countries. That was outright coercion. As a result, all such attempts have backfired.

Ms. Picco (Monaco), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In today's world, completely different approaches are needed — approaches aimed at unity and stability rather than disunity and anarchy. We need social convergence. To put it simply, we must work to create a robust middle class in every State, without coercion. After all, all countries have an interest in a sizeable national middle class. History has clearly shown that success in that area will ensure the domestic stability of a State and foster its interest in pursuing a foreign policy of international stability. We are convinced that the benefits produced by the middle class at the national level can have a similar impact at the international level. A large number of middle-income countries worldwide would be the best safeguard to ensure a truly multipolar, fair and stable world. Such a group of States would

seek neither diktat nor dominance over others. What is more, having just recently emerged from the grip of poverty and domestic instability, many countries have fully realized the importance of global development and of solidarity aimed at the least developed countries.

Building on that understanding, Belarus is keen to rekindle the topic of middle-income countries at the international level. In May, we held a regional conference on middle-income countries in the context of sustainable development. We witnessed immense interest in that event. Likewise, Belarus welcomes the high-level international conference on middle-income countries held in June in Costa Rica. Those and other relevant events point to the need for more focused work within the United Nations system on cooperation with middle-income countries. At the same time, a number of ongoing trends are working to prevent the strengthening of the middle class in those States. The unfettered globalization ardently carried out by the so-called market fundamentalists has served to increase inequality in the world and hollow out the middle class. Many, in both developed and developing countries, are already confronting the resulting political and economic consequences.

We pin our hopes for improvement on the ongoing effort at the United Nations to design a post-2015 United Nations development agenda. The world is fast approaching the 2015 completion deadline set for the Millennium Development Goals. My country's current view is that the key lesson to be drawn, even at this stage, is that there can be no lasting progress in today's world in any individual area if other areas are neglected. That is because everyone and every thing in the world — people, economies and threats — has become highly interconnected. For instance, one cannot succeed in tackling migration without addressing poverty, conflicts and environmental disasters. That perception, in turn, points to the need to set the stage for a comprehensive post-2015 development agenda. It is highly commendable that the United Nations, its Member States and many other stakeholders have already been actively engaged in the preparatory process. Likewise, it is gratifying that everyone views the paradigm of sustainable development as the basis for the future agenda. That is the proper course, as sustainable development — based on its economic, social and environmental components — is the best approach to meeting the global development challenges in a truly comprehensive manner.

Belarus shares the view that the sustainable development goals should be at the heart of the next agenda. We see the need to develop such goals in as many areas as possible. It is particularly crucial that they address those areas not covered by the Millennium Development Goals, such as, for example, migration, energy and employment. We believe that each and every goal must be achieved through appropriate thematic global partnerships among States, international organizations, civil society and the private sector. A good example of that is the global partnership against slavery and trafficking in persons initiative, which is now being successfully implemented. We hope that a comprehensive approach to development will help in controlling globalization and, more important, ensure that it is fair. After all, it must work in the interests of all rather than of a few. Drawing on a historical analogy, one can argue that the post-2015 development agenda represents our future, comprehensive “new deal” — like the one launched by Franklin D. Roosevelt. The United Nations serves as the indispensable platform — thanks to its unquestionable legitimacy, universal membership and comprehensive scope — for the international community to appropriately reconcile and subsequently implement its interests in terms of the new deal.

The greatest danger in geostrategic uncertainty is not the uncertainty itself; rather, it is the desire to take action in a complex setting using yesterday’s logic, namely, a business-as-usual attitude. We are certain that only by shaking off such an approach will we be able to forge a global order to benefit all people on Earth.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Rui Machete, Minister of State and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Portugal.

Mr. Machete (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): As this is the first time that I take the floor before the General Assembly, at the headquarters of international legitimacy and multilateralism, I would like to begin by reiterating Portugal’s firm and unwavering commitment to the United Nations, its Charter and the values and principles that guide its action.

I congratulate the President on his election. His long international career and vast experience in the United Nations system have placed him in a privileged position to preside over the central organ of the Organization. His election reflects a recognition on the part of all Member States of the strong commitment to the United

Nations and multilateralism of his country, Antigua and Barbuda, the Caribbean Community and the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States. I would also like to convey my country’s acknowledgement of the dynamism and dedication with which the President of the General Assembly at its previous session, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, performed his duties. I wish also to express special appreciation for the Secretary-General’s untiring work in defence of peace during an extremely challenging period for the international community. As always, the Secretary-General can continue to count on Portugal’s support.

I take this opportunity to strongly condemn the terrorist attack that occurred in Nairobi and to deliver a message of solidarity to the authorities and the people of Kenya. Acts such as those remind us that efforts to combat terrorism continue to be of paramount importance. We will not live in a world of peace and liberty or in an environment of tolerance and mutual respect until we eradicate terrorism.

The Organization was created to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, basing its action on faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person. The United Nations has undertaken much in its 68 years to achieve those goals globally. Unfortunately, in many regions those goals remain an illusion. Such is the case in Syria, where the horrors of war and the unspeakable suffering of the population now prevail. The devastating images that reach us daily show a country that is being physically destroyed. The numbers speak for themselves: more than 100,000 dead, almost 7 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, 4 million internally displaced persons and 2 million refugees. A tragedy on that scale is the result of serious and systematic violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, aggravated by the recent and unacceptable use of chemical weapons, something we believed had been universally banished forever.

The world was shocked at the use of chemical weapons in Ghouta on 21 August. I want to be very clear about this: the use of chemical weapons represents a violation of international law, a heinous crime and a regression from civilization. We cannot stand idle in the face of such a violation of the barrier between civilization and barbarism, a barrier that the international community has vowed never to cross again. We, the members of the Assembly, once again face a serious international crisis where we are in a

position to reaffirm the centrality of the United Nations in solving it. With the Security Council blocked and powerless, it was the absence of the United Nations in the period when prevention and control were still possible that allowed the Syrian crisis to reach such dramatic and unacceptable political and humanitarian proportions. We would certainly have had fewer casualties and refugees, and would surely not now be dealing with a huge international crisis resulting from the use of chemical weapons. Now, when an agreement has been reached to remove the threat posed by the chemical arsenal of the Syrian regime once and for all, the international community has again turned to the Security Council.

I would like to commend the enormous political and diplomatic efforts of the United States and Russia, with the involvement of Joint Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi. The commitment and spirit of compromise that they demonstrated in the process enabled them to arrive at an important agreement and the adoption yesterday of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), which, hopefully, will ensure its implementation. The Security Council, in close collaboration with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, has assumed its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations, finally creating a prospect for hope for a global political solution to the Syrian issue. It is now essential that we seize the opportunity created by the initiative on chemical weapons to consolidate the political-diplomatic track and hold the "Geneva II" conference. Nevertheless, the primary responsibility for resolving the Syrian crisis lies with the parties to the conflict. Without their will and commitment, no political solution is possible. The international community must keep up the pressure on the parties, particularly the Damascus regime, with a view to achieving a peaceful and sustainable democratic future in which every sector of Syrian society feels represented.

The Middle East has also seen some positive recent developments with the resumption of the peace process between Israel and Palestine. I would like to reaffirm before the Assembly Portugal's full support for that process. I congratulate the United States of America on its initiative and applaud the Palestinian and Israeli authorities for the courage and leadership shown in their decision to resume negotiations. There can be no lasting peace, stability or security in the Middle East unless the question of Palestine is settled. The present opportunity to ensure security for all and justice, finally, for the

Palestinians must not be missed. We have a unique opportunity to find a peaceful solution on the basis of United Nations resolutions and internationally agreed parameters that establishes a sovereign, independent and viable Palestinian State and addresses Israel's security concerns.

Also in the Middle East, we have been following with great concern the prolonged deadlock in the search for a solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. It is regrettable that, despite all the diplomatic efforts and pressure on the part of the international community, no solid progress has been made so far. Nevertheless, we view as positive signs the recent statements made by high-ranking Iranian officials, in particular by President Hassan Rouhani here in the General Assembly (see A/68/PV.6). I appeal to the Iranian authorities to translate those encouraging political signals into concrete steps conducive to a negotiated solution that can restore the international community's confidence in a peaceful and civilian Iranian nuclear programme.

Another issue of concern is the situation in the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, where the constitutional order has been subverted since the coup d'état of 12 April 2012. As a member of the European Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP) and the United Nations, and in close coordination with the Economic Community of West African States, as well as through bilateral measures, Portugal is continuing with its efforts to help the people of Guinea-Bissau overcome the current crisis. We acknowledge the work done by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ramos-Horta to promote a dialogue among the main political actors with a view to restoring the constitutional order. The formation of an inclusive Government was, in that sense, a step forward.

However, restoring constitutional order and normalizing Guinea-Bissau's relations with the international community require that presidential and legislative elections be held, in accordance with the commitments undertaken by the current Guinean authorities and as reiterated in the press statement issued by the President of the Security Council on 11 September. We are, however, very concerned about the possibility that has been raised of a new extension of the transitional period. The international community should also emphasize that for the elections to be free, fair and transparent, the current authorities must guarantee that all Guinean citizens, without exception, can participate in those elections, in full enjoyment

of their rights, including the rights of the freedoms of speech and association. Only a new Government that enjoys the legitimacy conferred by a free popular vote and is appointed in accordance with the Constitution can promote long-overdue reforms in the security, administration and justice sectors.

The crisis in Guinea-Bissau also has clear and worrying connections with the Sahel region through drug-trafficking routes. Europe, and especially its southern countries, is following the situation in the Sahel with particular concern. I can assure the Assembly that we will continue to make every effort to help stabilize the region. In that context, the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel represents a major contribution.

Portugal is currently co-President of the Western Mediterranean forum known as the 5+5 initiative, which brings together 10 countries on the northern and southern Mediterranean coasts. The dialogue and confidence-building that that informal instrument provides represents important added value for its members and the region. We are therefore engaged in exploring all of its potential for cooperation.

The Charter of the United Nations defends the importance of using international mechanisms to promote the economic and social advancement of all peoples. In the noble spirit of the United Nations and following the historic and inspiring launch in 2000 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the current session of the General Assembly will be a critical launching pad for defining our priorities and the path we will follow in our common efforts towards the 2015 summit at which we will adopt our development principles and goals for the coming years.

I commend the President for the timeliness of his choice of theme for this general debate, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage". On 25 September, I had an opportunity to participate in the special event on the Millennium Development Goals, which enabled us to thoroughly discuss the progress achieved to date on the MDGs and provide important guidance for our future work. It is our conviction that the set of MDGs should serve as the reference point for establishing the new development agenda, which should maintain a focus on poverty reduction and sustainable development in all its dimensions, while giving special attention to the needs of least developed countries.

But we need a broader, more inclusive and strategic vision. We must go beyond the traditional relationship between donors and recipients to create partnerships that involve new international actors. For Portugal, different modalities of assistance, new sources of financing and a strengthened principle of shared responsibility, leadership and ownership on the part of developing countries are the main guiding principles for the post-2015 development agenda. The inaugural meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development was politically highly significant. Portugal remains committed to ensuring that the Forum acts as a catalyst for international efforts, ensuring a more efficient and coherent link between the various processes in the area of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

In the context of the outcome of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, I would like to stress the importance of progress on the issue of oceans, which is a crucial matter for a maritime country like Portugal. We welcome Member States' commitment to discussing the issue of the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. In this context, Portugal is strongly in favour of the negotiation and adoption of an international instrument in the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Reforms and institutional innovations such as those I have just mentioned represent important changes in the architecture of the United Nations, adapting and preparing it for new times and new challenges. However, the reform of our Organization will never be complete without Security Council reform, including of its working methods and, above all, of its composition. It is increasingly difficult to justify why countries such as Brazil and India are not permanent members of the Security Council. As stated on previous occasions, Portugal is of the view that Africa also deserves permanent representation in that body. It is imperative that Africa be treated in a way that is just and reflects its size, economic growth and its weight in today's world.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the African Union and its member States on the fiftieth anniversary of the continent's regional organization.

Portugal firmly believes in multilateralism and in the United Nations as the centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of common ends. We contribute actively to the work of our Organization through a committed participation in its bodies, but we

have not yet had a chance to serve on the Human Rights Council. We therefore hope to be able to count on the support of the Assembly in the elections for that body to take place in 2014. We accept and have implemented virtually all of the 86 recommendations that resulted from our experience in the Council's universal periodic review (UPR) of 2009. We will submit to a new UPR in 2014.

If the Assembly invests its trust in us to elect us to serve for the 2015-2017 triennium, we will fulfil our mandate in the deep conviction that the United Nations human-rights-protection system should remain strong, independent, impartial and demanding, and that, in this regard, we should always resolve to aim higher. We will continue in the same vein as we approached our membership of the Security Council in 2011-2012, characterized by openness to dialogue and by a constructive and balanced attitude, and seeking to build bridges and generate consensus, without relinquishing values and fundamental principles.

The Portuguese language is the common element of unity that brings together the diversity of States of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries. We are a Community of eight countries, with about 250 million speakers spread across four continents. Portuguese is the third most widely spoken European language in the world, with a growing role and status on the international scene, both as a vehicle of communication and as an economic language used in trade and business, culture and social networks.

In October, Lisbon will host the second conference on the status of the Portuguese language in the international system, at which participants will consider the challenges faced by their common language. Portuguese is currently the official or working language of several international organizations, including some specialized agencies of the United Nations. The CPLP has the ambition and goal of seeing Portuguese adopted as an official language of the United Nations. I take this opportunity to salute the Mozambican presidency of the CPLP and its efforts to strengthen and deepen our Community.

I conclude by wishing the greatest success for the General Assembly at this session. The Assembly can count on Portugal's active contribution and support in upholding international law, promoting the peaceful settlement of disputes, defending and promoting human rights, and working towards greater prosperity for all of humankind.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Nabil Fahmy, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

Mr. Fahmy (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me pleasure to congratulate Mr. John Ashe and his friendly country, Antigua and Barbuda, upon his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. I take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Vuk Jeremić of Serbia, for his efforts during the previous session.

I reiterate our support to the Secretary-General as he strives to realize the purposes and principles of the Charter. I also welcome the choice of "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage" as the main theme of this session, considering the high priority that the United Nations and the peoples of the world accord to the achievement of development in all its dimensions.

Allow me to deviate from customary practice for a debate in the General Assembly by conveying to the Assembly a message that comes not only from the President of Egypt, Mr. Adly Mansour, but from the people of my country — the Egyptians who laid the foundations of human civilization and have recently inspired peoples around the world.

Egypt holds a unique position in the history of humankind, past and present. Its status, role and influence derive essentially from its culture and civilization. It would have been a historical inconsistency had the will of the Egyptians remained shackled at the dawn of a new century, and had our youth remained deprived of the right to design their own destiny and future. It was therefore natural for our people to take to the streets on 25 January 2011 to declare their determination to build a democratic and modern State in which their children could enjoy freedom, dignity and social justice.

This is the Egypt that millions of my countrymen and women chose then — the same Egypt they yearned for on 30 June 2013. In doing so, they showed the world that the will of the people cannot be broken and that it can grant authority, just as it can remove it from the hands of those who abuse it.

The Egyptians have an ambitious vision for the future that can be achieved by working systematically in a reasonable time frame. Its success is based on a society that is open to all peaceful political currents, that pluralistically embraces the diversity of all its

members, and that inclusively ensures the equal rights and duties of all citizens through the rule of law and equality before justice. The principles and practices of this vision are consistent with the fundamental rules that govern democratic practices throughout the world, in particular respect for peaceful dialogue, the rejection of violence, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

Our conviction that Egyptians have the right to fulfil such a vision underpins the road map that Egypt has been implementing since 3 July. That road map includes a national agenda to build the institutions of a democratic State in a specific time frame. All Egyptians are invited to participate in all phases of the political process, as long as they are committed to renouncing violence and terrorism or incitement thereto.

Work is under way, in line with the road map, on several tracks. To date, it has succeeded in establishing the principles of justice, freedom and democracy as bases for governance. Work is under way on the new constitution, to be followed by parliamentary elections and presidential elections, bringing the transitional phase to an end by next spring. We are determined to fully implement the road map. This requires us to give the utmost priority to preserving security, enforcing the law and countering any attempts to intimidate or humiliate us or hinder our efforts. Some parts of Egypt were recently hit by desperate terrorist attacks. Among their victims were Egyptians from all walks of life — men and women, young and old, Muslims and non-Muslims. Those hideous acts of terrorism sought to undermine the democratic process and to destroy our economy. I would like to emphasize and reiterate in the strongest terms our full confidence that the brave Egyptian people, who succeeded in imposing their will, can eradicate terrorism within the framework of the rule of law. I trust that the international community will stand firmly with the Egyptian people in the fight against those who commit or advocate for violence, and will accept no attempt to justify or tolerate it.

I take this opportunity to convey my deep condolences to the Government and the people of Kenya and Pakistan on the loss of innocent lives as a result of the latest terrorist attack.

The message I am carrying from Egyptians, particularly our youth, who are joining me here today and representing their ancient country, would not be complete without mentioning Egypt's aspirations to enjoy more democratic international relations and

stronger ties of cooperation between our people and the rest of the world. Those relations should be based on the principles of independence, mutual respect and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and on a foreign policy founded on equality and a constructive, civilized vision for the future. Egypt's foreign policy is now a reflection of the will of our people, and it is formulated in line with our national interests and security with no regard to any other consideration.

We fully recognize that Egypt's national security is linked to the security and concerns of our Arab nation. Given its geographical location, history and identity, Egypt is committed to continuing to defend the interests of its African continent, to address the issues of importance to the Islamic world, to spread the Islamic values of moderation and tolerance, and to promote dialogue among divine religions. Egypt also remains committed to tackling the challenges facing the South at a time when the world is witnessing an imbalance of power.

I would now like to briefly highlight Egypt's position on several issues of high priority in our foreign policy.

In Syria, the tragedy has now extended to the resort to chemical weapons. We strongly condemn their use and support the agreement reached between the Russian Federation and the United States, as well as Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). While the humanitarian crisis resulting from the fighting continues to intensify, the Syrian State itself is on the verge of disintegration. It is imperative to reach a political solution as soon as possible that would establish the freedom, dignity and democracy to which the people of Syria aspire and preserve the unity of the State. We hope that can be achieved through the holding of the "Geneva II" conference, so that a transitional authority can be put in place to end the civil war and the foreign interventions that we have long warned against.

The Palestinian question remains the main source of tension in our region. Palestine is still suffering the effects of the ongoing Israeli occupation of Arab territories and the intensification of settlement activities. The hope for achieving a two-State solution was until recently on the verge of fading away irrevocably. Given that bleak scenario, we welcome and appreciate the recent efforts of the United States to advance the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. The

commitment of both sides to engaging in a process of time-bound negotiations is a significant development. We should all support the ongoing negotiations so that they may lead to the final settlement of the Palestinian question, which has continued since the past century.

Egypt will continue to support the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of an independent and sovereign State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on all the territories of the West Bank and Gaza and in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant terms of reference. I reiterate that the needs of the Gaza population must be met. The failure to do so has become politically and morally unacceptable. We therefore call on Israel and the international community to shoulder their responsibilities and ensure that the Palestinians in Gaza have access to basic supplies. We are ready to cooperate with the Palestinian authority and all concerned parties to agree on appropriate arrangements that guarantee the delivery of provisions in legal and transparent ways.

The Assembly will agree that a new Middle East will not emerge until the right to equal security is ensured and the threats posed by the existence in our region of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction are eliminated. The situation threatens the credibility of the non-proliferation regime and the United Nations. For that reason, and to preserve that credibility, I would like to introduce to the Assembly today an initiative consisting of the following steps.

First, we must invite all countries of the Middle East and the five permanent members of the Security Council to deposit official letters with the Secretary-General stating their support for declaring the Middle East a region free from nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction.

Secondly, the countries of the region that have not signed or ratified any of the international conventions on weapons of mass destruction should commit, before the end of 2013, to simultaneously signing and ratifying the relevant conventions. They should also deposit documentation of their accession to those conventions with the Security Council. I invite the Secretary-General to coordinate such steps so that they are carried out simultaneously to ensure their success.

Those actions translate into the following. Israel must accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear State, ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention, and sign and ratify the

Biological Weapons Convention. Syria must ratify the Biological Weapons Convention and take the remaining steps it has pledged to take in relation to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Egypt must ratify the Biological Weapons Convention and sign and ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention, provided that all countries of the Middle East complete measures of accession to the international conventions prohibiting weapons of mass destruction and related arrangements and treaties.

Thirdly, we must pursue international efforts to ensure that the delayed 2012 conference to establish a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction is convened as soon as possible, preferably before the end of 2013 and by the spring of 2014 at the latest.

Egypt's roots go deep in Africa. We are proud of the many positive changes that Africa has witnessed and of the strides the continent has taken towards democracy and development. Yet Africa remains in need of concerted national, regional and international efforts to enable the continent to resolve its conflicts and challenges. Accordingly, Egypt will soon establish an Egyptian agency for development partnership. Most of its future resources will be directed to African countries so that they can benefit from Egyptian technical expertise and assets.

We cannot talk about democracy in current international relations and the rule of law at the international level unless comprehensive and substantial reform of the United Nations takes place, so that the Organization is better able to respond to challenges and to meet the aspirations of peoples worldwide. The only logical and sound way to achieve that desired outcome is the reform and expansion of the Security Council. Egypt therefore renews its call for an end to the monopoly of permanent members over the decision-making process in the Council and for the rectification of the historical injustice inflicted on Africa. The continent does not have a permanent seat on the Council and is poorly represented in the category of non-permanent members. Africa will not renounce its demands to obtain the permanent membership it deserves, as specified in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration.

In conclusion, I would like to highlight our priority issues within the United Nations system. They include strengthening the international human rights framework, addressing the absence of democracy in international relations, accelerating the achievement of

the Millennium Development Goals, realizing nuclear disarmament and fighting corruption, including recovering the assets stolen by key members of the regimes recently brought down by our peoples. We reiterate that we are determined to continue empowering women nationally and internationally, to protecting human rights, and to allowing our youth to contribute effectively to the elaboration of Egypt's vision for the world and for its future.

I take this opportunity to welcome the appointment a few months ago by the Secretary-General of a Special Envoy on Youth who comes from the Arab world. We must also exert concerted efforts at the international level to combat terrorism and strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to coordinate those efforts and address the root causes of terrorism.

In conclusion, I truly hope that the message I have delivered on behalf of the people and the President of Egypt has been received by the Assembly today. I also hope that the aspirations it identified will be realized so that we may achieve progress, peace and development and that next year we may reap the fruits of our labour.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Erlan Abdyldayev, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Mr. Abdyldayev (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): Thirteen years have passed since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2), and the established deadline to achieve the Millennium Development Goals is rapidly approaching. The world has changed since then, and we anticipate that, in the next 15 years, it will change a great deal more.

In that context, the main theme of the general debate, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage", is obviously very appropriate and relevant. We are convinced that the new development agenda will provide a clear vision for our post-2015 development. It should be formulated in the best spirit of the Millennium Development Goals, with special attention to the issues of poverty eradication, education and health care, the economy and employment, governance, agriculture and food availability, energy, peace and security.

The need for a common agenda is unquestionable. All countries must enthusiastically embark on the path of sustainable development. The global challenges can be effectively met if they are included as core priorities in each country's development strategy.

Kyrgyzstan has done its part. That is reflected in the national sustainable development strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2013-2017, which identifies five-year targets and plans for a transition to sustainable development, culminating in 2017. Our vision is to form a stable country where human rights, freedom and security are guaranteed, where a multi-ethnic society is governed with equal adherence to the rule of law, and where all prerequisites for sustainable economic growth and a decent standard of life are the norm. The tasks ahead are complex, and we believe they should be addressed in partnership with the United Nations and the international community.

The main strategic resource for the green economic growth of Kyrgyzstan is water. The role of water has increased significantly due to the major challenge of sustainable development posed by global climate change, which is already affecting our region negatively. Most importantly with regard to the state of water resources, Kyrgyzstan's glaciers have shrunk by 30 per cent as a result of global warming. According to preliminary expert forecasts, unless urgent measures are taken there will be practically no glaciers or snowfields on the country's territory by the year 2100. Those melting waters are the primary source of the rivers of Central Asia.

This ongoing negative trend may well lead to a substantial reduction of river flow in Kyrgyzstan, and consequently to social and economic tensions in the region as a whole. We must pursue our work in the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The relevant international financial and ecological organizations must continue to assist the countries of Central Asia in addressing the problem. That is particularly important in the transition to a sustainable use of both water and natural ecosystems resources.

The development of hydro-energy is strategically important to the sustainable socioeconomic development of the region. We are convinced that it would contribute to an integrated solution of many current and future challenges. We believe that the construction of large hydroelectric power facilities should be considered one path to clean development. Harnessing the hydropower potential of the upstream countries should be considered part of low-carbon development, and developing water resources should be considered the core model for green development in the economic progress of the region. We are ready to participate in an exchange of

best practices in water management, water use and the construction of irrigation systems.

More than 90 per cent of Kyrgyzstan is located in mountainous areas, which play an important role in the accumulation of water. In that regard, we support the further promotion of the developmental goals of the mountain regions, in accordance with the decisions taken at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. I am confident that a draft resolution on the issue, to be submitted to the General Assembly at this session with the co-sponsorship of Kyrgyzstan, will enjoy the support of all United Nations Members.

Some mountainous landlocked countries have special needs for development. High levels of poverty, isolation, the burden of transportation costs and a heavy debt are among the basic range of problems that many mountainous countries face. In such conditions, it is difficult to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and to meet the commitments set out in United Nations documents on sustainable development. We hope that the special needs, problems and challenges of mountain countries and communities will be properly reflected in the post-2015 development programme.

It is well known that mountain ranges provide valuable ecosystem services and serve as important indicator of environmental health and a support system for the snow leopard, a rare and endangered highland animal. In that regard, Kyrgyzstan is developing a 10-year national protection strategy. We invite everyone to the world forum on the snow leopard to be held on 22 and 23 October in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

The rehabilitation and security of uranium tailings, which today total more than 8 million cubic metres on our territory, is very important in Kyrgyzstan. The situation is aggravated by the fact that most are located in seismically active mudflow and flood-prone areas with high groundwater levels, as well near the banks of rivers that form the basis of the Central Asian water supply. The potential consequences of ineffective solutions would have a very negative impact on millions of people in Central Asia.

In order to raise the international community's awareness of the problem and to attract additional assistance towards its solution, at this session the Kyrgyz delegation will introduce a draft resolution under agenda item 19 (j), "The role of the international community in the prevention of the radiation threat in

Central Asia". We call on members to support the draft resolution.

It is well known that development and security are closely interrelated. Unfortunately, the maintenance of security and stability and the fight against international terrorism, religious extremism, and illicit drug and arms trafficking and trade remain on the development agenda of Kyrgyzstan and our region. Those issues are most acute in our region because of the current situation in Afghanistan.

Despite some progress in the political process in Afghanistan, the stability and security of the country remain at risk. Furthermore, the Afghan drug-production trade, being the largest in the world, is generating a whole range of threats and destabilizing both the political and military situation in Eurasia. Those problems are more critical and significant in our region than ever before, especially in view of the upcoming withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan in 2014.

Kyrgyzstan, in accordance with its commitments, has fully complied with its mission in counter-terrorism operations in Afghanistan. Over the past 12 years, Kyrgyzstan has provided an important channel for the supply of military and humanitarian goods to Afghanistan through the transit centre at Manas International Airport. We believe that the international community's efforts have contributed to the relative stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan and helped the Afghan authorities to assume their leadership role and responsibility in the fields of public administration and development. We are determined to continue our strategic dialogue with partners on all issues of mutual interest. We believe that in the fight against terrorism, drug trafficking and other security challenges stemming from Afghanistan, regional organizations have proved their effectiveness and should be even more involved. I am talking here in particular of the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Kyrgyzstan's chairmanship of those international and regional organizations this year has once again confirmed the need to have comprehensive measures in place to stabilize the situation as soon as possible, both in Afghanistan and in the region as a whole.

Along with other measures to combat security challenges and threats, it is necessary to pursue a policy of industrialization aimed at building a sustainable

Afghan economy in order to achieve socioeconomic growth in the country. It is also important to involve Afghanistan in the development of regional cooperation and the implementation of major joint socioeconomic and infrastructural projects such as the export of electricity and the building of roads and railroad networks.

In that respect, Kyrgyzstan stands ready to expand its trade and economic relations and to implement various infrastructural projects, including the export of electricity to Afghanistan as part of the CASA-1000 project and the establishment of a tripartite — Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan — agro-industrial consortium, with the assistance of the United Nations.

Today we must take a fundamentally new approach to solving Afghanistan's problems, based on a new philosophy and paradigm of social development: the right to development.

I should like to take this opportunity to invite representatives of Government and academia to take part in the international research conference on "Afghanistan — 2014", to be held on 10 October 2013 in the capital of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek.

We are following developments in the Arab world with special attention. The continuing two-year armed conflict in Syria is of great concern. Kyrgyzstan expresses its serious concern about the numerous victims of the armed conflict, the humanitarian disaster it represents and the further escalation of the crisis. We call upon both sides to immediately call a ceasefire and resolve the crisis peacefully through a dialogue between all political forces of the country under the mediation of the United Nations.

We support the initiative of the transfer of Syrian chemical weapons and their subsequent destruction, under international supervision, and Syria's accession to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. We wish to see the restoration of stability in the country and the preservation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria, without external military interference.

The changes occurring in the modern world and its increasing diversity require the strengthening of the United Nations so as to ensure that it continues to play its central role of ensuring global security and the effective implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

That can be achieved through reforming the United Nations, which should be done in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and on the basis of a broad consensus on the part of States Members of the United Nations.

We believe that all States Members of the United Nations should strictly comply with the decisions of the Security Council; we are in favour of expanding its membership in order to make it more representative, transparent and democratic.

We attach particular importance to the work of the Economic and Social Council. Kyrgyzstan therefore welcomed the adoption last week of resolution 68/1, on strengthening the role and enhancing the effectiveness of the work of the Council. We hope that a strengthened Council will become an effective mechanism for the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda and continue to serve as an important platform for multilateral political dialogue on global social and economic issues.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the need to move forward firmly and resolutely by means of joint efforts and a common resolve on the part of all countries in order to overcome threats and challenges, maintain peace and well-being and promote development for future generations. Kyrgyzstan is fully prepared to engage in such constructive and effective international cooperation.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Elmar Maharram oglu Mammadyarov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Mammadyarov (Azerbaijan): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Mr. John Ashe on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session and wish him every success in fulfilling this highly responsible duty. We are also grateful to Mr. Vuk Jeremić for his able presidency of General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session.

This year's general debate is taking place during a period of serious threats and challenges to peace, security and sustainable development. Environmental, economic and social indicators demonstrate that the models for progress and development need to be modified and adapted. The theme of the current general debate, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage", is timely and topical in providing

an opportunity for evaluating the progress achieved so far and identifying new ways of overcoming existing obstacles.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were adopted to address extreme poverty and multiple other forms of deprivation and for defining future development priorities, are of key importance in making future positive differences in the world.

Azerbaijan recently became a donor country and contributes to the sustainable development efforts of countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. This is a brand-new chapter in the history of my country and its activities in the international arena. A national entity, the Azerbaijan International Development Agency, which was established for that purpose, has already carried out various assistance programmes in more than 20 countries. The Heydar Aliyev Foundation has also conducted various humanitarian and social programmes.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations recently commended Azerbaijan's achievements in combating hunger and recognized that the country has accomplished the first MDG, namely, combating undernourishment. Moreover, gender equality, the empowerment of women and the fight against HIV/AIDS have also been identified as areas of progress.

One of the key elements that Azerbaijan is considering in the context of the post-2015 agenda is information and communications technology (ICT), which is a driving force of development and progress. To achieve the objective of ensuring improved access to ICT, efforts must be intensified to enhance regional synergies for promoting investment in ICT capacity-building, refocusing tools and content so as to address the particular needs of populations and thus better deploying ICT in the service of sustainable development.

In that connection, Azerbaijan has put forward a proposal to establish the Eurasian Connectivity Alliance, a regional platform in support of improved connectivity and greater cooperation in the field of ICT. We are encouraged by Member States' support for that initiative through the adoption of resolution 67/298 in September and look forward to further cooperation with interested Governments and other stakeholders.

The world is still witnessing violations of the fundamental norms and principles of international law.

Hundreds of thousands of people throughout the world continue to suffer from acts of aggression, military occupation, ethnic cleansing and a prevailing culture of impunity for the most serious crimes of concern to the international community.

Twenty years ago, in 1993, the Security Council adopted four resolutions — resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993) — condemning the use of force against Azerbaijan and the occupation of its territories. In those resolutions, the Council reaffirmed respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, reconfirmed that the Nagorno Karabakh region is an integral part of Azerbaijan, and demanded the immediate, full and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all the occupied territories.

The resolutions also made specific reference to violations of international humanitarian law, including the violent displacement of a large number of civilians in Azerbaijan, attacks on civilians and the bombing of its territory.

A series of Security Council presidential statements on the issue adopted between 1992 and 1995 are phrased along the same lines. All in all, the aforementioned resolutions, which are clearly the most authoritative and binding rulings on the problem, acknowledge that acts of military force were committed against Azerbaijan and that such acts constitute a serious violation of international law.

To our deep regret, the Security Council's principled demands, including, in the first place, the withdrawal of occupying forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, have still not been implemented, and the mediation efforts conducted for more than 20 years within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), have yet to yield results. Against that background, with a view to deflecting the attention of the international community from the urgent need to address the main problems caused by its continuing aggression against Azerbaijan, Armenia has been undertaking efforts to distort the actual situation and downplaying the relevance of Security Council resolutions and misinterpreting their provisions. Moreover, Armenia's continued claims of annexation and the consistent measures it has been undertaking in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan with a view to further consolidating the status quo of the occupation and preventing the return of hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons to their

homeland represent an open challenge to the conflict-resolution process and pose a serious threat to international and regional peace and security.

On our initiative at the United Nations in 2005 and 2010, OSCE-led fact-finding and fact-assessment missions visited the occupied territories. Both missions documented the fact of illegal activities in those areas, involving, inter alia, the insertion of settlers, the extensive redrawing of boundaries, the changing of original geographic names, and the discriminatory treatment of cultural property and sacred sites. However, the missions' recommendations remain just on paper. Moreover, the latest reports on the transfer of Syrian Armenians into the Nagorno Karabakh region and seven other adjacent occupied districts of Azerbaijan, along with other illegal activities, including efforts to operate flights into and out of those territories, provide yet more evidence of Armenia's deliberate policy of annexing Azerbaijani land.

In that regard, it is critical that the international community continue to insist on the need for an immediate and unconditional end to all actions that are seriously obstructing the prospects of a negotiated peaceful settlement to the conflict. Armenia's policy of annexation has absolutely no chance of succeeding. The Nagorno Karabakh region was, is and will always be an inalienable part of Azerbaijan. The only way to achieve a durable and lasting solution and to establish civilized relations between the two neighbouring States is to de-occupy Azerbaijani territories, fully re-establish the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, and comply immediately with the inalienable right of refugees and internally displaced persons to return to their homes. That is what international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions require, something that can in no way be introduced as a bargaining chip during the conflict-settlement process. Above all, Azerbaijan will never compromise its territorial integrity or the rights and freedoms of its citizens. Without prejudice to its rights under the Charter of the United Nations, in particular those set forth in Article 51, Azerbaijan has embarked upon, and remains committed to, the conflict-settlement process.

We have no doubt that the Azerbaijani and Armenian communities of Nagorno Karabakh will one day live side by side in peace and dignity in this region of Azerbaijan. It is therefore essential and vital to continue efforts towards peace, agreement and coexistence between the two communities of the

Nagorno Karabakh region. We consider those aspects to be an important part of the entire reconciliation process, which should be given the attention it deserves.

Azerbaijan highly appreciates the principled stance of the States Members of the United Nations that has been expressed on issues that are important for Azerbaijan and pertaining to its sovereignty and territorial integrity. We count on the continued resolve of the international community to defend the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as its strong solidarity with the just position of Azerbaijan.

We note the encouraging developments in the Middle East peace process with the resumption of direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine. The current situation of insecurity in the whole region necessitates progress in the peace process as never before. It is imperative that the parties demonstrate responsibility to sustain international efforts towards achieving the two-State solution and avoid actions that would risk undermining that objective. The economic, financial and humanitarian situation in Palestine requires continued international attention and assistance, particularly in order to ensure humanitarian aid for the region.

In June, Azerbaijan hosted a conference of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on the establishment of an Islamic financial safety net in support of Palestine, as well as a donors conference in support of the city of Al-Quds. States members of the OIC and other international organizations attending the conferences pledged to contribute to improving Palestine's economy, health care and education, as well as two infrastructure projects.

We welcome yesterday's adoption of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), regarding the safeguarding and destruction of Syria's chemical-weapon stockpiles. We hope that the unanimous and strong position demonstrated by the Council will contribute to finding a political solution to the conflict in Syria, putting an end to the suffering inflicted on the Syrian people and ensuring that all parties concerned comply with their obligations and commitments under international law. Azerbaijan strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons in Syria, particularly the resulting killing of civilians. Resolution 2118 (2013) affirms that the use of chemical weapons constitutes a serious violation of

international law and qualifies such an act as a threat to international peace and security. By endorsing the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 (S/2012/522, annex) and calling for the convening of an international conference on Syria, the Security Council paved the way for achieving a peaceful transition, stability and reconciliation. It is imperative that all parties cease armed violence, engage constructively in the political process and commit to the implementation of the Geneva communiqué.

In conclusion, I would like to express our hope that during the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, Member States will be able to take successful steps towards a stronger and more effective United Nations. We look forward to the continued commitment and engagement of the United Nations system, both in reinforcing the implementation of national development goals by individual countries and in ensuring the implementation of the decisions and resolutions adopted by the Organization.

The meeting rose at 2.05 p.m.