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Official Records

President: Mr. Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda)

In the absence of the President, Mrs. Mesquita Borges (Timor-Leste), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. János Martonyi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Hungary.

Mr. Martonyi (Hungary): Defining the post-2015 strategy for development is among the most important long-term multilateral agendas existing today. The task is complex, but the mission — to make our common development sustainable — should be clear. It is not just a synonym for the protection of the environment. The mission is to make sure that our societies, economies, environment and partnerships will serve us all and serve the generations to come.

By 2030, our population will be 9 billion people, 65 per cent of whom will live in cities, forming consumer societies with ever-growing demands but using the same or a declining pool of natural resources. Civil societies and other non-governmental players have more influence than ever on our values and decisions. We are racing against climate change. Our perceptions of progress, equity, inequality, affluence and resource management are changing as we speak. The post-2015 development agenda has to reflect these changes.

As we face a turning point in our history and the state of the Earth, it is only with a fundamental shift in mindset that humanity will succeed in a transition to global sustainable development. We have to accelerate progress towards the goals set out in the Millennium Development Goals. However, we know that by 2015 we may not be able to meet all the targets we set in 2000. Therefore, the next important step is to create a single agenda through which we will complete the unfinished business and make sure that the results will last even in the light of the tremendous challenges facing humankind.

We should aim at eradicating extreme poverty in a single generation. The transformation to sustainable development is costly; however, it would be incomparably more costly to miss the chance. We should learn from past mistakes and find better alternatives. We all need economic growth. We all need justice, respect for human rights, gender equality, dignity, good governance and successfully implemented national development plans. We all deserve to live free of want and from fear of devastating conflicts. Our objective should be not a zero-sum game but a win-win outcome. We all share the consequences; therefore we should be aware of our common responsibility as well.

The decisions we make today will also need to be relevant in 15 years. When our successors look back in 2030 on the agenda we are about to decide on, they should acknowledge the purpose, priorities and targets jointly set. They should be convinced that our action had the right impact and made this world a better place. I thank the Member States for the confidence they

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have shown in Hungary by entrusting us to co-chair the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. We will do our best to achieve a consensual, forward-looking, win-win formula as the outcome of the negotiating process.

Hungary attaches the utmost importance to the issue of water and sanitation. We believe that it needs to be addressed in an integrated way to achieve a human rights-based social development prosperity and ecological balance. Water is a source of life, health, prosperity and a shared future, but it can also be a source of risk.

In order to take stock of the various international developments in the field of water, Hungary has decided to organize the Budapest Water Summit, to be held in our capital from 8 to 11 October. Hungary is a downstream country with about 95 per cent of all fluvial waters originating beyond our State borders. We have accumulated precious know-how in flood control, drinking water, wastewater treatment and irrigation, just to list a few. The Summit will be accompanied by a science forum, a youth forum, a civil society forum, a business leaders' forum and Expo, and a philanthropy round table. We look forward to welcoming Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the United Nations agencies active in the field of water, as well as other international and national leaders to the conference. More than 100 countries and international institutions have confirmed they will be represented in Budapest. The Summit will adopt the Budapest Statement, and we hope that it will, as a synthesis document, greatly contribute to and facilitate the discussions and negotiations on the sustainable development goals.

The appalling situations in various parts of the world leave no doubt as to the interdependence and mutually reinforcing nature of democracy, peace and security, development and human rights. A cross-policy approach that takes account of those interrelationships should be integrated into the work of the various bodies and forums of the United Nations.

Hungary welcomes the measures that the United Nations system is introducing to mainstream human rights. Likewise, it encourages national initiatives and contributions to the protection of human rights. Hungary remains dedicated to the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It was in this spirit that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary established the annual Budapest Human Rights Forum,

intended to apply an interrelated philosophy to address current human rights challenges. The next Forum is due to take place in November and will be dedicated, among other things, to the relationship between human rights and sustainable development.

Hungary is committed to disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, which are fundamental for maintaining global peace and security. We urge all countries to ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention. We also support the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, as foreseen by the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

My country was greatly honoured to chair the International Atomic Energy Agency's International Conference on Nuclear Security in July and sincerely hopes that the results of that Conference will contribute to a safer world.

On the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), I am confident that its entry into force will greatly strengthen global peace and security. Only a treaty in force will confine the chapter on nuclear testing to the history books. We therefore need to further intensify our respective efforts. I and my fellow article XIV Coordinator Mr. Marty Natalegawa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, will make an attempt to bring us closer to that goal. I look forward to our co-coordinatorship of the CTBT for the period 2013-2015 with a view to accelerating the ratification process.

The use of chemical weapons in Syria was a crime against humanity. The international community has finally embarked on action to ensure that similar attacks will never be repeated. We urge that the perpetrators of all war crimes be brought to justice. Without justice there is no reconciliation. Without a chance for reconciliation, there is no lasting settlement. We welcome the United States-Russia agreement on the framework for the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons as well as the consequent resolutions adopted by the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and the Security Council. We look forward to a timely, transparent and full-scale implementation under the watchful eyes of the international community.

Hungary is ready to provide chemical and biological experts on the ground to facilitate those international

efforts. We urge the Syrian authorities to take full responsibility to ensure that their chemical weapons are stored securely until inspection and destruction, and do not fall into the hands of any other State or non-State actor. Syria should live up to its commitments, including by providing full access to the international inspectors.

We hope that these developments will bring us closer to a lasting and sustainable political solution, which should remain the backbone of our efforts in the Syrian crisis. Well over 100,000 lives have already been lost and 5 million people displaced in this conflict. Most regrettably, it was only after a terrible chemical attack last August that the Security Council became ready to fulfil its duties and embarked on action. I urge all partners in the international community to seize this momentum and reinvigorate the process leading to the long-overdue "Geneva II" international peace conference on Syria.

Last, but not least, my country is shocked by and strongly condemns the surging terrorist attacks against civilians at the Westgate Mall in Kenya, students in Nigeria, and Christian, Muslim and other communities in Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. Our solidarity and sympathy go to the innocent victims.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. François Louceny Fall, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Guineans Abroad of the Republic of Guinea.

Mr. Fall (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): It is with legitimate pride that I address the General Assembly, a symbol of the resolve of peoples to pool their potential in order to forge a better world where peace, security, prosperity and solidarity will allow humankind to face the many challenges before it.

My pride is as great as my country, since we as a nation have just reached an important stage in our history by finalizing the transitional process and holding legislative elections on 28 September. Guinea has thus joined the melting pot of democratic nations that respect human rights and fundamental freedoms. It was able to do so thanks to the assistance of its partners whose action catalysed a fruitful dialogue among the actors of Guinean political life. The elections have certainly opened the path to widespread development blazed by the Government so that the Guinean population can finally take advantage of its rich potential.

I could not find a better opportunity than from this rostrum to convey the gratitude of the people and Government of Guinea to the international community and to reiterate my country's commitment to the principles and purposes of our Organization. I should also like to pay a well-deserved tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, whose devotion and, above all, competence have strengthened the central role of the United Nations in managing crises and improving the living conditions of our populations.

I am firmly convinced that the new President of the General Assembly, Mr. John William Ashe, a man of the South, will understand better than anyone what is at stake in the theme for this session. I assure him of the full cooperation of my delegation in carrying out his noble mission. We also express our great appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, for his efforts in maintaining the Assembly at its highest level.

World peace and security are at the heart of our concerns and should be the subject of our full attention. A number of conflicts have been ended. Countries such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Burundi have been able to turn the page of war in order to dedicate themselves to peacebuilding, thereby guaranteeing national reconstruction and sustainable development. The international community has the duty to support and assist them.

In this context, I should like to evoke the case of Mali, which is emerging from a period of crisis. Sadly, the recent past of that brotherly country reminds us of the vulnerability of our States to terrorism and extremism, as well as the fragility of our institutions. The international community mobilized unanimously to maintain Mali's sovereignty and territorial integrity and to restore the authority of its State and constitutional legality.

The peace that reigned in the presidential election in Mali certainly augurs a new era of prosperity for the country. Mali urgently needs assistance in order to build peace, reconcile the Malians and rebuild their country. It needs assistance to strengthen its security, which is indivisible from the Sahelo-Saharan region. We must always recall that terrorism never sleeps; we must combat and defeat it. International security is at stake.

Guinea will never abandon its solidarity with Mali. Its presence within the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali testifies to our

commitment to the stabilization of the subregion. The Guinean Government reiterates its determination to work for the re-establishment of constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau on the basis of the recommendations of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union, the International Contact Group on Guinea-Bissau, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, the European Union and the United Nations.

The Mano River Union is an essential link for the consolidation of peace in West Africa and deserves our full attention. The international community, and in particular the United Nations and ECOWAS, must work to support that organization in its global approach to meeting the security and socioeconomic challenges.

We welcome the determination of the Peacebuilding Commission to assist Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea in their efforts in security and defence sector reform, while promoting youth employment and the empowerment of women on the basis of national reconciliation.

With respect to the Great Lakes region, we urge the parties to renounce violence and to firmly commit to bringing peace to the region via adherence to the Framework Agreement of 24 February. We thank the Mediator, President Denis Sassou Nguesso, for his efforts to re-establish sustainable peace in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and the Great Lakes region.

As for the Central African Republic, urgent measures are needed to prevent a collapse of the State and to avert the chronic instability that threatens the country. We urge the Sudan and South Sudan to pursue dialogue in order to solve pending questions, specifically the status of Abyei province, and to relaunch bilateral cooperation.

Given the deterioration of the situation in Syria, the international community must strive further to bring an end to the relentless violence and massive destruction of lives and property. Guinea condemns the use of chemical weapons, which violates international norms and human dignity. Robust action must be undertaken for the destruction of the chemical arsenal in Syria, in accordance with the Russian-American initiative and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). At the same time, the legal framework prohibiting the manufacture, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons must be strengthened.

I cannot fail to raise the issue of Western Sahara, where we call on all stakeholders to spare no effort to arrive at a political solution. Our solidarity with Cuba is as strong as ever as we seek to have the embargo unjustly imposed on its people lifted.

I should like to weigh in on a subject of major concern that is the focus of the international community's attention — the Palestinian question. In spite of the many injunctions of the international community, the Palestinian people continue to suffer. Arbitrary violence, settlements and the seizure of goods continue to be the people's daily lot. Guinea reiterates its unceasing support for the Palestinian cause, in the belief that peace and stability in the Middle East require the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the road map of the Quartet, which foresees the creation of an independent, sovereign and viable Palestinian State living side by side and in peace with Israel within safe and internationally recognized borders. We express the hope that the negotiations under way will enable the Palestinian people to finally enjoy their inalienable rights.

Ever since its creation, the United Nations has spared no effort to promote peace, security and international cooperation in order to ensure the harmonious development of humankind. In this context, the Millennium Development Goals were a source of real hope for developing countries. The undeniable progress made in many areas — growth, education, gender equality, and maternal and child health — has largely contributed to pushing back the borders of poverty. Nevertheless, many important challenges have still to be met.

At a time when the international community is investing in the creation of a post-2015 development agenda, we must recognize that the results achieved by the Millennium Development Goals have not lived up to our hopes. The eradication of extreme poverty depends on the strengthening of the human development base and the promotion of a competitive economy that respects the environment, which is an engine of inclusive growth and decent work. It also depends on governance that is favourable to sustainable development in the context of peace and security.

In this quest, the focus must be on the monitoring, transparency and management of our natural resources. We must join in international partnership on the basis of reaffirmed solidarity and shared responsibility. That

must be our new vision. In the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda, we must take into account the synergies arising from the complementarity between the Millennium Development Goals and the sustainable development goals. We must also particularly stress South-South and triangular cooperation, and promote innovative financing in order to bridge the gap in official development assistance.

In the unanimous resolve to fight marginalization, my delegation remains convinced that Africa's fight to master its own destiny will be understood. The determination of Heads of State on the continent to adopt a common African position and to create a high-level committee charged with forging regional and intercontinental alliances around the post-2015 development agenda are part of the dynamic to build a better world without conflict and poverty and their corollaries.

My country has always believed in the value of multilateralism, the only guarantor of peace, international security and shared development. The United Nations is still the irreplaceable framework for cooperation and the management of world affairs. Guinea, as in the past, will continue to contribute to this lofty fight in order to ensure a better future for humankind. That is why it shares the concerns of the international community and invites it to begin setting the post-2015 stage.

We leaders must outline how this new world partnership will work. It is time to draw lessons from the past in order to launch a fruitful dialogue in which all development actors will participate with mutual respect and collective responsibility in the emergence of an international society that is more just, equitable and more unified. There is a need for a new international architecture. The world would do better if all nations, large and small, strong and weak, effectively played their part towards achieving the overall well-being of humankind.

The Republic of Guinea will not cease its call for the United Nations system to be reformed and adapted to the needs of the moment. It is a question of equity and justice. Our will is unshakeable and the momentum is irreversible because the aspirations of people who are passionate about peace, freedom and progress are profound. It is high time to listen to the voices of those who do not have a voice — the poorest and most vulnerable. No one should suffer from hunger,

fear, illness or the spectre of ignorance. Our duty is to leave to future generations an environment conducive to sustainable development. Together we will save humanity.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Albert del Rosario, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines.

Mr. Del Rosario (Philippines): On behalf of the Philippine Government, I proffer my warmest congratulations to the President on his election. I wish him success and assure him of my country's steadfast support for his presidency.

The theme that has been selected for this session is indeed timely and relevant. We must start setting the stage for the new development agenda that will succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) framework. Barely two years before its deadline, considerable work still lies ahead of us. For instance, the global economic and financial crisis has underscored the need for reform towards greater systemic coherence; the multilateral trading system remains frozen in the past; and the persistence of an outdated development paradigm results in policy prescriptions and conditionalities inimical to the interests of many developing countries.

As we set the stage for the post-2015 framework, let us reaffirm the very *raison d'être* of the United Nations, which is to accord every person the opportunity at a life that is secure, progressive and dignified. That purpose is enshrined in the Philippine Constitution and is central to President Benigno Aquino III's social contract with the Filipino people. Under President Aquino's leadership, my country has embarked on a journey along a straight path — or, as we say in Filipino, "*daang matuwid*" — resolving to work towards inclusive growth, combating corruption, promoting transparency and accountability, improving global competitiveness, making better use of resources, achieving just and lasting peace, and upholding the rule of law.

The Aquino Administration firmly maintains that good governance is good economics. As a result, the Philippines is reaping the first fruits of its hard work. In the past four quarters, the Philippine economy has experienced unprecedented growth of over 7 per cent. As a result, the Philippines won three investment-grade ratings and is now considered a growth engine in the region.

These glowing reports are, of course, well received by my Government, but we are under no illusion that these indicators alone constitute success. For the past 13 years, the MDGs have been integrated into the Philippine development plan for 2011-2016. Yet our work continues and the challenge we now face is clear. It is how to ensure that growth is inclusive, resilient and sustainable. As we pursue the path towards this very type of growth, my Government is guided by the following important lessons learned from our experience in working towards the Millennium Development Goals.

First, strong institutional arrangements are necessary. For the Philippines, that means that the highest political support is given to the attainment of the MDGs, involving all branches of Government and other key stakeholders.

Secondly, specific policies, programmes and projects must be aligned with national development goals. In our MDG experience, innovative social protection programmes include conditional cash transfers, universal health care, the comprehensive and integrated delivery of social services, a K-12 basic education programme, and a community mortgage programme.

Thirdly, the active participation of various stakeholders — namely, the private sector, civil society, non-governmental organizations, the constituents and international development partners — must be strongly promoted and supported. This ensures that policies and programmes are responsive and inclusive.

Fourthly, local Government units should be empowered. Beyond the delivery of basic social services, the capacities of local Government units in formulating and implementing policies and programmes must be strengthened and guided by the principles of transparency and accountability.

Fifthly, the capability to generate accurate, timely and relevant data at the national and local levels must be enhanced.

Sixthly, disaster risk reduction must be mainstreamed to enable communities to better cushion the impact of man-made and natural disasters. Building the capacities of national and local stakeholders to help reduce the vulnerability and increase the physical and economic resilience of communities must be a key development goal.

These important elements will further enrich the United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2012-2018 for the Philippines. With the overall theme “Supporting inclusive, sustainable and resilient development”, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework seeks to fully align United Nations work with the Philippine Development Plan 2011-2016.

My Government is actively participating in the international discourse on sustainable development and in crafting the post-2015 development agenda. The Philippines was one of 66 countries chosen by the United Nations to conduct open, inclusive and transparent consultations with a broad range of stakeholders aimed at generating perspectives on how the post-2015 development agenda framework should look. We took to this task earnestly by undertaking consultations with more than 500 stakeholders representing the Government, civil society, the business community and academia.

Our national consultations on the post-2015 development agenda have identified the following building blocks of the new framework, as well as the development themes deemed most relevant to the Philippines. These building blocks are composed of four principles, five themes and various development enablers, and were offered to the United Nations system as the Philippines’ contribution to the ongoing discourse.

We need look no further than the United Nations Charter to identify the building blocks for the global post-2015 development agenda. For this agenda to be relevant and responsive, it must be anchored in four main principles: human rights; equality, equity, people empowerment, social cohesion and justice; accountable governance; and inclusive development.

My country has identified five pillars that we believe will address our own specific development challenges. These pillars represent the areas where progress is most needed to build a rights-based, equitable and sustainable society. These pillars are poverty reduction and social inclusion; environmental sustainability, climate change and disaster risk management; accountable, responsive and participatory governance; a fair and stable order based on the international rule of law; and peace and security.

My Government will formulate and implement policies that will be defined by these pillars. These

policies will duly be integrated into my country's national development agenda, and progress will be monitored at regular intervals. On the global front, the Philippines proposes that the duration of the post-2015 development agenda should be 10 years, with a major review to be undertaken by 2020. Reforms should be front-loaded within the first half of the period to pave the way for substantive accomplishments by 2020.

Allow me to further elaborate on aspects of the principles and themes the Philippines has put forward. The Philippines continues to aspire to a global economic system that places development at the centre and promotes democracy in international economic decision-making. Ultimately, it behoves us to consider reform of the overall global economic system as we craft a sound, sustainable development agenda.

To achieve meaningful reform, what we need now is a strong political impetus from all of us to make this happen. Governments must see beyond political differences and agree to work together to ensure a level global playing field. It is for this reason that the Philippines staunchly supports the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development goals.

The post-2015 development agenda should squarely address migration. It is a cross-cutting issue relevant to our efforts to promote human rights, reduce poverty and foster sustainable development. The Philippines, for its part, will continue to advocate the protection of the rights of migrants, regardless of migration status; the recognition of migrants' positive contribution to development in the sending and receiving countries alike; and the creation of programmes that support families, especially the children who are left behind.

Our national experience of these issues will be my Government's contribution to the discussion in the forthcoming High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development later this week. In addition, we hope to include in the discussion the plight of migrants who find themselves in conflict areas — a situation that my Government has had to address in recent years. In several instances, we have repatriated Filipino workers to get them out of harm's way.

Our experience has been instructive and enriching, as it has opened for us new windows of cooperation with our bilateral partners, as well as with the United Nations, the International Organization for Migration and other international organizations. My Government wants to focus international discussion on the plight of

these migrants, with a view to forging creative platforms on which States — whether countries of origin, transit or destination — can cooperate to better address this complex issue.

The Philippines hopes that the High-level Dialogue will reaffirm that migration is an indispensable element in the global sustainable development agenda. Migration influences each country's socioeconomic growth, human capital and involvement in global affairs. Managing migration through policies that uphold the dignity of the individual should therefore be a vital component in the development agenda of each nation and of the world.

Achieving sustainable development requires an enabling environment of peace, security and the rule of law. It is to this end that my Government's approach in managing conflicts within and outside its borders is anchored in international law. As such, we avail ourselves of the various means for the peaceful settlement of disputes, including mediation and arbitration, in accordance with Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter.

As declared by the General Assembly in its resolution 37/10, on the peaceful settlement of international disputes, otherwise known as the 1982 Manila Declaration, recourse to the judicial settlement of legal disputes should not be considered an unfriendly act between States. On the contrary, it is a measure that generates clarity, benefiting all stakeholders. In this spirit, my country reaffirms its unwavering support for the International Court of Justice and the various specialized tribunals, such as the dispute settlement mechanisms of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The Philippines has also relentlessly and tirelessly pursued the peace process in the southern Philippines. The signing of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro was a milestone in this regard. We remain steadfastly committed to achieving just and lasting peace that will be inclusive for all.

Furthermore, in accordance with the application of the rule of law and the peaceful settlement of disputes, the Philippines, as a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention and a staunch advocate of disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, also welcomes Syria's accession to the Treaty. The Philippines hopes that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons will

effectively assist the Syrian Government in disposing of its chemical weapons stockpiles.

The Philippine Government's commitment to peace is resolute. This commitment is demonstrated in its continued participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions, particularly in the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the occupied Golan where, despite the dangers, our peacekeepers have stood their ground. Their courage to stay and hold the line at the most critical time led to the continued fulfilment of UNDOF's mandate as charged by the Security Council.

The President took the Chair.

The post-2015 development agenda also demands that Governments address the devastating effects of climate change and natural disasters. My country is among those at highest risk from typhoons, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis. In terms of disaster management, my Government has instituted a cluster model that mobilizes both Government and non-governmental entities at the local and national levels, as well as international partners. The United Nations has recognized this model as a best practice that other countries could emulate. We will continue to share our knowledge and experience in disaster-risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery to help other States better manage similar occurrences. In 2015, we will also actively participate in the World Humanitarian Summit and in the review of the Hyogo Framework for Action, our blueprint for disaster risk reduction cooperation.

The year 2015 marks an important juncture in the history of nations. It will mark the beginning of a new era of sustainable development, one, it is hoped, that gives every individual on this planet a better chance at a better quality of life. That may sound ambitious; it may even sound daunting. Yet, this is an historic time and historic times call for acts of great ambition. Our national hero, Mr. José Rizal, also recognized the importance of ambition and ideals. He wrote that

“it is a useless life that is not consecrated to a great ideal. It is like a stone wasted on the field without becoming a part of any edifice”.

Let the post-2015 development agenda be the edifice upon which we will manifest the collective dreams and ideals of humankind.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Maxine McClean, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados.

Ms. McClean (Barbados): It is my distinct honour and pleasure to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Heads of Government, at their thirty-fourth meeting in July, pledged their support for your presidency. Allow me therefore to assure you of my delegation's support throughout the current session of the General Assembly. Let me also commend your predecessor, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, for ably guiding the work of the General Assembly during its sixty-seventh session.

You have assumed leadership of the General Assembly at a very pivotal moment in the United Nations timetable. The expiration deadline for the Millennium Development Goals is near, and our efforts to elaborate an agenda for the post-2015 period are intensifying. Following the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, modifications have been made to the institutional framework for sustainable development. An agreement has been reached on the establishment of the High-level Political Forum and the United Nations Environment Assembly. The deliberations on the reform of the Economic and Social Council have been completed. It is envisaged that the deliberations of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and the intergovernmental committee of experts on sustainable development financing will accelerate in the next few months. The international community continues to chart a course in the pursuit of global sustainable development.

The theme of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, “The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage”, will require us to engage in what might best be described as a retrospective and prospective dialogue. Much has been said about the current global financial and economic crisis, which has been made worse by the many manifestations of the impact of climate change — extreme weather events, food crises and volatile food crises — compounded by unprecedented levels of terror and violence. At the same time, we have seen a global determination to tackle these issues.

Barbados recognizes that the stability, health and productivity of the global environment, particularly coastal and marine resources, are fundamental to the

survival of Barbados, CARICOM and other small island developing States (SIDS). We therefore deem it imperative that countries like ours maintain active involvement in shaping the global development policy agenda. It is recognized, however, that SIDS are constrained in their ability and capacity to craft independent solutions. One major barrier is our debt situation.

The issue of debt sustainability is of particular relevance to SIDS. In highlighting its importance, the Prime Minister of Barbados, in his feature address to the recently concluded interregional preparatory meeting for the Third International Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, noted:

“Debt sustainability is a critical issue not only for Barbados, but for many of the SIDS... We must therefore use the opportunity provided by the Third International Conference on SIDS to both find and share solutions to this challenge, as it is a major constraint to SIDS achieving sustainable development.

“In this context, it is imperative that, before we meet in Samoa, an opportunity be provided to fully ventilate this matter. In this regard, the relevant entity of the United Nations responsible for coordinating SIDS issues may want to consider convening a meeting of the Finance and Economic Ministers of SIDS to discuss this issue and to put forward specific recommendations to be considered as part of the outcome of the Third International meeting on SIDS.”

I repeat that call on this body and commend it to the relevant entity of the United Nations system to act expeditiously on this proposal.

Another issue of concern to Barbados relates to the international financial-services sector. We believe that the sustainability of our development is being stymied by efforts to undermine this very important sector, which continues to provide a stable and substantial contribution to our gross domestic product. Barbados therefore associates itself with the comments of the Right Honourable Perry Christie, Prime Minister of the Bahamas, in his address to the General Assembly (see A/68/PV.19). We are a well-regulated jurisdiction which has sought at all times to comply with international rules and best practice, and it is our intention to operate

within the established international norms that have guided this sector to date.

In 1994, Barbados was honoured to host the first United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. At that time, we were optimistic that the international community’s recognition of the inherent vulnerabilities of small States would lead to real progress in the development of SIDS. However, the five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy in 2010 revealed that

“[s]mall island developing States have made less progress than most other groupings, or even regressed, in economic terms, especially in terms of poverty reduction and debt sustainability” (*resolution 65/2, para. 5*).

Despite this, Barbados remains committed to the process to advance the sustainable development of SIDS.

As you are aware, Mr. President, Barbados attaches great importance to sustainable development in all its dimensions. We believe that the theme for this year’s session — “The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage” — is thus both timely and important. Such an agenda must recognize the importance of addressing the very specific needs of the Members of the United Nations. I speak therefore from the perspective of SIDS.

Barbados believes that the post-2015 development agenda should involve commitments to the eradication of poverty and hunger; environmental sustainability, with a strong emphasis on coastal and marine resources; the development of sustainable and accessible renewable energy technologies; the pursuit of a sustainable agriculture agenda, in tandem with food and nutrition security; gender equality and women’s empowerment; and youth development, education and employment.

We also call for emphasis on the inclusion of vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities; the requisite means of implementation, including capacity-building, technology transfer, trade and technical cooperation; the integration of appropriate systems for accountability, monitoring, evaluation and reporting; and good governance, respect for human rights, and the rule of law.

This is not a mere shopping list. It reflects the understanding that all these issues are inextricably linked. They represent challenges or problems that must be tackled simultaneously, if we are to achieve

sustainable development. These cannot be addressed in a silo-like manner.

The importance of a policy of sustainable development can therefore not be understated. It is a matter of survival. It is for this reason that the Government of Barbados has envisioned the building of a green economy as its strategy for advancing its sustainable development. As Prime Minister Freundel Stuart indicated in the foreword to the *Green Economy: Scoping Study Synthesis Report* on Barbados,

“the Green Economy debate recognizes our structural vulnerabilities, offers a model to assist us in further realizing our sustainable development aspirations, and creates the institutional platform that would enable us to participate in innovative partnerships in the fight to save our planet, against mounting unsustainable consumption and production patterns”.

Our situation as a special case for development holds as true today as it did more than 20 years ago, when the United Nations system first acknowledged our vulnerabilities and our special link to ocean resources. In the case of Barbados, we are of the opinion that a green economy is inextricably linked to our development and as such should not be lost in this very important discussion.

Over the past several months, increasing attention has been focused on the preparatory process for the Third International Conference on the Sustainable Development of SIDS, to be held in Samoa in 2014. Three regional preparatory meetings in the various SIDS regions were convened in July. Members may recall that the interregional meeting was held in my country, Barbados, the birthplace of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States — the Barbados Programme of Action.

Barbados attaches great importance to the preparatory process for the Samoa Conference. As we take stock after almost 20 years of the implementation of the Programme of Action and 10 years of the Mauritius Strategy for its further implementation, we wish to emphasize that this process is an integral part of the overall post-2015 development agenda. This preparatory process can strengthen the collective action of SIDS in addressing their vulnerabilities and special development challenges. Prime Minister Stuart

of Barbados referred to this recently as building SIDS collectivity.

The support of the international community must underpin this concept of SIDS collectivity by strengthening interregional and intraregional collaboration between SIDS and the various SIDS regions, and increasing emphasis on institution-building, including the establishment of an appropriate institutional mechanism to facilitate, in particular, intraregional collaboration among SIDS.

Credence is given to this approach by the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability, whose report (see A/66/700) stressed that the building of effective institutional governance at the local, national, regional and global levels is essential for achieving sustainable development, facilitating greater utilization of science and technology to help address many of the issues being faced by our young people in strengthening the interface between youth talent, innovation and entrepreneurship, and speaking with one voice at the international level on issues impacting SIDS sustainable development.

Barbados believes firmly that South-South and triangular cooperation must be part of any effort to reform the existing international development cooperation architecture and to build more inclusive global partnerships for effective development cooperation. We possess a wealth of experience in areas that we can share with developing and middle-income countries, including education and training, health care, social partnering, clean energy policies and technologies, environmental protection, including coastal conservation, and the provision of social safety nets.

Like other SIDS, however, we are constrained by limited financial resources and the persistent and prolonged global financial crisis, which continue to have a negative impact on resource mobilization and financial flows to developing countries. Barbados supports the observation made by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, that there is a need to give the global South the incentive to invest more in multilateral forms of South-South cooperation. We therefore welcome the formation of partnerships with the private sector, international organizations, donors and civil society organizations specifically designed to better facilitate such South-South cooperation.

There is a clear need for greater equity, fairness and transparency in the method employed to determine socioeconomic classifications and resource allocation. The persistent use of arbitrarily determined international classification and ratings systems that are based on gross domestic product per capita and other narrow criteria must be expanded in scope to take into account meaningful variables such as vulnerability.

In this context, we refer again to the observation by the Secretary-General that gross domestic product per capita on its own is an inadequate indicator. We also applaud the useful research being conducted on vulnerability indices and other measures beyond gross domestic product by bodies such as the Commonwealth, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and the United Nations Statistical Commission. Barbados will continue its advocacy on this issue.

Barbados is not unique. Like other SIDS, we recognize that our efforts to achieve sustainable development must of necessity incorporate delivery modalities encompassing finance, good governance, development cooperation, trade capacity-building and institutional strengthening. Barbados therefore reminds this body that we must foster strong partnerships if we are to craft effective and truly lasting global solutions.

We call on Member States to revisit the Small Island Developing States Technical Assistance Programme as a means of enabling the transfer of skills, knowledge and experience across SIDS and the three SIDS regions. We hold the view that the Programme offers much potential for enhancing capacity and access to SIDS-grown technologies and skill sets. The Technical Assistance Programme must be seen as an important mechanism for advancing the post-2015 development agenda.

The provision of free health care for Barbadian citizens has been a critical contributor to the high level of human development in Barbados. The treatment and prevention of chronic non-communicable diseases, however, account for a disproportionately large percentage of our national budget. That has entailed the diversion of scarce resources that should have been devoted to achieving other development goals. Chronic non-communicable diseases constitute one of the major challenges to the sustainable development of Barbados, effectively threatening the development gains that Barbados has made.

Our strong commitment to preventing and combating chronic non-communicable diseases is reflected in strong multi-stakeholder partnerships, including the dedicated engagement of civil society. Despite the national prioritization of non-communicable diseases, the focus on prevention, and the implementation of evidence-based programmes, a developing country like Barbados cannot, on its own, achieve its national objectives. International cooperation and assistance in this area are critical.

My country does not draw a dividing line between its domestic and foreign policies. We have been blessed with stable Governments. We have enjoyed a tradition of constitutional change in our Governments since independence. As a nation, we have striven to create a just society. We see an inextricable link between development and international peace and security. Without development, there can be no international peace and security, and without international peace and security the development agenda will not succeed.

For Barbados, therefore, the rule of law at the national and international levels is an indispensable condition for sustainable development. Barbados is deeply concerned by the number of national regional and international conflicts raging throughout the world. We are yet more concerned that the threshold of what constitutes an acceptable level of violence and acceptable levels of atrocity grows higher and higher. The findings of the United Nations inspection team that chemical weapons were used in Syria are alarming. My country believes that the perpetrators of these acts must be brought to account. Moreover, we believe that the international community must work in good faith to find a political solution to the escalating and ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria.

At the same time, the international community must not lose sight of the many conflicts and acts of terror that continue throughout the world. Against this background my delegation wishes to extend profound condolences to the Government and the people of Kenya on the recent terrorist attacks that were perpetrated against the people of that country. As we have stated, there can be no justification for acts of terror.

In Barbados and the Caribbean, illicit small arms and light weapons are the weapons of mass destruction. Primarily linked to international drug trafficking and other transnational organized crime, the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons in the Caribbean

exacts a heavy toll on State and citizen security and impairs national development. For that reason, Barbados and CARICOM consistently argued for the elaboration of a robust, legally binding Arms Trade Treaty, which would set the highest common international standards for regulating the transfer of conventional arms. Barbados is pleased, therefore, to be among those Member States that have signed the Arms Trade Treaty. It is our hope that the implementation of the Treaty will lead to a reduction in the flow of illicit small arms, light weapons and their ammunition, parts and components, thus contributing to a reduction in armed conflict and violence.

Our first Prime Minister, now a national hero, the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, in his maiden speech to this body on 9 December 1966, stated:

“We have no quarrels to pursue and we particularly insist that we do not regard any Member State as our natural opponent... We will not regard any great Power as necessarily right in a given dispute unless we are convinced of this, yet at the same time, we will not view the great Powers with perennial suspicion.” (*A/PV.1487, para. 78*)

The United Nations was established in the aftermath of the Second World War to promote international peace and security. We call on the Security Council to meet its obligations to the international community. It is clear that there cannot be business as usual while humanitarian crises continue to emerge and countless lives continue to be lost. My delegation therefore remains concerned about the economic embargo that continues to be imposed on Cuba, as well as the extraterritorial impact that it continues to have on countries inside and outside our region. We call for the ending of the embargo and trust that it will soon be ushered into the pages of history.

My delegation looks forward to the further unfolding of the post-2015 development agenda during this sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, and I wish you, Sir, every success as you guide the General Assembly in realizing an agenda that is inclusive and one that will redound to the benefit of all.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Wunna Maung Lwin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Mr. Lwin (Myanmar): At the outset, I should like to extend my sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on

your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Myanmar delegation. I am confident that your diplomatic skills and vast knowledge will guide our deliberations to a successful conclusion. I should also like to pay special tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, for a job well done in guiding the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

We are fast approaching the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals. With fewer than 850 days to go, there is now a sense of urgency to look back on our past journey and chart the way forward. Despite the laudable advances made in meeting several of the global Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets in the past 13 years, there remain inequality and variations in achievement across regions and within countries. Therefore, we need to intensify our efforts and accelerate actions towards the full realization of the MDGs in the remaining short span of time.

In many developing countries, especially the least developed ones, a large proportion of the population is still grappling with poverty, hunger, economic and social disparity, and environmental degradation. It is therefore most pertinent and timely for the United Nations to set the post-2015 development agenda. For its part, Myanmar has been exerting relentless efforts to raise the socioeconomic conditions of its people, with poverty alleviation as the core priority of the national economic strategy, commensurate with the MDGs.

My delegation adds its voice to that of the Group of 77 in calls to address the key implementation gaps of the MDGs and the poverty agenda over the next two years. In this regard, national efforts should be assisted by international support and an enabling environment. The role of the global partnership for development must also be strengthened. Achieving inclusive and sustainable development will be one of the most paramount challenges of this century for the United Nations. Therefore my delegation welcomes the establishment by the General Assembly of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

This year, Myanmar celebrates the sixty-fourth anniversary of its membership in the family of the United Nations. We believe that the United Nations system remains relevant and important in the current international situation. In this age fraught with global challenges, the United Nations is more essential than

ever. We have trust in the world body's capacity and capability to maintain international peace and security, to safeguard fundamental human rights, and to promote economic and social development. Therefore, Myanmar has always cooperated with the United Nations in good faith.

As cooperation with the United Nations is the cornerstone of our foreign policy, we have always strictly abided by the decisions and resolutions of the United Nations. We believe that the United Nations should be more democratic, representative and effective in order to face the security and economic challenges in many parts of the world.

The continued existence of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, poses the greatest threat to humankind. Myanmar is therefore actively pursuing the cause of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in international forums. One testimony of our aspiration is demonstrated by the annual resolution on nuclear disarmament that our delegation has submitted since 1995. Through that resolution we have been calling on nuclear-weapon States to cease immediately the qualitative improvement, development, production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons with a view to taking measures leading to their total elimination within a specified framework of time.

In that firm belief, the Government of Myanmar signed the additional protocol to the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards agreement on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons on 17 September. That is yet another significant development testifying to our commitment to the goals of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

Myanmar fully subscribes to the fundamental principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Accordingly, Myanmar has been contributing its fair share to regional and international peace and security.

On the domestic front, the Government of President U Thein Sein has been undertaking unprecedented wide-ranging political and economic reforms over the past two and a half years. The Government has dedicated its efforts to fulfilling the twin objectives inspired by the people: to establish peace, stability and the rule of law, and to advance socioeconomic development of the lives of the people.

The first component of the reform was political transformation. The objective was to bring about peace, stability, national unity and reconciliation. Now we have been able to establish a firm foundation for building a democratic society. Political space has been created for every stakeholder, and the all-inclusive political system is in place. The legislative bodies are also functioning well, in an active and vibrant manner. Numerous pieces of legislation have been enacted to the benefit of the people, including new laws permitting greater freedom of the press, speech and association. A series of amnesties have been granted which have set free thousands of prisoners. We are speedily working through a screening mechanism to ensure that no prisoner of conscience will remain in prison by the end of the year.

The emergence of civil societies has also contributed to strengthening democratic values and practices. We have now been able to nurture a new culture of dialogue and accommodation among people of differing views and beliefs. We are also taking steps to establish the rule of law, good governance and clean government.

We have also made tangible progress in our efforts towards national reconciliation. The Government's peace overtures have led to ceasefire agreements with all armed groups, for the first time in more than 60 years. We hope that we will be able to celebrate the signing of a nationwide ceasefire agreement in Nay Pyi Taw very soon. We are optimistic that we will be able to start a new round of political dialogue at the Union central level in the near future to strike a comprehensive and lasting peace agreement. We have no illusion that the next step will be easy, but we are determined to pursue this path for the sake of our people, as they have for so long deserved.

The hard-won peace and the success of the democratic transformation will not be realistic or sustainable until and unless we deliver on the economic and social needs of the people. Therefore, as the second component of reform, we have opened up the economy through economic liberalization, financial reform, inviting foreign investment, a people-centred development approach, rural development, poverty alleviation and equitable development. We have also created an investor-friendly environment. The Government is focusing on poverty alleviation and rural development. We have aimed at reducing the current poverty rate from 26 per cent to 16 per cent by 2015, as prescribed in the Millennium Development Goals.

Recently, the Government turned its focus to private-sector development as another wave of reform. At this stage, the Government is strongly emphasizing the improvement of the institutional infrastructure and regulatory framework so as to facilitate business, trade and investment.

We are truly grateful to the international community for its invaluable support and encouragement in our democratic transition as well as in our efforts for the socioeconomic development of the people of Myanmar. We welcome responsible trade and investment that will transfer technology to develop our economy, to create jobs and to lift our people from poverty. We are now taking the necessary steps to become a signatory to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. We will try our best to ensure that no one from the communities or our national ethnic groups will be left behind and excluded from enjoying the fruits of our reforms and the exciting life of the nation.

Myanmar is a multiracial and multifaith nation. Various ethnic populations with the world's four great religions — Buddhists, Christians, Muslims and Hindus — have been living side by side in peace and harmony as fellow citizens of Myanmar. The Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar also designates the four religions as officially recognized faiths of the country. There are always people who wish to rock the boat. We will not let anyone take advantage of political openness to instigate violence among the different ethnic or religious communities. President U Thein Sein has clearly stated that the Government will take a zero-tolerance approach to anyone fuelling ethnic hatred.

The Government has been making serious efforts to resolve the problem through short-term and long-term plans. These include our extensive efforts, in cooperation with the United Nations and humanitarian non-governmental organizations, to improve the living conditions and livelihoods of all affected peoples, without discrimination. Parallel with these efforts, the Government is also encouraging interfaith dialogues across the country with a view to promoting understanding and trust among the different communities. In addition, the National Human Rights Commission, an independent human rights body of Myanmar, has also been working closely and intensively with domestic civil society organizations, interfaith groups and regional and international human

rights bodies for the promotion and protection of human rights in the country.

Our reform process is still nascent and at a sensitive stage where there is little room for error. With this in mind, the President has publicly emphasized the need for everyone to refrain from doing anything that could jeopardize Myanmar's peaceful transition. While undertaking political and other reform processes domestically, we have also been able to reach out to the international community. The overwhelming support that we have received from the international community and the United Nations has contributed significantly to the transition efforts in the country.

Myanmar is ready to take over the chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2014 for the very first time since the country joined the Organization in 1997. We regard this opportunity as a great honour. We shall be working closely with our fellow ASEAN members and with ASEAN dialogue partners in discharging this important responsibility so as to move forward in unity to a peaceful and prosperous community.

In the process of Myanmar's transition to democracy, expectations are high within the country as well as in the international community. For the Government and the people of Myanmar, the task is daunting. There are many challenges ahead. We are still in a critical transition period. However, we are resolute in marching forward along our chosen path. There will be no turning back. But we will not take anything for granted. It is incumbent upon the Government and people of Myanmar to be vigilant at all times so that we do not fall into the trap of the detractors of the reform process.

We need the continued support and encouragement of the international community. We always welcome friendly and constructive advice and the helping hands of friends far and near in our nation-building process. However, we are fully cognizant of the fact that ultimately the people Myanmar themselves are responsible for deciding their own destiny and shaping their own future.

The Government of President U Thein Sein is laying a solid foundation for democracy, peace and development for the people of Myanmar. Observers have applauded Myanmar's transition to democracy as one of the most promising efforts of democratization in the world today. The success we have achieved so far on

the road to democracy has been made possible through the joint efforts of the leadership and the people of Myanmar, driven by a strong and genuine desire to change.

The road ahead is long and full of challenges. We will spare no effort to overcome any challenges and move ahead on the journey on which we have set out to build a nation of peace, democracy and prosperity. As we continue our journey we need the understanding, continued encouragement and support of the United Nations and the international community. We will never lose sight of our goals, and we are determined to fulfil the aspirations of the people of Myanmar.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Lyonpo Rinzin Dorje, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

Mr. Dorje (Bhutan): I bring to you, Mr. President, and through you to all representatives the warm greetings and good wishes of His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck. Allow me also to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you steer the important work of this session.

I am deeply honoured to have the opportunity to address the Assembly for the first time. I do so owing to the mandate accorded by the people of Bhutan to the People's Democratic Party at the second parliamentary elections held this summer.

The second parliamentary elections were yet another milestone on the path of democracy that Bhutan chose to undertake five years ago. In 2008 there were two political parties, whereas four parties contested this year's elections. The people of Bhutan voted for change and ushered in a new Government. These, I believe, are signs of a vibrant democracy enabling the people of Bhutan to exercise their will through the ballot box.

We know that democracy needs to go beyond elections. We will therefore continually work to strengthen democratic institutions, the rule of law, an independent judiciary, a vibrant civil society, an open and free media and, above all, a democratic culture that enables people to voice their aspirations and to live with dignity, equality and prosperity. As we embark on a new phase in our relatively young democracy, we do so in full confidence that democracy in Bhutan is irreversible and on a firm footing. In this journey, we

count on the support of our friends and the international community.

We meet at a time of extraordinary changes. While some have been able to achieve tremendous economic growth and prosperity, millions of people continue to languish in the inhuman depths of poverty. Our relentless drive for economic growth has come at the cost of our environment. The climate is changing. Natural disasters hit us with increasing frequency and intensity. The natural question then is, how do we advance economic growth, promote societal progress and prosperity within the confines of nature? How do we lift the millions of people out of the vicious circle of poverty? How can we ensure that we leave a planet safe and secure for our children and grandchildren?

These, I believe, are the key questions that confront us all. Although we come from different parts of the globe, with our unique historical backgrounds and cultural experiences, we are bound by our shared future. In today's interconnected and globalized world, we can prevail only if we come together as global citizens and work to find solutions for the sake of our common future. In this endeavour, Mr. President, as you have rightly stated, failure is not an option.

My delegation welcomes the theme "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage" for this general debate. The question of the post-2015 development agenda is important, especially for the least developed and landlocked countries, which in many respects have the most at stake. It presents the opportunity for all countries to share their experiences and the kind of development agenda that they would like to see in the post-2015 era.

As we set the stage for a development agenda beyond 2015, the Millennium Declaration (resolution 52/2) provides a strong foundation. In our search for a new development agenda we must not forget the important principles set out in the Declaration, but must emphasize their continued relevance. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) inspired nations and a whole generation to improve the lives of many people by creating synergies between nations and among people. All efforts must be made to accelerate the realization of the MDGs during their last mile.

The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288, annex) also outlined important principles on which the post-2015 development agenda should be

built. These principles must guide our efforts to come up with a holistic and transformative development agenda that puts people at the centre of development and brings about shared prosperity and happiness to all. Within this broader vision, poverty eradication must form a central theme of the post-2015 agenda. For Bhutan, the alleviation of poverty remains a challenge and features as a key priority in the current eleventh five-year development plan.

Equally important is the need to bring about inclusive development, which is one of the priority objectives of the Royal Government of Bhutan. Targeted interventions are being planned to promote the livelihoods of the poorest and most vulnerable communities in Bhutan.

The empowerment of women should constitute one of the main building blocks of the post-2015 development agenda. Any development agenda will fall short if it does not include the empowerment of women as a key component.

Issues related to youth and to providing gainful employment to a growing population is one of the critical challenges that my country continues to face. It is therefore vitally important that the post-2015 development agenda address the issues of youth, as they are the key stakeholders of that era.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of a strong means of implementation in the post-2015 development agenda. Without it, the capacity of developing and least developed countries to realize the post-2015 development priorities will remain severely challenged. At the intergovernmental level, Bhutan will continue its close engagement in the work of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, on which it is pleased to serve as a member. We look forward to contributing to the intergovernmental negotiations towards the elaboration of a single post-2015 development agenda.

The subject of development inevitably leads me to refer to my country's experience, in which it is guided by the development philosophy of Gross National Happiness, a vision that has given character to my country. Happiness and development have come to mean many things, and there are indeed many experts and a rich body of literature on the subject. This body also adopted resolution 65/309, on happiness, at its sixty-fifth session, and resolution 66/281 proclaiming

20 March as the International Day of Happiness, at its sixty-sixth session.

Happiness as a development policy must relate to individuals as well as to Governments. It is the sacred responsibility of Governments to ensure that conditions are created for its citizens to pursue their individual happiness within the larger aspirations of the country. All our achievements, including the peaceful transition to a democracy in 2008, as well as the progress realized in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, have been as a result of embarking on a people-centred development approach.

Encouraged by our positive national experience, Bhutan has facilitated efforts to elaborate a holistic approach to development. We intend to share the findings with Member States and the wider international community at an appropriate time. We hope that this modest contribution will serve as a useful input to the ongoing discussions on the post-2015 development agenda.

While Bhutan has made significant socioeconomic progress, we face many challenges and vulnerabilities, being both a landlocked and a least developed country. Our economy remains import-driven and dependent on a single export commodity. Poverty, youth unemployment, natural disasters and vulnerability to adverse impacts of climate change, including glacial lake outburst floods, pose challenges. We will therefore continue to count on external support and assistance as we work towards achieving our long-cherished goal of self-reliance and graduation from the least developed country category.

We recognize that a vibrant democracy should be built on a strong economy, which is essential to bring about improvement in the lives of the people. Therefore, in the eleventh Five-Year Development Plan, the main thrust will be to promote prosperity for all through inclusive social development, accelerated green economic development and infrastructure development.

The United Nations, with its global scope and mandate, remains the only universal organization that can forge a global coordinated response to the pressing challenges in areas ranging from peace and security to development. The challenges of our times are, however, testing the United Nations and the resolve of its Member States to work together. Every effort must be made to strengthen the role and efficacy of a United Nations that is just, democratic and representative and allows space

for its Members, including the smallest, to participate fully in its work. That is the key to the legitimacy of an effective multilateral system.

We remain hopeful that under your able leadership, Sir, the sixty-eighth session will further advance work on the reform of the United Nations. The General Assembly must be revitalized and its role strengthened. The membership of the Security Council in both the permanent and the non-permanent categories must be expanded to bring it into line with contemporary realities and to make the Council a more representative body.

These are challenging times indeed. It falls upon us to seek the wisdom of those who created this great institution to work together in the spirit of international cooperation in solving international problems. We have the opportunity not only to strengthen the role of the United Nations and advance multilateralism, but also to define a holistic development agenda that will respond to the universal aspiration for happiness.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Winston Lackin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Suriname.

Mr. Lackin (Suriname): Allow me at the outset, on behalf of the President of the Republic of Suriname, His Excellency Mr. Desiré Delano Bouterse, and the people and the Government of Suriname, to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your well-deserved election. With your election you bring honour to your country, Antigua and Barbuda, and to the Caribbean. With your background in sustainable development, you are well prepared to lead us in our deliberations on this year's theme, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage". I assure you of the support and cooperation of Suriname during your presidency.

I should also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, for his leadership during the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly. Furthermore, I commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his management of the United Nations with regard to peace and security in various parts of the globe.

Setting a new stage urgently requires much effort at the national as well as the international level to achieve the ultimate goal of improving the standard of living of our peoples and bringing about the sustainable development of our countries. The Millennium

Development Goals are an important first step towards addressing some of the worst socioeconomic conditions facing approximately 40 per cent of humankind, targeted as they are at reducing the worst manifestations of underdevelopment.

In our view, the success of the Millennium Development Goals depends on two sets of simultaneous actions: first, a reorientation of national responsibilities; and, second, of equal importance, the reorientation of the international community. Such reorientation will enable us to chart a more meaningful path towards meeting the targets of the Millennium Development Goals and moving towards the post-2015 Development agenda.

That is particularly relevant if we take heed of the 2013 report on the Millennium Development Goals, which reveals some rather interesting facts, such as: most developing countries are performing well in meeting the targets; and developed countries, which have committed themselves to Goal 8 by making their aid pledges viable and effective, are nevertheless well behind in their general performance in meeting the targets.

Official development assistance is in constant decline, and the agreements concluded in 2001 within the context of the World Trade Organization to improve access to international markets have been stalled during the Doha Round. That stalling has proved to be so harmful that dealing with market access on behalf of the poorest nations has been left out of subsequent agendas. Furthermore, as we all know, the ongoing financial and economic crisis is having a detrimental impact on developing nations because official development assistance is drastically declining.

Clearly, a number of large developing countries, mainly in Asia, as well as some countries endowed with natural resources in Africa and South America, have made substantial economic progress. Their statistics, however, should not blind us to the fact that inequality is rampant and that almost 1.2 billion people are still living in extreme poverty and do not have access to affordable and adequate health services, while millions of children are still denied their right to primary education.

We have learned the important lesson that developing countries are obliged to undertake adequate measures to strengthen economic interactions among themselves in addition to ties with their traditional trading partners

in the North. We must give substance to South-South cooperation. That is an important consideration for setting a new stage for global sustainable development. In this context, foreign direct investment is considered to be a factor of vital importance.

It is encouraging to note that a number of countries, including my own, Suriname, have been upgraded from low-income status to middle-income status by international financial institutions and United Nations agencies. Our efforts to develop prudent macroeconomic and appropriate fiscal policies, combined with our initiatives to diversify our economy, and the sacrifices borne by our people, have led to this improved status. Applying per capita income as the major indicator for determining our development status has, however, manoeuvred us into a position where we have lost access to the necessary concessional loans and grants. The conclusion can be drawn that our people are being punished for their ability to overcome some of the obstacles that have made them less fortunate in the past.

Within this interdependent world, we will continue to build on our own strength as the main driving force for the achievement of our development agenda. Furthermore, we believe that building upon national strengths, within the context of participation in subregional and regional cooperation frameworks, is the right way forward to finding proper solutions for development. On the basis of what has been achieved at the regional level, a global approach might become more feasible.

Suriname shares the view that we should base the post-2015 development agenda on a people-centred approach, with a specific focus on the most vulnerable in society, in particular, women, youth, the elderly and people with disabilities. In so doing — and this we emphasize — we should strike the right balance between our positive macroeconomic situation and a micro situation that is in dire need of improvement.

We are in the course of developing policies and programmes to fight non-communicable diseases that have led to decreased productivity. Non-communicable diseases have now become the leading cause of death in Suriname and in other countries in our region. There is special emphasis on improving education and bringing it closer to our socioeconomic reality. We intend to work more closely with relevant international organizations such as the Pan American Health Organization, the

World Health Organization, UNESCO, UNICEF and others.

The Government also attaches great importance to issues involving young people. In this regard, a large-scale after-school programme with the aim of enhancing better learning for youth deserves mention. The successful experiences in regional cooperation mechanisms, such as the one in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), as well as the one that is being considered in the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), are clear examples of how youth can contribute to the connectivity between peoples and the enhancement of unity.

Taking into account global processes and cognizant of the opportunities and challenges from CARICOM and UNASUR, the post-2015 development agenda should emanate from an inclusive, intergovernmental process. That process should be directed towards: the continued eradication of poverty; a people-centred approach, combining economic activity with the social need for education and health care, thereby promoting the welfare and well-being of all; and the integration of economic and social action and strengthening of human capital.

Global warming has a direct negative impact on the development of small island developing States and low-lying coastal States, including Suriname. Suriname shares its grave concern regarding the state of the global climate and the stalled United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process. The Government of Suriname strongly recommends that the General Assembly face these challenges by making them part of the post-2015 development agenda.

In setting the stage for development goals beyond 2015, we cannot ignore the various threats to international peace. International peace, security and human rights are indispensable in creating an enabling environment for sustainable development. Suriname is well aware of the fact that national sovereignty and national security are seriously affected by the indiscriminate use of violence in fighting terrorism and other forms of transnational organized crime. Challenges related to armed conflicts, poverty, food, the environment, education, public health, migration and energy require increased collaboration. In this respect, partnership among Governments, international and regional organizations and civil society is a must. We applaud the South American and Caribbean nations

for their efforts towards regional peace and stability. Their willingness and capacity for further dialogue and persuasion is a better way to achieve and maintain peace than the use of violence and military intervention.

We are proud to belong to a region that has declared itself a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

We express the hope that the two-State solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict will gain more substance, allowing the peoples of both countries the prospect of peace and prosperity. Suriname maintains the position that the multilateral process within the United Nations should prevail in the search for a peaceful solution for the crisis in Syria.

The Cuban people have the right to participate as full members in all regional organizations, and we strongly urge that all obstacles that have prevented their full participation so far be removed, including the outdated and inhuman unilateral economic, financial and commercial embargo.

With regard to the Republic of Haiti, the international community tends to lose attention for the necessary follow-up activities to get Haiti back on its feet. Once again we call upon the international community to fulfil its commitments.

In closing, I take advantage of this opportunity to inform the Assembly that, exactly 30 days ago, my country, Suriname, took over the pro tempore presidency of the Union of South American Nations, a young and vibrant regional body. We pledge that Suriname will, during its presidency, further the goals of UNASUR and contribute to international peace, security and sustainable development.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Nickolas Steele, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Business of Grenada.

Mr. Steele (Grenada): I wish to extend my sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. The fact that you were elected by consensus speaks in unequivocal terms of the high esteem in which you are held by your colleagues and the respect that you command in this forum. I am confident that your vast practical experience at the multilateral level will serve you in good stead as you guide this session to a fruitful outcome. In the same breath, I pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, for his astute stewardship at the previous session.

Allow me to begin by expressing our solidarity with the people of Kenya, while condemning in the strongest terms the cowardly acts of terrorism that were seen last week.

I thank you, Sir, for selecting as the theme for this session “The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage”, which, in my delegation’s view, embodies the fundamental concerns of all countries, but will find particular resonance with small island developing States (SIDS) like Grenada. This is an area where the multilateral system must demonstrate its effectiveness not only to improve the lives of ordinary citizens but also to maintain confidence in our multilateral institutions. We look forward to key performance indicators linked to tangible outcomes, rather than more analysis and more reports.

Grenada endorses the call made at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development for the future we want. In that context, we must build on the successes of the Millennium Development Goals and Agenda 21. Indeed, for a post-2015 development agenda we welcome a framework that goes beyond gross domestic product and recognizes the assets of natural capital. Grenada encourages the international financial institutions to go even further by also recognizing the liabilities associated with natural disasters caused by climate change. Those liabilities underscore the need to reassess the basis on which small island developing States are graduated to middle-income status, thereby losing access to concessionary funding that is sorely needed.

The unilateral graduation of many small island developing States to middle-income status is premature. I therefore reiterate the call made in Agenda 21 for a more holistic and comprehensive set of indicators for classifying States. Grenada endorses support for low-income and fragile economies. Moreover, it is clear that several of the SIDS newly promoted to middle-income status continue to struggle with high debt burdens, which are worsened by climate change and high fossil-fuel import bills. Many SIDS also struggle with low productivity and low levels of competitiveness and with severe financial constraints, and, in some cases, they struggle with limited prospects for immediate growth.

The point is that per capita income used as a sole measure without the context of climate vulnerability does more harm than good. To illustrate that point, as damaging as Hurricanes Sandy and Katrina were to the

United States economy, the costs ran between 0.5 per cent and 2 per cent of the gross domestic product of the United States. That is in sharp contrast to the costs of between 20 per cent and 200 per cent of gross domestic product when hurricanes hit island economies.

Therefore, Grenada is joining with other SIDS in urging the shareholders, the donors and the boards of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to translate the recognition of climate vulnerability in small island States into a meaningful package of financial and official development assistance for SIDS.

The issue of the graduation of SIDS is an issue that has been raised year after year. Let us return to the General Assembly next year confident that progress on that matter has been made. In that regard, we wish to suggest for consideration during your presidency, Sir, a call for a substantive paper and a debate on the issue. Ideally, the outcomes of that debate should be provided as an input towards the 2014 third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, to be hosted by Samoa, and as an input to the Secretary-General's debate on climate change scheduled for September 2014.

Also contributing to the indebtedness and fiscal unsustainability of small island States are the volatility and high prices for fossil fuels. On average, small island developing States are paying between 20 cents and 40 cents per kilowatt hour for electricity, some as high as \$1. That contrasts with prices of 5 cents to 15 cents in developed countries. We welcome, therefore, the initiative of the Alliance of Small Island States in establishing the SIDS DOCK Support Programme. We also wish to express gratitude to the donors and institutions for helping to facilitate that programme.

In addition, the Government of Grenada is taking major steps towards creating a green economy. One of the priorities for Grenada's Prime Minister, The Right Honourable Keith Mitchell, is the dismantling of a monopoly that is contributing to high energy costs on the island of Grenada. The Government is seeking partners to help create a level playing field, which will allow many more private-sector players to have a role in innovative and substantive power-generation solutions, while positioning Grenada as an exemplar for a sustainable planet.

Mr. President, as you have chosen the theme of sustainability for the sixty-eighth session, so too has the Government of Grenada chosen sustainable

development as the organizing theme for the development of our island and for our engagement with international partners. Grenada is a party to more than 40 multilateral environmental agreements. The push to harmonize local laws with those international instruments is testament to Grenada's commitment to that agenda. The reasons are clear, the causes of climate change and the impacts of climate change are negatively affecting Grenada's ability to fulfil its social contract with its people, including its ability to fully deliver on the Millennium Development Goals.

So far I have spoken only about economic sustainability and environmental sustainability. The third pillar of sustainable development relates to social sustainability. Grenada is a society in which social development is given equal weighting with the importance of investment and economic growth driven by the private sector. On 13 May, a mere three months after assuming office, my Government ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. We are proceeding apace to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, thus demonstrating that Grenada is committed to the removal of all forms of discrimination.

Grenada associates itself with efforts to dedicate the Caribbean region to the development of humanity. We also acknowledge that through the ages the Arab world has contributed enormously to the world of science and mathematics, including the very numerals we use today. We see a modern Arab world taking positive steps to take the lead in developing breakthroughs on the key issues that confront our planet. We very much welcome initiatives such as Masdar City and the hosting of the International Renewable Energy Agency by the United Arab Emirates. The role of Qatar in hosting the United Nations Climate Change Conference is also noteworthy. Grenada joins with other countries in seeking to deepen our relationship with the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council and places a high degree of importance on the peace and security of the region.

We are mindful that the region and the entire United Nations system have been seized of the issues of peace and security during United Nations Week. Grenada and many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are home to a vibrant and entrepreneurial diaspora from the Middle East, including people from Syria and Lebanon. As a consequence, Grenadian citizens are very concerned about the prospects for peace in Syria and the wider Middle East.

Grenada condemns, in the most vehement terms, atrocities and crimes against humanity. We therefore believe that those responsible for the recent deadly use of chemical weapons in Syria must be held accountable by the international community. Moreover, Grenada welcomes Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), on destroying Syria's chemical weapons, and is encouraged by the commitment of the Syrian Government to comply with that resolution. More importantly, my delegation hopes that that breakthrough could be a stepping stone to the resolution of the already brutal and bloody civil war in Syria, which has been fuelled by conventional weapons.

On 3 June, Grenada joined 83 States in signing the Arms Trade Treaty on the very first morning that the Treaty was opened for signature. Work is already under way at the national level for the ratification of the Treaty, yet another signal of Grenada's commitment to peace and security. Moreover, being the first country to accede to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, Grenada intends to use its experience to raise awareness on that particular matter, especially in the Americas.

On the question of Israeli-Palestinian relations, Grenada remains convinced that a two-State solution is essential to ending that conflict and urges both parties to conduct the present round of negotiations in good faith. Grenada has good relations with the Government and people of Israel and is a strong advocate for Israel's right to coexist in peace with its neighbours. Furthermore, Grenada has long been a supporter of the people of Palestine. Grenada is proud to have joined with neighbouring countries in recognizing the State of Palestine and in signing a memorandum of understanding based upon friendship and upon an understanding of a two-State solution.

As with most of the world, Grenada looked at the Arab Spring with great interest. The use of social media underscores the rise of technology as a tool for democracy on a 24/7 basis, and my Prime Minister places great importance on the use of information and communication technologies as a way to engage our youth. As Egypt goes through its transition and its people's call for freedom, dignity and social justice is heard, we encourage the leaders to learn the lessons of the recent past and respond to the will of the people in moving forward to a system of true democracy and respect for human rights and inclusive processes for nation-building.

Finally, my delegation uses this occasion once more to express our solidarity with the Cuban people, who continue to suffer from an unnecessary economic, commercial and financial embargo that is a relic of the Cold War. Grenada once again calls on the United States of America to respect the views of the overwhelming majority of humanity and lift the onerous measures imposed over five decades ago now.

We support your theme, Mr. President, for this sixty-eighth session and wish to assure our partners that they can count on Grenada to be an active participant in these deliberations and in the implementation of their outcomes.

Grenada is open for business. My Government recognizes that a tried-and-tested route to sustainable development involves a significant component of foreign direct investment. Grenada therefore reaches out and seeks new friendships while maintaining and building upon its existing and long-standing relations with many States members of this body.

In 2014 Grenada marks its fortieth anniversary of independence, and we invite each and every Member to celebrate with us on 7 February. We also see our 40 years as a milestone that recognizes 40 years of struggle, 40 years of development. But also, more importantly, it marks 40 years of expectations not yet fully delivered upon. As such, my Government, under the leadership of our Prime Minister, sees this year as the year of less talk and more action, the year of tangible deliverables, and the year that great socioeconomic strides are made. We have a young and vibrant population that cannot wait any longer, that should not wait any longer, and with the help and cooperation of our friends, new and old, we will deliver. They will not wait any longer.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

Two Member States have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia): The Government of Indonesia strongly rejects the statement concerning the so-called issue of West Papua made by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, Mr. Moana Kalosil

Carcasses, in the General Assembly on Saturday, 28 September (see A/68/PV.18).

At best, such a statement reflects an unfortunate lack of understanding of the basic facts on the historical role of the United Nations and the principled position of the international community at large, as well as current developments in the Indonesian provinces of Papua and West Papua. Worse still, it suggests an utter refusal to acknowledge certain basic facts on matters relating to the aforementioned provinces and the efforts of the Indonesian Government and the local authorities to promote the general welfare and prosperity of the people in the two provinces.

We are only too conscious of the fact that internal political dynamics in Vanuatu have often played a role in raising the so-called issue of West Papua at the United Nations. That fact was acknowledged in a statement reportedly made by the Vanuatu Prime Minister's office in May 2012 and published by the *Vanuatu Daily Post* on 22 May 2012, which, inter alia, stated:

“In Vanuatu, the West Papua issue has been politicized and used by different political parties and movements not for the interests of the people in West Papua, but more so for elections and political campaign propaganda”.

I must emphasize that that statement was issued not by the Government of Indonesia, but by none other than the then Government of Vanuatu itself.

Finally, Indonesia for its part will not be distracted by such inclinations. We will continue our development efforts in the provinces in the context of their special autonomy, and we will persevere in the promotion of friendly relations with the Government and the people of Vanuatu based on the principles governing friendly relations between countries.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): In her statement of 27 September (see A/68/PV.16), the Prime Minister of Bangladesh used this forum to make some references relating to Pakistan that are not supported by the facts. We are deeply dismayed by the statement, because Pakistan and Bangladesh are brotherly countries and at one point the people of Pakistan and Bangladesh were citizens of one country. Even today, there is warmth and goodwill between our two peoples. Multiple channels of communication are available between the two Governments.

The Bangladesh statement was acrimonious and a misrepresentation of facts. Its premise was incorrect, facts flawed, and its legal dimensions untenable. We believe that raising an issue that has little relevance in contemporary Pakistan-Bangladesh relations is unhelpful and counterproductive. Nevertheless, the Government and the people of Pakistan will continue to work towards strengthening friendly ties with the Government and the people of Bangladesh.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.