



General Assembly

Seventieth session

23rd plenary meeting
Thursday, 1 October 2015, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Lykketoft (Denmark)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

Address by Mr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana.

Mr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Masisi (Botswana): On behalf of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Botswana, Lieutenant General Seretse Khama Ian Khama, allow me at the very outset to join other delegations in extending our heartiest congratulations to Mr. Mogens Lykketoft on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventieth session. His election bears witness to the excellent credentials he brings to the office, which should greatly support the execution

of his mandate during this historic year on the United Nations calendar. We wish to assure him of Botswana's unequivocal support throughout his term of office.

My delegation and I also wish to take this opportunity to recognize, with appreciation, his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa, whose leadership and purposeful endeavours as President of the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session were significantly evident in international efforts to address the global challenges confronting the world today. The high-level events he convened in that regard demonstrated his genuine commitment to sustainable development, to peace and security and to human rights and human dignity.

We are confident that the President's efforts will further and firmly guide the general membership of the Organization onto a path that ensures the full and effective implementation of the historic post-2015 development agenda that world leaders adopted only a few short days ago.

I would be remiss not to seize this opportunity also to commend the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, whose passion and dedication have been, and continue to be, instrumental to the work of the Organization.

The year 2015 marks an extraordinarily momentous year in the history of humankind. It is not only the seventieth anniversary of the birth of the United Nations but also the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, the twentieth anniversary of the World Summit on Social Development, the

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twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the fifteenth anniversary of the Millennium Summit, to mention but a few. That list of the global milestones is by no means exhaustive, but it demonstrates the resolute and enduring commitment of the United Nations to championing the cause of humankind.

The significance of this year impels us to pause and recall the purpose, ideals and founding principles upon which the United Nations was established. It is imperative that we reflect on the history of this eminent Organization and that we take account of what we, the international community, have achieved and can still achieve to safeguard the aspirations and integrity of the founders of the United Nations and to uphold the absolute primacy and veracity of the Charter. Furthermore, this year offers an opportunity for us to admit our failures and to draw attention to the areas where we have fallen short of fulfilling our individual and collective responsibility to deliver on all three anchors of human development: peace and security, development, and human rights.

The President's choice of a theme for this year's general debate, "The United Nations at 70 — a new commitment to action", is therefore fitting, because it provides a pertinent context for our deliberation and reflection at this critical juncture in our lifetimes. Fifteen years ago, at the Millennium Summit of 2000, the largest gathering of world leaders in history adopted the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2), which, inter alia, espoused the need for a people-centred framework for global development. That framework gave birth to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs were a landmark set of eight time-bound Goals aimed at addressing extreme poverty and social inequalities. For the first time, there was a clearly codified global agenda focusing nations around the world on priority areas for meeting the needs of the world's poorest people and liberating them from the dehumanizing conditions of abject poverty. The Secretary-General's final report on the MDGs, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*, shows that significant progress has been made in realizing those Goals.

Those notable achievements notwithstanding, the sombre truth is that progress has largely been uneven across and within countries and regions. We continue to see multitudes — especially the poorest, vulnerable and marginalized in our societies — subjected to

unacceptable living conditions. Social exclusions and inequalities still present a significant challenge in most countries, with women and girls and the youth bearing the heaviest weight of those circumstances. The situation varies from one nation to another owing to their different national realities and capacities, requiring more focused and targeted interventions to effectively address the issues and ensure the sustainability of the developments achieved.

In Botswana, we are proud of the tremendous strides we have made in the implementation of the MDGs, particularly given the enormous resource and capacity constraints we faced, and continue to face, as we implement our development programmes and prepare to domesticate the new agenda. Poverty eradication, gender equality, the empowerment of women, girls and youth, job creation and equal access to health and other social services remain high on our national agenda. However, we march on with steadfast determination to ensure that every opportunity is seized, every effort is galvanized and every resource is employed to ensure the inherent dignity and fundamental freedoms of all the citizens of Botswana. That includes paying due attention to the needs of the aged and to people with disabilities. In that regard, the Botswana Government is currently in the final stages of developing the country's National Vision 2030 and National Development Plan 11 in order to ensure firm alignment and complementarity between national aspirations and the building blocks to deliver them.

As dusk descends on the MDGs, the Government of Botswana has enthusiastically begun to prepare for the dawn of the new global development framework. Botswana therefore welcomes the highly anticipated adoption of the profoundly ambitious and transformative Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), which represent the culmination of more than two years of exceptionally intensive, broad and exhaustive negotiations. The Agenda represents a global vision for the sustained prosperity of humankind and the living planet, in which universal peace and security form the foundation for sustainable development across all nations.

We look forward to the effective implementation of the integrated and indivisible 17 Goals and 169 targets arrived at through an all-inclusive intergovernmental process, as mandated by the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

in 2012. The Botswana Government embarks on this new course with increased optimism that we shall indeed realize the future that we all want.

In December, the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will convene in Paris to adopt a universal, legally binding agreement on climate change. The importance and urgency of this cannot be overemphasized. Climate change, if left unchecked, is arguably the greatest environmental challenge the world is facing, with potentially catastrophic consequences for our planet and future generations. We continue to witness a dangerous rise in sea levels, melting glaciers, a severe decline in agricultural output, changing weather patterns and health challenges caused by the changing climate conditions.

Climate change also presents a serious security threat, for it displaces millions of people and condemns an even greater number to sub-par living conditions. We extend our condolences to all those who have lost loved ones or who have experienced the destruction of property caused by natural disasters. Developing countries are the hardest hit, because they have limited capacities to respond to such effects and therefore require substantial assistance in developing climate-smart technology in order to reduce their vulnerability and to transition to low-carbon growth paths.

In the pursuit of global development that leaves no one behind, the Botswana delegation believes that particular focus should be given to countries in special situations and to the specific support they require to build their economies. In November 2014, the landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) met in Vienna to adopt the Vienna Programme of Action on Landlocked Developing Countries, which identifies six priority areas, including infrastructure development and maintenance, international trade and trade facilitation, regional integration and cooperation, and structural economic transformation. Botswana, like other LLDCs, will require a substantial augmentation of its capacity to implement any of those areas. That also holds true for middle-income countries, a category to which Botswana belongs. Figures show that 75 per cent of the world's poorest populations live in middle-income countries.

The clarion call is therefore to explore the mechanisms by which such countries can be assisted in order to address entrenched and widespread poverty. The scale of the required assistance goes well beyond

the obvious need for infrastructure development, strengthening of institutions, access to technology, skills development and the development of social protection floors, *inter alia*. It is critically important to extend financing for development in order to address the specific needs and challenges of individual middle-income countries instead of employing a one-size-fits-all policy framework. Failure in that regard would be detrimental to the development trajectory of middle-income countries, with a real possibility that they could relapse to least developed country status.

Discussions have commenced in various United Nations platforms on how the Organization should transform itself to be better structured and better equipped to effectively and efficiently carry out its mandate and better serve the best interests of its Member States. Botswana believes that chief among the scores of considerations should be the coordination between and among the different United Nations agencies for stronger system-wide coherence that extends to improved cooperation with regional and subregional organizations. That, we believe, would go a long way towards enhancing international efforts to address the myriad challenges to development and to durable peace and security.

We cannot speak about development or about peace and security without considering the increasingly disturbing phenomenon of migration. The flow of international migrants has continued to grow exponentially since the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, which was held in New York in October 2013. Conflict, political instability and poverty are the main push factors for migration from developing to developed countries, as evidenced by the thousands who continue to cross the Mediterranean to Europe in search of economic opportunities. The grave conditions to which migrants are exposed, along with the unprecedented levels of humanitarian crises to which their movements contribute, are cause for great concern.

It is wrong to blame any single European country for its immigration policy, since each country has to assess its own ability to accommodate such influxes. Nor should Europe be blamed for the tragic drownings at sea, which are the fault of migrants' countries of origin.

Botswana believes that the issue of migration warrants the urgent attention of the international community, with a view to developing a comprehensive

and lasting solution. The imposition of quotas to make it mandatory for countries to accept migrants or refugees is not the best solution. Instead, consideration should be given to rewarding and supporting the countries that accept migrants or refugees by setting up a special fund under the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Europe, or preferably the entire international community, should contribute annually to such a fund, based on an assessment of each country's economic status and whether it is hosting refugees. If anything should be mandatory, it should be that approach. In summary, the more refugees a country takes, the bigger its reward or support and the lower its contribution to the fund.

We welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to convene the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit next year. It should not only enhance existing and new efforts to address the issue of migration, but should also ensure comprehensive, coherent and cohesive approaches for responding to the critically urgent issue of the global humanitarian architecture.

Botswana remains gravely concerned about the serious threats to international peace and security in many parts of the world, which arguably present the greatest challenge to human development. We are witnessing an alarming rise in instability, insecurity and violent conflicts which are causing untold devastation and human suffering. The unrelenting loss of innocent lives and the escalation in humanitarian crises have reached tragic levels, making it imperative for the international community to take urgent and decisive action. We take this opportunity to commend all humanitarian and human rights organizations for the good work they do on behalf of humankind.

The growing involvement of non-State actors and radical extremists in most conflict situations is deeply troubling. The activities of such entities introduce additional layers of difficulty to the processes for the management and resolution of conflicts. Terrorism, including the emergence of abductions as one of its many forms, further increases the complexity of the response to conflict in areas of unrest.

In a world in which borders are porous and nations are increasingly interdependent, threats to security in any region have consequences for all. The only difference is in the degree of impact. In Africa, the situations in Somalia, Libya and South Sudan, to mention but a few, are a current preoccupation and a cause of deep concern for the continent. However, the

African Union, through its regional mechanisms and international support, is actively engaged in efforts to resolve the conflicts. Botswana remains fully supportive of those ongoing efforts. We hope that lasting solutions can be found before there is any further loss of innocent lives and before instability becomes entrenched in those societies.

In other parts of the world, we remain deeply concerned about the situation in the Middle East. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has remained unresolved for several decades, without any real promise of an end in sight. Botswana continues to lend its unequivocal support to the two-State solution, and we join the call for constructive dialogue by the parties involved.

Of particular concern in the Middle East are the political crisis in Yemen and the protracted war in Syria. The latter especially has wreaked unprecedented havoc on a people, to an extent not seen since the Second World War. Botswana is profoundly troubled that the Security Council nonetheless seems paralysed by the hard divisions among its members that prevent it from upholding its responsibilities under Chapter V of the Charter of the United Nations and from taking decisive action against the Syrian Government. Despite the carnage and property destruction of unspeakable proportions that have raged in that country since 2011, some Council members still obstruct initiatives intended to end the war and alleviate the desperate plight of the poor Syrian people.

Horried by the torment visited with appalling impunity upon the Syrian people by their own Government, Botswana joined 58 concerned members of the international community in 2013 to petition the Security Council to refer Syria to the International Criminal Court. We deeply regret that action on that matter continues to be frustrated by divisions within the Council.

In the light of such challenges, Botswana continues to firmly support the initiative of France calling for the permanent members of the Council to refrain from using their veto power in situations involving mass atrocities. The United Nations, which promotes democracy around the globe, should lead by example. The Security Council is not an example of democracy when permanent membership is limited to five countries, which have a veto. There should be no permanent members and no veto at all. The practice of might making right is actually wrong.

Generally speaking, States have the primary responsibility to ensure the protection of their people. In reality, however, some States, such as Syria, are manifestly failing to exercise that responsibility. Instead, they violate international humanitarian law with shameful impunity. Clearly, that should trigger the application of measures under pillars two and three of the responsibility to protect — yet nothing is happening. Might it be time to make the responsibility to protect a formal agenda item for debate by the General Assembly? Perhaps such a debate could provide sufficient impetus for the Security Council to carry the full mantle of its mandate, including by improving its relationship with the International Criminal Court in order to facilitate the investigation and prosecution of the perpetrators of crimes against humanity.

Botswana's commitment to a strong and effective international justice system remains resolute. Our belief in the International Criminal Court as the only standing international criminal tribunal for war crimes and crimes against humanity is unwavering. The Botswana Government regrets that non-cooperation by some States parties to the Rome Statute still plagues the Court, creating leeway for continued impunity and escape from accountability for crimes against humanity. We therefore urge all parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court to stand fully behind the Court. Cooperation is vital to for the assurance of the Court's integrity and effective functioning.

My delegation and I are hopeful that, as we commemorate the 70 years of the United Nations, we can have unanimous agreement that judicial accountability, inclusive governance and the protection and promotion of human rights are essential elements for peaceful societies. That should not be seen as the preserve of the International Criminal Court or of the Security Council alone, but rather as a shared responsibility and norm of the global community.

Finally, the sooner the world is rid of the feeble leadership of Sepp Blatter at the Fédération Internationale de Football Association, the better. Corruption, poor governance and a leader who has gone well beyond his sell-by date make that organization almost a mirror image of a failed State. Good governance should not apply to politics alone, but to all institutions, especially international organizations.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Botswana's commitment to and abiding faith in the purposes and founding principles of the United Nations. We

are strongly committed to a world that nurtures and sustains all life within the natural limits of the living planet, leaving absolutely no one behind. Botswana is truly optimistic in its belief that, with genuine political will and concerted collective effort, such a world can be achieved.

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

Mr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana, was escorted from the rostrum.

**Address by Mr. James Wani Igga,
Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan**

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan.

Mr. James Wani Igga, Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. James Wani Igga, Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Igga (South Sudan): On behalf of my President, His Excellency Mr. Salva Kiir Mayardit, I would like to congratulate the newly elected President of the General Assembly. We stand with his leadership. I also thank his predecessor, Mr. Sam Kutesa of Uganda, for his beautiful and successful tenure in office.

I would like to express our sincere gratitude for the pivotal role of the United Nations, and of many other friends, before, during and after the birth of our country, South Sudan, in July 2011. We commend this noble world body and its able leadership for firmly supporting our independence. We vividly remember the three days that the Secretary-General spent in Juba, dedicated himself to lecturing and advising us as independence neared. We congratulate His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

After going through so much for too long, the dream, aspiration and vision of the people of South Sudan for a country of their own were finally realized on 9 July 2011, with strong support from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the United Nations

and the Troika. Almost one week thereafter, in this great Hall, the General Assembly took a historic step and endorsed our independence. We most enthusiastically thank the United Nations for that.

Having attained freedom for our country and its people, we, the leaders, wasted no time in pushing forward with the creation of institutions of good governance and democratic exercise. We started virtually from rubble, following the first civil war. However, our progress has been thwarted and marred by unjustified internal power feuds that resulted in a regrettable conflict that engulfed three of our country's 10 states.

It is my pleasure and a relief to announce to the Assembly that this regrettable war and unnecessary bloodshed have been brought to an end. The people of South Sudan were yearning for peace, and on 26 August 2015 our President took the courageous step — with the help of IGAD, the Troika, China, Russia, the United Nations and so on — to sign a peace agreement with our brothers in the rebellion to silence the guns and end the civil war. This signature was immediately followed by the President's declaration of a permanent ceasefire the next day. We must congratulate our people for this historic achievement of peace. I am sure it will be cemented by prosperity and happiness. We give credit to our neighbours and the international community at large. The next step now is for this body to quickly join and help us in terms of both humanitarian assistance and reconstruction as we vow to implement the agreement.

South Sudan is concerned about global and regional peace, security and respect for human rights. Though we have been tied down by our own difficulties, we are also mindful of our participation in global and regional strategies aimed at tackling threats of terrorism, environmental change and the like.

I commend the role that the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) played during the period leading up to our declaration of independence in 2011, and afterwards. Nonetheless, any renewal of the UNMISS mandate without consultations with and the consent of our Government would not be right and would therefore be unacceptable. It is a well-known fact that matters of that nature are sovereign and due consultation is imperative.

Committing crimes against the people we govern or violating human rights have never and shall never be condoned by our Government. Promoting and protecting

the safety of persons, families and communities and their physical and social well-being is a duty that we take very seriously. We will not allow impunity to reign. We are conscious of our obligations to humankind, and we respect the human rights charter contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related protocols. We respect the content and provisions of the Geneva Conventions and vow to strictly observe and apply them in our difficult and complex context. Since our independence, whenever we have received reports of human rights abuses by elements associated with our security institutions, we have investigated and immediately dealt with them in accordance with the law.

We are delighted to announce that through the efforts of IGAD, alongside the Troika, on 26 August His Excellency President Salva Kiir Mayardit not only signed the agreement but also declared the ceasefire. This ceasefire is holding surely in certain parts of the country — there is no doubt about that — but not in all, I must underscore. That is mainly attributable to the absence of a joint monitoring and verification mechanism installed on the ground and of funding from IGAD for that purpose. I urge IGAD to work more speedily on creating and designating that vital instrument for enforcing any meaningful ceasefire.

With respect to security arrangements, from 13 to 18 September the warring parties held a workshop in Addis Ababa, which ended with our Government delegation signing the minutes and a communiqué. Our brothers in the rebellion, however, declined to sign, for reasons best known to them. It is now incumbent upon "IGAD-Plus" to persuade the armed opposition to sign the minutes as quickly as possible. The announcement by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) — our Government Army — about a week ago that it would move out of Juba to a location 25 kilometres away is further proof that our Government is committed to this agreement. That is a clear demonstration of the Government's will to execute the accord. As the SPLA is already moving to redeploy, the international community needs to expeditiously provide the necessary funding to help build new army barracks in those forests.

As we embark on the implementation of the peace agreement, sanctions and travel restrictions imposed on our officials should no longer be an option. At this juncture, I urge all countries of good will to rush in with humanitarian, resettlement and development projects.

There is no doubt that development and prosperity can quickly lead to cementing peace and stability. It is therefore crucial for the Government of South Sudan to remind international donors about the many pledges they made earlier but which have never been honoured.

More than at any other time in our conflict-riddled history, the upcoming post-conflict imperatives of resettlement, rehabilitation and disarmament require concerted financial and technical assistance from our many friends of goodwill around the world. Honouring the numerous pledges made in forums such as in Oslo in 2005 and 2014 and the International Engagement Conference hosted by the sisterly country of the United States in 2011 will go a long way in enabling the current peace agreement to be fully implemented, in order to meet the pressing need for humanitarian aid and post-conflict reconstruction.

We are firmly determined to correct the errors of the past and look forward to the future. I take this opportunity to appeal to all friends and supporters of South Sudan to rapidly step in to support the humanitarian process I alluded to previously — the processes of rehabilitation, peacebuilding, cantonment and national reconstruction. South Sudan is very resilient and its future is certainly full of hope, particularly with all the assistance and cooperation that the international community has to offer. We should not be subject to undeserved isolation and sanctions, given our level of fragility as a new country.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. James Wani Igga, Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Joseph Butore, Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi.

Mr. Joseph Butore, Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Joseph

Butore, Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Butore (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): I would like first to thank God Almighty for guiding us throughout our trip and for continuing to be with us during our stay in New York.

I would like to express the fraternal greetings of the Burundian people and His Excellency Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi, who asked us to represent him here today.

We take this opportunity to extend our warmest congratulations to the Mr. Lykketoft on the occasion of his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventieth session and to assure him of the full support of our country in accomplishing his noble mission. We also wish to congratulate Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa, who brilliantly presided over the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. We offer special thanks to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his commendable ongoing efforts so that our Organization may continue to fulfil the goals and ideals that the Member States have set for it.

We would like to acknowledge the relevance of the theme chosen for this seventieth anniversary of our Organization: “Strong UN. Better World”. We assure the President of the strong support of the Republic of Burundi for achieving the three priorities that will guide his actions during his term: a commitment to action, an intensification of efforts by the United Nations to cement international peace and security, and significant progress in the area of human rights.

As some know, Burundi has just come through a period that has raised questions for some here today. I would briefly like to address them. Burundi has just completed an election process pursuant to the 2005 Constitution, which has remained unchanged, contrary to what some would have us believe. The process was a great success despite the violent protests that quickly turned into an insurrectionary movement in some neighbourhoods of the capital, Bujumbura.

The elections went well in Burundi, but during their preparation, while they were being held and afterwards, there were acts of sabotage, and the country fell victim to the machinations of some politicians whose plan was simply to destabilize institutions. Children were used as soldiers and human shields, to whom drugs, weapons and explosives were given so that they would

commit acts of vandalism, killings and other acts of terrorism in public places. Everyone knows that the use of children for military purposes is in itself a crime against humanity. We regret to report that all this happened with the support of certain countries that sought to torpedo the Government's efforts to restore the stability of our country.

We welcome United Nations support for the electoral process through the United Nations Electoral Observer Mission in Burundi, whose observers were deployed in much of the country. The decisions of the Constitutional Courts of Burundi and the East African Community, which confirmed the legality of the candidacy of Pierre Nkurunziza, were not enough to stop the insurrection initiated by the opposition and civil society. That proved once more their hidden agenda to destabilize the country. Yet everyone knows that the interpretation of the domestic laws of a country, including its constitution, is a matter for its legal authorities. This is also a reflection of the sovereignty of any independent country.

We believe that the peoples of this world must be respected in their choices. While remaining receptive to the advice of friends, the people of Burundi deserve to have the choice that they made in the recent elections respected. They do not ask for more than this, and it is a question neither of blind stubbornness nor, even less, of the obstinacy of a leader or a people, as some of our traditional friends from the North think.

The instigators of the aforementioned insurrection were supported by certain political parties without popular support that knew in advance they would lose the elections. Having therefore decided to bypass the ballot box, these political parties only wanted transitional arrangements similar to the Arusha negotiations as a stepping-stone to power. Their aim was to cause trouble in order to prove that it was impossible to organize the electoral process. Some media were unfortunately on their side. To amplify their action, certain non-governmental organizations supported them financially and morally at a time when some civil society organizations were stakeholders.

What was not known until now is that this insurrection was the tree that hid the woods, that is, the failed coup that was being prepared. It had been in preparation for some time by the same actors, in collaboration with some civil-society organizations. The date of 13 May 2015 will remain etched in the memories of the people of Burundi. Unable to seize

the institutions of sovereignty, the mutineers would use local and international media to announce to the nation and the whole world that they already had control of the national radio and television broadcasting system, that the international airport and all borders were closed, that the Constitution was suspended. In short, it was a veritable media war that did not reflect the reality on the ground in any way. The Government of Burundi appreciates for its true value the support of the international community, regional organizations, and the loyalist forces that quickly condemned the attempted putsch and which called for respect for the constitutional order.

After the failure of the coup d'état, some critics fled to one of our neighbouring countries, which has been sheltering them and assisting them in their campaign to destabilize our country. Burundi has remained watchful and condemns that hostile attitude, which contravenes the Charter of the United Nations and other relevant instruments of international and regional organizations of which we are members.

Faced with these problems in the wake of the failed putsch, the Summit of Heads of State of the East African Community recommended that the elections be postponed so as to enable all political parties and actors to participate under better conditions. Burundi acceded to the decision in order to head off any pretexts for contesting the results. The municipal, legislative and presidential elections were therefore postponed twice, but could not be delayed beyond the constitutional deadlines. At all costs we had to avoid ending up in a constitutional vacuum.

To mark Burundi's democratic progress, we succeeded in introducing single ballots and consolidating several rounds of voting. After this electoral marathon, therefore, consultations between the country's various political forces enabled us to establish the offices of both Houses of Parliament, with the participation of the former leader of the opposition, Mr. Agathon Rwasa, President of the Amizero y'Abarundi coalition. Following an internal dialogue, the new Government was named on 24 August and consists of 20 ministers, including five from the opposition. All of that was carried out in strict accordance with the Arusha Agreement and constitutional balance.

With the elections over, the Government of Burundi has now launched another political phase, that of dialogue, one that aims to be inclusive, sincere and open to all issues and that is embodied in the National

Commission for inter-Burundian Dialogue, established by presidential decree on 23 September. Its main mission is to lead an inter-Burundian dialogue process on the issues both inside and outside the country, particularly as they relate to social issues, politics, peacebuilding, security, economic development, the Arusha Agreement, the Constitution, the comprehensive ceasefire agreement, the Charter of National Unity and so forth.

Based on the main conclusions of the discussions, the Commission will make recommendations to the Government, the political parties, civil society and religious groups in order to arrive at agreement on the changes to be made to the founding documents in the interests of all Burundians. The Commission will consist of 15 Burundian nationals appointed by decree and in accordance with the constitutional balances. We take this opportunity to once again ask for support for the process from Burundi's partners, starting with the United Nations, which has recently demanded firmly that we organize a genuinely inclusive dialogue in our country.

It should be recalled that this dialogue framework comes a few months after the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, whose main task is to shed light on the crises that have dogged Burundi since its independence. With a continuing view to restoring an atmosphere conducive to peace and security throughout the country, the President of the Republic has just made another gesture of goodwill by signing a decree allowing those who illegally have weapons to return voluntarily within a month without fear of prosecution by the legal authorities. We should note that the decision is also a response to the disarmament recommendations of the Summits of Heads of State of the East African Community and of the African Union.

Concerning freedom of the media, which some have been concerned about, we would like it known that the issue is important to us, too. However, it is important not to lump all the media together. Of the 20 or so private media outlets operating in Burundi, only three radio stations and one television and radio broadcaster face judicial investigations into their alleged role in the failed coup of 13 May before it is decided whether they can reopen. Other representatives of the media, both national and international, operating on Burundian territory have continued to broadcast without difficulty. Moreover, the media will also occupy a prominent place in the inter-Burundian dialogue soon to begin.

Those arrested during the insurrection will receive a fair trial and have the right to a defence. We should emphasize that minors recruited into the movement through violence will be pardoned, and only those responsible for serious crimes will have to face trial. As to refugees, Burundi hopes to see more involvement on the part of its partners and friends in helping to facilitate the voluntary return of Burundians wishing to come home.

On the socioeconomic front, Burundi has made significant progress in recent years. Women and girls' involvement in running the country is now a reality. Indeed, the Constitution reserves a quota of at least 30 per cent of seats for them in decision-making bodies. Women make up 50 per cent of the Senate and 36 per cent of the National Assembly. In the Government, women head important ministries such as those of health, education and higher education and scientific research, justice, trade and municipal development. As for women and armed conflict, we have made progress in recruiting women into the defence and security forces, which also contributes to their effective participation in peacekeeping missions.

Turning to education, free tuition has enabled us to achieve our ambition of having as many girls as boys in primary school. That policy, introduced in 2005 and based on community efforts, has also involved the population in building school infrastructure, which in 2014 enabled us to achieve a school-attendance rate of 96 per cent, compared with 59.5 per cent in 2005. In the health sector, free health care for children under the age of 5 and pregnant women has significantly reduced the mortality rate for children under 5 and for infants at birth.

In the area of transport infrastructure, all of the roads linking the country's provinces are now paved, except for one in one province on which work is ongoing.

Among the important reforms introduced in recent years, I should mention that all revenues are now channelled through the Burundi Revenue Authority, whose establishment has given us a reliable taxation body harmonized with the East African Community. Based on the performances achieved with regard to the Millennium Development Goals, we are entering the era of the Sustainable Development Goals with confidence and are determined to implement, over the short and the long terms, every policy able to curb poverty in our country.

At the regional level, Burundi will continue to work with other countries to better respond to the security objectives laid out in the founding documents of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries, the East African Community, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and many others.

On the international front, Burundi has pledged to continue the work it began nearly a decade ago in the spirit of international solidarity, namely, to participate in peacekeeping operations wherever asked to do so. Accordingly, we have not shrunk from the call to help our brothers and sisters in Somalia, so that they can regain their dignity. When we sent our troops to Somalia at the beginning of operations initiated by the African Union, Burundi became the second-largest troop-contributing country in Somalia. Our brave men and women are also contributing energetically to peacekeeping operations in the Central African Republic, Darfur in the Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire and Haiti. We will not only continue our commitments to the peacekeeping operations in which we are involved in a spirit of partnership and mutually beneficial cooperation, but, in the various international forums in which Burundi has a voice, it will also pursue building a more united and just world, a world in which States respect each other on an equal and sovereign footing.

Burundi wishes, however, that the United Nations and other partners would step up their support to troop-contributing countries in order to enable a rapid and effective response. Burundi embraces all strategies that aim to eradicate the major threat posed by terrorism and reaffirms its commitment to fight alongside the international community in the common struggle. We support the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) so as to prevent non-State actors in particular from obtaining biological, nuclear, chemical or other weapons in order to commit terrorist acts.

Burundi is firmly committed to working with all other bilateral and multilateral international partners to take up the challenge of climate change. Our country is part of a new political momentum that promises to provide a rapid solution to the problems related to climate change. Accordingly, we have high expectations for the session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Paris in December.

Regarding the issue of reforming the Security Council, our country subscribes to the logic of finding

a comprehensive solution that meets the broad approval of the Member States, and that will uphold the common interests of our States and serve the long-term interests of our Organization. It is therefore our wish that the decisions on this important issue reflect the views of the individual States and of the continental organizations to which they belong.

Ultimately, we, like the other developing countries, are asking for a more substantial amount of support from the United Nations and our partners, in order to make increased progress as we implement the new post-2015 Agenda. For our part, we are committed to taking ownership of the Agenda from the grass-roots to the top level of our Government, for the benefit of the national and international community.

Lastly, Burundi wants stability in the Great Lakes region, based on the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and particular regard for the commitments made within the framework of regional organizations, which all advocate peace and security, as the foundation for all development.

Long live the United Nations family.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi for the statement he has just made.

Joseph Butore, Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Moisés Omar Halleslevens Acevedo, Vice-President of the Republic of Nicaragua

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Nicaragua.

Mr. Moisés Omar Halleslevens Acevedo, Vice-President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Moisés Omar Halleslevens Acevedo, Vice-President of the Republic of Nicaragua, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Acevedo (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): Please receive the greetings of the people of Nicaragua and our President, Commander Daniel Ortega Saavedra.

We wish the new President of the General Assembly success in the responsibilities that he has undertaken.

Today I come to the General Assembly to express the position of Nicaragua and that of our President, Commander Daniel Ortega Saavedra. I shall therefore deliver the message on behalf of our Head of State and Government.

“This year, the General Assembly at its seventieth session commemorates the seventieth anniversary of our Organization. Seven decades ago, 51 States signed the Charter of the United Nations. Nicaragua is a founding State. The world was, at that time, emerging from a terrible war, and humankind was crying out for ‘peace, peace, peace’, as our immortal poet Rubén Darío said. Since 24 October 1945, the United Nations has projected to the world the image of an entity that would bring peace, but, from the time of its founding until today, its stated objectives have been frustrated.

“As we celebrate its seventieth anniversary, we are now 193 Member States, and the Organization was created in an entirely different world. Now, it must be transformed. We live on a planet with more people, and we are threatened by numerous and highly complex challenges. It is a world where egotism, arrogance and interference have completely altered and dismantled the right to peace, sovereign security and life for millions of human beings. We must therefore reflect deeply before reinventing, democratizing and recasting the United Nations. We want an Organization with equal rights for all its Members and one that more effectively meets the challenges of justice; equitable, sustainable, secure and sovereign development; and, above all, peace.

“The increasing greed of global capitalism, particularly in the Middle East and Africa, has caused wars and created, fostered, cultivated and exploited fanaticism and terrorism, which have, in turn, spread insecurity and destruction, and caused all kinds of crises — crises of infinite proportions and ramifications with war, food, the environmental, labour and humanitarian matters at their heart.

“The forced and brutal displacement of thousands of people, including the elderly, children and entire families, from countries that were

previously developed, such as Syria, Libya and Iraq, and from sub-Saharan Africa, lays bare the true nature of wars, terrorism, and the conflicts that we are experiencing. They have been created and fuelled by the greed of the empire of global capitalism. We have all said that that situation will get worse unless we act together to address and resolve the causes of so much distress, barbarism and catastrophe.

“Our Organization should promote respect, peace, sovereign security, justice and solidarity among human beings. The Organization must respond in the face of that barbaric intervention in and interruption of the tranquillity and the right to prosperity in the lives of millions of families of countries and entire populations. The Organization must respond to the challenges of our time with measures and activities that reflect the supreme interests of people — respect, the inviolability of sovereignty, the recognition of national natural resources and the promotion of security, justice and peace.

“We must not pass over the fact that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was hindered by the terrible impact of wars and terrorism, created and encouraged by the imperialist empires. Similarly, climate imbalance, or climate change — the unusual frequency of earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, disasters, epidemics, droughts, floods, landslides, all known calamities — have shown no mercy in the most impoverished countries. The peoples and countries that had fully implemented the MDGs, such as Libya, Syria and Iraq, have witnessed interventions and been devastated by terrorism, which was promoted to sustain imperialist invasions and wars. All those actions have been disguised as internal conflicts, brought about in an effort to seize and control our natural resources. There is no region on the planet where the imperialist hand has not left its mark, in the form of intrigue, aggression, manipulation and all kinds of interference directed against legitimate democratic processes, intended to weaken Governments, influence institutions, undermine harmony and engineer self-serving disruptions in the social, political and economic lives of our peoples.

“In Latin America and the Caribbean, we have reiterated our wish to declare our region a

zone of peace and equitable development and our commitment to creating conditions in each country and in the region that will enable us to achieve, through dialogue and collaboration, firm and enduring peace and justice.

“To carry out the outstanding work under the MDGs and the implementation of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), we need to restore peace, sovereign security, respect for independence, protection of the natural resources of every population and respect for the dignity and cultures of all peoples. To work for justice, equality and development requires the establishment of a culture of meeting, dialogue and consensus, and it requires recovering the essential values of humankind. It necessitates putting an end to the wars and terrorism that have been created and fuelled. It also requires the constructive work of dialogue and the respectful affirmation of sovereign security and peace.

“Our Government of national reconciliation and unity has worked to eradicate poverty, as the national and international indicators show. As we fulfil that ongoing commitment, and as our Government, country and people are committed to the rights, welfare and security of Nicaraguan families, we propose here in this Hall that the United Nations take on the responsibility of addressing the very necessary battles to come.

“We must work for justice, peace, respect, dialogue and sovereign security in the world. To do that, we must bring about the necessary changes so that the Organization can serve the interests of all its Members. We would like to emphasize that during his presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session, in 2008, Father Miguel d’Escoto Brockmann developed some ideas and proposals in fulfilment of Nicaragua’s mandate to establish the basis for a discussion of such changes in a draft document on the reinvention of the United Nations. We believe that only when the United Nations is equitable and democratic, recast, re-created and fit for the purpose of serving the world and humankind in the twenty-first century, can we tackle the great challenges of our time.

“Our Government and our people advocate for a world with values, in which human beings bring out the best in each other and foster the best possible conditions for a just, sustainable, equitable, secure,

sovereign development and in which advances in science and technology in all areas of our lives are accessible to all and shared by all. The Government and the people of Nicaragua hope that the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris will result in a commitment to climate justice as well as concluding an indispensable policy of indemnization translated into direct and unconditional cooperation. The carbon emitters and those who are responsible for despoiling and degrading our planet and causing imbalances must recognize our losses and help to promote the recovery of Mother Earth and restore its right to health and life and the right to health and life of the peoples of the world.

“Nicaragua calls for a world of solidarity and complementarity and a reshaped United Nations in which everyone’s interests are served and all Member States can listen and talk to each other on equal footing. We also call for the United Nations agencies to play a respectful, responsible and ethical role, devoid of any form of interference and intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign States.

“We come with greetings from the people of Nicaragua and their hope that the seventieth anniversary and the commitment we make will result in a transparent and deep process of reflection on how we can change and reinvent the Organization to make it democratic. Nicaragua, the land of Darío and Sandino, blessed and always free, is committed to the initiative to recreate, reinvent and recast the United Nations and adapt it to the growing demands of a democratic Organization that serves the supreme interests of sovereign security, justice and peace in the world. I hope that we united nations will fulfil that role, that we will promote dialogue, respect, understanding, sovereignty, security, peace and a future without interference or dependency, and that we will work together on an equal footing, with everyone, for everyone, for the well-being of all. Let it be so.”

That ends the address that President of Nicaragua, Mr. Daniel Ortega Saavedra, asked me to deliver on his behalf to the General Assembly on 1 October 2015.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the

Republic of Nicaragua for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Moisés Omar Halleslevens Acevedo, Vice-President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted from the rostrum.

**Address by Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne,
Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and
Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda**

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Browne (Antigua and Barbuda): Democracy, peace, security, rule of law and respect for human rights are crucial elements in achieving the economic and social development to which my people aspire. We are aware that, just as no development can take place without democracy, peace, security and the rule of law, so, too, little peace and certainly no security will exist without development. Development, peace and security, therefore, go hand in hand. They are inextricably linked.

But I am disappointed that some nations within this body fail to recognize that if development is denied to any section of humanity, so too are human rights. Today, we live in a world where — despite all the utterances to the contrary — might is still right, and the big and strong continue to bully the poor, the weak and the vulnerable. Until small States such as mine are no longer bullied by larger and more powerful nations, despite our full compliance with international standards and practices, human rights will continue to be denied. As the Organization enters its seventy-first year, it is time that Member States stop paying lip service to the principle of sovereignty. They must show that they truly respect the sovereignty of States regardless of their size.

In the years since our independence the people of Antigua and Barbuda have built solid institutions of

democracy and respect for human, civil and political rights. We guard those institutions jealously, and we have enshrined them in our Constitution and in our laws. And we do so not only for ourselves, but for every investor in our country, every visitor to our shores and every other country with which we have treaties or conduct business.

However, my country is beset with all the problems and challenges that confront all small States. They include remoteness, high transactional costs, threats to our survival from climate change, a limited economic base and a small resource pool to fund and manage our development aspirations. Those realities make it difficult, if not impossible, for my small country to finance its development, without external assistance and without access to foreign capital. But the people of my country do not wish to be beggars before the world community. We do not want to attend meetings, cap in one hand, begging bowl in the other. Yes, we want the sympathy and understanding of the international financial institutions and development agencies. Yes, we want better terms of trade and more reasonable access to development financing. But we are also determined to stand on our own two feet and to earn our place among the community of nations. We are resolved not to beg for it, but to work for it. However, the international community, particularly the rich and the powerful, must help us to work for the development we need, instead of placing obstacles in our way.

Yet, 11 years after the World Trade Organization delivered a judgement in my country's favour against a larger and vastly richer country for a trade violation that set back my small country by over \$100 million, that country has failed to settle with us. Justice delayed is justice denied. After 11 years of not receiving the fruits of that judgement, which, incidentally, are lawfully due to my country, my people are entitled to conclude that the powerful continue to ignore and trample on the rights of the weak and that might is right.

In the international trading system, my small country with a population of 100,000 people is treated in the same way as the United States of America, Canada or Japan. Our market size and development status, which require us to be treated differently from larger and vastly more developed countries, receive scant attention. Our need for access to concessionary financing to fund our development is accorded even less attention. At best, we are treated with benign neglect. The arbitrary and unjust rules that are imposed

upon us choke our efforts to diversify and develop our small economies and are even worse.

In that regard, my country condemns the recent list of the European Commission, in which several small States in the Caribbean and the Pacific, including Antigua and Barbuda, are falsely named as tax havens. Similarly, my country deplores the list of tax havens produced by individual States and a district within the United States of America that has wrongfully and inappropriately labelled many Caribbean and Pacific countries.

My country and others in the Caribbean all have tax information exchange agreements with the Government of the United States of America. We have been fully cooperative and no request for tax information has ever been denied. With regard to the European Union's (EU) list of tax havens, Antigua and Barbuda has tax information exchange agreements with 18 of the 28 EU nations. Yet, because 10 of them, with which we do little or no business, arbitrarily and without consultation say that we are tax havens, we are placed on an EU rogue list that is published globally.

What is more, my country and many of the others wrongly named in both lists have been found to be fully compliant with all the relevant international standards. And the relevant authorities namely, the Financial Action Task Force and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes, have also found us to be fully compliant.

It cannot be right that powerful countries unjustly tarnish our small country's reputation, despite all that we have done—at great cost in view of our limited resources — to comply with international standards. Such wrongful tarnishing opens the possibility of financial institutions in Europe and the United States discontinuing correspondent relations with our banks. If that happens, no one in our small States will be able to pay for any goods or services purchased from the United States or Europe, including food, tuition for our young studying abroad, and medication and medical bills for our people in need of specialized treatment.

The consequences would be disastrous, since we would be excluded from the international payment system and would be unable to settle our trade and investment transactions. Our banking system would collapse, our economy would be irreparably damaged, and our people would be plunged into abject poverty,

contrary to the objectives of the post-2015 development Agenda.

International principles to which small States readily adhere should not be overturned by bigger countries that seek to impose their will on smaller ones. It is not fair; it is not just; it is not democratic; and it is patently wrong.

My country is not looking for handouts, nor are many others like mine. We do not want to endure the indignity of begging. What we want is a chance to develop, a chance to improve the living standards of our people.

In this regard, I wish to salute the Government of the People's Republic of China, whose President, in this very Hall a few days ago, undertook to establish a fund for South-South cooperation with a pledge of \$2 billion to support developing countries in the implementation of the post-2015 development Agenda. I further hail China's announcement of a 10-year, \$1 billion fund to support the work of the United Nations in peacekeeping and development. China should be acknowledged and applauded for the care it is demonstrating for others in the global community.

I acknowledge, too, the contributions of two other developing nations, Venezuela and Cuba, which have made significant contributions to South-South cooperation.

Despite the economic challenges that these three developing countries face, they have given help to other countries unstintingly. If these three countries, challenged as they are, can recognize an obligation to all humankind, regardless of race or colour or of a country's size or geographical location, surely rich and developed countries should be able to do the same. I call on these developed countries to stand up and be counted.

I applaud those countries, such as Britain, Germany and Sweden, that have met their commitments to deliver 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product as official development assistance. I urge the others to follow their lead and to join them not as a giveaway to beggars but as an investment in a safer and more peaceful world, whose progress will contribute to the prosperity of all humankind.

On the matter of peace and security, my country firmly believes that the world's prospects for peace

and security were greatly enhanced by two recent developments.

The first is the establishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States of America. We hail that accord, and we call upon the United States Congress to lift the embargo against Cuba, which serves no one's interest or any useful purpose. Further, we support the call for the United States to return Guantanamo Bay to Cuba.

At the same time, my country congratulates the United States Government on the agreement reached with Iran. While we are mindful of the fact that five other countries were involved in the process, we recognize that President Obama faced the most difficult circumstances. We commend his far-sightedness, as we applaud the willingness of all of the participating countries, including Iran, to overcome obstacles through negotiations and dialogue.

The President of Iran told the Assembly that while his country will not forget the past, it does not wish to live in the past. He has committed his nation to the practical path to security and stability through the development that comes with economic engagement. My country welcomes that commitment and, in turn, stands ready to participate with Iran in such economic engagement.

I express Antigua and Barbuda's deep concern at the devastation of neighbouring Caribbean island Dominica by tropical storm Erika. I also want to make the point that countries in the Caribbean did not await an international response. In fact, we went ahead and provided aid to Dominica and its suffering people, and we did so within the limited capacity of our respective States members of the Caribbean Community. We made immediate financial and other tangible contributions to Dominica.

Despite our own challenges, we stood up for the humanitarian needs of our neighbour. But even as we did so, we were aware that wider international support is necessary. Therefore, I appeal for continued international action for Dominica in its recovery process. I also express my country's deep worry about the Bahamas, which is being battered by a Category 4 hurricane even as I address the Assembly. There is no greater evidence, if any were needed, that climate change is now one of the most serious challenges facing small island States. The time for action on climate change is now. There is no more time for excuses.

Climate change is the greatest threat confronting all of humankind. It knows no borders, and it respects neither size nor economic and military power. All of our countries are its potential victims, even where its existence and danger continue to be denied. But it poses the greatest threat to the smallest on our shared planet, particularly the island States in the Caribbean, the Pacific and the Indian Ocean.

What happened in Dominica a few weeks ago also befell Vanuatu and Tuvalu in the Pacific earlier this year. What is sad is that these disasters are not occurring in these islands through their own fault. They are happening because of the excesses of larger and more powerful countries, which will not bend from their abuse of the world's atmosphere even at the risk of eliminating other societies, some older than their own.

Increasingly, several of these islands are drowning, and their age-old civilizations are facing extinction. In this connection, I hail the clean-energy proposal of United States, and I commend President Obama for this initiative. It is a most enlightened proposal, as a result of which the people of the United States will not only maintain the quality of their own country but will also stand up for the rights of other societies to have a homeland and to raise their children in the land of their ancestors.

I am thinking particularly of the people of the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu in the Pacific; of Maldives in the Indian Ocean; and a few Caribbean islands where the prospect of disappearance looms large from sea-level rise. All industrialized nations should accept their responsibilities as chief contributors in emitting high levels of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. If the countries of the United Nations want their pledge for democracy, human rights and peace to be meaningful, they must resolve to make the Conference on Climate Change in Paris later this year a resounding success. That success will be best measured if our nations collectively ensure that the outcome of the Conference is an ambitious international agreement that limits global warming below 2°C, in order to ensure the survival of small States. Financing is also important. Not because we are begging, but because the world's interests are served by it. Financing the cost of mitigation must be done through an internationally legally binding commitment to additional and predictable support.

I want to end my statement by thanking God for the United Nations. If it did not exist, small countries such as mine would have no voice at all. We know the United

Nations needs reform to make it more democratic and certainly more representative. But, within its bodies, we have a platform and an opportunity to hold up a mirror to the world that reflects the marginalization we confront. That is of great value to us. My country hopes for a tomorrow that offers us better prospects, where the opportunities in the world are not monopolized by the rich few but are shared for the advancement of all humankind. In this Organization, fair-minded nations, acting together, still have the chance to make equity a reality for the small as much as for the big.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. John Key, Prime Minister of New Zealand

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of New Zealand.

Mr. John Key, Prime Minister of New Zealand, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. John Key, Prime Minister of New Zealand, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Key (New Zealand): The seventieth anniversary of the United Nations is a good opportunity to reflect on the state of the Organization. For most of us, the United Nations has been one of the key international realities of our lives. It has been at the heart of what has shaped us in the significant developments of the post-Second World War era. But as we all know, it is not perfect. A lot can be said about the shortcomings of the United Nations. They are many and some are serious. But there are things this Organization can do that no other international body can. And it remains the key reference point for States when there is a problem. That is why New Zealand fought so hard for its current seat on the Security Council. We sought election because the Council is the primary body for the maintenance of international peace and security.

New Zealand is a small country at the bottom of the world. Despite being far from many of the world's trouble spots, we are not immune to their consequences. This time last year, I pressed the case for New Zealand's election to the Security Council. I would like to thank Member States for their faith in us. In the past nine months we have striven to repay them. Much of the debate in this Hall this week has been about where the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, has not performed. The conflicts and human suffering in Syria, Yemen, South Sudan and a long list of other countries show how far we are from achieving the aspirations of our founders and of today's Members. So, too, does the lack of progress in bringing peace to the Middle East.

Since we have been on the Council, we have found it as hard as many of those here warned. The Council's agenda is lengthy and contentious. The dynamics within it are difficult. When Council members work together, as they did over the recent agreement on Iran's nuclear capability, they can still deliver on the Council's role as it is set out in the Charter of the United Nations. The Iran deal was a notable bright spot this year. Although it was negotiated in Vienna, only the Council had the power to implement it. New Zealand is proud that this occurred during our presidency of the Council in July. Now, the deal has to be implemented and its example followed. That is because this important agreement must become the basis for something wider — a fundamental resetting of relationships and a foundation for the resolution of other regional conflicts.

Nowhere is the resetting of relationships needed more than in Syria. Syria has been torn apart by internal divisions and a leader prepared to wage war on his own people to cling to power. External actors, from within the region and beyond, have tried to tilt the balance in pursuit of their own interests. And as the country descended into lawlessness, the evil nightmare that is the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which first took hold in Syria, spread death and terror in the region and beyond. ISIL's warped ideology and unprecedented use of social media to export its twisted message is a threat to all of us, even a country as distant as New Zealand.

That is why New Zealand has joined the international coalition against ISIL. We are doing what we can to help the victims of the Syrian conflict and combat the scourge of ISIL. New Zealand's armed forces are helping the Government of Iraq to train its soldiers to

defend its people. In response to the humanitarian crisis we are helping to fund programmes in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey to assist their efforts to support thousands of displaced refugees. Like many other countries, we are implementing an emergency Syrian refugee resettlement programme.

None of that gets to the root of the problems in Syria. All Council members carry responsibility for ending the misery in Syria and beyond. The consequences of inaction are not theoretical. The human toll is real — a 3-year-old boy dead, washed up on a Turkish beach; hundreds of thousands killed and millions forced to flee their homes. We cannot ignore the huddled travellers in the railway stations of Europe or the reality of refugees scratching out a meagre existence in camps and makeshift homes in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. More than 160 leaders have shown up in New York this week to mark the enduring importance of the United Nations over the past 70 years. Yet we do so against the backdrop of the worst refugee crisis since the Second World War.

Every one of us sees the harrowing images daily. At the same time we see the consequences of the Security Council's failure to act over the past four years. It is time for the Council to step up. It is time for it to stop talking about what is right and do what is right. It is time for the Council to do the job for which it was created. It is time for its members to set aside their vested interests and historical alliances in order to stop the violence and end the suffering. It is time for the Council to do its duty by those who have lost their lives and loved ones and the millions who have been displaced. We cannot afford to let the Council go from an institution with failures to a failed institution.

There must be a political solution to the conflict in Syria. And it must come soon. It should address all issues and involve all relevant actors, from within the region and beyond. The question is not Al-Assad or ISIL. Both need to be dealt with. A workable political solution will not be a perfect one. Indeed, it is a classic case of the perfect being the enemy of the good. It will require international cooperation and compromise, on all sides.

The Council also needs to engage in making progress on the Middle East peace process. Since being elected to the Council, New Zealand has made clear its view that the status quo is unsustainable. It puts at risk the achievement of the two-State solution that we all know is the best hope for a lasting peace. That is a

matter of urgency and another critical issue on which the Security Council should lead. We are told that the conditions are not right on the ground and that the parties are not ready, but we should not let conditions on the ground dictate our actions, if our actions can help bring a solution.

We stood for the Council because we believe small States have a positive contribution to make, and we wanted to provide a voice for those who go unheard too often. It was for that latter reason that we arranged the first open debate on the peace and security challenges of small island developing States during our presidency in July (see S/PV.7499). We were heartened by the level of participation of both those States and the broader membership.

The challenge for a small elected member to have its voice heard and its views taken into account is considerable. Part of the problem is structural. That the five permanent members of the Council have the right of veto creates an extraordinary power imbalance. That imbalance is exacerbated by their practices of prenegotiating outcomes before engaging with the 10 elected members and of taking no action when one of the five does not agree. That experience has reaffirmed to us that New Zealand was right to oppose the right of veto when the Charter of the United Nations was being drafted.

It is still our view that the right of veto is a constraint on the effectiveness of the Council and realizing the aspirations of the States Members of the United Nations. For that reason, New Zealand supports the two proposals being put forward this year — by the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group of countries and by France and Mexico — to limit the use of the veto in mass atrocity situations. The fact that two permanent members are supportive represents progress, but part of the problem is also behavioural. The permanent members have become used to exercising power and are protective of their privileged position. They presume to control the Council's agenda and to determine its processes. Despite that, we are doing what we can to ensure that the elected members have the information and the opportunity to contribute effectively to Council decision-making. And, in turn, that it makes effective decisions.

We want to contribute to a Council that is genuinely focused on finding practical solutions to political problems and not on preserving the status quo. We are well aware that the conflicts on the Council's agenda

are complex and not easily solved, but we are realistic in our expectations of what can be achieved. New Zealand believes that the body responsible for maintaining international peace and security has a responsibility to find solutions to the world's most pressing crises.

The President took the Chair.

Only the United Nations and its agencies have the capacity to focus world attention across a range of issues. That was demonstrated last week with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals. We sincerely hope that the Conference of the Parties will be similarly successful in Paris in December, with the adoption of a meaningful agreement on climate change.

Healthy and productive oceans are a key requirement for a sustainable future. I was pleased to announce earlier this week the creation of a marine sanctuary around New Zealand's Kermadec Islands. The Kermadec Ocean Sanctuary will comprise 620,000 square kilometres of ocean in one of the most pristine and special environments on Earth. The Sanctuary will be one of the world's largest and most significant fully protected marine areas. It will cover an area twice the size of our land mass and better protect the habitats of a huge array of sea creatures.

New Zealand is committed to managing our oceans responsibly, and we are working with our Pacific neighbours to do the same. We have committed \$1 billion in development assistance to the Pacific, focused on, among other things, helping support sustainable fisheries management. Our aid is focused on our region and in areas where we know we can get real results for real people, improving livelihoods and creating opportunities. Many Governments around the world are doing the same, and we are proud to play our part.

As I prepare to leave New York, I do so proud of the contribution that New Zealand has made to the sustainable development of our oceans. I leave proud of the contribution New Zealand is making on the Security Council and proud of the values and principles that underpin the country I lead. I also leave dispirited by the Security Council's failure to help not only the people of Syria, but those in so many other countries. The collective effort of the Security Council, supported by the broader membership, could make a real difference.

I think all of us who have been here over the past week know that collective action must start somewhere. It should start at the United Nations.

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

Mr. John Key, Prime Minister of New Zealand, was escorted from the rostrum.

**Address by Mr. Rui Maria de Araújo,
Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic
of Timor-Leste**

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

Mr. Rui Maria de Araújo, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Rui Maria de Araújo, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Araújo (Timor-Leste) (*spoke in Portuguese; interpretation provided by the delegation*): It is with the utmost pleasure that I address the Organization today. It is a privilege for me to take the floor for the first time in the General Assembly, particularly because the Member States have come together to celebrate the Organization's seventieth anniversary.

This is undoubtedly a historic moment in the life of the United Nations, when we can celebrate and honestly reflect on the principles and spirit that led to the establishment of the Organization, as well as the failures and successes of the past 70 years. Those failures and successes are intimately associated with various world events, including the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, whose status as a sovereign State was internationally recognized on 20 May 2002.

Nonetheless, the world has changed dramatically since the Charter of the United Nations was signed seven decades ago, in 1945. Today, we are an Organization with 193 Member States, many of which were formed after the end of the Second World War. The world in the twenty-first century is marked by a combination of complexities, challenges and different opportunities

that require coordinated actions by the States. While in the 1940s we already had the audacity to proclaim that no country is an island, that adage is even more relevant in our own century with the advances in communication and transportation technologies that transform our world into a global village in which distance and location are no longer impediments to interaction among peoples and States. It requires from us a stronger commitment to understanding and cooperation as a means to better capitalize on the potential and to minimize the adverse risks of that new reality.

Our commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the multilateral system therefore constitutes an indispensable element in the interactions of humankind in our century. Today, using the words of the Preamble to the Charter, we must repeat our undertaking “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” and “reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights” with dignity and equality for all. We must strengthen our commitment to “justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law” and to “social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom”.

Those ideals are the pillars of the Organization and have guided its work since its foundation, but we must acknowledge that we have yet to respond to the aspirations of all peoples in all nations of the world. Now is an opportune moment to renew our efforts towards fulfilling those principles. To that end, the United Nations needs a reform that will allow it to take up the challenges that have emerged in the new circumstances of our century. Reforming the Security Council is one change that has been suggested, with a view to making the Council more representative and balanced. Improving the system is the only way for us to be prepared for the long journey ahead and for us to honour and fulfil the promise of peace, security and human rights for all.

At the United Nations sustainable development Summit a few days ago, from 25 to 27 September, we all met to launch the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). Through the changes outlined on the new Agenda, we have redefined the pillar of development for the United Nations and set the planet on the path to sustainable development. The dynamic of change must now focus on the other pillars of the Organization, which are peace, security and human rights.

The United Nations was born out of the need for States to develop closer relations and work together in a world dismayed and marked by war. Yet, conflicts and violence continue to ravage the world, and millions of people continue to be forced to abandon their homes and countries. We currently have the largest number of refugees since the Second World War, and estimates indicate that the number will increase. In addition to those refugees, there are many other people who migrate in search of better opportunities.

We are seeing thousands of people arriving in Europe every day, trying to escape threats to their lives, which they face in the conflict zones in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, among several other countries. It is crucial that we bear in mind that we must provide those who are forced to flee persecution and armed conflict with the protection to which they are entitled under international law. We cannot forget that crises, wherever they crop up, can drag on and spread indiscriminately, affecting economies, social life, peace and stability in particular regions and in the world. Notwithstanding the progress achieved since the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, we must acknowledge that there remains much to do and fulfil. Conflicts and crises persist in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Europe and the Americas. The Saharans, Palestinians and many other peoples continue to be denied their fundamental rights.

When there is disagreement, leaders must recognize that dialogue is a means to an end. Timor-Leste is particularly pleased that the United States of America and the Republic of Cuba have re-established diplomatic relations. It congratulates them and hopes that a frank and open dialogue will quickly lead to the removal of impediments to economic, financial and trade relations.

New and different threats to peace, security and human rights have emerged since the creation of the United Nations. Terrorism, organized crime and extreme violence are new obstacles to international peace and security. The United Nations and the international community must adapt to those new threats in order to ensure a process to build peace and to build an inclusive, responsible and transparent State with a view to achieving lasting peace.

Another challenge, which may not appear as consistently in the mass media but which affects us equally, is climate change, and the international community is approaching a moment of decision in that

regard. The discussions that will take place at the end of the year at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Paris, must produce universal, ambitious and legally binding results. It is time to act with respect to climate change. The whole world is advancing towards a consensus that recognizes the urgency of combating climate change, including citizens, civil society and religious leaders, as seen in the message of His Holiness Pope Francis (see A/70/PV.3) and the declaration by Muslim leaders, which underscore our moral duty to protect those who are most vulnerable and to care for the planet we inhabit.

We also know that the impacts of climate change are even more pronounced in the developing small island States, which are on the front lines of the struggle. Our neighbouring islands in the Pacific have been assailed by the same storms and by an increase in the number of natural disasters, which are compounded, as if that were not enough, by soil erosion and the rise of sea levels.

Timor-Leste has been a part of the community of nations for 13 years and is ready to roll up its sleeves, leverage its national experience and contribute to the international community. We are a young nation, but that has never been nor will it ever be a reason for us to ignore the events and realities of the world we share. We officially announce our desire to join the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, boost progress in fragile States through the Group of Seven Plus and accede to the international mechanisms for the promotion of peace, democracy, justice and human rights.

We have been serving in the presidency pro tempore of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries since 2014. We wish to instil a new dynamic in that Community of sister nations and bring it to the forefront of economic globalization, with investment opportunities that could improve the living conditions of our peoples and contribute to the development, peace, and stability of the peoples of the world. We have had the opportunity to share our experience with other brotherly countries and peoples, such as Guinea-Bissau, Sao Tome et Principe, and the Central African Republic.

Timor-Leste's participation on the stage of international politics reflects our conviction as to the importance of solidarity, mutual respect, and cooperation for a better world. We have also undergone a Government transition recently. After many years at

the helm of the country, our outstanding leaders and former Presidents of the Republic, Xanana Gusmão and José Ramos-Horta, who are present here today, understood that Timor-Leste lacked a model of inclusive democracy. That type of democracy, which gave rise to the sixth constitutional Government, which is currently in office, was achieved peacefully and with dignity. The Government that I am honoured to lead is committed to preserving the peace and stability that has been achieved. It is also committed to continuing the efforts of previous Governments to foster growth and development in our country and the well-being of our people.

However, the road ahead for the Timorese is still long and arduous. In addition to building our institutions and promoting sustainable development, the national consensus in Timor-Leste is that we must work to fully assert our national sovereignty under international law and standards. That full assertion of our sovereignty includes the demarcation of our maritime borders with our two great neighbours, Indonesia and Australia. As a matter of principle, Timor-Leste has opted for negotiations in accordance with international law and standards and, when dialogue fails to resolve disagreements, our country has chosen to use international conflict-resolution mechanisms.

Though small, Timor-Leste has also helped other nations in their development efforts. The recent report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (see A/70/95), chaired by former President José Ramos-Horta, proposed fundamental shifts for the future of peace operations, which will have an impact on the lives of thousands of people. The four major shifts proposed by the Panel would help to enhance the credibility, relevance and legitimacy of the United Nations, thus making it more effective in preventing and resolving conflicts, and in peacemaking and peacekeeping, so that people can live in security and freedom.

Over the past three years, we have witnessed an unprecedented effort on the part of the States Members of the United Nations, and the international community in general, to redefine our approach to sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) embodies a remarkable balance of interests and priorities in its set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are profoundly interlinked and indivisible. Timor-Leste is particularly pleased with the inclusion of Goal 16, which strengthens the essential elements of peace, justice, and

institutions. We know from our own experience that those elements are crucial to our joint commitment not to leave anyone behind on our path towards sustainable development. Goal 16 is the basis for a truly inclusive Agenda and, together with Goals 5 and 17, serves as the cornerstone for achieving the other Goals. Timor-Leste is committed to working with other countries and development partners and sharing what little we have to implement those Goals and the other SDGs.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the United Nations, its Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and all States Members of the United Nations here present, as well as all the sectors of society that supported us in our struggle for liberation until we were recognized as a sovereign State. It is with humility that we once again express our profound gratitude and declare our commitment to being a part of this great team of nations that fights tirelessly for a more prosperous, just, and peaceful world. We believe that nations, when united, are much stronger and produce better results.

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

Mr. Rui Maria de Araújo, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands.

Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Sogavare (Solomon Islands): The Government and people of Solomon Islands join me in conveying our warm greetings to the General Assembly. I extend to you, Mr. President, our felicitations on your election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventieth session and assure you of Solomon Islands' support and cooperation during your term in office.

As we commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations, I wish to pay tribute to the 51 founding leaders who created the Organization in 1945. The United Nations represented peace, security and cooperation then, and continues to do so now. On this auspicious occasion, Solomon Islands reaffirms its faith in and commitment to the Organization and its Charter. Having said that, much has happened since 1945, and the world has changed over time.

Solomon Islands is part of the historic journey of the United Nations. When we first joined the Organization in 1978, there were only 145 members. Today, membership has increased to 193. At present, more than two thirds of the Members of the United Nations are from the developing world and are all seeking a fair, equitable and rules-based multilateral system. That is a sentiment that is echoed in this Hall every year. As long as wealth continues to reside with 20 per cent of the world's population, a global system manifesting such a divide will always face challenges in attempting to respond meaningfully to our collective agenda, even though it recognizes the fairness and equity that we all desire.

The number of conflicts that the United Nations deals with has also multiplied. We now have 16 peacekeeping missions. That has meant that, multilaterally, we are spending more on security than on development issues. We need to reverse that trend by striving to invest more in peace through strategies and programmes and less on military solutions and by addressing security and sustainable development. Where there are situations of potential conflict, we need to work with all Governments concerned through an inclusive mechanism that avoids unilateral decisions, which always result in protracted conflicts and strife and cause immense suffering to the people who are supposed to be the beneficiaries of peacebuilding efforts.

In that regard, the United Nations, on the occasion of its seventieth anniversary, must demonstrate its commitment to greater action. Our appreciation goes to the former President of the General Assembly, Mr. Sam Kutesa, for his strong leadership in guiding the historic development framework, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (resolution 70/1), which the Assembly adopted last week.

For developing countries, what is required is to translate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

of the new Agenda into action. That can happen only if the SDGs are matched with the necessary resources, in accordance with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, so that the international community can deliver the necessary means of implementation and convert the Goals into action. Humankind's survival depends on the world coming together on our shared 2030 Agenda. It offers us a last hope of getting it right. Incremental action is not an option. Transformative change comes about only if we think big, smart and innovatively to achieve the 17 global SDGs and the 169 targets. It has to be driven by a new form of partnership, anchored in a new spirit of solidarity, fostered by new political relationships and a paradigm shift in international cooperation — one that guarantees prosperity for all.

Solomon Islands registers its appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the sterling leadership that he has provided the Organization with over the past nine years. We join the Secretary-General and the General Assembly in the call for a more open process in the selection of a new Secretary-General, who is due in office by January 2017. Over the past seven decades, the permanent five members of the Security Council have selected the previous Secretaries-General. We call for a more accountable, democratic and transparent process for such appointments. To that end, the Assembly, as the chief deliberative and most democratic and representative organ of our Organization, must play a central role in the selection process.

Solomon Islands reiterates its interest in serving in United Nations peacekeeping missions. We have a well-trained police force that is ready, willing and able to serve alongside other United Nations officers. Our Royal Solomon Islands Police Force has a programme in place to achieve that goal. We intend to see our first team of officers out in the field during the current session of the General Assembly.

Solomon Islands remains under-represented among the United Nations Secretariat staff. I am pleased to note that the United Nations is organizing competitive recruitment exams in our country this year. We are grateful for that outreach and look forward to filling our quota, while enriching the diversity of the Secretariat. On the United Nations country presence, Solomon Islands welcomed resolution 69/318, calling for an enhanced United Nations country presence in the Pacific region, particularly at the country level. We welcome new thinking with regard to establishing

subregional offices within the Pacific region, noting the distance and the diverse and peculiar characteristics of the region. In that regard, Solomon Islands offers to host one of the subregional centres.

The democratic coalition-for-change Government that I lead was formed following last year's successful national general election using a biometric voter registration system for the first time. We are pleased with the system and will be building on its success, along with other electoral reforms. I thank all partners, including the United Nations, Australia and the European Union, for supporting our biometric registration system, and we seek partnerships to invest in the next phase of strengthening our democratic institution.

The review of our Political Parties Integrity Act is a priority that my Government is working on to further strengthen political stability in Solomon Islands. Likewise, my Government has launched an ambitious governance-reform programme that includes the enactment of anti-corruption and whistle-blowers legislation and the establishment of an anti-corruption commission. Similarly, my Government will introduce legislation to establish growth centres and industrial zones in the rural sector for the purpose of redistributing economic and social opportunities to the broader community.

At the regional level, Solomon Islands greatly appreciates its partnership with the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), which includes the participation of the 15 members of the Pacific Island Forum. That regional cooperation initiative has done much in terms of the restoration of the rule of law and the rehabilitation of mechanisms of Government, particularly those responsible for peacebuilding and ensuring the maintenance of law and justice. The RAMSI drawdown process will end by 30 June 2017. The assistance from our regional neighbours is greatly appreciated.

Solomon Islands assumed the chairmanship of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) in June this year. The Group is made up of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and the Front de libération nationale kanak et socialiste of the Territory of New Caledonia and my own country, Solomon Islands. The MSG countries make up at least 95 per cent of the total population of the Pacific small islands developing States (SIDS). The Melanesian subregion is rich in biodiversity, and its peoples speak a quarter of the world's languages.

Solomon Islands is exploring the establishment of an indigenous biocultural platform to preserve our traditional knowledge and our rich biodiversity.

At the recent MSG Summit, leaders of the Group agreed to foster more comprehensive economic cooperation on trade, aviation, fisheries, shipping and finance among its members and beyond the subregion. The Group further agreed to establish a regional police academy. At the summit, the MSG leaders also conferred associate membership on Indonesia and observer status on the United Liberation Movement for West Papua.

Solomon Islands calls for the full and swift implementation of the 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonized Countries and Peoples. Of interest to the MSG is the question of New Caledonia. This year marks 162 years of the French colonization of New Caledonia. That territory is entering its seminal phase as it prepares for an act of self-determination in 2018. It is our fervent hope that the process will succeed with the full backing of the French Government. We wish them well in that historic undertaking.

Having said that, Solomon Islands cautiously welcomes the fragile consensus reached in addressing New Caledonia's electoral issues by the Special Committee on the Noumea Accord. We therefore reaffirm the importance of ensuring that the electoral process is addressed amicably, given that it has implications for establishing a credible referendum process that conforms to and is consistent with accepted principles and practice of self-determination as outlined in United Nations resolutions, including resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV).

Solomon Islands welcomed resolution 69/103, which reaffirmed the inalienable right of the people of French Polynesia to self-determination. Solomon Islands calls on the administrative Power to fully cooperate with the work of the Special Committee. We note that 30 years of nuclear testing by the administrative Power caused widespread atomic radiation, which has resulted in considerable health and environmental concerns. It is a matter that is of concern to us, and we call for more attention to be paid to the issue by the Assembly.

Solomon Islands reaffirms that human rights principles are universal, indivisible, interrelated and must be treated in a fair manner. All States have a legal duty and moral responsibility to uphold, respect and promote human rights and, where necessary, to take

preventive, protective and punitive measures against human rights abuses or violations, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and applicable international laws.

Against that backdrop, the General Assembly is well aware of the continuing concerns regarding human rights violations in the Papua and West Papua regions of Indonesia. Solomon Islands, together with the Pacific Islands Forum, is seeking genuine dialogue and cooperation with Indonesia on that issue. The outreach is intended to resolve reported allegations of human rights violations in two of Indonesia's ethnic Melanesian regions, namely Papua and West Papua. Solomon Islands further calls on the Geneva-based Human Rights Council to do more investigating and monitoring of the allegations of human rights abuses against ethnic Melanesians in the concerned regions of Indonesia. We would like the issue to be addressed in a timely manner.

In that connection, the Pacific Islands Forum, at its recent Leaders' Summit held in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, approved the deployment of a fact-finding mission to West Papua to establish the alleged abuses of human rights there. We appeal to the Government of Indonesia to allow free and unrestricted access to the mission in the true spirit of regional cooperation. In the long term, however, the United Nations cannot shy away from the root causes of those violations.

On South-South cooperation, I thank the Papua New Guinea Government for opening their educational institutions to Solomon Islands students. We acknowledge Papua New Guinea's bilateral assistance and substantial commercial investments in people-to-people relations. Our Melanesian relations remain firmly rooted in our cultural and traditional values, which link our people now and into the future. We are forging similar economic, sociocultural and trade relations with Fiji, Vanuatu and other Pacific countries.

Turning now to Solomon Islands's relations with Cuba, we thank that fellow small island developing State for training more than 100 Solomon Islands medical students. To date, 44 doctors have graduated from medical schools in Cuba and are now back in the country. I thank Cuba for its solidarity and support to Solomon Islands.

Two months ago, Solomon Islands joined the international community in celebrating a new era of relations between Cuba and United States of America.

The restoration of relations, after 54 years, presents a new beginning for the United States to reconstruct its relations with Cuba, based on mutual respect for national sovereignty and the freedom of international trade and navigation. We welcome President Obama's progressive easing of restrictions on Cuba. However, more needs to be done. We call for the total lifting of the economic, commercial and financial embargo on Cuba, so as to normalize relations between the two States, which are a mere 90 miles apart.

The issue of climate change is for Solomon Islands, like other small island developing States and least developed countries (LDCs), an existential concern. It impacts everyone, but the poorest and marginalized populations often bear the greatest burden. It is imperative that the upcoming twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Paris in December, deliver an ambitious, comprehensive and robust climate-change agreement that is inclusive and leaves no one behind.

As ocean acidification increases, Solomon Islands tourism, fisheries and the livelihood of 85 per cent of our population have been put at risk. Sea-level rise has already led to land inundation, the loss of biodiversity, threats to food security and the resulting relocation of populations from low-lying islands to other parts of the country. Solomon Islands will be relocating its National Referral Hospital from its coastal location in Honiara, given the frequency and intensity of disasters threatening the entire infrastructure system.

In the past year, flash floods wiped out more than 9 per cent of Solomon Islands's gross domestic product. In 2015, we were hit by two cyclones, Chan-Hom and Raquel. Solomon Islands welcomes the participation of new development partners, namely, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, for their humanitarian assistance to our people this year. We very much thank them. Coming from a disaster-prone region, we look forward to the World Humanitarian Summit, which is to be held in Istanbul next year. We hope the world will come together and create a new playing field to build a resilient and environmentally responsible community operating within safe limits for the planet.

Cognizant of the fact that success is founded on partnerships, the Solomon Islands Government is seeking deepened, expanded and results-oriented partnerships in the areas of economic infrastructure, hydroelectric and geothermal energy, agriculture,

forestry and fisheries so as to kick-start sustainable development for our rural population in accordance with the SDGs.

The leaders of the Pacific small island developing States at the Pacific Islands Development Forum Leaders' Summit, held in September in Suva, Fiji, issued the Suva Declaration on Climate Change, calling for the coming Paris agreement to be legally binding, with a call for the global average temperature increase limit to be well below 1.5°C. The Declaration further calls for loss and damage to be anchored as a stand-alone chapter in the agreement, and for strong mitigation commitments in the agreement that must be espoused.

It is not far from reality to say that SIDS and LDCs, such as Solomon Islands, are the front-line States when it comes to bearing the brunt of the negative impacts of existential issues such as climate change. We are concerned that the slow progress in the climate negotiations will cause uncertainties and possibilities for a climate-change-induced situation that could trigger conflicts. That uncertainty prompts Solomon Islands to seek a seat in the Security Council for the period 2031-2032, which will be one year after we have completed and taken stock of the 2030 Agenda.

Solomon Islands supports reform of the Security Council and calls for a SIDS-dedicated seat in an expanded Security Council. That is needed in order to ensure that SIDS security issues are meaningfully addressed in the Council. The Council will need to adapt to the ever-changing realities that we face in our world. We are pleased with the progress achieved in the negotiations on reforming the Council thus far.

On the issue of gender, Solomon Islands's three-year term on the UN-Women Executive Board comes to an end this year. We leave the Board with our Strategic Plan 2014-2017. Unfortunately, UN-Women's work programme remains underresourced, and we therefore call on Member States to support that work. The 20-year-old Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remains a source of guidance and inspiration on gender equality and gender empowerment. Solomon Islands remains committed to the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Platform, which should enable the realization of the gender-related Goals and targets under the SDGs.

In 2009, Solomon Islands, as an archipelagic State, lodged four continental shelf claims with the United

Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. One of those claims is a joint submission with the Federated States of Micronesia and Papua New Guinea on the Ontong Java Plateau. That submission is currently being examined by a United Nations subcommission of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. The next session between the States and the subcommission is scheduled for this month, and we hope that negotiations will bring about an amicable solution for all parties concerned.

Solomon Islands, as a close friend of the Republic of China/Taiwan, continues to call for the Republic of China on Taiwan's meaningful participation in our United Nations specialized bodies. The Republic of China on Taiwan continues to take on international obligations with regard to climate change and aviation. The Republic of China on Taiwan, which is among the largest economies in the world, needs to be part of the global solution in the various international frameworks. The international community must welcome the interest of the Republic of China on Taiwan in participating fully as equals in the proceedings of the International Civil Aviation Organization and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The Solomon Islands has benefited from the Republic of China or Taiwan's partnership with us on the Millennium Development Goals, and we will enhance our bilateral cooperation with the Republic of China on Taiwan under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). The Sustainable Development Goals are universal in nature, and we expect our friend and partner to join the world in helping to eradicate poverty and to heal the declining health of our planet.

In closing, I would like to state that the Solomon Islands supports multilateralism with continued integrity, courage and strength, which will give our people a message of hope, optimism and a positive future.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands for the statement he had just made.

Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.