



# General Assembly

Seventy-eighth session

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New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Francis . . . . . (Trinidad and Tobago)

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

## Agenda item 110

### Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/78/1)

**The President:** Before proceeding to the general debate, as announced in *The Journal of the United Nations*, the General Assembly will hear an introduction by the Secretary-General of his annual report (A/78/1) on the work of the Organization, under agenda item 110, in accordance with the resolution 51/241.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres.

**The Secretary-General:** Just nine days ago, many of the world's challenges coalesced in an awful hellscape. Thousands of people in Derna, Libya lost their lives in epic, unprecedented flooding. They were victims many times over: victims of years of conflict, victims of climate chaos, victims of leaders near and far who failed to find a way to peace.

The people of Derna lived and died in the epicentre of that indifference, as the skies unleashed 100 times the monthly rainfall in 24 hours, as dams broke after years of war and neglect, as everything they knew was wiped off the map. Even now, as we speak, bodies are washing ashore from the same Mediterranean Sea where billionaires sunbathe on their superyachts. Derna is a sad snapshot of the state of our world — the flood of inequity, of injustice, of inability to confront the challenges in our midst.

Our world is becoming unhinged. Geopolitical tensions are rising. Global challenges are mounting. And we seem incapable of coming together to respond. We confront a host of existential threats — from the climate crisis to disruptive technologies — and we do so at a time of chaotic transition.

For much of the Cold War, international relations were largely seen through the prism of two super-Powers. Then came a short period of unipolarity. Now we are rapidly moving towards a multipolar world. This is, in many ways, positive. It brings new opportunities for justice and balance in international relations. But multipolarity alone cannot guarantee peace. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Europe had numerous Powers. It was truly multipolar, but it lacked robust multilateral institutions. The result was the First World War.

A multipolar world needs strong and effective multilateral institutions. Yet global governance is stuck in time. Look no further than the Security Council and the Bretton Woods system. They reflect the political and economic realities of 1945, when many countries in this Assembly Hall were still under colonial domination. The world has changed. Our institutions have not. We cannot effectively address problems as they are if institutions do not reflect the world as it is. Instead of solving problems, they risk becoming part of the problem.

Indeed, divides are deepening — divides among economic and military Powers, divides between North and South, East and West.

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We are inching ever closer to a great fracture in economic and financial systems and trade relations — one that threatens a single, open Internet, with diverging strategies on technology and artificial intelligence and potentially clashing security frameworks.

It is high time to renew multilateral institutions based on twenty-first century economic and political realities rooted in equity, solidarity and universality and anchored in the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. That means reforming the Security Council in line with the world of today. It means redesigning the international financial architecture so that it becomes truly universal and serves as a global safety net for developing countries in trouble.

I have no illusions. Reforms are a question of power, and I know that there are many competing interests and agendas. But the alternative to reform is not the status quo, but further fragmentation. It is reform or rupture.

At the same time, divides are widening within countries. Democracy is under threat; authoritarianism is on the march; Inequalities are growing; and hate speech is on the rise. In the face of all those challenges and more, compromise has become a dirty word. Our world needs statesmanship, not gamesmanship and gridlock.

As I told the Group of 20 (G20), it is time for a global compromise. Politics is compromise; diplomacy is compromise; effective leadership is compromise. Leaders have a social responsibility to achieve compromise in building a common future of peace and prosperity for our common good.

Over the past year, we have shown the promise of multilateral action, with important new global agreements on safeguarding biodiversity, protecting the high seas, climate loss and damage and the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

We have all the tools and resources to solve our shared challenges. What we need is determination. Determination is in the DNA of our United Nations, summoning us with the first words of our Charter: “We the peoples of the United Nations determined” — determined to end the scourge of war, determined to reaffirm faith in human rights, determined to uphold justice and respect international law and determined to promote social progress and better lives for all people. It falls to us — through

our actions — to apply that determination to the challenges of today, being faithful to the Charter of the United Nations.

It starts with determination to uphold the Charter’s pledge for peace. Yet instead of ending the scourge of war, we are seeing a surge of conflicts, coups and chaos. If every country fulfilled its obligations under the Charter, the right to peace would be guaranteed. When countries break those pledges, they create a world of insecurity for everyone.

Take exhibit A — Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The war, in violation of the United Nations Charter and international law, has unleashed a nexus of horror: lives destroyed, human rights abused, families torn apart, children traumatized and hopes and dreams shattered.

But beyond Ukraine, the war has serious implications for us all. Nuclear threats put us all at risk. Ignoring global treaties and conventions makes us all less safe. And the poisoning of global diplomacy obstructs progress across the board. We must not relent in working for peace — a just peace in line with the United Nations Charter and international law.

And even while fighting rages, we must pursue every avenue to ease the suffering of civilians in Ukraine and beyond. The Black Sea Grain Initiative was one such avenue. The world badly needs Ukrainian food and Russian food and fertilizers to stabilize markets and guarantee food security. I will not give up on my efforts to make it happen.

Around the globe, old tensions fester while new risks emerge. Nuclear disarmament is at a standstill while countries develop new weapons and make new threats.

Across the Sahel, a series of coups is further destabilizing the region as terrorism is gaining ground. The Sudan is descending into full-scale civil war. Millions have fled and the country risks splitting apart. In the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, millions are displaced and gender-based violence is a horrific daily reality.

In Haiti, a country that suffered centuries of colonial exploitation is today overwhelmed by gang violence and still awaits international support. In Afghanistan, a staggering 70 per cent of the population needs humanitarian assistance, with the rights of women and girls systematically denied. In Myanmar,

brutal violence, worsening poverty and repression are crushing hopes for a return to democracy.

In the Middle East, escalating violence and bloodshed in the occupied Palestinian territory is taking a terrible toll on civilians. Unilateral actions are intensifying and undermining the possibility of a two-State solution — the only pathway to lasting peace and security for Palestinians and Israelis. Syria remains in ruins while peace remains remote.

Meanwhile, natural disasters are worsening the human-made disaster of conflict. In the face of those mounting crises, the global humanitarian system is on the verge of collapse. Needs are rising, and funding is drying up. Our humanitarian operations are being forced to make massive cuts. But if we do not feed the hungry, we are feeding conflict. I urge all countries to step up and fully fund our global humanitarian appeal.

The peace and security architecture is under unprecedented strain. That is why, in the context of the preparations for the Summit of the Future, we put forward ideas for the consideration of Member States for a New Agenda for Peace, based on the Charter and international law. It provides a unifying vision to address existing and new threats for a world in transition. It calls on States to recommit to a world free from nuclear weapons and to end the erosion of the nuclear disarmament and arms control regime. It bolsters prevention at the global level by maximizing the capacity and convening power of the United Nations and our good offices to bridge geopolitical divides. It bolsters prevention at the national level by linking actions for peace with progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It puts women's leadership and participation at the centre of decision-making and commits us to the eradication of all forms of violence against women. It calls for a broad-based reflection on peacekeeping to make it nimbler and more adaptable, with forward-looking transition and exit strategies from the start. And it supports peace enforcement action by regional organizations, notably the African Union, with clear Security Council mandates and predictable funding.

Determination for peace also requires new governance frameworks for emerging threats — from artificial intelligence to lethal autonomous weapons systems that function without human control.

Peace is inextricably linked to sustainable development. We see a familiar pattern around the

world — the closer a country is to conflict, the farther it is from the Sustainable Development Goals. The Charter calls on us to be determined in promoting social progress. In twenty-first century terms, that means achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Yet inequality defines our time — from cities where skyscrapers tower over slums to countries that are forced to choose between serving their people or servicing their debts. Today Africa spends more on debt interest than on health care. Yesterday's SDG Summit was about a global rescue plan to scale up support from billions to trillions.

The international financial architecture remains dysfunctional, outdated and unjust. The deep reforms that are needed will not happen overnight, but we can take determined steps now to help countries weather crises that have dramatically impacted them, such as the coronavirus disease pandemic. We can do that by urgently advancing the SDG stimulus of \$500 billion per year and relieving the financial burden on developing and emerging economies; scaling up development and climate financing, increasing the capital base and changing the business model of multilateral development banks; and ensuring effective debt-relief mechanisms and channelling emergency financial support towards those in greatest need.

We must be determined to tackle the most immediate threat to our future: our overheating planet. Climate change is not just a change in the weather. Climate change is changing life on our planet. It is affecting every aspect of our work. It is killing people and devastating communities. Around the world, we see not only accelerating temperatures but also an acceleration in sea-level rise, glaciers receding, deadly diseases spreading, the extinction of species and cities under threat. And that is only the beginning.

We have just survived the hottest days, months and summer on the books. Behind every broken record are broken economies, broken lives and whole nations at the breaking point. Every continent, region and country is feeling the heat. But I am not sure that all leaders are feeling that heat. Actions are falling abysmally short. There is still time to keep rising temperatures within the 1.5°C limit of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. But that requires drastic steps now — to cut greenhouse-gas emissions and ensure climate justice for those who did least to cause the crisis but are paying the highest price.

We have the receipts. The G20 countries are responsible for 80 per cent of greenhouse-gas emissions. They must lead. They must break their addiction to fossil fuels, stop new coal development and heed the International Energy Agency's findings that new oil and gas licensing by them is incompatible with keeping the 1.5°C limit alive. To stand a fighting chance of limiting global temperature rise, we must phase out coal, oil and gas in a fair and equitable way and massively boost renewables. That is the only path to affordable, renewable energy for all — and unfortunately, many in Africa still lack electricity.

The fossil fuel age has failed. If fossil fuel companies want to be part of the solution, they must lead the transition to renewable energy. No more dirty production. No more fake solutions. No more bankrolling climate denial. I have laid out a Climate Solidarity Pact, in which all big emitters are asked to make extra efforts to cut emissions and wealthier countries support emerging economies with the financing and technology to do so. For example, Africa has 60 per cent of the world's solar capacity but accounts for just 2 per cent of renewable investments.

I have also put forward an Acceleration Agenda, to supercharge those efforts. Developed countries must reach net-zero emissions as close as possible to 2040, and emerging economies as close as possible to 2050, in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. The immediate steps include putting an end to coal consumption by 2030 for the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and by 2040 for the rest of the world, putting an end to fossil fuel subsidies and putting a price on carbon emissions.

Developed countries must finally deliver the \$100 billion for developing country climate action, as promised, double adaptation financing by 2025, as promised, and replenish the Green Climate Fund, as promised. All countries must work to operationalize the loss-and-damage fund this year and ensure universal early-warning coverage by 2027.

Tomorrow I will welcome credible first movers and doers to our Climate Ambition Summit. And the twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is around the corner. Climate chaos is breaking new records, but we cannot afford the same old broken record of scapegoating and waiting for others to move first.

And to all those working, marching and championing real climate action, I want them to know that they are on the right side of history and that I stand with them. I will not give up this fight of our lives.

*(spoke in French)*

We must also be determined to honour the Charter of the United Nations commitment to fundamental human rights. Just four women signed our founding document. One look around the Hall shows that not enough has changed. "We, the peoples" does not mean "We, the men". Women are still waiting for equal opportunities and equal pay, equality under the law, and for their work to be valued and their opinions to be taken into account. Around the globe, women's rights — including sexual and reproductive rights — are being suppressed, and even rolled back, and their freedoms are being curtailed. In some countries women and girls are punished for wearing too many clothes, while in others they are punished for wearing too few.

Thanks to generations of women's rights activists, times are changing. On sports fields, in schools and in public squares, girls and women are challenging the patriarchy and winning. I stand with them. I entered this office with a commitment to ensuring gender parity at the United Nations. We have achieved that at the senior levels and are on track to do so across the United Nations system. Because gender equality is not the problem — gender equality is the solution. It is not a favour to women; it is fundamental to ensuring a better future for all.

We must be determined to answer the call to action to put human rights at the heart of our work. Seventy-five years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there has been enormous progress in some areas, from ending colonization and segregation to ensuring women's voting rights. But we have not achieved basic rights for all when 1.2 billion people still live in acute poverty and hunger is at levels not seen since 2005; when discrimination based on skin colour and ethnicity is perfectly legal in many countries; when people must risk death to seek a better life; when refugees, migrants and minorities are routinely demonized and hounded; when declaring one's gender identity or simply who one loves can lead to imprisonment or even execution; and when merely speaking out can lead to perilous consequences.

Human rights — along with political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights — are the key to



solving many of the world's interlinked problems. Laws to protect the vulnerable must be enacted and enforced, the targeting of minorities must stop, and human rights and human dignity must be at the centre of social, economic and migration policies. All Governments must fulfil the commitment they made in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

*(spoke in Spanish)*

We must also face up to the looming threats posed to human rights by new technologies. Generative artificial intelligence holds much promise, but it may also lead us to cross a Rubicon and into more danger than we can control. When I mentioned artificial intelligence (AI) in my General Assembly speech in 2017 (see A/72/PV.3), only two other leaders uttered the term. Now AI is on everyone's lips — a subject of both awe and fear. Even some of those who developed generative AI are calling for greater regulation.

But many of the dangers of digital technology are not looming — they are already here. The digital divide is inflaming inequalities. Hate speech, disinformation and conspiracy theories on social media platforms are spread and amplified by AI, undermining democracy and fuelling violence and conflict in real life. Online surveillance and data harvesting are enabling large-scale human rights abuses, and technology companies and Governments are far from finding solutions.

*(spoke in English)*

We must move fast and mend things. New technologies require new and innovative forms of governance, with input from experts building such technologies and from those monitoring its abuses. We also urgently need a global digital compact among Governments, regional organizations, the private sector and civil society in order to mitigate the risks of digital technologies and identify ways to harness their benefits for the good of humankind. Some have called for consideration of a new global entity on artificial intelligence that could provide a source of information and expertise for Member States. There are many different models inspired by such examples as the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Civil Aviation Organization and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The United Nations stands ready to host the global and inclusive discussions that are needed, depending on the decisions of Member States. To help advance the search for concrete governance solutions, I will appoint this month a high-

level advisory body on artificial intelligence, which will provide recommendations by the end of this year. Next year's Summit of the Future is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for making progress to deal with those new threats, in line with the vision of the United Nations Charter. Member States will decide how to move forward on the New Agenda for Peace, the global digital compact, reforms to the international financial architecture and many other proposals to address challenges and bring greater justice and equity to global governance.

The United Nations was created precisely for moments like this — moments of maximum danger and minimum agreement. We can and must use our tools in flexible and creative ways. Last month, we saw the dividends of determination off the coast of Yemen. Carrying 1 million barrels of oil, the decaying *FSO SAFER* supertanker was a ticking time bomb — a looming ecological disaster in the Red Sea. No one offered to solve the problem, and therefore the United Nations stepped in and brought the world together. We mobilized resources, assembled experts, navigated difficult negotiations and built trust. We have more work ahead and more resources are needed. Last month, however, the oil was successfully transferred from the *FSO SAFER*. That United Nations-led action saved the Red Sea. When no one else could or would, United Nations determination got the job done. Despite our long list of global challenges, that same spirit of determination can guide us forward. Let us be determined to heal divisions and forge peace, determined to uphold the dignity and worth of every person, determined to realize the Sustainable Development Goals and effectively leave no one behind and determined to reform multilateralism for the twenty-first century and come together for the common good.

**The President:** I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

## Agenda item 8

### General debate

**The President:** It is my honour and privilege, as President of the General Assembly, to welcome members to this Hall for the opening of the general debate of the seventy-eighth session. Allow me to acknowledge in our midst today several former Presidents of the General Assembly, including His Excellency Mr. Han Seung-soo, former Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea,

who served as President of the fifty-sixth session of the Assembly and who now sits as Chair of the Council of Presidents of the General Assembly. Together, this Assembly Hall and this rostrum stand as a living testament to multilateralism and the extraordinary role and compelling influence of the United Nations over the 75 years of its existence. It is a unique and truly global platform for debate, dialogue and problem-solving through multilateral diplomacy.

This year, our imperative is clear: to unite the nations and to be united in conviction of common purpose and in solidarity of joint action. Such a common, coordinated approach is needed now as much as at any point in our history. War, climate change, debt, energy and food crises, poverty and famine — those crises are directly impacting the lives and well-being of billions of people around the world. We are rolling back decades of hard-won development gains, and thereby condemning millions to lifelong intergenerational poverty and hardship. It is at times like these that we must search deep within to find our better selves and our common humanity that impel us to meet the moment. I therefore implore members to use this forum for that which it was intended. Let us listen and learn. Let us rebuild trust and reignite global solidarity. Let us find common ground to address the challenges we face. In the words of the late great Madeleine Albright, if the United Nations did not exist, we would have to invent it. We are fortunate, therefore, that it does indeed exist. Let us therefore make full and effective use of this unparalleled resource.

This message is all the more important in the light of the continued violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of a fellow Member of the United Nations, Ukraine. This horrendous war has unleashed untold suffering and destroyed countless families, communities and lives. Its cascading impacts have also spooked many developing countries in far-flung corners of the globe, unleashing acute shortages of essential commodities and triggering food insecurity and volatility in energy prices. It has even revived the unconscionable threat of nuclear war. We all want that war to end. It is an affront to everything that this Organization and the Charter of the United Nations stand for. We need just and sustainable peace in Ukraine and elsewhere in the world, in line with international law and the United Nations Charter.

Peace must also be given a chance in other parts of the globe, from Africa to the Middle East. With the

adoption of Agenda 2063, Africa spelled a clear path for the Africa we want, and the continent still has a great chance to cut a corner in consolidating democracy and good governance. However, the resurgence of coups in Africa is a regressive step and the root causes of such alarming trends must be carefully analysed and addressed.

I urge Member States to use this high-level week not to fan the flames of conflict and hostility but instead to opt for dialogue and diplomacy. We must remember that peace is an investment in our collective prosperity. I call on leaders to come together, abide by the Charter and support efforts to deliver a peaceful resolution to the war.

Yesterday we began our high-level week with the Sustainable Development Goals Summit. It offered a prime moment to take stock of our successes and failures in delivering the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Front and centre was the fact that 1.2 billion people are living in multidimensional poverty as of 2022. While some progress has been made on the Goals, the Summit is being convened in a context in which there have been unacceptable delays and rollbacks. Let me be clear — we do not have the luxury of excuses, or are we absolved of our responsibilities. The onus is on us, collectively, to make up for the lost momentum and work much harder in the remaining seven years to accelerate progress on that which we have promised to deliver. The commitment to action presented at the Summit should therefore be the tailwind that enables us to regain lost ground and supercharge implementation.

The SDG Summit was only the start of what is a full agenda during the high-level week. It naturally interlinks with the General Assembly's High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development — which is key to accelerating the financing impetus for the SDGs. The preparatory ministerial meeting for the Summit of the Future will help to launch the negotiations of a pact for the future, giving guidance on how to ensure that the United Nations is fit for purpose in the twenty-first century. It will give Member States the opportunity to come together and transform our shared future.

We will also convene three health-related high-level meetings — on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response; on universal health coverage and on tuberculosis — all of which offer us opportunities to better the lives of our global citizens. In addition, the Secretary-General's Climate Ambition Summit offers

a moment to build political ambition ahead of the twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in November. Tomorrow I will also join hands with several Heads of State and Government to convene a breakfast summit to address the existential threats posed by sea-level rise — an issue of significant concern to small island developing States, especially those in the Pacific region.

Allow me to pause here and reiterate my deepest condolences to the Governments and the peoples of Morocco and Libya. The twin disasters of earthquakes and flooding have left thousands dead and untold more suffering. It is my sincere hope that resources and relief can be expedited to support all those who now find themselves in desperate need. As a citizen of a climate-vulnerable region, I urge Member States to recognize the continued and escalating impacts of climate change — and to deliver real, transformative results. Let us work together to unlock the financing and resources required to support those who are most vulnerable through mitigation, adaptation and resilience-building, and let us continue to work on the multidimensional vulnerability index, with the aim of moving beyond the measurement of gross domestic product to a measure of economic development that effectively captures a country's true vulnerability to external shocks.

Beyond the high-level week, this year we will commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That is an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to the principles enshrined in the Declaration and remind ourselves that we are all born free and equal in dignity and in rights. As President of the seventy-eighth session, I am committed to championing vulnerable and marginalized groups, including indigenous peoples, persons living with disabilities and older persons. I have committed to ensuring that we do not continue to neglect countries in special situations, and I intend to soon launch a high-level advisory group on least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

However, first and foremost, we need to work for all women and girls, who, appallingly, are still struggling for equality and respect. We must walk the talk on gender equality and women's empowerment. That means according to women full, equal and meaningful participation at every level. As an international gender

champion myself, I am strongly committed to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, and I have appointed a special envoy and special adviser on gender equality and women's empowerment to assist me in that endeavour.

Before I conclude, allow me to emphasize that, in spite of the many and complex challenges we face, we do have the capacity to effect change — consequential change. We can make a meaningful difference in the lives of billions of people if we so choose. We do not lack capacity. What we lack is the will to act. By putting aside our differences and bridging divides, we can deliver — we must deliver — peace, progress, prosperity and sustainability to everyone, everywhere. Therefore, let us step up and take action now. Let us reenergize the General Assembly and demonstrate our capacity and our will to deliver for all.

In the words of Steven Pressfield, an author born in Trinidad and Tobago:

“The most pernicious aspect of procrastination is that it can become a habit. We don't just put off our lives today; we put them off till our deathbed. Never forget: This very moment, we can change our lives. There never was a moment, and never will be, when we are without the power to alter our destiny. This second, we can turn the tables on Resistance. This second, we can sit down and do our work”.

I thank members once again for their support to me and my presidency, and I wish all participants a fruitful, productive, and healthy debate in the coming days.

Before giving the floor to the first speaker in this morning's general debate, I would like to remind members that the list of speakers has been established on the agreed basis that statements should be no longer than 15 minutes to enable all speakers to be heard at a given meeting. Within that time frame, I would like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a reasonable pace, so that interpretation into the other official United Nations languages may be provided properly. I would also like to draw the attention of members to the decision taken by the General Assembly at previous sessions, namely, that the practice of expressing congratulations in the General Assembly Hall after a speech has been delivered is strongly discouraged.

After delivering their statements from the rostrum, speakers are invited to exit the General Assembly Hall

through Room GA-200, located behind the rostrum, before returning to their seats.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to proceed in this manner?

*It was so decided.*

**The President:** Finally, I should like to inform members that, during the general debate, official photographs of all of the speakers will be taken by the Department of Global Communications. Members interested in obtaining those photographs are requested to contact the United Nations Photo Library.

**Address by Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva,  
President of the Federative Republic of Brazil**

**The President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

*Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Lula da Silva** (*spoke in Portuguese; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I would like to greet the President of the General Assembly, Ambassador Dennis Francis of Trinidad and Tobago. It is also a great pleasure to be preceded by Secretary-General António Guterres. I acknowledge all the Heads of State and Government and representatives present. I pay tribute to our compatriot Sergio Vieira de Mello and the 21 other staff members of the Organization who fell victim to the brutal attack in Baghdad 20 years ago. I also would also like to express my condolences to the victims of the earthquake in Morocco and the storms that struck Libya. Like the recent events in the state of Rio Grande do Sul in my country, those tragedies have claimed lives and caused irreparable losses. Our thoughts and prayers are with all the victims and their families.

Exactly 20 years ago, I stood at this rostrum for the first time and said, on 23 September 2003,

“Let my first words before this world parliament be of confidence in the human capacity to overcome

challenges and to move towards higher forms of partnership” (A/58/PV.7, p.5).

I return today to say that I maintain my unshakable trust in humankind. At that time, the world had not yet realized the severity of the climate crisis. Today it is at our doorstep, destroying our homes, cities and countries, killing people and causes losses and suffering for our brothers, especially the poorest.

Hunger — the central theme of my statement at this world parliament 20 years ago — today affects 735 million human beings, who will go to sleep tonight without knowing if they will have anything to eat tomorrow. The world is increasingly unequal. The 10 richest billionaires have more wealth than the poorest 40 per cent of humankind. The destiny of every child born on the planet seems to be decided while they are still in their mother’s womb. The part of the world where their parents live and the social class to which their family belongs will determine whether or not they will have opportunities throughout their life; whether they will eat at every meal or they will be denied the right to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner every day; whether they will have access to health care or they will succumb to diseases that could have already been eradicated; whether they will finish school and get a decent job or they will be numbered among the countless unemployed, underemployed and discouraged people. First of all, we must overcome our resignation, which makes us accept such unfairness as a natural phenomenon. There is a lack of political on the part of those who govern the world to overcome inequality.

If today I have returned in the honourable capacity as President of Brazil, it is thanks to the victory won through democracy in my country. Democracy ensured that we overcame hate, misinformation and oppression. Hope, once again, has won over fear. Our mission is to ignite Brazil and rebuild a sovereign, fair, sustainable, supportive, generous and joyful country with solidarity. Brazil has once again found its place within our region, the world and multilateralism. As I never tire of repeating, Brazil is back. Our country is back to make its rightful contributions to facing the major global challenges. We have reclaimed our foreign policy’s universalism, marked by respectful dialogue with everyone. The international community has been immersed in a flood of multiple and simultaneous crises. The coronavirus disease pandemic, the climate crisis and food and energy insecurity have been amplified by growing geopolitical tensions. Racism,



intolerance and xenophobia have spread, encouraged by new technologies that were created supposedly to bring us closer together. If we had to summarize those challenges in a single word, it would be “inequality”. Inequality is at the root of those phenomena and serves to aggravate them.

The United Nations broadest and most ambitious collective action aimed at development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, could turn into its greatest failure. We have reached the mid-point of the implementation period and are still far from achieving its defined goals. Most of the Sustainable Development Goals are moving at a slow place. The moral and political imperative of eradicating poverty and ending hunger appears to have been numbed. In the seven years that we have left, reducing inequalities within and among countries should become the core objective of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Reducing inequalities within countries requires providing for the poor in Government budgets and making the rich pay taxes that are proportional to their wealth. In Brazil, we are committed to implementing all 17 Sustainable Development Goals in an integrated and indivisible manner. We want to achieve racial equality in Brazilian society through an eighteenth goal, which we will voluntarily adopt.

We launched the Brazil zero-hunger programme, which will bring together a series of initiatives to reduce poverty and food insecurity, including the Bolsa Familia Programme, which has become a global reference for income transfer programmes for families who keep their children vaccinated and in school. Inspired by Brazilian Bertha Lutz, a pioneer in and advocate for gender equality and the Charter of the United Nations, we have adopted a bill that makes equal pay between women and men mandatory when they perform the same roles. We will fight femicide and all forms of violence against women. We will strongly advocate for the rights of LGBTQI+ groups and people with disabilities. We have revived social participatory practices as a strategic tool for implementing public policies.

Taking action against climate change involves thinking about tomorrow and facing historical inequalities. Rich countries grew, based on a model with high rates of climate-damaging emissions. The climate emergency makes it urgent to correct course and implement what has already been agreed. There is no other reason why we speak of common but differentiated responsibilities. It is the vulnerable

populations in the global South who are most affected by the loss and damage caused by climate change.

The richest 10 per cent of the world’s population is responsible for almost half of all carbon that is released into the atmosphere. We, the developing countries, do not want to repeat that model. In Brazil, we have already proved once and will prove again that a socially fair and environmentally sustainable model is possible. We are at the forefront of an energy transition, and our matrix is already one of the cleanest in the world. Some 87 per cent of our electrical power comes from clean and renewable sources. Solar, wind, biomass, ethanol and biodiesel power generation is growing every year. The potential for generating green hydrogen is immense. With the ecological transformation plan, we will invest in sustainable industrialization and sustainable infrastructure. We have renewed the sound Amazon Agenda with oversight actions aimed at combating environmental crime.

Over the past eight months, deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon has already been reduced by 48 per cent. The entire world has always talked about the Amazon, and now the Amazon is speaking for itself. A month ago, we hosted the Belém Summit meeting in the heart of the Amazon and launched a new collaboration agenda among countries that are part of that biome. There are 50 million South Americans living in the Amazon whose future depends on the decisive coordination and action by the countries that hold sovereignty over the region’s territories.

We also have continued our dialogue with other countries that have tropical forests in Africa and Asia. We want to arrive at the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Dubai, with a joint vision that reflects, without any coaching, priorities for preserving the Amazon, the Congo and Borneo-Mekong basins, based on our needs.

Without mobilizing financial and technological resources, there is no way to implement what we decided in the Paris Agreement and the global biodiversity framework. The promise to allocate \$100 billion annually to developing countries remains just that — a promise. Today that amount would be insufficient for the demand, which already reaches trillions of dollars.

The principle on which multilateralism is based — that of the sovereign equality of nations — is being eroded. At the main global governance levels,

negotiations in which all countries have a voice and vote have lost momentum. When institutions reproduce inequalities, they are part of the problem, not the solution.

Last year, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) made available \$160 billion in special drawing rights to European countries and just \$34 billion to African countries. The unequal and distorted representation of the management of the IMF and the World Bank is unacceptable. We have not corrected the excesses of market deregulation and support for the ideology of the minimum state. The foundations of a new economic governance have not been laid. The Brazil, Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) group was the result of that paralysis and constitutes a strategic platform to promote cooperation among emerging countries.

The recent expansion of the group at the Johannesburg summit meeting strengthens the fight for an order that accommodates the economic, geographical and political plurality of the twenty-first century. We are a force that works towards fairer global trade in the context of a serious crisis of multilateralism. The rich countries' protectionism has gained strength, and the World Trade Organization remains paralysed, in particular its dispute-settlement system. No one remembers the Doha Development Round anymore. Meanwhile, unemployment and precarious work have been undermining people's confidence in better times, especially the youth.

Governments must stem the increase in dissonance between the voice of the markets and the voice of the streets. Neoliberalism has aggravated the economic and political inequality that plagues democracies today. Its legacy is a mass of disenfranchised and excluded people. Amid the wreck, far-right adventurers emerge, who deny politics and sell solutions that are as easy as they are wrong. Many have fallen to the temptation of replacing failed neoliberalism with primitive, conservative and authoritarian nationalism.

We reject an agenda that uses immigrants as scapegoats, undermines the welfare State and attacks workers' rights. We need to reclaim the best humanist traditions that inspired the creation of the United Nations. Active inclusion policies at the cultural, educational and digital levels are fundamental for promoting democratic values and defending the rule of law.

Preserving press freedom is essential. A journalist such as Julian Assange cannot be punished for informing society in a transparent and legitimate way. Our fight is against misinformation and cybercrime. Applications and platforms should not abolish the labour laws for which we fought so hard. Upon assuming the presidency of the Group of 20 next December, we will spare no effort to place the fight against inequality in all its dimensions at the core of the international agenda. Under the motto, "Building a just world and a sustainable planet", the Brazilian presidency will coordinate social inclusion, combat hunger and promote sustainable development and the reform of global governance institutions.

There will be no sustainability or prosperity without peace. Armed conflicts are an offence to human rationality. We know the horrors and suffering caused by all wars. Promoting a culture of peace is a duty for all of us. Building it requires persistence and vigilance. It is disturbing to see that old, unresolved disputes persist and that new threats emerge or gain force. The difficulty of guaranteeing the creation of a State for the Palestinian people clearly shows that, not to mention the persistent humanitarian crisis in Haiti, the conflict in Yemen, threats to Libyan national unity and institutional ruptures in Burkina Faso, Gabon, Guinea-Conakry, Mali, the Niger and the Sudan. In Guatemala, there is a risk of a coup d'état, which would prevent the winner of the democratic elections from taking office.

The war in Ukraine exposes our collective inability to enforce the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We do not underestimate the difficulties of achieving peace, but no solution will be lasting if it is not based on dialogue. I have reiterated that work needs to be done to create space for negotiations.

Much is invested in weapons, and very little in development. Last year, military spending totalled more than \$2 trillion. Expenditures on nuclear weapons reached \$83 billion — a value 20 times higher than the regular United Nations budget. Stability and security will not be achieved where there is social exclusion and inequality. The United Nations was born to be the home of understanding and dialogue. The international community must choose: on the one hand, there is the expansion of conflicts, the furthering of inequalities and the erosion of the rule of law; on the other, there is the renewal of multilateral institutions dedicated to promoting peace.

Unilateral sanctions cause great harm to the populations of affected countries. In addition to not achieving their alleged goals, unilateral sanctions hinder mediation and prevention processes and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Brazil will continue to reject measures taken without the support of the Charter of the United Nations, such as the economic and financial embargo imposed on Cuba and the attempt to classify that country as a State sponsor of terrorism. We shall continue to criticize any attempt to divide the world into zones of influence and revive the Cold War.

The Security Council has been progressively losing its credibility. Its frailty is the specific result of the actions of its permanent members who wage unauthorized wars aimed at territorial expansion or regime change. The Council's paralysis is the most eloquent proof of the urgent need to reform it, which will bring it greater representation and efficacy.

Inequalities need to inspire outrage — outrage over hunger, poverty, war and disrespect for human beings. Moved by the power of outrage, we may act willingly and unwaveringly in the fight against inequality and effectively transform the world around us. The United Nations needs to fulfil its role as a builder of a world with greater solidarity, fraternity and fairness, but it can do so only if its members have the courage to proclaim their discontent at inequality and work tirelessly to overcome it.

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

*Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Address by Mr. Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the United States of America**

**The President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United States of America.

*Mr. Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the United States of America, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the United States of America, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Biden:** About one week ago, I stood on the other side of the world in Viet Nam, on soil once bloody with war. I met a small group of veterans — Americans and Vietnamese — whom I watched exchange personal artifacts from that war: identification cards and a diary. It was deeply moving to see the reaction of the Vietnamese and American soldiers. It was the culmination of 50 years of hard work on both sides to address the painful legacies of war and to choose to work together towards peace and a better future.

Nothing about that journey was inevitable. For decades, it would have been unthinkable for an American President to stand in Hanoi alongside a Vietnamese leader and announce a mutual commitment to the highest level of a partnership between countries. But it is a powerful reminder that our history need not dictate our future. With concerted leadership and careful effort, adversaries can become partners. Overwhelming challenges can be resolved. And deep wounds can heal. Let us never forget that. When we choose to stand together and recognize the common hopes that bind all of humankind, we hold in our hands the power to bend that arc of history.

We gather once more at an inflection point in world history. But the eyes of the world are upon all of us. As President of the United States, I understand the duty my country has to lead in this critical moment and to work with countries in every region, linking them in a common cause, and to join together with partners who share a common vision of the future of the world — in which our children do not go hungry and everyone has access to quality health care, workers are empowered and our environment is protected, entrepreneurs and innovators everywhere can access opportunity everywhere and conflicts are resolved peacefully and countries can chart their own course. The United States seeks a more secure, more prosperous, more equitable world for all people because we know that all our futures are bound together. Let me repeat that: we know that all our futures are bound together, and no nation can meet the challenges of today alone.

The generations that preceded us organized this body, the United Nations, and built international financial institutions and multilateral and regional bodies to help to take on the challenges of their time. It was not always perfect, but working together, the world made some remarkable and undeniable progress and improved the lives of all people. We avoided the renewal of global conflict, while lifting more than 1 billion

people out of extreme poverty. We, together, expanded access to education for millions of children. We saved tens of millions of lives that would have otherwise been lost to preventable and treatable diseases such as measles, malaria and tuberculosis. HIV/AIDS infections and deaths plummeted in no small part because of the work of the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief in more than 55 countries, saving more than 25 million lives. It is a profound testament to what we can achieve when we act together, when we take on tough challenges, and an admonition for all of us to urgently accelerate our progress so that no one is left behind because too many people are being left behind.

The institutions we built together at the end of the Second World War are an enduring bedrock of our progress, and the United States is committed to sustaining them. This year, we are proud to rejoin UNESCO. We also recognize that, to meet the new challenges, our decades-old institutions and approaches must be updated to keep peace in the world. We have to bring in more leadership and capability, which exists everywhere, especially from the regions that not have not always been fully included. We have to grapple with challenges that are more connected and more complex. And we have to make sure we are delivering for people everywhere, not just people somewhere.

Simply put, twenty-first century results are badly needed to move us along. That starts with the United Nations. That starts right here in this Hall. In my address to this body last year (see A/77/PV.6), I announced that the United States would support expanding the Security Council by increasing the number of permanent and non-permanent members. The United States has undertaken serious consultations with many Member States and will continue to do its part to push more reform efforts forward, look for points of common ground and make progress in the year ahead. We need to be able to break the gridlock that too often stymies progress and blocks consensus in the Council. We need more voices and more perspectives at the table.

The United Nations must continue to preserve peace, prevent conflict and alleviate human suffering. We embrace nations stepping up to lead in new ways and to seek new breakthroughs on hard issues. For example, on Haiti, the Caribbean Community has facilitated a dialogue among Haitian society. I thank President Ruto of Kenya for his willingness to serve as the lead nation of a United Nations-backed security support mission. I

call on the Security Council to authorize that mission now. The people of Haiti cannot wait much longer.

The United States is working across the board to make global institutions more responsive, more effective and more inclusive. For example, we have taken significant steps to reform and scale up the World Bank, expanding its financing to low- and middle-income countries so it can help to boost progress towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goals and better address interconnected challenges such as climate change and fragility.

Under the new President of the World Bank, change is already taking root. Last month, I asked the United States Congress for additional funds to expand World Bank financing by \$25 billion. At the Group of 20 (G20), we rallied the major economies of the world to mobilize even more funding. Collectively, we can deliver a transformational boost to World Bank lending. And because the multilateral development banks are among the best tools we have for mobilizing transparent high-quality investment in developing countries, reforming those institutions can be a game-changer.

Similarly, we proposed making sure developing countries have a strong voice and representation at the International Monetary Fund. We are going to continue our efforts to reform the World Trade Organization and preserve competition, openness, transparency and the rule of law, while at the same time equipping it to better tackle modern-day imperatives such as driving a clean energy transition, protecting workers and promoting inclusive and sustainable growth. And this month, we strengthened the G20 as a vital forum, welcoming the African Union as a permanent member.

However, upgrading and strengthening our institutions is only half the picture. We must also forge new partnerships and confront new challenges. Emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, hold both enormous potential and enormous peril. We need to be sure they are used as tools of opportunity, not as weapons of oppression. Together with leaders around the world, the United States is working to strengthen rules and policies so artificial intelligence technologies are safe before they are released to the public to make sure we govern the technology, not the other way around — having it govern us. I am committed to working through this institution and other international bodies and directly with leaders around the world, including our competitors, to ensure



we harness the power of artificial intelligence for good while protecting our citizens from its most profound risk. It is going to take all of us. I have been working at this for a while, as many Member States have. It is going to take all of us to get this right.

In every region of the world, the United States is mobilizing strong alliances, versatile partnerships, common purpose and collective action to bring new approaches to our shared challenges. In the western hemisphere, we united 21 nations in support of the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection, launching a region-wide approach to a region-wide challenge to better uphold laws and protect the rights of migrants.

In the Indo-Pacific, we have elevated our Quad partnership with India, Japan and Australia to deliver concrete progress for the people of the region on everything from vaccines to maritime security. Just yesterday, after two consultations in diplomacy, the United States brought together dozens of nations across four continents to establish a new partnership for Atlantic cooperation, so that the coastal Atlantic countries can better cooperate on science, technology, environmental protection and sustainable economic development. We brought together nearly 100 countries in a global coalition to counter fentanyl and synthetic drugs to reduce the human cost of that affliction, and it is real.

As the nature of the terrorist threats evolves and the geography expands to new places, we are working with our partners to bring capabilities to bear, to disrupt plotting, degrade networks and protect all our people. Additionally, we convened the Summit for Democracy to strengthen democratic institutions, root out corruption and reject political violence. In this moment, in which democratically elected Governments have been toppled in quick succession in West and Central Africa, we are reminded that this work is as urgent and important as ever. We stand with the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and other regional bodies to support constitutional rule. We will not retreat on the values that make us strong. We will defend democracy — our best tool to meet the challenge that we face around the world. And we are working to show how democracy can deliver in ways that matter to people's lives.

The Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment addresses the enormous need and

opportunity for infrastructure investment in low- and middle-income countries, particularly in Africa, Latin America and South-East Asia, through strategic targeted public investments. We can unlock enormous amounts of private sector financing. The Group of Seven has pledged to work with parties to collectively mobilize \$600 billion in infrastructure financing by 2027. The United States has already mobilized more than \$30 billion to date. We are creating a race to the top, with projects that have high standards for workers, the environment and intellectual property, while avoiding the trap of unsustainable debt. We are focusing on economic corridors that will maximize the impact of our collective investments and deliver consequential results across multiple countries and multiple sectors.

For example, the Lobito corridor will extend across Africa — from the western port of Angola, to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to Zambia — boosting regional connectivity and strengthening commerce and food security in Africa. Similarly, the groundbreaking effort we announced at the G20 to connect India to Europe through the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Israel will spur opportunities for investment across two continents.

That is part of our effort to build a more sustainable, integrated Middle East. It demonstrates how Israel's greater normalization and economic connection with its neighbours is delivering positive and practical impacts, even as we continue to work tirelessly to support a just and lasting peace between the Israelis and Palestinians, with two States for two peoples. Now let me be clear — none of these partnerships are about containing any country; they are about a positive vision for our shared future.

When it comes to China, I want to be clear and consistent. We seek to responsibly manage the competition between our countries so that it does not tip into conflict. As I have said before, we are for de-risking, not decoupling with China. We will push back on aggression and intimidation and defend the rules of the road — from freedom of navigation to overflight, to a level economic playing field, which have helped safeguard security and prosperity for decades — but we also stand ready to work together with China on issues where progress hinges on our common efforts.

Nowhere is that more critical than the accelerating climate crisis. We see it everywhere — record-breaking heat waves in the United States and China, wildfires

ravaging North America and southern Europe, a fifth year of drought in the Horn of Africa and tragic flooding in Libya that has killed many thousands of people. My heart goes out to the people of Libya. Together, those snapshots tell an urgent story of what awaits us if we fail to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and do not begin to climate-proof the world. From day one, my United States Administration has treated this crisis as an existential threat, from the moment we took office — not for us only, but for all of humankind.

Last year I signed into law in the United States the largest investment ever and anywhere in the history of the world — to combat the climate crisis and help move the global economy towards a clean energy future. We are also working with the Congress to quadruple our climate financing in order to help developing countries reach their climate goals and adapt to climate impacts. And this year, the world is on track to meet the climate finance pledge made, collectively, under the Paris Agreement — to raise \$100 billion.

But we need more investment from the public and private sector alike, especially in places that have contributed so little to global emissions, but face some of the worst effects of climate change, like the Pacific Islands. The United States is working directly with the Pacific Island Forum to help those nations adapt and build resilience to the climate impact, even as we lead the effort to build innovative new partnerships that attack the global challenges from all sides. Those range from the First Movers Coalition, which is mobilizing billions of dollars in private sector commitments to create a market demand for green products in carbon-intensive sectors like concrete, shipping, aviation and trucking; to the Agricultural Innovation Mission for Climate, which is bringing farmers into the climate solution and making our food supply more resilient to climate shocks; to the Global Methane Pledge, now endorsed by more than 150 countries, which expands our focus beyond our carbon emission targets to reduce the potential greenhouse gases in our atmosphere by 30 per cent in this decade. It is all within our capacity.

We need to bring that same commitment, urgency and ambition as we work together to meet the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Those Goals were adopted at the United Nations in 2015 (resolution 70/1) as a road map for improving lives around the world. But the hard truth is that for decades of progress, the world has lost ground these past years, in the wake of the coronavirus disease pandemic, conflicts and other crises.

The United States is committing to doing its part to get us back on track. All told, in the first two years of my Administration, the United States has invested more than \$100 billion to drive development progress and bolster food security, expanding access to education worldwide, strengthening health-care systems and fighting disease, and we have helped mobilize billions more in private sector investments.

But to accelerate our forward progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, we all have to do more. We need to build new partnerships that change the way we tackle this challenge in order to unlock trillions of additional financing for development, drawing on all sources. We need to fill the gaps and address the failures of our existing system, exposed by the pandemic. We need to ensure that women and girls benefit fully from our progress. We must also do more to grapple with the debt that holds back so many low- and middle-income countries. When nations are forced to service unsustainable debt payments over the needs of their own people, it makes it harder for them to invest in their own futures. And as we work together to recover from global shocks, the United States will also continue to be the largest single community donor country of humanitarian assistance at this moment of unparalleled need in the world.

Cooperation and partnership are the keys to progress on the challenges that affect us all, and the baseline for responsible global leadership. We do not need to agree on everything to keep moving forward on issues like arms control, the cornerstone of international security. After more than 50 years of progress under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Russia is shredding long-standing arms control agreements, including announcing the suspension of the New START Treaty and withdrawing from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. I view it as irresponsible; it makes the entire world less safe. The United States is going to continue to pursue good-faith efforts to reduce the threat of weapons of mass destruction and lead by example, no matter what else is happening in the world.

This year we safely destroyed the last chemical-munitions stockpile in the United States, fulfilling our commitment towards a world free of chemical weapons.

We condemn the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's continued violation of Security Council

resolutions, but we are committed to diplomacy to bring about the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

We are working with our partners to address Iran's destabilizing activities, which threaten regional and global security, and remain steadfast in our commitment that Iran must never acquire a nuclear weapon.

Even as we evolve our institutions and drive creative new partnerships, let me be clear. Certain principles in our international system are sacrosanct — sovereignty, territorial integrity and human rights. Those are the core tenets of the Charter of the United Nations, the pillars for peaceful relations among nations, without which we cannot achieve any of our goals. That has not changed, and that must not change.

Yet, for the second year in a row, this gathering, dedicated to the peaceful resolution of conflicts, is darkened by the shadow of war — an illegal war of conquest brought, without provocation, by Russia against its neighbour, Ukraine. Like every nation in the world, the United States wants this war to end. No nation wants this war to end more than Ukraine. And we strongly support Ukraine in its efforts to bring about a diplomatic resolution that delivers just and lasting peace. But Russia alone bears responsibility for this war. Russia alone has the power to end this war immediately. And it is Russia alone that stands in the way of peace because Russia's price for peace is Ukraine's capitulation, Ukraine's territory and Ukraine's children.

Russia believes that the world will grow weary and allow it to brutalize Ukraine without consequences. But let me ask the Assembly this. If we abandon the core principles of the United Nations to appease an aggressor, can any of the members of this body feel confident that they are protected? If we allow Ukraine to be carved up, is the independence of any nation secure? I would respectfully suggest that the answer is no. We have to stand up to that naked aggression today and deter other would-be aggressors tomorrow. That is why the United States, together with its allies and partners around the world, will continue to stand with the brave people of Ukraine as they defend their sovereignty, territorial integrity and freedom. It is an investment not only in Ukraine's future but in the future of every country that seeks a world governed by basic rules that apply equally to all nations and uphold the rights of every nation, no matter how big or how small. Sovereignty and territorial integrity are the fixed foundations of this

body and universal human rights are its North Star. We cannot sacrifice either of them.

Seventy-five years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights captured a remarkable act of collective hope — I repeat, a collective hope drafted by a committee representing different regions, faiths and philosophies, and adopted by the entire General Assembly. The rights contained in the Declaration are elemental and enduring, and while we still struggle to uphold equal and inalienable rights for all, they remain ever steady and true. We cannot turn away from abuses, whether in Xinjiang, Tehran, Darfur or anywhere else. We have to continue working to ensure that women and girls enjoy equal rights and equal participation in their societies; that indigenous groups, racial, ethnic and religious minorities and people with disabilities do not have their potential stifled by systemic discrimination; and that LGBTQI+ people are not prosecuted or targeted with violence because of who they are. Those rights are part of our shared humanity. They are absent when they are absent anywhere, and their loss is felt everywhere. They are essential to the advancement of the human progress that brings us together.

Let me end with this. At this inflection point in history, we are going to be judged by whether or not we live up to the promises we have made to ourselves, to each other, to the most vulnerable and to all who will inherit the world we create, because that is what we ourselves are doing. Will we find within ourselves the courage to do what must be done to preserve the planet, protect human dignity, provide opportunity for people everywhere and defend the tenets of the United Nations? There can be only one answer to that question. We must, and we will. The road ahead is long and difficult, but we can persevere and prevail if we keep the faith in ourselves and show what is possible. Let us do this work together. Let us deliver progress for everyone. Let us bend the arc of history for the good of the world, because it is in our power to do it.

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

*Mr. Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the United States of America, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

*The meeting was suspended at 11.45 a.m. and resumed at 11.50 a.m.*

### Address by Mr. Gustavo Petro Urrego, President of the Republic of Colombia

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

*Mr. Gustavo Petro Urrego, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Gustavo Petro Urrego, President of the Republic of Colombia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Petro Urrego** (*spoke in Spanish*): One week ago, I was in Santiago de Chile for the commemoration of the 50 years that had passed since the homicidal and bloody coup against President Salvador Allende. From there I went to my country, a poor neighbourhood of Medellín, where in the past the mafia would lure young people with the possibility of learning computer programming. I then went to Havana, an unjustly blockaded country whose inclusion on the list of terrorist-sponsoring countries for the simple reason of helping to make peace in Colombia was suggested and accomplished by the President of my country. And now I am here to address the General Assembly.

Over the year that has passed since my previous address at the United Nations (see A/77/PV.4), we have seen only a deepening of what the wealthy Davos meeting participants call a polycrisis. War continues. Hunger continues. The recession is increasing. And the climate crisis is showing its teeth, claiming thousands of lives and heating land and sea as never before. This has been a year of loss for humankind, which is hastening on and marching steadily towards the era of extinction. All those crises are in fact just one crisis: the crisis of life. It seems that world leaders have become the enemies of life. The crisis of life is being expressed in one devastating indicator. It began at the furthest corners of the Earth, far from the most remote regions. It is a silent march of people of different cultures who are mingling on their way like an infinitely nuanced painting. The colours are mixing together in an uncontainable stream. A multitude of all the colours is moving along trails and through the seas and jungles. They make a kind of work of art on the canvas of the Earth, a flow of tones, sounds, a mixture of clothes and cultures in an amalgam that remembers its beginnings.

It is an amalgam in a great march from the South to the North. The human exodus has begun.

Today there are tens of millions. Tomorrow — by 2070, according to scientific experts — the figure will have reached 3 billion. That is 3 billion people fleeing their beloved homes because those homes will be uninhabitable. In my homeland, Colombia, the country of beauty, the country of an explosion of life, only deserts will remain by 2070. The people will go to the North, no longer attracted by the glitter of wealth but by something simpler and more vital — water. Since the early stages of humankind, people have gone to where water is, to the North. Billions of people will defy armies and will change the Earth to do that. The exodus of the peoples to the North is an exact reflection of the dimension of the failure of Governments. This past year has been a time of defeat for Governments, a defeat for humankind. The exodus across borders has increased. Dogs and hounds have been set on immigrants. People have been put on horseback to pursue them, with whips in their hands, with restraints and chains. They have built prisons. So much has hatred grown for the foreign, the strange, that prisons have even been built at sea so that men and women of the South do not set foot on the land of white people, who still believe themselves to be a superior race and who, nostalgic for that, recall at their elections a leader who has even said so and who killed millions as a result.

The exodus has increased over this past year, showing how much the crisis of life is advancing. But while the clock ticks away the minutes that define life or death on our planet, instead of sitting down and taking the time to discuss how to defend life and then using our increased knowledge to expand life in our universe, we decide to waste our time killing one another. We are not thinking about how to expand life in the stars, but how to end it on our planet. We have devoted ourselves to war. We have been called to war. Latin America has been called on to deliver machinery and men to go to the battlefields. They forgot that our countries were invaded several times by the same people who today talk about fighting against invasions. They forgot that Iraq, Syria and Libya were invaded for oil. They forgot that the same reasons that are advanced to defend Zelenskyy are the same reasons that should be used to defend Palestine. They forgot that, to meet the Sustainable Development Goals, all wars must be brought to an end. But they helped to start one because it was convenient for world Powers in their game of



thrones, in their hunger games, and they forgot to end the other war because it was not convenient for them. What is the difference, I ask, between Ukraine and Palestine? Is it not time to end both wars, and others, and to make the most of the short time we have to build pathways to save life on the planet?

As President of Colombia, the country of beauty, whom a group within humankind — comprising millions of workers, women from working-class neighbourhoods, Indigenous and Black people, people from the countryside, young people of all colours — decided to elect and send to speak here before the Assembly, I propose to end the war so that we have time to save ourselves. I propose that the United Nations convene two peace conferences as soon as possible, one on Ukraine and the other on Palestine, not because there are no other wars in the world, as in my country, but because it would show how to build peace in all regions of the planet, because both — and only both — would put an end to hypocrisy as a political practice, because we could be sincere, a virtue without which we cannot be warriors for life. Today's generation must decide and act as soon as possible to overcome the enormous hurricane that has been unleashed against life, from the dark but powerful sewers of greed, from the hurricane of capital that only looks at profit and that has engulfed the planet and the very basis of existence. I propose that we end the war in order to defend life from the climate crisis, the mother of all crises. The Summit that we have just held was designed to assess the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, which were set by Governments for 2030. Well, it is easy to make that assessment. Those human development goals are not going to be achieved. We are far from achieving them — in fact, we have regressed. To give the United Nations human development goals a simpler name, I would call them social and environmental justice.

Humankind will not achieve social justice by 2030, because what has been sown on our planet is injustice. What we have seen happening in the past few years is injustice, the injustice of turning a vaccine against a deadly disease into a commodity by hoarding it in rich countries. Latin America — a mere 8 per cent of the world's population — accounted for 26 per cent of coronavirus disease deaths. Who said that health must be a business and not a right? Millions of elderly people and millions generally died because the vaccine was a commodity and not a good of humankind. Those rich countries have failed to deliver on their own promise

to finance climate change adaptation. They do not have \$100 billion to give to countries to protect them from floods, storms and hurricanes, but they do have it to spend in a single day to enable Russians and Ukrainians to kill each other. At this point we do not need \$100 billion — we need \$3 trillion to overcome the climate crisis, and the bill is rising with every second that passes on Earth.

Injustice has been sown, and by arresting peasant farmers who grow cannabis and coca leaf instead of addressing the loneliness faced by the young in the countries with the greatest economic and military power in the history of humankind, those young people have turned to fentanyl, the drug of death. Those countries wanted a war against the drugs of choice of the rebellious youth who opposed the Viet Nam War, the hippies' marijuana and LSD. They ended up leading their society to the drug of neoliberalism and competition, the drug of choice of Manhattan yuppies — cocaine — and locked up millions of blacks and Latinos in cold, privatized prisons. A million Latin Americans were murdered and democracies destroyed in our America. They never managed to jail the Manhattan yuppies, and now they are faced with the glorious result of drug prohibition, fentanyl, which kills not 4,000 but 100,000 young people a year in the United States.

Injustices were sown, with the worst of them all condemning humankind to war. That is why social justice in the world today is in such a bad state. The problem is that this was not a question of whether we might be socialists or progressives, but rather one of determining where the time left to live on the planet was going. As President of a land of beauty, I propose to the General Assembly that we do two simple things to make up for lost time — end the war and reform the global financial system. From the peace conferences on Ukraine and Palestine, we should go out and build the reform that we already discussed back there, in the Amazon jungle, where the largest river on Earth, which crosses the largest jungle on Earth, meets the sea. We have discussed it in Brasília, and we have been to Kenya to join our brother peoples of black Africa, from whence we came at a time of another great injustice perpetrated by the powerful — slavery. We have been to Paris to see if crowds are still clamouring for liberty, equality and fraternity, and we have been to Washington to talk to the President and see if the peoples of North and South America might come together again, remembering that

in days of old, more than two centuries ago, we met in history to talk about liberty, equality, democracy and the Republic. And we have talked in every tone of voice about getting to the root of the problem of and resolving the climate crisis.

If fossil capitalism is not financed, it will die. Its death throes will be harsh, but that is necessary if humankind, nature and life are to continue to exist. Decarbonized capitalism will have to be financed — we already know that green capital will move only where there is profit. That is its law, and that framework for covering the decarbonization of the entire world is a narrow one. Those in Government and power who still believe that the climate crisis, the crisis of life itself, can be overcome with a few affordable credits are mistaken. In their delusion, they propose that countries of the Earth that are already over-indebted by disease and greed can acquire more credits in order to overcome a problem created solely by the smokestacks of the North. But the crisis of life, the mega-crisis, cannot be overcome by acquiring more debt.

The financing of life is the intravenous medicine that must be infused into the veins of the economies and societies of the world to tackle the challenge of leaving coal and oil under the earth, in their places, which are the true veins of the Earth, as Roberto Cobaría, a Colombian Uwa indigenous person, told the world 30 years ago. In his words, extracting oil is drawing blood from the Earth, and doing it will cause life to perish. Most of the investment in decarbonizing the world's economy will come from public funds, from societal efforts, by bringing States together to bring humankind together — what is now known as multilateralism — to govern the Earth through the lens of democracy rather than the lens of empire. Empires excel not at saving life but at starting wars. The mega-crisis of life can be resolved through a democracy with global reach, a deeper democracy that should not hesitate to define States and societies and formulate a great Marshall Plan for the revitalization of the planet.

The market will help us somewhat, but we cannot ask a mechanism devoid of humanity for solutions to a problem that it created to begin with. Yes, private funds can help, but they will be limited by their own logic. It is public funds that will have to bear the brunt of the effort, and those funds are presently weakened by debt. The great battle of our generation, that of defending life for our children and grandchildren, can be fully financed only by the public sector, by all of

us — freeing the public sector to save life. Many may not like it, but we must let the echo of the public, of the State, of humankind, of multilateralism resound once more — that is to say, let the word “change” resound because it will be crucial if we are to save life. Saving life requires an era of change, and it is urgent.

Today change is synonymous with life. Today, in order to live, young people of all colours must bear the standard of change, of transformation, of a new humankind. It is democracy, not authoritarianisms, that increasingly resembles Nazis. It is world democracy, it is planning, it is the power of States, this time facing not war but how to plan life. It entails planning the transition to a decarbonized economy and financing it. The decarbonized economy, I have no doubt, will be a more humane and just economy. That is why the President of the land of beauty proposes that we reform the global financial system, the International Monetary Fund and the multilateral banking system, end economic blockades and channel private equity funds. If the debt of all countries were reduced by paying what is owed to the lenders through the allocation of special drawing rights by the IMF, there would be a decrease in global public debt and a real increase in public budgets and funds. In that way, we would be able to finance a Marshall Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals and for social and environmental justice on the planet, a plan to overcome, mitigate and adapt to the climate crisis, which is the crisis of life.

This would be to restore Keynes from oblivion. That wise old man, and other wise men before him, equally forgotten, had already said as much in the depth of their ideas. What a beautiful horizon amid the darkness and storms of today — a horizon that tastes of hope. The goals of life and justice can be reached on the path that leads to global democracy and the reassessment of the common good, achieved along a pathway that belongs to everyone. I want my baby grandchildren, Luna, Victoria and Luka, and my younger daughter, Antonella, to be able to live far from the apocalypse and the times of extinction. I want them to live in a time in which humans learned how to stop killing each other on the planet and, through the diversity of their cultures, succeeded in understanding each other and fulfilling their mission to spread the virus of life among the stars of the universe.

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

*Mr. Gustavo Petro Urrego, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan**

**The President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

*His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**King Abdullah:** When human catastrophes seem beyond description, we turn to the appalling statistics. This year, around the world, more than 345 million people face food insecurity, daily hunger or starvation. Among the most vulnerable are 108 million refugees, people who have been forcibly displaced from their homes and ways of life. And 40 per cent of those refugees are children, the most defenceless of all. Yet the numbers cannot really convey the tragedy or the failure. Refugees are our brothers and sisters. They look to our countries to help end the crises that have driven them from home. Refugees are mothers, fathers and grandparents, who have made perilous journeys to save their families. They are young people with big dreams and little children who deserve the chance to dream big. They depend on the international community for their survival, and multiple United Nations agencies provide vital services to help meet the need.

But in recent months, one by one, those agencies have been delivering difficult news. A severe shortfall in international funds has forced them to cut support. Is that what we have come to? Is the international community going to watch as refugee families find themselves forced to send their children to work instead of school? In Jordan, where refugees make up more than one third of our population of 11 million, cuts have already thrown the lives of hundreds of thousands of refugees into uncertainty. The impact of such humanitarian shortfalls is never limited to a country or region. Fear and want bring on sharp increases in the

number of refugees fleeing to Europe and beyond on journeys that too often end in tragedy.

Jordanians are serious about our duty to those in need. We have done everything we can to secure a dignified life for refugees. Nearly half of the almost 1.4 million Syrians whom we host are under 18 years of age. For many of them, Jordan is the only place they have ever known. More than 230,000 Syrian children have been born in Jordan since 2011. We are sharing precious resources to help them meet basic needs — food, energy and especially water. We are among the water-poorest countries in the world, even as our water supplies face extraordinary demand. And we face those pressures just when another crisis has hit our region: climate change, with its destructive heat waves, drought and flooding. And to meet the refugee burden, we have been carefully managing to combine our limited resources with essential support from the international community, because the responsibility to act falls on everyone's shoulders and the world cannot afford to walk away and leave a lost generation behind.

But today Jordan's capacity to deliver necessary services to refugees has surpassed our limits. The Syrian refugees' future is in their country, not in host countries. But until they are able to return, we must all do right by them. And the fact is that refugees are far from returning. On the contrary, more Syrians are likely to leave their country as the crisis persists. And Jordan will not have the ability or the resources to host and care for more.

We must find a political solution that is consistent with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) and the step-for-step approach, which offers a path forward. Proposed by Jordan as the basis for engagement with the Syrian Government and coordinated with the United Nations, that approach sets out a road map for incrementally resolving the crisis and dealing with all its consequences. Until then, we will protect our country against any future threats that the crisis could pose to our national security.

Jordan's case is a microcosm of our entire region. For all our peoples' immense potential, repeated crises have held back the promise of greater development and prosperity. Our region is a focal point, where some of the most urgent global challenges are converging. How will our world respond? Will we come together in global solidarity to get to the root of the problem — the conflicts and crises that destroy life and hope? Will we

work as one to rebuild the lost trust in international action and help those in want?

Our region will continue to suffer until the world helps lift the shadow of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the central issue in the Middle East. No architecture for regional security and development can stand over the burning ashes of that conflict. But seven and a half decades on, it still smoulders. Where are we going? Without clarity on where the future of the Palestinians lies, it will be impossible to converge on a political solution to the conflict. Five million Palestinians live under occupation — no civil rights, no freedom of mobility, no say in their own lives. Yet every United Nations resolution since the beginning of the conflict recognizes the equal right of the Palestinian people to a future of peace, dignity and hope. That is the heart of a two-State solution — the only path to comprehensive, lasting peace.

We can see the Israeli people actively defending and engaging in the expression of their national identity. Yet the Palestinian people are deprived of that same right to express and fulfil their own national identity. The basic requirement for that right is the establishment of their own independent and viable State on the 4 June 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living alongside Israel in peace, security and prosperity. Delaying justice and peace has brought endless cycles of violence — 2023 has been the deadliest for the Palestinian people in the past 15 years. How can people trust in global justice while settlement-building, land confiscations and home demolitions continue? Where is the global solidarity to make United Nations resolutions believable for people in need of our help?

Jerusalem is a flashpoint of global concern. Under the Hashemite custodianship of Islamic and Christian holy sites, Jordan remains committed to safeguarding the city's identity. But we all share the responsibility of preserving Jerusalem as the city of faith and peace for Islam, Christianity and Judaism. And we must not abandon Palestinian refugees to the forces of despair. Sustainable funding is urgently needed by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which provides vital relief, education and health services to millions of Palestinian refugees. It is essential to protecting families, keeping communities stable and preparing young people for productive lives. We must protect young Palestinians from extremists who prey on their frustrations and hopelessness by making sure that they continue to learn

at schools under the blue flag of the United Nations, because the alternative will be the black flags of terror, hate and extremism.

We come together here as partners to deal with our challenges and shape a better future. We speak here for our people. We speak for families and the younger generations. We speak for victims of conflict, displacement, hunger, climate-change disasters and more. They are not mere statistics. They are our fellow human beings, sharing our world. Only by restoring trust, only by acting in solidarity will we create the future that all our peoples desire and deserve. We cannot allow a lost generation on our watch.

**The President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for the statement he has just made.

*His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Address by Mr. Andrzej Duda, President of the Republic of Poland**

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

*Mr. Andrzej Duda, President of the Republic of Poland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Andrzej Duda, President of the Republic of Poland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Duda:** I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the honourable function of the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session, and to express Poland's full support for your mission and wishes for your every success in its fulfilment. At the same time, my thanks go to His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, in recognition of his active engagement while presiding over the work of the Assembly at its seventy-seventh session.

The representatives of 193 countries from every continent have gathered in New York at United Nations Headquarters to discuss the most important threats and challenges facing the world today. The Assembly's general debate is an extremely important event. It is the only place and our only opportunity to discuss in



person the crucial problems that affect us all. We are here because of the courageous and forward-looking decisions made by the leaders of the Western world during the darkest days of the Second World War. At the time, they pondered how to avoid similar tragedies in the future. The leaders of the United States and Great Britain, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill, and soon the other countries of the anti-Hitler coalition, including Poland, signed the Atlantic Charter. It contained the most important principles on which the post-war world order was to be based — the self-determination of nations, the inviolability of borders, the renunciation of violence, economic cooperation and human rights. The Atlantic Charter, together with the Washington Declaration, was the cornerstone in the building of the United Nations Organization.

Today it has once again befallen us to live in dangerous times. As a result of Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine, hundreds of thousands of people have lost their lives or been injured. Millions have been forced to flee their home country and hundreds of millions worldwide are facing the spectre of famine and serious economic disruptions. Russia's brutal aggression has brought immense global problems in its aftermath. It has put the international world order to the test. The cost of those barbarian actions — humanitarian, material and environmental — are incalculable and still growing. For a long time, world peace has never been as threatened as it is today.

We Poles know full well that peace is not to be taken for granted. September, in the history of my home country, is a special month. On 1 September 1939, Nazi Germany invaded my homeland, Poland. The Second World War broke out. On 17 September 1939, we received a blow from another direction: the Soviet Union also made an onslaught on Poland. In the wake of the alliance between Hitler and Stalin — Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia — Poland lost its independence, was wiped off the world map and subjected to an extremely brutal occupation. That is precisely why we understand the tragedy of Ukraine, as well as the tragedy of other countries experiencing the pandemonium of war, better than any other country in the world.

During the Second World War, 6 million of our citizens perished, including 3 million Polish Jews. Warsaw, the capital of Poland, was razed to the ground. And yet our history stands as a testament to the fact that even crimes and persecution are not able to suppress the true spirit of freedom, and freedom

will finally prevail. Enslavement, imperialism and neocolonialism are as much a denial of freedom as insane dreams of dominating others. When unleashing the war in Ukraine, Vladimir Putin wanted to restore the Russian empire, to divide the world and to make Europe systematically dependent on his raw materials. He has not succeeded. It is my firm belief that he will no longer succeed.

Today the world needs courageous and visionary leaders. The late President of Poland, Lech Kaczyński, with whom I had the honour to cooperate, was such a leader. He was a leader who, a dozen years ago, was trying to shake consciences, appeal to politicians and warn of the imperialist policy of Vladimir Putin's Russia. Let me recall, at this point, Lech Kaczyński's seminal words spoken in Tbilisi at the height of the Russian aggression on Georgia in 2008:

“For the first time in a long time, Russians have shown the face we have known for hundreds of years. They believe that the nations around them should be subjected to them. We say no. Russia believes that the old days of the empire that collapsed less than 20 years ago are coming back and that domination will again be a feature of our region. Well, it will not. Those days are over, once and for all.”

Yes: today, in this very place, at United Nations Headquarters, I wish to reiterate that those days can never return. The logic of conquest, changing borders by force, disregarding the law and denying the Ukrainian people their right to exist must be stopped. The brutal war must end; it must not be converted into a frozen war. That can be done only by restoring the full territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

Poland's position in the face of any war is clear and straightforward. We demand absolute respect for internationally recognized national borders. The inviolability of those borders is a fundamental element of the world order. Today the victim is Ukraine; tomorrow it could be any one of us if we do not follow those iron-clad rules and if we do not insistently enforce compliance with international law. Forgotten and unpunished war crimes and crimes against humanity build a sense of impunity among the perpetrators. Such crimes give permission to those perpetrators' successors and imitators, who, following suit, commit similar crimes when they want to dominate and determine the

fate of other States and nations. The crimes committed during the war in Ukraine are living proof thereof.

That is why we are engaged in an initiative to hold Russia accountable for gross violations of the fundamental norms of international law. We strongly support the work of the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice. We support the work of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry under the Human Rights Council to investigate violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the context of the Russian aggression and to collect, verify and preserve evidence. We support the idea of establishing an ad hoc special tribunal. Crimes must be accounted for and their perpetrators punished.

Information warfare goes on. Lies are used to cover up and justify Russian crimes against the civilian population. Russia continually tries to shape international public opinion by building a false vision of reality. In Poland that comes as no surprise to us, but the world is just about to discover the scale of the manipulation and disinformation. The spearhead is often directed also at my country, Poland, which has been libelled in many various ways. That is because we have consistently opposed Russia's imperialist and neocolonialist policy and have supported Ukraine in its defence from the outset. We, as the international community, must draw conclusions from the situation. We must confront manipulation and disinformation. We must fight against the hypocrisy of history and the reversal of the roles of henchman and victim. What is evil should be called evil. A crime should be called a crime.

These days, many States are being blamed for prolonging the war as they supply necessary weapons to Ukraine in its war of defence. That is a completely false logic, akin to putting the blame on a neighbour who comes to the aid of the people next door defending their home against a burglar. If one's household is attacked, one has the right to defend it — and one's neighbours should not stay indifferent. Ukraine would not be able to resist the aggression and effectively stand up for its independence if it were not for the assistance of other countries and, primarily, on the biggest scale, the United States of America.

It is the United States that has been playing a pivotal role in assuring security in Europe for more than a century. I say that as the President of a European country

that has been plagued by the experience of war on many occasions. It must be remembered that the engagement of the United States in the First World War led to its end, as well as to the restoration of independence in Poland and other countries in Central and Eastern Europe. The United States played a pivotal role in defeating Nazi Germany. Without the United States support, neither the United Kingdom nor the Soviet Union would have been able to resist Hitler. Finally, the United States was instrumental in the reconstruction of Western Europe in the aftermath of war and in fending off the threat posed by the Soviet Union throughout the Cold War.

Too often, Europe tends to forget that it owes its security and prosperity to the United States' commitment and presence. In Poland, we recall that very well, that is why Poland's top priority for its presidency of the European Union, in the first half of 2025, will be enhancing transatlantic relations and cooperation between the European Union and the United States of America.

Poland has never had colonies, a fact of which we are proud. We emphasize it on every occasion. Instead, my home country many times was brutally attacked, destroyed and used by neighbours to advance their imperial ambitions. For 123 years, Poland disappeared from the maps of the world. That is why we understand very well the countries that suffered colonialism and the challenges they need to confront. Wherever the international community is in need, Poland is always ready to respond to its call and does so without any hesitation. We provide assistance in many corners of the world. Despite the war in our immediate neighbourhood, we will continue our support to the Eastern Partnership countries.

We continue to focus on the countries of the sub-Saharan region. We are present in the Middle East. Given the refugee crisis caused by the war in Syria, Poland's assistance to Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan will be maintained. Poland will also continue its humanitarian support.

Many places around the world are facing worsening food crises. The situation is most difficult in Africa, where one in five people is suffering from hunger. Also, the population suffering from hunger is increasing in West Asia and the Caribbean. Today an estimated 2.4 billion people lack sustainable regular access to food, of which some 900 million face severe food insecurity. Therefore, in 2022, we in Poland have

supported the World Food Programme's activities in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, including in Lebanon, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Syria. We fund our activities mainly through multilateral channels, as well as through Polish non-governmental organizations and their local partners.

Poland fully recognizes the ambitions of the African Union to play an even more active role on the global stage, ensuring peace and development in Africa will be facilitated by good and cost-effective governance and the development of democracy on the continent. We respect the principle of African solutions to African problems and stand ready to share the experience we have gained in the difficult but successful transformation of our economy.

Poland is a country of freedom and solidarity. It is known worldwide for the great Solidarity movement which not only stood for workers' rights but also for freedom and fundamental values. The movement brought together millions of people, courageously defied evil and changed the course of modern history, bringing about the fall of communism. We are extremely proud of our solidarity.

With regard to the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the Poles have once again illustrated that solidarity is not only a great part of their history, but that solidarity lives in us. Millions of my compatriots committed themselves to bringing aid to people fleeing the nightmare of war. In the very first days of the war, many journalists were coming to Poland and invariably asked me, "Where are the refugee camps?" And my response was, "There are not any. There are none." There was no talk about camps. We hosted our guests in our own homes. We also had the honour of hosting many world leaders who came bringing humanitarian aid, including the Secretary-General and other United Nations high-ranking officials. I thank them for their support and their presence. Greater solidarity must come as a response to evil, war and aggression. Without solidarity there will be no lasting peace.

The world today needs more solidarity. We believe that the idea of solidarity-based development, which we hold so dear, is a beacon for security and prosperity. Poland is ready to take on concrete measures to support the United Nations operations undertaken to confront the most fundamental global challenges and threats and social and economic crises. We wish to support the idea of just transition, of economic and social changes

that will not lose sight of the human dimension so that nobody is left behind.

We believe that our experience as the leader of Central Europe, the fifth-largest economy in the European Union and the largest State in the Three Seas Initiative can prove valuable to many countries with varying degrees of economic and social development. We are ready to share with our partners from around the world not only our experience in the process of economic transformation but also specific technologies that many Polish companies have available.

Poland is proud to have been elected a member of the Economic and Social Council for the 2024-2026 term. A key priority of our Economic and Social Council membership will be to draw the international community's attention to the impact of global crises, such as armed conflicts, the energy crisis, the coronavirus disease pandemic and climate change, and their impact on socioeconomic development.

Time is running out to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, and there are still many challenges ahead, so we must unite and intensify our efforts to accelerate the implementation of the individual tasks.

Today the United Nations measures its strength against various challenges. With regard to the decision-making impasse in the Security Council, the situation in which Russia, one of the permanent members of the Council, is deliberately violating the Charter of the United Nations, the lengthy debates are considered a symptom of the weakness of both the Organization and its constituent States. There are some people who ask whether the United Nations is needed at all, whether it fits the times.

On behalf of Poland, a neighbour of attacked Ukraine and a country that has taken in millions of refugees, I emphatically answer: yes. The United Nations is very much needed. No better system for international cooperation has been invented. The United Nations best justifies its existence not in New York or Geneva, but by bringing aid and assistance to those most in need: children, victims of war, the persecuted and the hungry, every day, all over the world.

In 2025, the United Nations will celebrate 80 years of existence. We remember why it was founded. Today, in these dangerous times, we need a return to

the thinking and actions of the founding fathers of the United Nations.

There will be no lasting peace without cooperation, without solidarity between richer and poorer countries and, ultimately, without respect for international law. Poland wants cooperation. Poland wants solidarity. Poland wants peace.

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

*Mr. Andrzej Duda, President of the Republic of Poland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez,  
President of the Republic of Cuba**

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

*Mr. Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, President of the Republic of Cuba, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, President of the Republic of Cuba, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Díaz-Canel Bermúdez** (*spoke in Spanish*): I am bringing to this Assembly the voice of the South, the voice of the “exploited and scorned” — the words of Ernesto Che Guevara in this same Hall almost 60 years ago (see A/PV.1299).

We are diverse peoples with the same problems. We just confirmed that recently in Havana, which was honoured to host a summit of leaders and other high representatives of the Group of 77 (G77) and China, the most representative, broad and diverse group in the multilateral arena.

During those two virtually non-stop days, more than 100 representatives from the 134 nations that comprise the Group raised their voices to call for changes that can no longer be postponed amid the unjust, irrational and abusive international economic order that, year after year, has deepened the enormous inequalities between a minority of very developed nations and a majority that has not managed to shed the euphemism of “developing nations”.

Worse still, as recognized by the Secretary-General at the Havana Summit, the G77 was founded six decades ago to repair centuries of injustice and abandonment and, in today’s convulsive world, they are entangled in a host of world crises, where poverty is on the rise and hunger is ever-growing.

We are brought together by the need to change that which remains unresolved and by the condition of being the main victims of the current global multidimensional crisis, the abusive unequal exchange, the scientific and technical gap and the degradation of the environment. But we have also been brought together, for more than half a century now, by the inescapable challenge and the determination to transform the current international order, which is exclusionary, irrational, unsustainable for the planet and non-viable for the well-being of all.

The countries represented in the G77 and China, where 80 per cent of the global population lives, face not only the challenge of development, but also the responsibility to modify the structures that marginalize us from global progress and turn many peoples of the South into laboratories of renewed forms of domination. A new and more just global contract is urgently needed.

Only seven years ahead of the deadline set for the implementation of the promising 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the panorama is discouraging. This institution has already recognized that. At the current pace, none of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals will be achieved and more than half of the 169 agreed targets will not be met.

In the midst of the twenty-first century, it shocks the human conscience that almost 800 million persons suffer from hunger in a planet that produces enough to feed everyone and that, in the era of knowledge and accelerated development of information and communication technologies, more than 760 million persons — two thirds women — do not know how to read or write.

The efforts of developing countries are not enough to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They must be supported by concrete actions to provide access to markets, financing under fair and preferential conditions, technology transfer and North-South cooperation. We are not begging for alms or favours.

The G77 clamours for rights and will continue to demand a profound transformation of the current



international financial architecture because it is deeply unjust, anachronistic and dysfunctional and because it was designed to profit from the reserves of the South and perpetuate a system of domination that increases underdevelopment and replicates a pattern of modern colonialism.

We need and demand financial institutions in which our countries can have real decision-making capacity and access to financing. We urgently need a recapitalization of multilateral development banks in order to radically improve their lending conditions and meet the financial needs of the South. The member countries of this Group were forced to allocate \$379 billion from their reserves to protect their currencies in 2022, almost twice as much the amount of special drawing rights allocated by the International Monetary Fund.

A streamlining, review and change of the role of credit rating agencies is needed. It is also critical to establish criteria beyond gross domestic product to define the access of developing countries to financing under favourable conditions and to adequate technical cooperation.

While the richest countries fail to meet the commitment to allocate at least 0.7 per cent of their gross national income to official development assistance, the nations of the South need to spend up to 14 per cent of their income to service their foreign debt. Most G77 nations are forced to allocate more resources to servicing the debt than to investing in health or education. What sustainable development can be achieved with that noose on their necks?

The Group reiterates today its call on public, multilateral and private creditors to refinance the debt with credit guarantees, lower interests and longer maturities. We insist on the implementation of a multilateral mechanism to renegotiate sovereign debt, with the effective participation of the countries of the South, that will allow for a fair, balanced and development-oriented treatment. It is imperative to redesign, once and for all, the debt instruments and to include activation provisions to alleviate and restructure said debt whenever a country is affected by natural catastrophes or macroeconomic shocks — problems that are so common among the most vulnerable nations.

No one in their right mind is denying now that climate change is threatening the survival of all, with irreversible effects. It is also no secret that those who are least responsible for climate change are the ones

suffering the most from its effects, particularly small island developing States. Meanwhile, industrialized countries, voracious predators of resources and the environment, elude their greatest responsibility and fail to comply with their commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement. To mention just one example, it is extremely disappointing that the goal of mobilizing no less than \$100 billion a year until 2020, for climate financing, has never once been met.

On the eve of the twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28), the G77 countries will need to prioritize the exercise of a global balance, the implementation of the Loss and Damage Fund, the definition of the framework for the adaptation goal and the establishment of a new climate financing goal, fully abiding by the principle of shared but differentiated responsibilities.

The G77 is organizing a summit of the leaders of the South, to be held on 2 December, in the context of COP28 in Dubai. That initiative, unprecedented in the context of a Conference of the Parties, will provide a forum in which to articulate the positions of our Group at the highest level in the context of the climate negotiations. COP28 will demonstrate whether, beyond the speeches, there is a real political will on the part of developed nations to achieve the urgent agreements required on this issue.

The priority of the G77 is to shift, once and for all, the paradigms of science, technology and innovation, which are limited to the environment and perspectives of the North, thus depriving the international scientific community of considerable intellectual capital. The successful Havana summit launched an urgent appeal to centre science, technology and innovation around the indispensable objective of sustainable development. At the summit, we decided to resume the work of the Consortium on Science, Technology and Innovation for the South in order to promote joint research projects and foster productive linkages aimed at reducing dependence on Northern markets. We also agreed to promote the convening, in 2025, of a high-level meeting of the General Assembly on science, technology and innovation for development.

The 17 cooperation projects that Cuba has set up in the context of its chairmanship of the G77 will contribute to channelling the potential for South-

South and triangular cooperation. We urge the richest nations and international organizations to participate in those initiatives. Cuba will not relent in its efforts to boost the creative potential, influence and leadership of the G77. Our Group has much to contribute to the multilateralism, stability, justice and rationality that the world requires today.

In addition to all the problems and challenges of the realities of our nations and which are mobilizing peoples, there are unilateral coercive measures — euphemistically called sanctions — which have become a practice of powerful States purporting to act as universal judges to weaken and destroy economies and isolate and subjugate sovereign States. Cuba is not the first sovereign State against which measures of that nature have been applied, but it is the one that has endured them the longest. That is despite the worldwide condemnation of them expressed almost unanimously every year in the Assembly, which is intentionally disrespected and ignored by the Government of the biggest economic, financial and military Power in the world. We were not the first, and we will not be the last.

The pressures to isolate and weaken economies and sovereign States are also currently affecting Venezuela and Nicaragua, and, both before and after those cases, they have been the prelude to invasions and the overthrowing of inconvenient Governments in the Middle East. We reject the unilateral coercive measures imposed on countries such as Zimbabwe, Syria, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran, among many others, whose peoples suffer the negative impact of those measures. We reiterate our solidarity with the cause of the Palestinian people. We support the right to self-determination of the Saharan people. Let us strive for a world of peace, without wars or conflicts.

Five years ago, I spoke for the first time from this rostrum (see A/73/PV.8), where once stood the historic leader of the Cuban revolution, Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro Ruz, and Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, to speak these truths and the ideals of peace and justice of a small archipelago that has resisted and will continue to resist, reflecting the dignity, courage and unwavering resolve of its people and history. But I cannot stand in this global platform without once again denouncing the fact that for 60 years now, Cuba has been suffering a suffocating economic blockade designed to depress its income and living standards, inflict continuous shortages of food, medicines and other basic supplies and restrict its development potential. That is the

nature and those are the objectives of the policy of economic coercion and maximum pressure applied by the Government of the United States against Cuba, in violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Cuba has not implemented a single measure or action aimed at harming the United States through damage to its economic sector, trade or social fabric. Cuba has not engaged in any action to threaten the independence or national security of the United States or to impair its sovereign rights, interfere in its internal affairs or affect its people's well-being. The behaviour of the United States is absolutely unilateral and unjustified. Every day, the Cuban people use creative ways to resist and overcome that merciless economic war which, since 2019, at the height of the coronavirus disease pandemic, has been escalated opportunistically to reach an even more extreme, cruel and inhumane dimension. Its effects have been brutal.

The United States Government pressured entities not to supply the medical oxygen and pulmonary ventilators that were needed in Cuba to face the peak of the pandemic. Our Cuban scientists created the vaccines and developed the pulmonary ventilators needed save our country, and we also made them available to other countries in the world. With surgical and vicious precision, Washington and Florida calculated how to inflict the greatest possible damage on Cuban families.

The United States has tried and continues to try to prevent the supply of fuel and lubricants to our country, an action that would seem unthinkable in peacetime. In a globalized world, it is not only absurd but criminal to prohibit access to technologies, including medical equipment for which more than 10 per cent of the components are from the United States. The United States actions against the medical cooperation provided by Cuba in many nations are shameful. It has gone so far as to openly threaten sovereign Governments that have requested such help to respond to the public health needs of their populations.

The United States deprives its citizens of the right to travel to Cuba, in defiance of its own Constitution. The tightening of the blockade has contributed to an increase in migratory flows registered in our country in recent years, which imposes a painful cost on Cuban families and has adverse demographic and economic consequences for the nation.

The Government of the United States lies and does enormous damage to the international efforts to combat terrorism when it accuses Cuba, without any basis whatsoever, of being a sponsor of that scourge. Under the cover of that arbitrary and fraudulent accusation, it extorts hundreds of banking and financial institutions all over the world, forcing them to choose between continuing their relations with the United States or maintaining their ties with Cuba. Our country is suffering a real siege — an extraterritorial, cruel and silent economic war — one that is supported by a powerful political machinery of destabilization, with billions of dollars in funds approved by the United States Congress, aimed at capitalizing on the shortages caused by the blockade and undermining the constitutional order of the country and the peace of our citizens.

Despite the hostility of the United States Government, we will continue to build bridges with the country's people, as we do with all the peoples of the world. We will continue to strengthen relations with Cuban emigrants in every corner of the planet.

The promotion and protection of human rights is a common ideal that requires a genuine spirit of respect and constructive dialogue among States. Unfortunately, 75 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the reality is very different. That issue has become a political weapon of powerful nations that seek to subject independent nations, mainly in the South, to their geopolitical designs. No country is exempt from challenges, just as no country has the authority to designate itself as a model for human rights or to stigmatize other models, cultures or sovereign States. We support dialogue and cooperation as effective ways to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights, without politicization or selectivity and without the application of double standards, conditions or pressure.

In that spirit, Cuba submitted its candidacy to the Human Rights Council for the period 2024–2026 in the elections that will be held on 10 October. We would like to thank in advance for their trust those countries that have already given us their valuable support. If elected, Cuba will continue to raise its voice for a universal vision, representative of the South and in favour of the legitimate interests of developing countries, based on a constructive commitment to, and unwavering responsibility for, the full realization of all human rights for all. Cuba will continue to strengthen its democracy and its socialist model, which even under siege has shown how much a developing country — small in

size and with modest natural wealth — can do. We will continue our transformative process, seeking ways out of the siege imposed on us by United States imperialism and ways to achieve the prosperity with social justice that our people deserve. In that endeavour, we will never give up the right to defend ourselves.

I wish to conclude by extending an invitation to everyone to work to overcome differences and to face common challenges together and with a sense of urgency. To achieve that, the United Nations and the General Assembly, even with their limitations, are the most powerful instruments at our disposal. Cuba can always be counted on to defend multilateralism and to jointly promote peace and sustainable development for all. It will always be an honour to fight for justice, sharing the difficulties and challenges with the people of the South that are willing to change history. And we will win.

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

*Mr. Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, President of the Republic of Cuba, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

*Mr. Sitaldin (Suriname), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

#### **Address by Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Türkiye**

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

*Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Türkiye, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Türkiye, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Erdoğan** (*spoke in Turkish; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): On behalf of myself and the Turkish nation, I would like to salute the members of the General Assembly with my most heartfelt regards. I would like to congratulate Mr. Körösi, who successfully completed his term as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-

seventh session, and to wish Mr. Francis, who is succeeding him, every success.

I hope that the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, convened in a spirit of trust and solidarity, will be a blessing for the entire human race. Unfortunately, it is not possible to draw a more optimistic picture of the future of our world than the assessments made from this rostrum last year (see A/77/PV.4). The picture before us shows that we are facing increasingly complex and dangerous challenges on a global scale. There are conflicts, wars, humanitarian crises, political strife and social tensions to the south, north, east and west of my country. Those growing challenges, compounded by global economic problems, are becoming more and more difficult to deal with. In addition to the humanitarian tragedy, the war on Europe's eastern borders has created serious problems in all areas, from economy to security and from energy to food supply security. Terrorism, which is used as an instrument of proxy wars in Syria, North Africa and the Sahel region, is causing irreparable damage to the increasingly fragile international security climate. The areas of operation of terrorist organizations, which grow by exploiting the ambitions of global Powers, are spreading like an epidemic across vast geographic areas, taking advantage of technological developments and deteriorating socioeconomic conditions everywhere. The signs of xenophobia, racism and Islamophobia turning into a new crisis have reached alarming levels in the past year. No matter which corner of the world we live in, climate change and related natural disasters have become a reality of our daily lives.

On the morning of 6 February, Türkiye faced, in the words of the Secretary-General, "one of the biggest natural disasters in our times", both in terms of its magnitude and the area it affected. It is impossible for us to forget the sincerity of the international community, including that of the United Nations, in responding urgently to our appeal for help. We will not forget the self-sacrificing efforts and the generous support provided to our country. The friendship shown to our country on that very dark day — on which more than 50,000 people lost their lives, 850,000 buildings were destroyed and cities sheltering millions of people were virtually levelled to the ground — was an important source of consolation for us. We have friends from all across the globe from 100 countries. I would like to thank them for the helping hand they so

generously extended to us. We have spared no effort in reconstructing our destroyed cities and their buildings.

A few days ago, Libya, with which we have strong historical ties, was subjected to heavy destruction and significant loss of life caused by storms and floods. Following the disaster, Türkiye immediately mobilized its resources on behalf of Libya, where 12,000 people lost their lives and thousands are still unaccounted for. In the first phase, we sent three vessels and three aircraft, along with 567 relief personnel, hundreds of vehicles and thousands of tons of food, shelter and sanitary supplies. Our non-governmental organizations are also participating in the relief efforts in that region, with their own resources and capabilities. As a country that stands in solidarity with victimized and oppressed people, wherever they may be in the world, we have not and will not abandon our Libyan brothers and sisters. Hopefully, friendly countries will mobilize to extend a helping hand to Libya

I would also like to wish a rapid recovery to our Moroccan brothers and sisters, who were hit by a very strong earthquake, just like the one we recently experienced.

We are pleased to see that this year's theme of the General Assembly is in line with Türkiye's goals. The Century of Türkiye, which we started to realize during the 100th anniversary of our republic, is the most concrete expression of that overlapping vision and is one that eliminates global injustices, addresses economic inequalities and promotes peace, security, stability and prosperity in an effective and inclusive way that embraces humanity. In short, it is our call for the establishment of an international system for the benefit of all humankind. This vision is finding ever greater resonance.

We agree with Secretary-General Guterres' recent observation that the institutions established after the Second World War no longer reflect the world of today. That statement expresses our call that "the world is bigger than five". The Security Council has ceased to be the guarantor of world security and has become a battleground for the political strategies of only five countries. We consider the recent events in Cyprus to be a manifestation of the hollowed-out nature of that institutional structure that no longer inspires justice or trust.

As a country that has pioneered numerous initiatives to strengthen peace and stability, we attach great



importance to Mr. Guterres' call for a new agenda for peace. With that understanding, since the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war, we have been endeavouring to keep both our Russian and our Ukrainian friends around the table, with the thesis that war will have no winners and peace will have no losers. We will step up our efforts to end the war through diplomacy and dialogue on the basis of Ukraine's independence and territorial integrity.

With the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which we launched together with the United Nations, we prevented the threat of a global hunger crisis by ensuring the delivery of 33 million tons of grain through the Black Sea to global markets. However, the failure to implement that agreement in all its elements has left the world facing a new crisis. That initiative had been extended three times, partly through my efforts. This humanitarian bridge, which extends to countries in dire need, will, we hope, benefit from our arrangements and negotiations. We have a new plan, whereby another 1 million tons of grain will be released to countries in dire need around the world. Our aim is to make the greatest possible contribution to world peace and prosperity in the face of the conflicts around us.

The humanitarian tragedy in Syria is now marking its thirteenth year, and it is worsening the living conditions of everyone in the region, regardless of their origin or faith. We are the only country to take a principled, constructive and fair stance against developments that threaten Syria's political unity, social integrity and economic well-being. It is becoming increasingly important to end the crisis in the south with a comprehensive, lasting and sustainable solution that meets the legitimate expectations of the people. The devastating impact of the 6 February earthquakes, which affected 14 million people in our country, was also deeply felt in Syria, especially in north-western Syria. The already troubled humanitarian situation has only worsened. It is unfortunate that United Nations cross-border humanitarian aid operations in the region were interrupted at such a time.

As Türkiye, we will not abandon the more than 4 million people struggling to survive in the north of Syria to their fate and demise. Upon completion of the construction, led by us, of the settlements beyond our borders, we will continue to encourage the return of the refugees in our country to those settlements. However, the biggest threat to Syria's territorial integrity and political unity is the support given to terrorist

organizations, guided by the Powers that have designs on that country. The Syrian people are overwhelmed by the Kurdistan Workers' Party and Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat terrorist organizations and the radical groups organized on the basis of sectarian divisions. Moreover, different groups have reached the point that it is no longer bearable for the people. As a matter of fact, the various consequences of that have begun to emerge recently. Iraq, another neighbour, is also making sincere efforts to overcome the internal and external challenges it faces. We act with an understanding that strengthens Iraq's political unity, territorial integrity and reconstruction efforts, and we do not discriminate between the constituent elements of the country.

For countries in the region, the path to development will be established so that regional integration will be ensured. The games of those who cling to the Da'esh excuse every time they are in trouble in the region have now been all but exposed. As the leader of a country that has actually fought the greatest battle against Da'esh, inflicted the greatest losses on that organization and knows the realities before and behind the problem, I want to speak very clearly and frankly. We are sick and tired of the hypocrisy of those who use Da'esh and similar organizations as a front for their own political and economic interests in the Middle East, North Africa and the Sahel, but especially in Syria and Iraq. We are tired. The threat in those regions is not confined to Da'esh. The real threat is the terrorist organizations, paramilitary groups, mercenaries and local elements that are used and that are being nurtured as tools in proxy wars, and whoever pays the highest price will use those elements.

In spite of that reality, countries that continue to work with terrorist organizations in the service of their own political and economic interests have no right to complain about terrorism and its consequences. In such a world, no one is safe, whether they live right next to a conflict zone or far away, on land surrounded by oceans — nobody can be safe. That is why we say that, under the auspices of the United Nations, we must rapidly restructure the institutions charged with ensuring the security, peace and prosperity of the world. We must build a global governance architecture that is capable of representing all origins, beliefs and cultures in the world with its geography and demography. In conclusion, we say once again with all of our heart, the world is bigger than five, and a fairer world is possible.

I would now like to briefly share with the Assembly my country's approach to various problem areas, starting with our own region. The transformation of the eastern Mediterranean into a sovereign region of peace, prosperity and stability will be possible only if the rights and laws of all parties are respected. We have no eyes on anybody's rights, and we do not, and will not, let anyone to ignore our rights. This is the sixtieth anniversary of the emergence of the Cyprus question. The Turkish Cypriot side has always made sincere efforts to find a just, lasting and sustainable solution to the Cyprus issue. It is widely accepted that this solution can no longer be realized on the basis of the federation model. We therefore call on the international community to recognize the independence of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and establish diplomatic, political and economic ties with the country. We also expect the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus to strictly uphold its obligation of impartiality. We would not want the already-discredited Force to face further loss of its credibility in Cyprus.

We are making sincere efforts vis-à-vis Yemen. We have strong historical ties with Yemen, and we hope and pray that the issue will be settled once and for all by ensuring unconditional respect for the territorial integrity and unity of that country. Our relations with Egypt were stagnant for a while, but we have recently embarked on a new era, in which relations are developing quite rapidly on the basis of mutual interests and benefits. It is also very important to mention that, in order for peace to prevail in the Middle East, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict should be eventually resolved. We will continue to support the Palestinian people and State, as they struggle to achieve their legitimate rights under international law. It bears repeating that, without the realization of an independent and geographically integrated Palestinian State, based on the 1967 borders, it will be difficult for Israel to achieve the peace and security that it seeks in that part of the world. In that context, we will continue to pursue ensuring respect for the historic status of Jerusalem.

We have enjoyed strong political, economic and humanitarian ties with the Balkans throughout history, and we are working hard on bilateral, regional and international platforms to ensure stability in that critical region of Europe and resolve disagreements through dialogue. We actively support the process for the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia,

which have been strained recently. The increasingly complex nature of regional and global challenges underlines more than ever the need for relations between Türkiye and the European Union to move forward on a healthy basis. We expect the European Union to quickly begin fulfilling its long-neglected obligations towards our country. In particular, ambivalent attitudes against Türkiye should stop once and for all.

Latin America and the Caribbean is another region where we are mobilizing all elements of our humanitarian foreign policy and where our ties of friendship are getting stronger by the day. In the near future, we intend to transform those relations into a Türkiye-Latin America and the Caribbean partnership policy. As we commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of its establishment, the African Union is a monumental symbol for the continent, taking its destiny in its own hands and standing up. The process that started with the will to find African solutions to African problems has turned into one of the most important development projects in the world. To support Africa on that path, we have crowned our ties of friendship with the continent with a strategic partnership. I must once again reiterate, however, that we have welcomed the African Union's membership in the Group of 20, to which we have attached great importance too. It is a fact that the Sahel faces serious political, economic, social and security challenges. We hope that the Niger, which has recently experienced turbulent times, will restore constitutional order and democratic governance as soon as possible. Any military intervention in the Niger risks plunging that country and the entire region into deeper instability.

Our Asia Anew Initiative has become a symbol of our will to further advance our relations with Asia, our ancestral homeland, on the basis of mutual benefit and shared priorities. We have a historic opportunity to build peace, tranquillity and cooperation in the South Caucasus. In order to fully take advantage of that opportunity, we have launched a process with Armenia, aimed at good-neighbourly relations and full normalization. In the same spirit, we have supported the negotiations between Azerbaijan and Armenia from the very beginning. However, Armenia is not taking full advantage of this historic opportunity. We are eager to see a comprehensive peace agreement signed between the two countries, as soon as possible, and promises to be quickly fulfilled, especially the opening of the Zangezur corridor. Karabakh is the territory of Azerbaijan. Any other status imposed will

never be accepted. Everybody has the right to coexist on Azerbaijani soil, including the Armenians, which should be our primary goal. We are moving together with Azerbaijan under the motto that we are two nations and one State. Efforts to strengthen our cooperation with the countries of Central Asia, with whom we share the same culture and where the roots of our ancient civilization lie, are under way. We are pleased that the Organization of Turkic States is becoming an increasingly effective regional and global actor.

The people of Afghanistan, who have undergone difficult times for half a century, are in dire need of humanitarian assistance and support, regardless of political motives. The transformation of the interim Government into an inclusive Administration in which all segments of society are fairly represented will pave the way forward for Afghanistan and will be positively welcomed in the international arena. Another development that will pave the way for regional peace, stability and prosperity in South Asia will be the establishment of a just and lasting peace in Kashmir through dialogue and cooperation between India and Pakistan. Türkiye will continue to support steps taken in that direction.

We emphasize at every opportunity that we respect China's territorial integrity and sovereignty. However, we will continue to express our sensitivity regarding the protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of Uyghur Turks with whom we have strong historical and humanitarian ties. We are a country that has extended a helping hand to Rohingya Muslims living in difficult conditions in Myanmar and Bangladesh, since the very beginning. Our support for the displaced Rohingya will continue until their safe, voluntary, dignified and permanent return to their homeland is ensured.

Our goal of continuously improving relations with our neighbours, as well as with our friends in more distant locations, is an essential manifestation of our quest to respond more effectively to global challenges. The security of the energy supply is an important issue on the global agenda. We have made considerable investments over the past two decades to be self-sufficient. Energy should no longer be used as an instrument of hostility, but instead should be a vessel for solidarity and cooperation. Within that context, from the Black Sea to the Balkans, from the Caucasus to various parts of the world, we have always prioritized cooperation and solidarity and are striving to do more. In the area of transportation, Türkiye has

the geopolitical position to support all projects that pass through or around it. Technological innovation should be seen as an opportunity to solve global and regional challenges, not as a trump card to increase competitiveness.

Regrettably, we are gradually moving away from the objective of zero hunger by 2030, which is one of the most important Sustainable Development Goals. Indeed, we find it difficult to accept hunger as an unresolved issue in the twenty-first century. We call on all countries to demonstrate a strong willingness to realize the Sustainable Development Goals, especially in this region, where wealth has skyrocketed. We cannot explain why 735 million of the world's inhabitants continue to live in dire poverty. Hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent to reach space, but, from Africa to Asia, millions of people cannot even find a decent portion of food to consume. As long as that is the situation, none of us can be safe. As I said before, all countries should demonstrate a strong willingness to realize the Sustainable Development Goals. We are one of the most generous countries in the world in terms of development aid, and we have the right to make this appeal.

Global climate change is another issue I would like to touch upon. It is becoming increasingly difficult to limit global temperature rise due to climate change to 1.5°C. One of the conditions required for that is financial and technological support for the efforts of developing countries. Food security is one of the main areas affected by climate change. We must develop and implement the right policies and investments for the sustainable use of water and land resources.

We cannot bequeath to our children a world plagued by pollution, caused by unconscientious consumption and depleted natural resources. With that understanding, we have taken the zero-waste movement — which we started in our country with the vision of a more liveable and fairer world — and brought it to the world, through a United Nations decision jointly presented by 105 countries, along with my spouse, the First Lady. Yesterday evening, we signed the goodwill declaration on zero waste at the Permanent Mission of Türkiye to the United Nations. We hope that our zero waste targets will contribute to combating climate change and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. I would like to kindly invite all countries, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to support the zero-waste movement globally.

The developed countries are suffering from racism as from a plague. They also suffer from xenophobia and Islamophobia. It has become unbearable and has reached intolerable levels. Hate speech, polarization and discrimination against innocent people leave no conscience untouched around the world. Unfortunately, populist politicians in many countries continue to play with fire by encouraging such dangerous trends.

The mindset that encourages the heinous attacks against the Holy Qur'an in Europe by allowing them under the guise of freedom of expression is essentially darkening the future of Europe with its own hands. Türkiye will continue to support initiatives to combat Islamophobia on all platforms, including at the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Regardless of which faith they might follow, no one can accept heinous attacks on holy spaces. I kindly ask all brotherly nations to follow those developments around the world.

Combating all those challenges, each of which I have tried to touch upon in a few sentences, is our common responsibility. We can fulfil that responsibility only through effective cooperation and solidarity. We believe that the ancient values that make humans who they are have been recently eroded. Those attacks pose a threat to the prosperity and welfare of the entire world. We have the family at the core of our endeavours, and we must protect and save them. Saving families will mean saving the future of the entire human race. Global impositions are on the rise in unprecedented fashion. That is why I kindly ask all Member States to support and protect the institution of the family.

We in the Republic of Türkiye, which celebrates its one-hundredth anniversary this year, will continue to take steps towards peace, prosperity and security for all for the benefit of the entire human race. I hope that the work of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session will strengthen the spirit of global cooperation and solidarity.

I would also like to take this opportunity to mention that the recent incidents between Armenia and Azerbaijan must be condemned and regional developments must be resolved immediately. That is what I hope and pray for.

I would once again like to convey greetings, love and respect to all members, and may they remain in good health.

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

*Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Türkiye, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Address by Mr. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of the Portuguese Republic**

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

*Mr. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of the Portuguese Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of the Portuguese Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Rebelo de Sousa** (*spoke in Portuguese; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I would like to begin by saying that Portugal fully supports the priorities outlined by President Dennis Francis for his term. Allow me also to say a word of gratitude to former President Csaba Kőrösi, whose term has ended.

I applaud Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, on behalf of Portugal, for his inexhaustible dedication to the values of the Charter of the United Nations. I support *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982) and the reform proposals contained therein for global governance, including those of a financial nature, as well as the priorities that we have never abandoned on climate change, human rights, migrants, refugees and gender equality. Portugal supports the success of the Summit of the Future in 2024; the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Global Forum, which we will host in Lisbon next year; and the World Social Summit in 2025, which are hallmarks of the Secretary-General's ongoing clear thinking and dynamism at this demanding juncture for the world in terms of building peace and international cooperation.

*The President returned to the Chair.*

We heard today from the Secretary-General as he presented his report (A/78/1). We then heard from



President Lula da Silva and President Biden who, despite their different positions, agreed on that which is essential. It is urgent that we respect the Charter of the United Nations in order to maintain peace in the world. It is urgent to accelerate the fight against climate change, to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to protect our oceans and biodiversity. In order to guarantee peace, it is urgent that we reform the institutions established in the past century — some of which were established in the first half of the past century — that are so far removed from the reality of the world today. It is urgent that we reform the international financial institutions. As the Secretary-General said, it is time to approve a new Bretton Woods system.

Those three matters of urgency are connected. There is no peace and sustainable development nor institutional reform without respect for the Charter of the United Nations. There is no sustainable development nor respect for the Charter of the United Nations without the reform of international institutions. There is no reform of international institutions without respect for the Charter and without achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and our climate change goals.

But that is not the problem. The problem lies elsewhere. Where is the urgency in our urgency? Where is the credibility in us coming here every year to state what is urgent when it is in fact not treated with the appropriate urgency? That has been the appeal of the Secretary-General for many years. It is urgent that we respect the Charter of the United Nations because, without it, and without respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and for human rights, there can be no peace.

In Ukraine, peace is the struggle of the Ukrainian people, as it is for many peoples throughout the world in regions such as the Sahel and many other parts of Africa, in the Near and Middle East and in Asia. The problem is respect for the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Therefore, we cannot differentiate the struggle of the Ukrainian people from the fight for respect for the United Nations Charter.

It is also not possible to build peace without accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. We are behind — and continued to lag behind — in achieving the Goals,

thereby prolonging inequalities among States and among peoples. We cannot achieve the Goals without reforming our international institutions, not least the Security Council. The Security Council corresponds to a world that no longer exists. Portugal has long held that countries such as Brazil and India should be granted permanent membership. The Common African Position should be taken into account, and small countries cannot be ignored. Likewise, the existing financial institutions are incapable of financing sustainable development with equity and justice. They favour the richest and disfavour the poorest.

The three matters of urgency are connected and remain so year after year. Portugal defends respect for the United Nations Charter as a path to peace. Portugal defends the intensification of the fight against climate change, trying to move forward with decarbonization, the promotion of clean energy and the protection of our oceans and biodiversity. Portugal defends the reform of institutions such as the United Nations itself and the international financial institutions.

We have never ceased and will never cease in our support for the Secretary-General of the United Nations, no matter the cost, because it is easy to come here every year and make the same promises but never deliver on them — not contributing to peace with respect for international law and the United Nations Charter, not contributing to justice and sustainable development and delaying the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It is easy to come here and promise a new global governance but postpone concrete solutions for institutional reform, talking about providing financing for those who need it without providing examples of such financing.

Portugal has just signed an agreement with Cabo Verde — a country home to some of the world's 300 million Portuguese speakers — to convert State debt into an environmental and climate fund, converting the debtor's debt into a contribution by the creditor to that State's sustainable economic development. That should happen systematically with existing debts and financing for sustainable development. It is our goal to extend that initiative to other countries in the Portuguese-speaking community.

Year after year, we lose time. But the time has come for us to deliver on respect for international law, on peacebuilding and on international cooperation. It is time to deliver on correcting global inequalities and on

the fight against climate change. It is time to deliver on the reform of the United Nations and of international financial institutions. Without it, multilateralism is not possible. There can be no lasting cooperation nor peace throughout the world.

Every day lost is another day of inequality, selfishness, conflict and war. Every day gained is another day of justice, solidarity and peace.

I hope that, when we meet a year from now, it will be possible to say that there is more peace than war, and not more war than peace, more justice than injustice, more equality than inequality, more climate action than climate inaction, more reform of the United Nations than less reform and further reform of financial institutions than disregard for, or a reduction in, such reform. If that is the case, it will be worth it. Otherwise, we will always continue to hear all the same very influential people promising and not delivering. We realize why people believe less and less in those who govern them.

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

*Mr. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of the Portuguese Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Address by His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar**

**The President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the Amir of the State of Qatar.

*His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**Sheikh Al Thani** (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I congratulate His Excellency Mr. Dennis Francis on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session. I wish him every success. I also express my appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi for his efforts in presiding over the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. I commend the efforts of the Secretary-General, His Excellency

Mr. António Guterres, and the staff of the United Nations for fulfilling its noble goals.

I would like first of all to offer my sincere condolences to my brother His Majesty King Mohammed VI and to the brotherly people of Morocco for the victims of the devastating earthquake. I also extend my condolences to the Government and people of the sisterly State of Libya for the victims of the floods there. We ask Almighty God for a speedy recovery for the injured and mercy for the deceased. I affirm our full solidarity with them in that ordeal.

God has bestowed a favour on us by allowing us to live in an era of unprecedented accelerating progress, in which an innovative spirit prevails in the fields of medicine, technology and science in general, and wherein the human ability to use resources has multiplied, enabling the provision of a decent life for all of humanity. The sequent innovations have brought about productivity, prosperity and a level of communication between humans in a way close to realizing the visions of science fiction.

Although this evolution has enabled us to realize many wishes, it has come at a cost for the people of the world, our planet and its resources. The average life expectancy and standard of living for the majority of humanity have risen, and this has clearly manifested itself in population growth. Nevertheless, poverty and unemployment rates have also increased, and there is a growing awareness of the lack of justice in wealth distribution, in addition to the dire consequences for the environment. In areas such as genetics and artificial intelligence, the possibilities for realizing the well-being of all humanity are increasing. But the gap between possibility and reality is also widening. However, as those possibilities are unfolding in the same era, there are peoples who are grappling with child labour, starvation, unemployment and civil wars, while developed countries guard their borders against the influx of refugees fleeing this suffering, as if the peoples of the earth are living in two different eras.

Rapid technological development and the growing reliance on it open up unprecedented prospects for humanity to develop for the better. Undoubtedly, science and technology are crucial for increasing productivity and improving the quality of human life. But celebrating the means without responsible thinking about the ends for which they are used has led to major disasters such

as the use of nuclear weapons, dangerous experiments on humans and genocide in concentration camps.

It is incumbent on us to keep pace with scientific and technological development, encourage it in our countries and encourage barriers between countries in this field to be removed. At the same time, it is not plausible to ignore the worsening risks in terms of reality falsification, invasion of personal privacy, educational process disruption through the facilitation of plagiarism, and the spiralling effect of disinformation and ploys aimed at deception.

Therefore, in addition to the necessity of cooperation and investment in developing those technologies, we reiterate the call for unifying efforts to prevent the misuse of cyberspace and regulate this vital aspect, based on the provisions of international law.

In that context, Web Summit 2024 will take place in Doha. The convening of that event constitutes an important opportunity to review development in the field of technology and create new cooperation opportunities in the realm of technology for the benefit of all humankind. It is also an occasion to welcome everyone to Doha.

We must not forget that there are peoples around the world, especially in our region, who are directly affected by the current tragedies and who consider their involvement in the issues I have mentioned as a sort of luxury. If we are truly an international community and not merely diverse entities, it is our duty to strive towards ending the injustice afflicting them, at least in accordance with what is required by the resolutions of this body and by international law.

It is not acceptable for the Palestinian people to remain prisoners of the arbitrariness of the Israeli settler occupation and the rejection by successive Israeli Governments of any just political solution in line with the principles of international legitimacy. We have to bear in mind that the failure of the international organization to take action against the occupation provided and continues to provide the opportunity for Israel to undermine the foundations of the two-State solution by means of settlement expansion until the occupation has taken the form of an apartheid regime in the broad daylight of the twenty-first century. Even some of Israel's close friends have taken notice of that. Israel also responds to Arab peace and normalization initiatives with more intransigence and national ultra-orthodox extremism that are reflected in

government coalitions, further settlement expansion, the Judaization of Jerusalem and attacks on holy sites, besides using heavy-handed means against those languishing under the occupation and tightening the noose on the Gaza Strip.

Qatar provides political, humanitarian and development support to the brotherly Palestinian people and contributes towards rebuilding the Gaza Strip, which is reeling under the siege, in addition to its continuous contribution to funding the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. It also continues its adherence to the principled stance regarding the fairness of the Palestinian question, which has become a credibility test for world politicians in relation to the Middle Eastern region.

In the case of Syria, it is not permissible to condone the gross injustice that has befallen the brotherly Syrian people as if it is destiny. The crisis is still awaiting a comprehensive settlement through a political process leading to a political transition, in accordance with the Geneva communiqué and Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), in a way that meets the Syrian people's aspirations while maintaining Syria's integrity, sovereignty and independence.

It is regrettable to witness the outbreak of violence in the Sudan this year, which has had a dire impact on the brotherly Sudanese people and exacerbated the refugee crisis. We condemn the crimes perpetrated against civilians in the capital, Khartoum, and in the Darfur region, and we call for holding perpetrators to account. We also call for the cessation of hostilities and recourse to the voice of reason, and that civilians be spared the consequences of the fighting. We affirm our support for all regional and international efforts to facilitate reaching a ceasefire and hold a dialogue among Sudanese political forces about the future of the Sudan, with only one army charged with protecting, rather than ruling, the country.

In brotherly Lebanon, where danger hangs over the State's institutions, we stress the need to find a sustainable solution to the political vacuum, while introducing mechanisms that thwart its recurrence, and form a Government capable of addressing the aspirations of the Lebanese people and getting them out of their economic and development crises. The prolonged suffering of that brotherly people, caused by political and personal interests, is regrettable.

In Yemen, we call for the crisis to be resolved in accordance with the decisions of the National Dialogue Conference, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

With regard to the Libyan issue, we reiterate our unwavering support for the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya and his efforts to achieve tangible results to resolve Libyan crisis.

It is clear that the solution in all sisterly countries that I mentioned lies in reaching consensus on the State's entity and citizenship.

Regarding the situation in Afghanistan, we continue to coordinate international efforts and facilitate dialogue among the United Nations, the countries concerned and the caretaker Government of Afghanistan to ensure compliance with the Doha agreement in a way that ensures the non-recurrence of past mistakes in order to prevent Afghanistan from sliding into a humanitarian crisis that is difficult to manage. It must also be ensured that Afghanistan does not become a haven for terrorist individuals and groups and that the Afghan people receive the international support and assistance that they need and enjoy human rights, including minority rights and women's rights to education and work.

In the context of talking about our region, we reiterate our appreciation for the détente witnessed this year, as represented by the constructive dialogue and re-establishment of ties between the sisterly countries the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as between the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Republic of Türkiye.

The war in Europe drags on. Along with Russia and Ukraine, it has consumed the entire Europe and has been affecting the whole world in vital areas such as energy and food. In the absence of the prospect of a permanent political solution, and due to the ability to keep the war raging indefinitely by major international blocs engaging directly or indirectly in the war, a long-term truce has become the aspiration most sought by people in Europe and all over the world. However, that cannot be the basis for long-term stability. Based on the harm that has befallen the peoples of the two countries and the peoples of the world, and because such a status quo cannot be accepted, we reiterate our call on all parties to comply with the Charter of the United Nations and international law, respect the sovereignty

and territorial integrity of States and resort to a radical peaceful solution that is based on those principles.

Our region is awash with tremendous potential and opportunities, and our peoples are tolerant and peace-loving, a fact that has been distorted by stereotypes and preconceptions. During the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, there was an opportunity for interaction among peoples, and for the world to see our people as they are and to learn about some aspects of our culture and values, besides Qatar's stature as a global destination and nexus between East and West. We emphasized the role that sport plays in building bridges of communication and rapprochement among peoples and cultures. I hope that we have contributed, through that tournament, to breaking the stereotypes and have presented a new exciting and safe tournaments' formula to the world.

In Qatar, we have had a dream that our country will be one of the prosperous nations whose people enjoy well-being and prosperity, and we have invested decades of planning and comprehensive development work to make that dream come true. We have achieved a great deal, thanks to God and the solidarity of everyone in Qatar.

*Mr. Sitaldin (Suriname), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

While investing in liquefied gas was a leverage to realize that dream, our investment has enabled us to play an important role in addressing the energy challenge around the world with a realistic vision that takes into account the world needs for a diverse mix of different energy sources by using the highest levels of advanced technology that is, at the same time, environmentally friendly. We realize that energy export imposes obligations on us, as a reliable partner, towards the countries of the world, while, at the same time, imposing obligations on us towards our people and the future generations as well. Hence Qatar continues to develop its sovereign fund and diversify the sources of its income, including investment in clean energy. The State of Qatar pursues environmentally friendly policies and supports various projects for protecting them. In that context, we are going to host the Qatar Horticultural Expo next month.

State responsibility also prompts Qatar to strengthen its role in providing humanitarian aid, exerting mediation efforts and resolving conflicts that affect our region. The road to resolve conflicts through



peaceful means is a long and strenuous path, but it is less costly than wars. Our commitment to continuing our efforts in facilitating and making peace is a principled commitment deeply rooted in the core of our foreign policy.

We reaffirm that we are proud of our partnership with the international Organization, and there is no clearer evidence of that than the opening of the United Nations House, which so far includes 12 United Nations offices, in the presence of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in Doha last March. In March, my country also hosted the fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, which is considered one of the most prominent international forums. It galvanized efforts to achieve the ambitious goals of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2022–2031. While we affirm that the State of Qatar is a major and active partner in the efforts to respond to the priorities and needs of those countries, we welcome the Sustainable Development Goals Summit held yesterday. We are pleased that the State of Qatar is once again playing a leading role in major debates under the umbrella of the United Nations, the most recent of which is working with Ireland to facilitate governmental negotiations on the political declaration adopted by the Sustainable Development Goals Summit yesterday.

We believe that cooperation in those areas contributes to preventing the waves of refugees that have become a real problem for Europe as well as for African and Asian countries.

Allow me to pinpoint the need to combat racism and campaigns of incitement against entire peoples, religions and civilizations. On this occasion, I would say to my Muslim brethren that it is implausible for us to get distracted by an idiot or a biased person whenever it occurs to them to provoke us by burning the Holy Qur'an or by other trivial means. The Qur'an is too holy to be desecrated by a witless person. God Almighty said: "Embrace forgiveness, enjoin what is right and turn away from the ignorant" (*The Holy Qur'an, VII:199*). At the same time, I would say to all those who seek to justify those hideous acts as freedom of expression that compromising the sanctity of others deliberately should not be seen as an example of the freedom of expression.

In conclusion, it is the duty of leaders to empower their peoples with the means to live in peace and

security and to look forward to a better future for upcoming generations. There are obstacles at the level of the international community, primarily seen in the failure to subject contradictions and competition among major countries on cross-cutting issues to the minimum binding principles owing to variations in governance systems. Such issues, which concern all humankind, include climate change, environmental matters in general, poverty and the blatant injustice represented by occupation, racism and war crimes. That is the consensus that must take place here in this international Organization in order for it not to become bogged down in details and to safeguard the future of entire peoples from loss owing to the unwillingness of such countries to cooperate in implementing international law. May peace, mercy and blessings of God be upon members.

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

*His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa**

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

*Mr. Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

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

**President Ramaphosa:** Seventy-eight years ago, in the aftermath of the Second World War, the nations of the world made a solemn commitment to saving future generations from the horror and suffering of war. Through the Charter of the United Nations, those nations accepted a shared mandate to foster peace and promote fundamental human rights and social progress and ensure a better standard of life for all.

Yet, as we gather here, much of humankind is confronted by war and conflict, by want and hunger and by disease and environmental damage and disaster.

Solidarity and trust among States are being eroded. Inequality, poverty and unemployment are deepening across many nations in the world. In those conditions, and in the wake of a devastating global pandemic, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals seems increasingly remote. At the moment, when every human effort should be directed towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, our attention and our energies have once again been diverted by the scourge of war. But those woes, those divisions and those seemingly intractable troubles can, and must, be overcome.

Over millennia, the human race has demonstrated an enormous capacity for resilience, an ability to resolve problems, adaptation, innovation, compassion and solidarity. At this moment, we are all called upon to reaffirm those essential qualities, which define our common humanity. Such qualities must be evident in how we work together as a global community and as nations of the world to end war and conflict.

South Africa has consistently advocated for dialogue, negotiation and diplomacy to prevent and end conflict and achieve lasting peace. As a country, it has committed itself to the promotion of human rights, human dignity, justice, democracy and adherence to international law.

From the experience of our own journey from the evil system of apartheid, which was declared a crime against humanity by this very Organization, to democracy, we value the importance of engaging all parties to conflicts in achieving peaceful, just and enduring resolutions.

It is those principles that inform South Africa's participation in the African peace initiative, which seeks a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. In that conflict, as in all conflicts, we have insisted that the United Nations Charter principle of respect for the territorial integrity of every country should be upheld. Our participation in the African peace initiative, supported by seven countries from the African continent, is informed by a desire to see an end to the suffering of those most directly affected by the conflict and the millions on our continent and across the world who, as a result of the conflict, are now vulnerable to worsening hunger and deprivation.

As we, as African leaders, engaged with the parties to the conflict, one of the issues that we raised was that there should be confidence-building measures that

could create a sense of trust towards the resolution of the conflict. In that regard, we said that issues such as the return of the children who were removed from Ukraine should be ensured. We also said that the prisoners of war should be exchanged between the two countries. I just held a meeting with President Zelenskyy, who said that, in part, some of our efforts were bearing fruit, as the children were now being returned and the prisoners were also being exchanged. But then we said that we needed to see that happening at a much faster pace.

As the international community, we must do everything within our means to enable meaningful dialogue, just as we should refrain from any actions that fuel conflict. As we confront other conflicts in several parts of the world, including on our own continent, Africa, we need to invest in prevention and peacebuilding. We support the call by the Secretary-General in the New Agenda for Peace for Member States to provide more sustainable and predictable financing for peacebuilding efforts.

As a global community, we should be concerned by the recent incidents of unconstitutional changes of Government in some parts of Africa. The global community needs to work alongside the African Union to support peace efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, the Sudan, Somalia, Mali, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, northern Mozambique, the Great Lakes region, the Sahel, the Niger and the Horn of Africa.

The African Union Peace and Security Council has declared that it stands ready to deepen its cooperation with the United Nations Security Council to silence the guns on the African continent and to achieve peace, stability and development.

We are called upon to remain true to the founding principles of the United Nations by recognizing the inalienable right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination, in line with the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

We must work for peace in the Middle East. For as long as the land of the Palestinians remains occupied, and for as long as their rights are ignored and their dignity is denied, such peace will remain elusive. The actions of the Government of Israel have imperilled the possibility of a viable two-State solution. The principles of the United Nations Charter with regard to territorial integrity and the prohibition on the annexation of

land through the use of force must also be applied in that situation.

South Africa continues to call for the lifting of the economic embargo that was imposed 60 years ago against Cuba, which has caused untold damage to the country's economy as well as the people of Cuba.

The sanctions that are also being applied against South Africa's neighbour Zimbabwe should also be lifted, as they are imposing untold suffering on ordinary Zimbabweans, but they also have a collateral negative impact on neighbouring countries, such as my own country, South Africa.

As many people around the world are confronted by hunger and want, the essential human qualities of cooperation and solidarity must be evident in the actions that we take to bridge the divide between the wealthy and the poor. We must summon the necessary will and resolve to regain the momentum towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That means that we must address the fundamental development challenges that have also long characterized our unequal world.

To address the development challenges that face many people in the world we are required to focus on targeted investment, technology transfer and capacity-building support, especially in key areas such as supporting industrialization, building infrastructure, ensuring that investment in agriculture takes place and making sure that there is investment in water, energy, education and health.

That also requires predictable and sustained financial support, including supportive trade policies, from the international community. We call on our partners from wealthier countries to meet the financial commitments that they made. It is a great concern to us from the global South that those wealthier countries in the global North have failed to meet the undertakings that they made to provide \$100 billion a year for developing economies to take climate action. That must be changed, and the money must be made available in the interests of development.

We support the proposals outlined in the Secretary-General's Sustainable Development Goals stimulus. In particular, we support the call to tackle debt and debt distress, by which many countries, particularly in the global South, are burdened. We support the call to massively scale up affordable long-term financing to

\$500 billion a year and to expand contingency financing to countries that are in need.

It is a grave indictment of the international community that we can spend so much on war — in fact, trillions are being spent on war — but we cannot support the action that needs to be taken to meet the most basic needs of billions of people in the world, such as addressing hunger and health, empowering women and ensuring that there is development in vulnerable countries.

The achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals depends fundamentally on the empowerment of women in all spheres of life. Social and economic progress will not be possible unless we end gender discrimination. We must ensure that there is equal access for women to health care, education and economic opportunities. We must pay particular attention to the provision of adequate health services to every woman, child and adolescent. By doing so, we will fundamentally improve the health and well-being of all.

The empowerment of women must be central to the actions that we now take towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda. The women of the world need empowerment. They have a right to empowerment. They also have a right to participate equally in the decision-making structures of all institutions in the world. I am proud that, in South Africa, 50 per cent of the members of the Cabinet of South Africa are women. Today I am accompanied by an all-women delegation to this General Assembly session. It should be a matter of concern to us all that the majority of people who are sitting in this Assembly are men. The question that we must ask is: where are the women of the world? The women of the world have a right to be here to represent the views of women across the world.

The essential human qualities of innovation and adaptation must be evident in the actions that we take to prevent the destruction of our planet. Africa is warming faster than the rest of the world. We are told that, of the 20 climate hotspots in the world, we find 17 in Africa. Africa is the least responsible for the climate damage that has been caused; yet it bears the greatest burden. Centuries after the end of the slave trade, decades after the end of the colonial exploitation of Africa's resources, the people of our continent are once again bearing the costs of the industrialization of the North and the development of the wealthy nations

of the world. That is a price that the people of Africa are no longer prepared to pay. Many countries in the North count their assets in the mineral resources that are beneath African soil. The wealth of Africa belongs to Africans. The mineral wealth that is beneath the soil of Africa must in the end accrue to Africans.

We urge global leaders to accelerate global decarbonization, while pursuing equality and shared prosperity. We need to advance all three pillars of the Paris Agreement — mitigation, adaptation and support — with equal ambition and urgency. African countries, alongside other countries with developing economies, need increased financial support both to implement the 2030 Agenda and to achieve their climate change goals in a comprehensive and integrated manner. We need to operationalize the loss and damage fund for vulnerable countries hit hard by climate disasters, as agreed at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Africa has embraced that challenge. Africa is determined to deploy smart, digital and efficient green technologies to expand industrial production, boost agricultural yields, drive growth and create sustained employment for Africa's people.

As the global community, we must ensure that the essential qualities that define our humanity are evident in the institutions that manage the conduct of international relations. We require institutions that are inclusive, representative and democratic and that advance the interests of all nations. We require a renewed commitment to multilateralism, based on clear rules and supported by effective institutions.

This is the moment to proceed with the reform of the Security Council, give meaning to the principle of the sovereign equality of nations and enable the Council to respond more effectively to the current geopolitical realities. We are pleased that the Common African Position on the reform of the Security Council is increasingly enjoying wide support. That process must move to text-based negotiations, creating an opportunity for convergence among Member States. The Brazil, Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa Summit, held recently in Johannesburg, also affirmed the view that the Security Council should be reformed and should ensure that nations that are not represented are also represented.

We must ensure that the voice of the African continent and the global South is strengthened in the United Nations and the broader multilateral system. All the peoples represented here in this United Nations had their origins in Africa. In Africa, they developed the tools and capabilities to spread across the world and achieve remarkable feats of development and progress. All that was due to the skills and the talent that originated from the African continent.

Despite its history, despite the legacy of exploitation, colonialism and subjugation, despite the ongoing challenge of conflict and instability, Africa is determined and ready to regain its position as a site of human progress. The era of African development has arrived.

Through the African Continental Free Trade Area, which is creating a wider seamless trading area, as well as accelerated interconnectivity, African countries are mobilizing their collective means and resources to achieve shared prosperity. Through that treaty, African countries are establishing for themselves the foundation for a massive increase in trade, accelerated infrastructure development, regional integration and sustainable industrialization.

As the global community, we have the means and the desire to confront and overcome the enormous challenges that face humankind today. As the nations gathered here in this General Assembly, let us demonstrate that we have both the will and the resolve to secure a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable future for our world and, more important, for the future generations that will follow, leaving no one behind. That is the duty that we all now have.

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

*Mr. Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. Serdar Berdimuhamedov, President of Turkmenistan**

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

*Mr. Serdar Berdimuhamedov, President of Turkmenistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*



**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Serdar Berdimuhamedov, President of Turkmenistan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Berdimuhamedov:** First of all, I would like to congratulate the heads and members of delegations and other participants on the opening of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, and I wish them productive work. I would also like to congratulate Mr. Dennis Francis on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session.

Today a high responsibility should unite all States Members of the United Nations. Each of them should have, and has, the means to significantly contribute to tackling the tasks of the United Nations. The current world faces very serious challenges for various reasons. Despite their differences in appearance, they all influence the course of inter-State relations to a greater or lesser extent and often negatively influence the implementation of agreed plans and programmes in key areas of the global agenda. That, in turn, may lead to the lowering of the very foundation of global security as a principle of the United Nations, which should not be allowed.

Over several years, Turkmenistan has therefore firmly and persistently upheld the principle of the unity of security and its integrity. We are convinced that military and political security should not be considered separately from economic, ecological, energy, transport, food, biological and information security. None of those areas that I mentioned can be secondary or irrelevant, and their solutions cannot be postponed.

I think that the main challenge of the United Nations is to provide an integral approach to the security challenge, mobilize the current experience, competence, ideas and initiatives of Member States in a constructive manner and step back from short-term gains to attain truly crucial goals that will provide lasting peace, security and development over the long term. That can be achieved only collectively and with the United Nations in the leading role.

Amid the discussions on the role of the United Nations in the current world and suggestions to reform it, it is a fact that there is no alternative to the United Nations. From the day of its establishment, the United Nations has stood as the only universal and

legitimate Organization responsible for peacekeeping and for providing global and comprehensive security and a stable modern structure of inter-State relations. That is the principled position of Turkmenistan.

For that reason, we must consistently and persistently make use the potential of this global Organization and its political and diplomatic tools and moral authority in order to make a balanced, non-ideological assessment of the current events and trends, to overcome the distrust and confrontational tension in world politics and try to indicate perspectives for compromise and the consideration of mutual interests. That is possible only in an open and genuine dialogue under the auspices of the United Nations. We are aware that achieving that kind of dialogue will not be easy; however, it is necessary.

In that regard, Turkmenistan proposes beginning to discuss opportunities for the development of a global security strategy based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the universal standards of international law, considering the current realities and trends in global development. In our opinion, such a strategy should reflect the existence of the new risk factors that recently appeared, along with the traditional ones. We also consider it necessary to include a number of areas of the United Nations in it, in particular preventive diplomacy as an instrument to prevent and diffuse conflicts, usage of the potential of neutrality for the peaceful, political and diplomatic settlement of disputes and controversies and the restoration of a structure of trustful dialogue, based on the decisions of the General Assembly in declaring 2021 the International Year of Peace and Trust and 2023 the International Year of Dialogue as a Guarantee of Peace. Time has confirmed the relevance of those resolutions in the current situation.

In order to achieve global and comprehensive security, Turkmenistan bases its position on the need to give a pronounced regional context to the work of the United Nations. We conclude that such an approach aims to contribute sufficient specificity and to increase functionality and effectiveness.

I am convinced that the time has come to launch an inclusive, comprehensive and systemic dialogue between Central Asia and the United Nations. Turkmenistan respectfully invites partners to join its initiative. In that regard, our country is taking the initiative to create the format of the Conference on Security in Central Asia

and Bordering Areas under the auspices of the United Nations. The goal of the conference is the development of approaches and decisions aimed at aligning and synchronizing the efforts of the Central Asian States and the global community, international organizations and financial and economic institutions to provide stable, conflict-free development of the region. We express our readiness to host the first conference in Ashgabat in 2024.

Turkmenistan considers the addressing of urgent climate and ecological issues to be among the key areas of the work of the United Nations in the coming years. Among those, we highlight the issues related to the Global Methane Pledge.

I must say that, with joining the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in 2017, a number of relevant national programmes were adopted in our country. National events aimed at reducing and eliminating the negative effects of methane emissions into the atmosphere are being held. We are primarily talking about the phased implementation and use of modern, green and resource-saving technologies, mainly in the areas of energy, industry and transport.

At the same time, we welcome the efforts of the world community towards realizing the Global Methane Pledge. Of course, we expect substantive cooperation and targeted assistance from the specialized agencies of the United Nations, States Members of the Organization and other interested partners. In that context, the road map for the development of international cooperation aimed at studying Turkmenistan's joining of the Global Methane Pledge was recently approved. We will soon send that document to the Secretariat.

Overall, I believe that the time has come for the United Nations to pay close and effective attention to ecological issues in Central Asia, work on certain delays in addressing them and begin taking targeted and specific actions to create a coherent ecological United Nations strategy regarding the region, with a population of nearly 80 million people, covering a vast area with its unique natural resources and biodiversity, while, at the same time, being located in a region with serious ecological risks.

As a significant step in taking a strategic approach to the ecological issues of Central Asia, Turkmenistan proposes the establishment of a specialized agency, the regional centre for technologies related to climate change in Central Asia, which will substantively and

systematically work on the topic of climate. We are ready to offer organizational and technical terms for the functioning of such a centre in the capital city of Turkmenistan, Ashgabat.

The Central Asia region adjoins the Caspian Sea. Everyone is aware of the importance of that lake, with its unique natural system in the context of the global ecological agenda. As a result of the active and respectful long-term cooperation of coastal countries, the key principles of a policy on the Caspian Sea were developed, including the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea. Last summer, at the sixth Caspian Summit, held in Turkmenistan, all the participants strongly affirmed their readiness for close cooperation on ecological issues. I believe that that provides a good opportunity for the beginning of the broad, systemic interaction of coastal countries with the United Nations.

In that regard, Turkmenistan proposes the creation of the Caspian ecology initiative, which seeks to become a platform for substantive and professional interaction on a wide range of issues associated with the environmental protection of the Caspian Sea, preserving its biological resources and tackling several pressing ecological issues. We think that the realization of that initiative should be accomplished in close cooperation with the United Nations and its agencies and institutions.

As a responsible State Member of the United Nations, Turkmenistan clearly formulates and implements its own approaches and actions by defining priorities that will make a tangible contribution and serve for the benefit of global goals, facilitating their early achievement. Among those priorities, we highlight the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the area of transport.

As Member States know, Turkmenistan initiated the establishment of effective international platforms in that important area. Let me mention the first-ever Global Sustainable Transport Conference, which was successfully held in Ashgabat in 2016, as well as the Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked Developing Countries on Trade and Transport, which was organized last summer in Turkmenistan in cooperation with the United Nations.

We are proud that Turkmenistan's purposeful work was marked by the adoption in recent years by the General Assembly of six resolutions on transport, which were initiated by our country. Among the recent

ones is resolution 77/286, entitled “World Sustainable Transport Day”, which was adopted in May. We thank all Member States for their support of the document.

In that regard, based on the provisions of that resolution, Turkmenistan is proposing to convene a high-level meeting during the current session on the occasion of World Sustainable Transport Day. We hope for the assistance of the relevant United Nations agencies in organizing that event in New York.

An important area of Turkmenistan’s work in achieving the SDGs is maximizing assistance to the United Nations in addressing the food issue. The coronavirus disease, along with other adverse factors, has exposed the weakness of countries where that issue has not been resolved and where the population does not receive proper nutrition. Unity, integrity and determination are necessary when addressing issues related to access to food resources for countries and regions. Guaranteed proper nutrition is an integral part of human rights and a key factor in health and normal physical development, especially for children. It is obvious that that requires ground-breaking decisions and new approaches that overcome political, ideological and cross-cutting barriers.

Consequently, Turkmenistan proposes an initiative to convene a major international forum on food security in cooperation with the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization and UNICEF and under the auspices of the United Nations. We express our readiness to provide conditions for holding such an event in the capital city of Turkmenistan within the agreed time frame.

Next year, in Turkmenistan and far beyond its border, including at the United Nations, we will celebrate the 300th anniversary of the prominent son of the Turkmen nation — poet, philosopher and public figure Magtymguly Pyragy. All humankind honours his memory and pays due respect to that great humanitarian, who highly contributed not only to world literature but also to the development of Eastern civilization and to that of the whole world. I would like to conclude with an excerpt from the poem of Magtymguly entitled “Humankind”, in which he addresses his fellows and descendants in these life-affirming lines: “Whether asleep or awake, he will always keep in his mind whatever work is chosen by humankind”.

Let loyalty to creative thoughts and the ideals of peace, justice and progress serve as the main and clear guide in our joint work.

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

*Mr. Serdar Berdimuhamedov, President of Turkmenistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

*The President returned to the Chair.*

#### **Address by Mr. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine**

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

*Mr. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

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

**President Zelenskyy:** I welcome all who stand for common efforts. I promise that, by being truly united, we can guarantee fair peace for all nations. What is more, unity can prevent wars.

This Hall saw many wars but not as an active defender against aggressions. In many cases, the fear of war, the final war, was the loudest here — the war after which no one would gather in the General Assembly Hall again. The third World War was seen as a nuclear war — a conflict between States on the highway to nukes. Other wars seemed less scary compared to the threat of the so-called great Powers firing their nuclear stockpiles. The twentieth century therefore taught the world to restrain from the use of weapons of mass destruction — not to deploy, not to proliferate, not to threaten with and not to test, but to promote complete nuclear disarmament. Frankly, that is a good strategy. But it should not be the only strategy to protect the world from a final war.

Ukraine gave up its third-largest nuclear arsenal. The world then decided that Russia should become a keeper of such power. Yet history shows that it was Russia that deserved nuclear disarmament the most, back in the 1990s; and Russia deserves it now. Terrorists have no right to hold nuclear weapons. No right.

But nukes are truly not the scariest now. While nukes remain in place, mass destruction is gaining momentum. The aggressor is weaponizing many other things, and those things are used not only against our country, but also against those of all present. There are many conventions that restrict weapons but there are no real restrictions on weaponization.

First, let me give an example — food. Since the start of the full-scale war, the Ukrainian ports in the Black and Azov Seas have been blocked by Russia. Until now, our ports on the Danube River remain the target for missiles and drones. Russia's attempt to weaponize the food shortage on the global market in exchange for the recognition for some, if not all, of the captured territories is clear. Russia is launching food prices as weapons. The impact spans from the Atlantic coast of Africa to South-East Asia. That is the threat scale.

I would like to thank the leaders who supported our Black Sea Grain Initiative and the Grain From Ukraine programme. United, we made turned weapons back into food. More than 45 nations saw how important it was to make Ukrainian food products available on the market, from Algeria and Spain to Indonesia and China.

Even now, when Russia has undermined the Black Sea Grain Initiative, we are working to ensure food stability. I hope that many Member States will join us in those efforts. We launched a temporary sea-export corridor from our ports, and we are working hard to preserve the land routes for grain exports. It is alarming to see how some of our friends in Europe play out solidarity in a political theatre, making a thriller out of the grain. They may seem to play their own role, but they are in fact helping to set the stage for a Moscow actor.

Second is the weaponization of energy. Many times, the world has witnessed Russia using energy as a weapon. The Kremlin weaponized oil and gas to weaken the leaders of other countries when they came to Red Square. Now the threat is even greater. Russia is weaponizing nuclear energy. Not only is it spreading its unreliable nuclear-power-plant construction technologies, but it is also turning other countries' power plants into real dirty bombs. Look what Russia did to our Zaporizhzhya power plant. It shelled it and occupied it, and it now blackmails others with radiation leaks. Is there any sense in reducing nuclear weapons when Russia is weaponizing nuclear power plants? That is a scary question. The global security architecture offers no response or protection against

such a treacherous radiation threat, and there is no accountability for radiation blackmailers so far.

The third example is children. Unfortunately, various terrorist groups abduct children to put pressure on their families and societies. But never before have mass kidnapping and deportation been a part of Government policy — not until now. We know the names of tens of thousands of children, and have evidence regarding hundreds of thousands of others, kidnapped by Russia in the occupied territories of Ukraine and later deported. The International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Putin for that crime. We are trying to get children back home, but time goes by. What will happen to them? Those children in Russia are taught to hate Ukraine, and all ties with their families are broken. That is clearly genocide.

When hatred is weaponized against one nation, it never stops there. Each decade, Russia starts a new war. Parts of Moldova and Georgia remain occupied. Russia turned Syria into ruins, and if it were not for Russia, chemical weapons would have never been used there. Russia has almost swallowed Belarus. It is clearly threatening Kazakhstan and the Baltic States. The goal of the current war against Ukraine is to turn our land, our people, our lives and our resources into a weapon against those present and against the international rules-based order. Many seats in the General Assembly Hall may become empty if Russia succeeds in its treachery and aggression.

The aggressor disseminates death and brings ruin, even without nukes, but the outcomes are similar. We see towns and villages in Ukraine wiped out by Russian artillery, completely levelled to the ground. We see a war of drones. We know the possible effects of spreading the war into cyberspace. Artificial intelligence could be trained to fight well before it would learn to help humankind. Thank God, people have not yet learned to use climate as a weapon. While humankind fails in the objectives of its climate policy, it means that extreme weather will still have an impact on normal global life, and some evil State will also weaponize its outcomes. When people in the streets of New York and other cities of the world went out on climate protests, we all saw them. When people in Morocco, Libya and other countries die as a result of natural disasters, when islands and countries disappear under water and when tornadoes and deserts spread into new areas, while all that was happening, one unnatural disaster in Moscow



decided to launch a big war and kill tens of thousands of people. We have to stop it.

United, we must act to defeat the aggressor and focus all our capabilities and energy on addressing those challenges. Just as nuclear weapons are limited, the aggressor and all its tools and methods of war must likewise be restrained. Every war can now become the final one, but it takes our unity to make sure that aggression will not intrude again. It is not a dialogue between the so-called great Powers somewhere behind closed doors, but the open work of all nations for peace that can guarantee us all a new era of no wars.

Last year (see A/77/PV.7, annex I), I presented the outlines of the Ukrainian peace formula at the General Assembly. Later, in Indonesia, I presented the full formula. Over the past year, the peace formula has become the basis for updating the existing security architecture. We can now bring the Charter of the United Nations back to life and guarantee the full power of the rules-based world order. Tomorrow I will present the details at a special meeting of the Security Council.

The main thing is that it is not only about Ukraine. More than 140 States and international organizations have supported the Ukrainian peace formula, fully or in part. The Ukrainian peace formula is becoming global. Its points offer solutions and steps that will stop all the forms of weaponization that Russia used against Ukraine and other countries and that may be used by other aggressors. Look, for the first time in modern history, we have a real chance to end the aggression on the terms of the nation that was attacked. It is a real chance for every nation to ensure that aggression against their State, if it happens, God forbid, will end not because their land will be divided and they will be forced to submit to military or political pressure, but because their territory and sovereignty will be fully restored.

We launched the format of meetings among national security advisers and diplomatic representatives. Important talks and consultations were held in Hiroshima, Copenhagen and Jeddah on the implementation of the peace formula, and we are preparing a global peace summit. I invite all participants who do not tolerate any aggression to jointly prepare the summit.

I am aware of the attempts to make some shady dealings behind the scenes. Evil cannot be trusted. Ask Prigozhin if one can bet on Putin's promises. I

ask that Member States hear me. Let unity decide everything openly.

While Russia is pushing the world to a final war, Ukraine is doing everything to ensure that, after the Russian aggression, no one in the world will dare to attack any nation. Weaponization must be restrained; war crimes must be punished; deported people must come back home; and the occupier must return to its own land. We must be united to make that happen, and we will do it. *Slava Ukraini*.

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

*Mr. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. Alejandro Giammattei Falla, President of the Republic of Guatemala**

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

*Mr. Alejandro Giammattei Falla, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Alejandro Giammattei Falla, President of the Republic of Guatemala, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Giammattei Falla (spoke in Spanish):** I would like to acknowledge the work of the President of the seventy-seventh session and to congratulate the President of this session, Mr. Dennis Francis, by welcoming the theme adopted for the session on the need to rebuild trust among nations and to address threats to peace, prosperity and the progress of the peoples of the United Nations.

Today we find ourselves at an unprecedented time. For more than a year and a half, we have watched with horror the war launched against Ukraine by the Russian Federation, which violates the most elementary principles on which the international order was based after the Second World War. Delegations know what the worst thing is — that we seem to have got used to it. We have become accustomed to flagrant violations of human rights in Ukraine, to war and to death. Worse still, instead of dealing with it, we have become

accustomed to looking the other way in the face of a sad and stark reality that we try to ignore. That has led us to mistrust among human beings, inequality among nations and a lack of respect for peace agreements. In those circumstances, human prosperity and progress are impossible.

Today, here, before all, I declare that this Organization is not the most active: we have food insecurity, deaths due to wars and large-scale migration, among many other problems. We must therefore make it work. We must all work together. We need a revitalized Organization that seeks solutions but, above all, we need countries that are willing to overcome their ideological positions and their long-standing conflicts. This is the time for human beings, represented by their peoples, to shake hands and to be ready to share their wealth by investing in countries that need it in order to generate the wealth to survive. It is about saving the human race. It is about saving the planet. It is about having future generations living in peace and development. As an example of what I am talking about, we can mention the vast movements of human beings fleeing the crises in their countries due to insecurity, a lack of food or the economic conditions.

Under that new order, we must therefore achieve a United Nations striving for peace and human development. We must demand respect for international law, respect for the peaceful settlement of disputes and respect for the self-determination of peoples. To achieve that, every country must raise its voice. Every country must say “enough is enough”. Today my country joins the cry to say “enough is enough”. My country joins the global call for the immediate withdrawal of Russian forces, while respecting the territorial integrity and national unity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. Glory to Ukraine.

Disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, as well as the use of nuclear energy for peaceful uses, are among the most important pillars of the Organization. As a State party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, my country is deeply committed to the common goal of a world free of weapons of mass destruction. Imagine what a catastrophe it would be for the world if the Russian Federation’s illegal and unprovoked aggression were to destroy the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, the largest nuclear power plant in Europe, the physical integrity and

operation of which are threatened, and which could cause a disaster of unimaginable magnitude. That is why I reiterate Guatemala’s position as a country that respects the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. I urge that all nuclear-weapon States, including the five permanent members of the Security Council, charged with maintaining peace and security within this Organization, sit down and candidly achieve total global nuclear disarmament.

Guatemala contributes to the maintenance of international security through its active participation in peacekeeping operations. As a country that promotes peace, Guatemala has committed to the United Nations by deploying Guatemalan officers, making us the fourth-largest troop contributor in the Americas.

We reiterate our firm commitment to, and solidarity with, the development and prosperity of the Haitian people, who are at risk owing to a multidimensional crisis of a political nature, internal security and a lack of development and the humanitarian crisis that they are experiencing. As an international community, we must respond and deal with catastrophes before they become even more devastating. If this Organization decides on a new peace mission to be deployed on Haitian territory, it can count on Guatemala’s participation in the instruction and training of Haitian forces for as long as the peace mission is present in that country.

In the proposed change to the foundations of the United Nations so that it has the mechanisms to enable it to meet the main challenges facing humankind, so in need of peace and development, Guatemala calls on the community of States to make rapid progress on a proposal, under the aegis of country-level experts, to define substantive reforms to the United Nations so that it can return to the commendable path following its founding in 1945, with which, over the years, we have forgotten to fully comply.

*Mr. Pary Rodríguez (Plurinational State of Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

I propose that we initiate as soon as possible a fourth amendment to the founding Charter, that addresses such new approaches and is in line with the current times, which are indeed difficult times, but they also bring with them great opportunities. In that amendment, it must be ensured that recognition of the sovereign equality of States is a reality, that the peaceful resolution of conflicts between countries is an obligation and that nuclear energy is used only

for peaceful purposes, but, perhaps most important of all, that the Members of the United Nations do not exclude anyone.

As our book *Popol Vuh*, from one of the world's greatest civilizations, the Mayan civilization, says: "Let no one be left behind; let everyone rise up". Today I wish to say that, as the ruler of a founding country of the United Nations, I recognize that the transformation of this body will lead to a radical change in multilateralism. It must acknowledge the importance of the inclusiveness and universality of this Organization.

How can it be, in the twenty-first century, that this Organization excludes a country like Taiwan? It is a country that contributes to science, sophisticated technology, health and development, among many other things. However, what is most important is that we have prevented the citizens of Taiwan from having a voice to represent them in this forum. Guatemala calls on the United Nations to exhaust all necessary means to ensure international peace and security in the Taiwan Strait. We also condemn the constant and increasing military manoeuvres in the waters and airspace around Taiwan, which endanger the security of the region, and which affect international transportation and trade.

Four years ago, I took office as President of the Republic of Guatemala. In that time, I have heard great speeches, and major treaties and commitments have been signed to stop climate change. I want to tell everyone that the world today is worse than it was four years ago. The world needs action more than speeches, commitments and treaties. The region that suffers the most from the impacts of climate change is the Caribbean and Central American region. Although we generate only a small percentage of greenhouse gases, we suffer the most damage year after year. We are exhausting our resources and must indebt ourselves in order to rebuild countries that are damaged again the following year, which leads us to seek out loans from international sources that grant them very happily and then live off of international usury. The reports of United Nations rapporteurs then speak of the lack of human development in our countries. They criticize and point fingers at us. But who points the finger at those who, due to industrialization and lack of commitment to combating the impacts of climate change and greenhouse gases, cause the death of human beings around the world? There are countries that neither accept the United Nations agreements on climate change nor pay their budgetary contributions,

and yet refuse to accept responsibility for the high level of pollution caused by their industries, much less for the destruction they cause. Is that fair?

The serious threat of drug use, especially synthetic drugs, should be a topic of great concern for the international community. It is an invisible enemy that has an impact on health in addition to affecting governance and slowing the development of countries. Among the changes in the approach to this issue that the Organization must make, countries must understand that transnational crime must be combated transnationally, because, as it turns out, the large consumer countries are also the main countries that launder money, a product of the drug business, making this fight a global responsibility. We have to end it. The fight against drug trafficking, including synthetic drugs, must be a joint and coordinated effort in which information flows in accordance with domestic and international regulations. We must implement effective strategies to confront criminal organizations that cause hundreds of thousands of deaths per year. A world free of drugs will not be achieved without a world committed to fighting them.

Guatemala is firmly committed to the promotion of food security and the zero-hunger goal in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To that end, we have increased our national food budget and strengthened the school nutrition law, which aims to guarantee the nutrition of school-age children and adolescents in a sustainable way, with a view to guaranteeing their ability to enjoy a decent, healthy and active life. I am proud to report that, in 2022, 2.6 million students in public educational centres benefitted from those efforts. Guatemala also notes with alarm that the Black Sea Grain Initiative was not renewed. We highlight the risks that poses to food security worldwide, including difficulties for humanitarian operations that help to alleviate hunger worldwide and the destabilization of food prices. We condemn the use of hunger as a tool of war. That is a violation of human rights and international humanitarian law. We call for good sense and cooperation, and for preventing the further deterioration of the global food situation.

A topic that does not seem important but should be significant for a revitalized Organization is cultural heritage, because our world's mosaic of cultural diversity is threatened by war. We must reinforce and safeguard the evidence of our past, which is essential to understanding our present and building our future.

Guatemala has worked very hard to care for our heritage and to showcase to the world our ancient cultural wealth, and it is with satisfaction and pride that we can say that the celebration of Holy Week was declared a part of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity. I also wish to mention that yesterday the Tak'alik Ab'aj National Park, which is considered to be the first city where the Mayan civilization originated, was declared a World Heritage site. As the old saying goes, he who does not know his past cannot make the best of his present and future.

Guatemala is known for its consistent calls for respect for international law and respect for sovereignty. We have done the work and proved that differences can be resolved through international justice mechanisms. Such is the case with our territorial, insular and maritime dispute with Belize, which both countries are committed to resolving in a peaceful and respectful manner, whatever the International Court of Justice decides on the matter. The good will between the parties, as demonstrated by Belize and Guatemala, is an example of how a peaceful solution can be reached through international justice, in contrast to war over conflicts resulting from the foolishness of human beings.

Guatemala recognizes that one of the greatest and alarming threats to life and freedom of our time is human trafficking, a contemptible phenomenon that not only violates human rights, but is a veritable crime against humanity that violates the most basic values that we cling to, as a community of nations. This crime is related to slavery, as its practice involves the purchase and sale of human beings, who should live in freedom as a fundamental right of life. That is why my country unequivocally condemns this crime. In that spirit, we have adopted a series of legal and political measures to repress it. We have a public policy against violence, exploitation and trafficking in persons, which aligns with and optimizes State actions to guarantee the protection of and the comprehensive care for victims of human trafficking. It also promotes the prevention, detection, prosecution and punishment of this abhorrent crime.

In the same vein, we have a policy for the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents, which focuses on guaranteeing the comprehensive, equitable and inclusive development of children and adolescents. This policy, which was adopted in 2022, brings together more than 90 executive branch institution

programmes for the development of human beings at all stages of life. Guatemala, through these different initiatives, seeks to stand out in the fight against human trafficking, given that the number of people affected by this phenomenon exceeds the number of enslaved persons in times past. That is why we have made it a priority to stop these scourges, which are an affront to human dignity and human beings. I must remind States that the profits generated by human trafficking already exceed those from international arms trafficking and, at this rate, will soon reach and surpass those from illicit drug trafficking. Children are ripped from their homes and given to gangs that prostitute them, and, when they cease to be fresh meat for these criminals, they are dismissed and their organs sold for transplants. We cannot continue to be indifferent and apathetic in the face of these horrifying crimes.

This is my last speech before the General Assembly as Head of State, and, unlike the untruths that we have heard from the rostrum today, I will hand power over to the person elected by the sovereign majority will of the people of Guatemala, on 14 January, in accordance with the Constitution. Unnecessary international interference has marred the elections. While our democracy may not be perfect, it has made the handover of power possible in addition to respect for the Constitution on a continent where some presidents fight to stay and hold on to their positions, allowing re-elections even against what is mandated by their own constitutions. In Guatemala, the principle of handing over power is fully complied with, every four years.

In conclusion, the United Nations is facing history's greatest challenge, one that requires us to be strong, united and ready for action. World peace, which we took for granted for years, now requires a new international agreement that goes beyond differences, colour, countries and latitudes. We need a people-centred agreement that has citizens as protagonists and people as the ultimate objective. Putting an end to war, which would be ideal, is today's great imperative. Whatever our beliefs, let us fight for peace. Wherever we are, let us fight for peace lest one day we wake up to find ourselves invaded or killed by others. For that reason, let us unite, let us strive so that one day we can all awake citizens of the world in a climate of peace, progress, prosperity and development.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President



of the Republic of Guatemala for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Alejandro Giammattei Falla, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Address by Ms. Katalin Novák, President of Hungary**

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Hungary.

*Ms. Katalin Novák, President of Hungary, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Katalin Novák, President of Hungary, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

**President Novák:** Of the people, by the people, for the people. We all know the most famous words of the Gettysburg Address. However, fewer people know that Abraham Lincoln borrowed these words from one of the greatest Hungarians, Lajos Kossuth, the leader of our 1848 war of independence. He was born on this very day, 19 September. All for the people, and all by the people. Nothing about the people without the people. This is the main purpose of the sovereign Hungarian State and the guarantee of our freedom. The Hungarian people want peace and security. We have 1,000 years of turbulent history in the heart of Europe — in the draughty Carpathian Basin — with wars, oppression and occupation, revolutions and wars of independence. We know the feeling of vulnerability. We know what it is like to live divided and what suffering wars cause. We know how precious freedom is and how painful it is to be deprived of it.

I myself was born during the decades of Soviet oppression, when my country was not free. A childhood spent in a softening communist dictatorship left indelible marks on my generation. The rejection of any kind of oppression has become an instinct in us. That is why we condemn clearly and unequivocally the violation of international law, the attack on another State, the Russian aggression against Ukraine, which has caused immense suffering and destruction and has destroyed the peaceful life of Europe. We are for the victims and against further escalation. This is why we are providing

humanitarian aid to Ukraine and to all those fleeing the war. We help beyond our size and strength. This is why we emphasize that there are 150,000 Hungarians living in Ukraine, in Transcarpathia, who share every hardship and struggle, sacrifice and success. This war also directly affects us Hungarians. It is not just in our neighbourhood. Hungarian fathers and sons living in Ukraine are also giving their lives in the trenches. Thus, we want peace — in our country, in Ukraine, in Europe, in the world. We want peace and the security that comes with it.

Hungary stands for the territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine. We understand Ukraine's desire to be part of the community of European countries, and we therefore expect it to uphold the values that characterize our community, including — expressly — the protection and full guarantee of the rights of national minorities — not in words, in deeds. At the invitation of President Zelenskyy, I have been to Kyiv twice since the outbreak of the war. I have seen the suffering of the families. I have seen what they experience when the peace is broken. I have met Ukrainian and Hungarian people who have lost family members. I have met Ukrainian children for whom a kindergarten was set up with the help and support of Hungary — children whom the war is depriving of a happy childhood. The war and the suffering affects families first and foremost: mothers who lose their husbands and sons; fathers who go into battle with their barely grown-up sons; and children who lose their sense of security and faith in the future. There is no alternative to peace. The killing, the terrible destruction, must stop as soon as possible. War is never the solution. We know that peace is only realistically attainable when at least one side sees the time for negotiations as having come. We cannot decide for Ukrainians how much they are prepared to sacrifice, but we have a duty to represent our own nation's desire for peace. And we must do all we can to avoid an escalation of the war.

I am a mother of three children, and we mothers know that in every war, children are the most vulnerable. War hits them hardest, although they are the ones who need security and stability the most. These are lost in war. Hungary has always been respectful towards other nations. We are loyal to our allies and our partners alike, as proud and active members of the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the European Union and the Council of Europe. We do our share of the joint tasks, even beyond our size and

economic weight. As an equestrian nation, we speak honestly, with a straight posture. Here we are at the United Nations in New York — Heads of State and Government, world leaders. We have come together as we do every year in the United Nations, which was created by our ancestors' desire for peace. Demand a ceasefire and a just peace!

Of the people, by the people, for the people. I would also like to take this opportunity to send a message to the world from young Hungarians. I have asked the youth delegate of Hungary to the United Nations, Csenge Offenbächer, who is here with us today, to help us articulate the message of Hungarian youth. This is the sentence they gave me: "Today we need solidarity with each other more than ever. So young people feel that we must look out for each other, that we must not let go of the hands of others reaching out towards us".

This spring in Budapest, in our nation's main square, which is named after Lajos Kossuth, whom I mentioned earlier, Pope Francis prayed in the presence of tens of thousands of people with the following words.

"[I]nstil into the hearts of peoples and their leaders the desire to build peace and to give the younger generations a future of hope, not war, a future full of cradles, not tombs".

The fifth Budapest Demographic Summit, the most important international forum on demographic issues, was concluded three days ago. In addition to war, a large part of the world is facing a difficulty that is oppressing it from within. In Europe and in many other countries of the United Nations, the demographic winter has turned into an ice age. Public leaders, thinkers, demographers and the representatives of family organizations and professional workshops from 60 countries and five continents sought answers on how to protect and strengthen families and overcome our demographic difficulties. If we do not address the issue, it will have an immeasurable impact on our economies, societies and security in the near future. Elon Musk may be right when he says that demographic decline is a more serious problem than the climate crisis. Little attention is being paid to the real and irreversible changes taking place in our world. If there are no children, there will be no future. What is the point of looking after the Earth if we do not have children and grandchildren to pass it on to? If childlessness becomes widespread, if we continue to see fewer children born each year than the number

who die in our countries, our beloved world, which we believe to be secure, will be shattered.

We Hungarians see a solution to the demographic crisis in the strengthening and support of families. Our aim is for everyone to have a full and happy family life and to have all the children that young couples want. Hungary was the first country in the world to bring the issue of strengthening families and tackling the demographic crisis into focus. We have built up a broad family support system. Our country's spending on family support is the largest in the European Union, and it has not destroyed the Hungarian economy. On the contrary, the strengthening of families has been a positive in economic terms. We protect parental freedom. We believe firmly that the right to raise children does not belong to the State, to non-governmental organizations, the media or the knowledge industry. It belongs to parents. Any of us who have children are ready to fight at any time to ensure that they can live in peace and freedom. Families pass on their values from generation to generation, in the face of every difficulty, every historic trauma and every challenge. The message of the Demographic Summit of Budapest, our capital city, which is 150 years old this year, is clear. Pro-family forces stand up for their values and interests even at a time when anti-family and anti-child ideologies are on an unprecedented offensive — and, in fact, especially then. We recognize that family is the key to security. A strong, united and healthy family is a guarantee of security.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Hungary for the statement she has just made.

*Ms. Katalin Novák, President of Hungary, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Address by Mr. Alain Berset, President of the Swiss Confederation**

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Swiss Confederation.

*Mr. Alain Berset, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Alain Berset,

President of the Swiss Confederation, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Berset** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): The era we are traversing has been marked by a series of crises and proliferating major conflicts in a world full of tensions. While the challenges we face are formidable, it is our mindset and our attitude in facing them that are now extremely important and decisive. Are we ready to do everything we can to try to improve the situation? In any case, it is clear that we must. Together, we must combat these crises — the climate crisis, wars, social conflict and growing inequalities, as well as the weakening of democratic institutions and the erosion of the multilateral structures that enable us to connect at the international level. It would seem that that everywhere — or almost everywhere — protectionism, a kind of withdrawal and selfishness are on the rise, even though we are all aware that withdrawal, threats and violence have never solved global issues and inequalities. It is true. We all see it. We are experiencing a global crisis, probably the biggest since the end of the Second World War.

In launching an aggressive war against Ukraine, the Russian Federation has not only attacked a peaceful country, but it has also attacked international law and our multilateral structures. What is strange is that this aggression is the work of a permanent member of the Security Council, which, according to the Charter of the United Nations, has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Today we should recall the essential principles enshrined in the Charter and ensure that we fulfil the mandate entrusted to us in that regard.

What we also know in these situations is that it is the poorest and most fragile States and regions that would suffer the most if our confidence in the international system were to weaken. I have already mentioned the Charter of the United Nations, which is a cornerstone of public international law, and this year is the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which represents a unique opportunity to reaffirm the global consensus embodied in the Declaration and a key moment for uniting and strengthening the international community. The United Nations is the foundation of peaceful collaboration and mutual trust between States. I believe there is no way that these challenges can be overcome by isolated initiatives. Our actions must be

collaborative and collective. Take the fight against inequality, for instance.

Strong multilateral institutions are essential to combating inequalities, which unfortunately always worsen during crises. Climate change exacerbates social and economic inequalities, too. And we are seeing inequalities increase exponentially — whether they are social and gender inequalities or economic disparities — not only between countries but within them. I was struck when I read again recently that over the past 20 years the income gap between the richest 10 per cent and the poorest 50 per cent has doubled. I was also struck to read again recently that inequalities are as large today as they were at the beginning of the twentieth century, before the First World War. Those inequalities have continued to have a disproportionate effect on those who are already the most vulnerable in our societies, thereby encouraging instability and populism and a loss of confidence in democracy and institutions. That fragility therefore threatens all of us, nationally and internationally.

For what is probably too long, we have believed that defending our interests and protecting the most vulnerable were two different things. Today we know that the one cannot exist without the other. And strong multilateral institutions are also essential to promoting peace. But we do have a few things that we can build on together. For instance, the Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace stresses the very important point that prevention is the starting point of any peace effort. Inequality of access and of opportunity in terms of food, health, employment and property leads to conflicts. We must all make every effort to ensure that everyone, in all of our countries, is able to participate fully in political, economic, social and cultural life. In that regard, internationally speaking, we must engage resolutely in combating threats, persecution and acts of violence, especially those against women — and especially people who are working to defend human rights. Young people must also have real prospects for development and prosperity.

I have spoken of inequality. I have spoken of the promotion of peace. There is also of course the key role played by multilateral institutions in the protection of civilians. All armed conflicts are different. But what they all have in common is that they increase inequality and the suffering of civilians. In that regard, strong multilateral institutions are essential. Also essential is respect for international humanitarian law, which is an

absolute priority for Switzerland and at the heart of our efforts in the Security Council. And I want to take this opportunity to reiterate that the protection of civilians in armed conflict is not an option but an obligation for all the parties to a conflict.

Over the past year I have had several opportunities to visit countries that have been marked by conflict, notably Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Colombia. Those contacts with conflict-affected populations have served as a reminder of how essential it is to address the root causes of conflicts if we are to ensure lasting peace. I was also able to observe first-hand how important the full participation of women is to any return to peace. For that reason, Switzerland remains committed to implementing the agenda on women and peace and security and will continue to actively work for the full implementation of the relevant resolutions.

During armed conflicts, the lack of essential goods and services for the civilian population often claims more lives than the direct impact of the hostilities. It exacerbates inequalities and undermines the return to peace. In that context, I would like to take this opportunity to stress the importance of the United Nations peacekeeping missions, which are doing indispensable work for the populations that are most affected. In that regard, I also believe that all humanitarian actors, including those in United Nations missions on the ground and other actors, must be protected and supported. In that context, the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) must also be strongly defended. Owing to the growing number of crises, our Organization is dealing with an unprecedented and worrisome increase in needs. As the depositary of the Geneva Conventions and the headquarters of the ICRC, Switzerland is firmly committed to meeting that humanitarian imperative. The work of the ICRC is fundamental to the protection of civilians.

Today I have mentioned some of the factors in the clearly immense challenges we are facing. We must be clear about where our collective interests lie — and that is certainly not in the disorder that the world is witnessing and that some are hoping to intensify for their own benefit. On the contrary, our collective interests lie in a renewed world order that can guarantee stability, trust and prospects for all. And it is precisely for that reason that we must take a stand and commit to keeping international cooperation alive. The United

Nations did not come out of nowhere. It embodies the institutionalized hope for a better world. It is an arguably idealistic project, born of another age of war, brutality and despair, and it rests on the belief that international cooperation is vital, that the world can be a better place only if each and every one of us shoulders our responsibilities and that ultimately what unites nations and peoples is much stronger than what divides them. Perhaps that observation can give us cause for optimism during this time marked by significant pessimism, and can encourage us to both strengthen and deepen our work together on a global scale.

The seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly offers us a unique chance and a rare opportunity to come together in a show of trust and to prepare together for the Summit of the Future in 2024 in order to strengthen cooperation on essential issues, fill the gaps in global governance and reaffirm existing commitments. That applies in particular to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Yesterday's debates and discussions at the Sustainable Development Goals Summit were very impressive and interesting to participate in. The outcomes of the Summit should enable us to breathe new life into the 2030 Agenda, which is none other than our collective road map to a better future. Let us therefore demonstrate responsibility and solidarity with a view to building a fairer and more egalitarian world — not so much for us today but for those who will succeed us, our future generations. It really must be made clear that we need to shoulder that responsibility ourselves and that we cannot delegate it. It is our responsibility.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Swiss Confederation for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Alain Berset, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Ms. Nataša Pirc Musar, President of the Republic of Slovenia**

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Slovenia.

*Ms. Nataša Pirc Musar, President of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*



**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Nataša Pirc Musar, President of the Republic of Slovenia, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

**President Musar:** Let me first congratulate the President on his election to lead the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session. It is truly a great honour to be addressing the general debate of the Assembly for the first time in my capacity as the President of Slovenia, as this institution is facing the most challenging of times — times that we have not seen since the United Nations was first established. I will return to that point again later.

We live in a world in which various actors, including private companies and individuals, affect international relations at every level and across sovereign boundaries. It is a world that has changed demographically and technologically. It is a world in which human dignity is still not guaranteed for all and is increasingly challenged for the most marginalized and vulnerable people. It is a world with a set of normative commitments, including legally binding treaties, that are not being implemented. It is a world of many wars, deadly conflicts and aggressions against States, and of the suffering of many civilians, who fear for their lives or are affected by the socioeconomic destruction caused by conflict. It is a world that has not universally recognized the seriousness of the climate change unfolding before our eyes. It is a world that lacks global solidarity for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals that we have all committed to. It is a world that needs the United Nations, with a reformed, representative Security Council that will be able to respond effectively, adequately and fairly to all the challenges I have mentioned.

We should tackle those challenges together as one. If we continue to prioritize national interests, private interests or the particular interests of individual actors and leave the resolution of global problems on the sidelines, we will extinguish ourselves as a civilization. In that context, I would like to briefly touch on four issues that call for the attention of all of us and require that we all adopt and implement appropriate measures. They are climate change, Security Council reform, the pitfalls of the digital age and, of course, gender equality.

With regard to climate change, it may sound like a cliché to say that we need to abandon the “business

as usual” mentality. But it is not a cliché. Business as usual is not working. It is failing us all. Climate change is the greatest challenge of our time. The catastrophic floods that hit Slovenia in August were just one more event among the many around the world that prove the point. I hope that we will be able to deal with the flooding’s consequences. But let us think of countries that have less capacity to do so, such as small island developing States. They are frequent victims of catastrophic natural disasters, but their recovery costs are disproportionately high.

Everyone should invest in an environmentally sustainable world, but I want to be clear — not everyone equally. Global solidarity is a matter of climate justice. Intergovernmental solidarity, with richer States contributing more than the poorer ones and with the richest private companies also contributing their fair share, must be guided by the understanding that climate change is a result of human activities, past and present. I am therefore pleased to announce that Slovenia plans to increase its contribution to the Green Climate Fund by 50 per cent. Addressing the growing financing gap between the needs of developing countries and the available financial resources is essential to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, I am very concerned that the current geopolitical polarization is hindering collaborative climate action. I only wish that in the circumstances scientists were listened to more. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, simply keeping our promises would already be a step in the right direction. Sustainable development must become our joint and purposeful goal and the principle guiding everyone’s behaviour. We must integrate climate action, as well as the related question of water and food security, into conflict prevention and resolution and sustainable peacebuilding.

Slovenia continues to be actively involved in ensuring climate and environmental justice, including the right to a clean and healthy environment, and in securing equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation for all. During the United Nations 2023 Water Conference, I emphasized that water is life, water is existence and water is peace. It is for that reason that I want to take this opportunity to repeat our call for the establishment of a United Nations special envoy for water, which would be an important step towards ensuring more coherent water efforts both inside and outside the United Nations.

On 6 June, Slovenia was elected as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the 2024–2025 term. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members for their confidence in electing my country to serve on the Council. We will take on that task as a great honour, with profound humility and a sense of shared responsibility. The work we will do in our term will be based on the numerous conversations and exchanges that we had with Member States during our campaign.

With regard to the Security Council, I cannot avoid the discussions on its reform, which have been going on for decades. I truly hope that we will soon see a light at the end of the tunnel. Slovenia has always been among the Member States claiming that a change in the composition of the Council's permanent and non-permanent membership is long overdue. The current distribution of its seats is neither fair nor representative. Furthermore, Slovenia belongs to the majority of Member States that are deeply concerned about the unrestrained use of the power of the veto, which is causing us to lose faith in the Council, and has also resulted in its failing to act when action is required.

In Europe, we view Ukraine as a case in point. Even some of the Council's permanent members have suggested that the five permanent members of the Security Council (P5) should refrain from using the veto, at least in cases of mass atrocities. We are all seeing that very valid suggestion ignored. In that regard, we commend Liechtenstein's recent introduction, through resolution 76/262, of the veto initiative as an important invitation to the P5 to reflect thoroughly on a situation before resorting to a veto. At the same time, it should be recalled that the Charter of the United Nations itself gives the P5 an opportunity to express their displeasure with decision-making but still act responsibly. They may not like a draft resolution, but they can choose to abstain in the voting and let the United Nations pursue its main goal without interruption — that of maintaining peace and security for all, not merely a few, and certainly not just one.

When we lose trust, we attack the very foundations of organized society in our international community. I am afraid that in our digital age, part of the problem of losing trust lies with science and technology. Inventions are meant to advance humankind. Social media was not invented to disconnect us, but too often it does exactly that. Artificial intelligence can be useful, but it can also be dangerous. In that regard, I applaud the Secretary-General's resolve to form a high-level advisory body on

artificial intelligence. We need to find a way to govern the development of new technologies, including artificial intelligence, in a way that does not impede economic, development, social and research opportunities and does not put us at risk. The answer should be a human-centric and human rights-based approach to the full life cycle of technologies, encompassing their design, development and application as well as their decline. The Global Digital Compact should be centred on that notion. Things can be done, but we will need all actors, including private companies, to be on board with an honest and meaningful commitment.

Ensuring that human rights are the foundation of an open, safe digital future will not be an easy task. In that regard, I am looking at a key menace of our time — disinformation. Unfortunately, our time is once again one of competing narratives, except that now the threat they pose to humankind is much more complex. We are in an era of snack news, an attention economy, the fabrication of facts and increasing disagreements about facts precisely because we no longer trust any narrative. We may have freedom of information, but we are not protected against false information, manipulation and deceit. The Secretary-General was on point when he referred to the proliferation of hate and lies in the digital space as grave global harm. Big tech companies should take more systematic responsibility for the content they host and moderate. They should better protect users from hate speech, disinformation and other harmful online content. What is unacceptable offline should not be acceptable online.

I am about to say a few words on a subject so important that I have saved it for the last part of my address — gender equality. This year we are celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It saddens me that today we are still facing the fact that half of the world's population, women and girls, experience inequality, exclusion and even brutal violence. Their societal marginalization, often coupled with poverty and a lack of opportunities for receiving quality education, and with exclusion from labour markets and decision-making processes, is not only unjust but also results in a monumental waste of potential for our societies.

To ensure dignity for everyone, including women and girls, we all must pursue that goal, whether in the West, East, North or South, or anywhere in between. We should start at home, and in our United Nations home.

In that regard, I would like to recall an astounding detail that illustrates the need to take Sustainable Development Goal 5 very seriously. It is that it will take 140 years to achieve the equal representation of women in leadership positions in the workplace. I think that is simply unacceptable, and the Secretary-General agrees. The achievement of women's full, equal and meaningful participation in political and public life is part of his New Agenda for Peace. That is why I am very much in favour of initiatives to achieve that objective, including within the framework of the United Nations. On that particular point, I am thinking of the initiative from the Group of Women Leaders Voices for Change and Inclusion aimed at alternating the gender of the presidency of the General Assembly. The President here leads an Assembly of the world's most important global institution. We are all painfully aware that so far only four Presidents of the General Assembly have been women — four in its entire history — while 74 have been men. We should live up to our own declarations on gender equality and make them a reality in the work of the General Assembly as well. That would be a vivid and symbolic way of demonstrating our joint commitment.

As I leave this rostrum, I would like to reaffirm the need for multilateralism. It needs to be a different type of multilateralism, one that is effective and inclusive, making the United Nations an actor and a forum fully fit for the future. The most pressing challenges today — and I have elaborated on some of them — cannot be addressed by individual States, whatever their size or power. This must be a collective effort, or our children and grandchildren will be affected far more deeply than the generation of leaders gathered here. We must work for a new global compact that needs to be principled, to rise above individual interests and be based on global solidarity. It needs to prioritize the protection of nature and human dignity, and it also needs to have a long horizon. Slovenia is fully committed to contributing to the Pact for the Future, and we look forward to actively engaging in the upcoming Summit of the Future next year. We must be ambitious, even if we do not agree on solutions to all the emerging challenges. We need to use our power and resources to put all our collective efforts into action in order to solve them. Better one by one than none.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Slovenia for the statement she has just made.

*Ms. Nataša Pirc Musar, President of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan**

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

*Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Mirziyoyev** (*spoke in Uzbek; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): Today's meeting of the General Assembly is taking place in the context of fundamental changes in our system of international relations. There is a global crisis of confidence. We are experiencing problems with the functioning of security globally and seeing a growing unwillingness to comply with international law, causing huge increases in tension. These geopolitical contradictions are creating new obstacles to the free flow of trade, investment and innovation. Even in areas that concern the fate of humankind as a whole, such as climate change, hunger and inequality, we can feel that mutual communication has been lost. In this complex situation, the notions of preserving a spirit of practical cooperation and interaction, placing our common interests above existing conflicts and strengthening unity among countries are becoming more relevant than ever.

Last year we launched the Samarkand Solidarity Initiative, which is aimed at improving our shared security and development. Our main goals are to comprehensively understand our responsibility for the present and future of our countries and peoples and to engage in a global dialogue with all parties that are ready for open and constructive cooperation. I am confident that the Secretary-General's initiative to hold a Summit of the Future next year will help address the current challenges to international and regional development and increase the influence and effectiveness of our Organization.

We remain committed to continuing our policy of creating a new Uzbekistan as a law-governed, secular, democratic and social State. Our country is boldly pursuing a path of fundamental reforms and strengthening the principles of democracy and justice, based on ideals representing humane values and interests. In April, for the first time in the history of Uzbekistan, a nationwide referendum was held on our revised Constitution, which defines the priorities for our national development. More than 90 per cent of the voters in the referendum supported this truly popular Constitution, thereby ensuring that our reforms will indeed be irreversible. In our basic law we have reaffirmed our commitment to the principles of the equality of all citizens, human rights and freedom of speech and conscience, regardless of nationality, language or religion. It is on that legal basis that we have adopted our Uzbekistan 2030 development strategy. It is in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and we are fulfilling all the commitments we have undertaken.

One of the outcomes of our ongoing reforms is that the economy of Uzbekistan, despite the global challenges, is showing steady growth. Over the past six years, the gross domestic product of the country has grown more than one and a half times. Our main objective is to double that figure by 2030. Another priority of our economic liberalization is becoming a full member of the World Trade Organization in the near future. We have halved poverty in our country since 2017, thanks to policies aimed at improving our people's living standards, and our aim is to reduce poverty rates to 7 per cent by 2030. We also intend to increase by several orders of magnitude the scale of our water supply, health care, education and other social services to the population. We support the Secretary-General's Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection initiative. In order to share best practices within that framework, in 2024, under the auspices of the United Nations, we propose holding an international conference in Uzbekistan on "Social Protection: The Path towards Development".

In recent years, Uzbekistan has achieved remarkable results where the protection of human rights is concerned. We have completely abolished forced labour and child labour. For 100 years, millions were forced to pick cotton in Uzbekistan. The vast majority of the population — from teachers and doctors to entrepreneurs, workers and employees

and, unfortunately, schoolchildren and university students — were mobilized to pick cotton every year from September to December. As a result, Uzbek cotton was boycotted and for years the country was blacklisted. Thanks to our will and determination, all of that is now history. Our people have been completely liberated from cotton slavery. The ban on forced labour is guaranteed in our renewed Constitution and we have introduced criminal liability for involvement in the practice. I believe it is essential to intensify the global fight against forced and child labour, and our experience shows that it is possible to put an end to such practices.

One of Uzbekistan's strategic tasks is developing our human capital and training a creative young generation. We believe that high-quality education, accessible for all, is the most effective factor in eradicating poverty, improving public welfare and achieving sustainable economic growth. In that respect, our country has gained considerable ground in recent years, with the education system undergoing radical transformation. In the past six years, preschool education coverage has increased from 21 to 70 per cent, and that of higher education from 9 to 38 per cent. By 2030 we will have created the conditions for every child to have access to preschool education and for half of all secondary school graduates to obtain higher education.

In recent years the countries of Central Asia have embarked on a path of good-neighbourliness, stability, joint partnership and progress. Thanks to our joint efforts, Uzbekistan has managed to address problems related to State borders, transport corridors and water use with all of its neighbours. Mutual trade between the countries of the region has grown more than two-and-a-half times and the number of joint ventures has increased fivefold. Our region has become a promising centre for economic development and a transport and communications bridge linking East and West, North and South. That has led to growing interest in our countries' potential. Central Asia's openness to the world is becoming an important basis for ensuring the region's security and stable development. It is safe to say that our people have united around a growing sense of regional identity that is becoming ever stronger. We share not only a common history but a future and vital interests. Expanding our regional cooperation is and will be our only choice. I believe firmly that with the support of the international community, Central Asia will continue on a path of unity. In that



regard, transforming Central Asia into a peaceful and prosperous region will remain a priority goal of Uzbekistan's foreign policy from now on.

In Central Asia, where almost half of the population belongs to the younger generation, dealing with the issues facing young people and creating opportunities so that they can realize their potential are vital. In order to strengthen cooperation in that area, the countries of our region recently signed an agreement on the common dimensions of our youth policy. We are interested in establishing effective cooperation with the United Nations and its specialized structures while studying the best practices and achievements of other regions. In that regard, I propose to establish a working group at the United Nations to support youth development in Central Asia. As part of that endeavour, it would be helpful to develop a youth agenda for Central Asia for 2030.

Women's active participation in society and public administration is an urgent issue today. One of the noblest goals of our national policy is ensuring family stability, legal protection and a peaceful life for women and girls. In addition, we are making systemic efforts to achieve equality between men and women. For example, last year, girls accounted for 49 per cent of university enrolments, and women's participation in public administration reached 35 per cent for the first time. We have enacted a special law aimed at protecting women and minors from domestic violence, and we are interested in further expanding our cooperation with UN-Women. As a joint initiative, we have proposed holding the Asia Women's Forum in Uzbekistan next year to discuss the fulfilment of women's creative potential and to exchange experiences and best practices in that area.

The world is facing a critical environmental situation today. The triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental contamination are worsening. In those challenging conditions, while the countries of Central Asia have continued to grapple with the tragedy of the Aral Sea, our region is becoming one of the parts of the world most vulnerable to climate change. Uzbekistan is doing its best to mitigate the consequences of the Aral Sea tragedy, which remains a global problem. In the past few years we have created 1.7 million hectares of green areas with drought-tolerant plants on the dried-up bed of the Aral Sea, but the support of the international community is essential if we are to continue those vital efforts. Over the past 30

years, the air temperature in our region has increased by 1.5°C — more than twice the global average. As a result, nearly one third of the total area of glaciers in the region has melted. If that trend continues, the flow of the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, the two major rivers in our region, could decrease by 15 per cent in the next 20 years. It is expected that the per capita water supply will fall by 25 per cent and agricultural yields by 40 per cent. Unless we take timely and effective measures, the consequences of those problems will seriously undermine our region's socioeconomic stability.

In that context, we support the establishment of the position of a special representative of the Secretary-General for water resources. We are in favour of attracting and introducing state-of-art technologies for the process of establishing a water-saving-technologies platform in Central Asia, using the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism on All Freshwater Related Issues, Including Sanitation. We are building systematic cooperation as part of the green development programme that the countries of the region have adopted. That partnership completely dovetails with our interests and is aimed at preventing threats related to climate change. In that regard, I believe that the implementation of the outcomes of the High-Level Dialogue on Climate Change and Resilience in Central Asia will be extremely useful. We have put forward an initiative on adopting a draft resolution entitled "Central Asia facing global climate threats: solidarity for common prosperity", and we propose to discuss its substance at an international climate forum to be held in Samarkand next year. In that regard, I would like to emphasize that adapting the main sectors of Uzbekistan's economy to climate change, achieving carbon neutrality and drastically increasing green energy's share in our energy mix remains a strategic task for us.

We need to strengthen our joint efforts to prevent the spread of the scourge of extremism and the radicalization of young people. In Tashkent in March, we adopted a joint plan of action for the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia. As part of our national strategy on countering extremism and terrorism, we are particularly emphasizing the issue, including by helping people affected by extremist ideas to return to normal lives and reintegrate into society. We have gained unique experience in that regard. As part of our *Mehr* humanitarian operation — which means "benevolence"

and has been carried out five times over — we have repatriated more than 530 of our citizens, most of them women and children, from conflict zones in the Middle East and Afghanistan. They have all received medical, psychological and social assistance and other forms of support. Here at United Nations Headquarters in June, the international community heard stories from people who had been repatriated to our country and who had embarked on a new life. In order to continue the ongoing efforts in that direction and to promote a continued exchange of lessons learned, we have taken specific measures under the auspices of the Office of Counter-Terrorism to establish a council of regional experts on systemic work with people repatriated from combat zones. We Member States must be more united and work together to combat common threats such as international terrorism.

I would like to emphasize another important matter. We believe that the recent manifestations of religious intolerance and Islamophobia that we have seen in some countries are unacceptable. Under the auspices of UNESCO, and in order to promote ideas of religious tolerance and cooperation globally, we propose establishing an international centre in Uzbekistan for interreligious dialogue and cooperation. We take great pride in the fact that our country is the homeland of outstanding scholars and thinkers such as Al-Khwarizmi, Al-Biruni, Ibn Sina, Imam Al-Bukhari, Mirzo Ulugbek and Alisher Navoiy, who made incomparable contributions to the development of science and showed Islam to be a religion of knowledge and peace. Next year, in order to study the rich heritage of those great scholars and reveal to the world the true humane essence of Islam, we propose organizing in Uzbekistan an international conference entitled “Islam: a religion of peace and kindness”.

The developments in Afghanistan have had a direct impact on international security. The country is facing

an unprecedented situation that demands a unique approach to resolving its issues. Leaving Afghanistan to once again face its problems alone would be a grave mistake. Ignoring it, isolating it and imposing sanctions on it only exacerbate the hardships facing ordinary Afghans. We believe that humanitarian aid to the Afghan people should not be reduced. We call for developing appropriate mechanisms that can utilize Afghanistan's frozen international assets to address its acute social problems. We need an open, peaceful and sustainable Afghanistan that is actively engaged in regional cooperation initiatives and ready for mutually beneficial partnerships with its neighbours and other countries. From this rostrum, I urge the international community to come together in resolving the issue of Afghanistan. I believe it is essential that we work together to develop a flexible and constructive approach to the Afghan issue under the leadership of the United Nations.

At this turning point in history, we must all consider what kind of planet we will leave to future generations. Only through shared aspirations and collective action can we achieve lasting peace and prosperity. More than ever, we need mutual trust, unity and a spirit of cooperation. In conclusion, I want to reiterate that on this path Uzbekistan will always remain committed to strengthening deep and long-term cooperation with United Nations structures and all countries.

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

*Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

*The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.*