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12th plenary meeting

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Official Records

President: Mr. Holkeri (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 122 (continued)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/55/345/Add.3)

The President: In a letter contained in document A/55/345/Add.3, the Secretary-General informs me that, since the issuance of his communications contained in document A/55/345 and addenda 1 and 2, Cape Verde has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in that document?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 9 (continued)

General debate

The President: I give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saint Kitts and Nevis, His Excellency The Honourable Sam Condor.

Mr. Condor (Saint Kitts and Nevis): The delegation of Saint Kitts and Nevis congratulates you, Sir, on your election to the presidency the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. We pledge our full support and our assistance in the work ahead. Permit

me also to pay tribute to the work of your predecessor, who took us through a challenging fifty-fourth session.

As the new Foreign Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis, I am deeply honoured to be addressing the Assembly at this historic moment of increasing expectations at the national level. At the same time, we salute the dawn of this millennium with consternation in the face of the unprecedented challenges that confront us.

The United Nations has matured in the past five decades, but we recognize that this is an institution where maturity cannot be measured in days or decades. The maturity of which I speak should be measured by the quality of our commitment and the depth of our vision.

The phenomenon of globalization has been characterized by growth in the level of trade, increased flows of capital, and advanced technology. Although we do not question this reality, we are cognizant of the inherent challenges and inequalities of globalization resulting from our varied levels of development. Small island developing States such as Saint Kitts and Nevis have yet to access a significant share of the vaunted benefits that globalization has brought in its wake. We continue to bear a disproportionate share of its costs while experiencing continuous marginalization due to our small size and to the volatility of financial flows.

We urge the United Nations to influence developed countries to improve market conditions for exports from small developing States, which are

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especially vulnerable. We are inclined to ask the pertinent question: Why is globalization, with all its inherent benefits, not improving the lot of the poor among us?

It is evident that globalization is creating new scenarios on our landscape; as these new situations emerge, we must develop new strategies to remain relevant. What is critical, therefore, is the need for increased cooperation among Member States in our efforts to secure our various interests.

Saint Kitts and Nevis would like to stress the imperative of giving the United Nations the political impetus necessary to address the inequalities characterizing inter-State relations. This Organization, with its tradition of democracy, should resolve the anomalies created by globalization. We welcome the recommendations of the Secretary-General intended to ensure that this multifaceted phenomenon will work to the advantage of small island developing States. We intend to persevere in our efforts to adopt the requisite macroeconomic policies. However, effective governance and cooperation at the global level must complement our democratic will and our political will at the national level.

We should commit ourselves to strengthening the United Nations as the multilateral institution which provides a forum of inclusion. We shall also persist in our efforts to ensure the development of mechanisms and modalities to make possible equitable results. In particular, we urge the use of a vulnerability index to be factored into any assessment of small island States by the United Nations and by international development and financial institutions.

As for globalization and governance, Saint Kitts and Nevis is concerned by the recent action taken by the financial action task force of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, which has sought to put pressure on the already weakened economies of several Caribbean States, including Saint Kitts and Nevis. In recent times, many of us, in our efforts to diversify our economies, have undertaken to build a strong financial service sector. But sadly, as I speak, my people find themselves, along with the collective populations of four other Caribbean neighbours, assaulted through negative advisories.

We urge the United Nations, through the Secretary-General, to impress upon OECD countries

that unilateral attempts to effect multilateral solutions in their own self-interest weaken the democratic fibre of international relations. We urge, therefore, that any discussion on the development strategies of countries large or small must be raised to the level of inclusive discussions or multilateral forums.

We would like to emphasize that there is no harm in a competitive, well regulated, supervised financial service sector. However, a unilateral challenge to the sovereign rights of States to implement legal tax regimes is an unwarranted attack on the integrity of those States. We believe that the development of the financial services sector holds valuable opportunities for small developing countries. We understand also the need for due diligence and for appropriate checks and balances to frustrate and deter money laundering.

The coupling of the financial services sector and money laundering without distinguishing between the two does grave injustice to a legitimate economic enterprise. Saint Kitts and Nevis is committed to ensuring that no individual or entity abuses our financial services sector for illicit purposes. To that end, we have enacted legislation and have established a financial intelligence unit. We will be vigilant and will continue to take the necessary steps to keep this sector free from abuse. Members can thus see that we are aware of the difference, and that we are committed to ensuring that our jurisdiction complies with international standards.

The convening earlier this year of the special session on the World Summit for Social Development allowed us to focus attention on the human face of poverty, which is overlooked by globalization. While we, as developing countries, continue to adopt a proactive approach to our social development agenda, the United Nations, through its specialized agencies, should continue to support national poverty reduction programmes so as to promote favourable economic and financial opportunities for all young people.

Saint Kitts and Nevis, therefore, regards as critical the meeting on financing for development, scheduled for the year 2001. We hope that it will provide the appropriate opportunity to adopt measures to strengthen the international financial system; this could ensure long-term access to resources and technical assistance.

St. Kitts and Nevis welcomes the Secretary-General's initiative for the establishment of a disaster

response programme that would complement the resilience of our people to contribute to effective and timely reconstruction efforts. However, the impact from man-made disasters is even more devastating. The frequent passage through our waters of shipments of toxic and hazardous waste poses a serious threat to our fragile ecosystems. We urge the United Nations to assume a greater role in mobilizing support within the international community to implement this policy. We have to take action to avert the threat of pollution from ship-generated waste, as well as accidental release of hazardous and noxious substances.

We regard the progress achieved in promoting women in development as vital to the global agenda of human rights. Hence, St. Kitts and Nevis welcomed the convening this year of the special session on the status of women, which allowed Member States to review and assess the progress made since the Beijing Declaration and Plan of Action.

My Government is currently implementing a new gender management system and has introduced measures to ensure that the national budget and development programmes are more gender sensitive. We are committed to strengthening and promoting the mainstreaming of a gender perspective at all levels.

There has been much debate about the critical role of information technology in bridging the global digital divide. We welcome the Secretary-General's proposal for a United Nations Information Technology Service, which could go a long way towards our efforts to sustain our future through capacity-building.

In the Group of 77 Summit convened earlier this year, the developing countries committed to strengthening South-South cooperation through the transfer of knowledge and technology. St. Kitts and Nevis intends to forge ahead on the information super-highway. My Government has embarked on a programme to make each child in St. Kitts and Nevis computer literate by the year 2005. We encourage developed countries to use the availability of appropriate technologies, not only to generate wealth for themselves but also to advance the economic and social well being of the citizens of the world. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King,

“Through our scientific genius we have made the world a neighbourhood; now, through our moral and spiritual development, we must make it a brotherhood”.

The plethora of issues on the United Nations agenda is complex and involved. Indeed, these challenges sometimes even exceed the capacity of individual States. Therefore, we need to harness the collaborative energies of States and non-State actors to cope with the fundamental changes in the world. This Organization should be guided by the foresight of President Truman who, in reference to the Charter, stated,

“The Charter will be expanded and improved as time goes on. Changing world conditions will require readjustments”.

Change is the only constant. St. Kitts and Nevis encourages Member States to recognize the importance of change as we embrace the true concept of democracy within the Security Council. The undemocratic structure and lack of fairness within the Security Council threaten to undermine Member States' commitment and trust in the Organization.

Even as we forge ahead into a new millennium, we still are witnessing some of the most gruesome forms of man's inhumanity. War and other inter-State conflict still litter the landscape of many societies throughout the world. We must continue to support peacekeeping operations to ensure that the rhetoric of violence is silenced. The concepts of peace-making and peacekeeping must also be complemented by the imperatives of development. Once we have established peace, we must also lay the foundation to support lasting peace.

We welcome and congratulate the State of Tuvalu, admitted at the opening of this fifty-fifth regular session. As a vulnerable small island Caribbean developing State, St. Kitts and Nevis is pleased to welcome another vulnerable small State from the Pacific, convinced that it is seized of its obligations to uphold the principles of the Charter.

In addition, St. Kitts and Nevis reiterates its call for discussion of the Chinese people on Taiwan. Again, we emphasize that our policy seeks to promote respect for the sovereignty of States. However, as we reflect on the mission of this institution, we deem it appropriate to consider the invaluable contribution of the 23 million Chinese people on Taiwan who can add great substance to international discourse.

This Millennium Assembly affords us the opportunity to reflect on the Secretary-General's

report, which focuses on the world's people and the United Nations role in ensuring their well-being.

We welcome the importance attributed to peace and security on the agenda of the United Nations and welcome the proclamation of the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace. We further applaud the decision to declare the decade beginning in 2001 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World. Our children are our future; the new millennium belongs to them. It behooves us to dissipate the ominous clouds on the horizon of their dreams so they can awaken to a world free of fear.

The experts contend that there is an obvious correlation between the persistence of poverty and poor health.

The statistical reports on HIV/AIDS paint a sinister picture. Saint Kitts and Nevis is disturbed by the rapid increase in the number of persons infected with the HIV/AIDS virus and its economic and social consequences for growth in developing countries. This disease does not recognize national boundaries and threatens to undermine future economic and social development in many of our nations. We look forward to a United Nations special session on HIV/AIDS to intensify and better coordinate our approaches at the international level.

Despite all its shortcomings, the United Nations has a critical role to play in the international system. Without the United Nations, many small States like Saint Kitts and Nevis would lose a champion of collective interests. That is unacceptable. One of the most valuable gifts to humanity in the last millennium has been the United Nations. We must therefore commit ourselves to preserving it.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Tang Jiaxuan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Tang Jiaxuan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Please allow me to extend my warm congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its current session. I am confident that, with your wisdom and experience, and with the support and coordinated efforts of the member States, the Millennium Assembly will successfully complete all its work. At the same time, I would like to express my appreciation and thanks to Mr. Gurirab for the

contribution he made as President of the General Assembly at its last session.

The Millennium Summit, which attracted worldwide attention, has just concluded. The United Nations Millennium Declaration is a consensus reached by world leaders on how to meet the major challenges facing mankind today. The Declaration reviews and sums up the course that the United Nations has travelled over the past 55 years. More importantly, it offers a blueprint for the United Nations in the new century and the new millennium and important guidance to people around the world in their pursuit of peace, development and common progress. I would like to add my voice to the call to action made by Secretary-General Kofi Annan at the closing ceremony of the Summit. We should work together to turn the consensus reached at the Summit into action and usher in a new era of peace and development for people all over the world.

It is the primary mission of the United Nations in the new century to uphold the purposes and principles of its Charter, promote democracy in international relations, maintain world peace and stability and facilitate the development and prosperity of all countries. The United Nations Charter is a manifestation of the peoples' aspiration to equality, justice and freedom. Over the past 55 years, the United Nations has adhered to the Charter aims of safeguarding peace, developing friendship and promoting cooperation, as well as the core principles guiding international relations, such as sovereign equality and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. It is precisely for these reasons that the United Nations has grown in strength and its membership increased from 51 to 189. This Organization is still playing an irreplaceable role in world affairs.

The history of the past 55 years has amply proved the effectiveness of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. Today, global issues have made our interests intertwined and modern technology has made our communication easier. In these circumstances, we need more than ever to face our common challenges together on the basis of equality, mutual respect and democratic consultation. The purposes and principles of the Charter are by no means outdated, but are rather of greater relevance today.

Democracy in international relations requires compliance with the principle of sovereign equality, as

provided for in the United Nations Charter. Countries differ in size, strength and wealth, but they are all equal members of the international community. None should be discriminated against and their state sovereignty brooks no encroachment. The internal affairs of a country should be managed by the people of that country and major world affairs should be decided by all countries through consultation. The response to global challenges calls for worldwide cooperation and coordination. This is a necessity of our times and a prerequisite for the establishment of a fair and just new international political order. It is also the foundation and source of vitality for the United Nations in the new century.

The reform of the United Nations should give full expression to democracy in international relations. The reform is aimed at better safeguarding the fundamental rights and interests of all Member States and, especially, at truly reflecting the will of developing countries, which make up the bulk of United Nations membership. It should not merely satisfy the needs of a few countries. The reform of the Security Council should seek primarily to increase representation of developing countries and should be based on extensive deliberations among Member States. It is against the will of the overwhelming majority of Member States to set arbitrary deadlines or to force the passage of immature plans.

There is general agreement among the United Nations Member States on basing the scale methodology of regular budget and peacekeeping assessment on the principle of the capacity to pay. This methodology is also one that has been confirmed time and again by the General Assembly through its resolutions and should therefore be abided by in whatever circumstances. Any adjustment to this methodology should take into full account the specific economic conditions of developing countries. Such adjustments should be made only when there is consensus among all Member States through extensive consultation, thus facilitating the normal and sound operation of the United Nations.

Another important historical task facing the United Nations is to respond to globalization and to achieve the common development of mankind. The twentieth century has seen both unprecedented economic prosperity and the greatest polarization. In the last decade of the century, economic globalization has advanced at the fastest pace, while the gap between

the North and the South has continued to widen. According to the World Bank, the revenue of the low-income countries accounts for only 6 per cent of the world's total, although they make up more than half of the world's population, while that of the developed countries is 80 per cent with only one sixth of the world population.

It is especially worrisome that there is an even wider gap between developing and developed countries in the field of advanced technology. The new economy is so far benefiting only the rich countries. Most developing countries are still information have-nots. Should this situation be allowed to continue, many developing countries will long remain deprived of the opportunity to participate in technological progress and economic growth and the world will be further polarized.

To prevent poverty from swallowing up achievements of development and to prevent social injustice from shaking the basis of global stability, the United Nations must play its due role in narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor and bringing about common prosperity to the world. It is an unavoidable major responsibility of the United Nations in the new century to promote the establishment of a new international economic order based on cooperation on an equal footing and aimed at common development and to ensure that economic globalization benefits everybody in the world.

The United Nations should give top priority to the issue of development, make efforts to change the current situation in which global economic affairs are dominated by only a few countries and ensure developing countries their right to equal participation in economic decision-making. In making or revising global economic rules of the game, consideration should first be given to the need of developing countries in order to facilitate their development and reduce the risks they may face when participating in globalization. The United Nations should also mobilize all the resources available and encourage the international community to narrow the "digital divide", and it should help developing countries to seize, as far as they can, the opportunities brought about by the scientific and technological advancement driven by the information revolution. The United Nations also has the responsibility for introducing new rules to the world to make science and technology truly serve all of

mankind and the lofty cause of peace and development in the world.

As drastic and profound changes are taking place in the international situation, what kind of security concept should be embraced is a major subject before the United Nations and all its Member States. Global strategic stability is the foundation on which world security rests. And the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty is an important cornerstone for global strategic stability. Any move to undermine the totality and effectiveness of the Treaty will have a profound negative impact on world peace and security. The proposal for a national missile defence system that is prohibited by the ABM Treaty is essentially aimed at seeking unilateral military and strategic supremacy, and thus a typical example of the cold war mentality. Such a plan, if implemented, will only bring serious negative consequences to the security of the whole world. The adoption by the General Assembly of the resolution on preservation of and compliance with the ABM Treaty (A/54/54 A) at its fifty-fourth session by an overwhelming majority is an indicator of the firm will of most countries in the world to maintain and strictly observe the ABM Treaty. The United Nations should continue to show serious concern over the attempt by a certain country to develop a missile defence system to the detriment of global strategic stability, and it should take necessary measures to stop this dangerous development.

Security is mutual and relative. No country should enhance its security at the expense of that of the others. To seek absolute unilateral security is not feasible and will lead to greater insecurity. With increased international contacts and exchanges, countries of the world will find themselves sharing more common interests and facing more common challenges. Security can only be realized through dialogue on an equal footing and in the spirit of mutual understanding and mutual accommodation. It can only be maintained on the basis of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence, and it can only be consolidated through mutually beneficial cooperation and common development. The only way to protect the fundamental interests of all countries and enhance universal security is to replace the old security concept based on military alliances and military build-up with a new one that is characterized by equality, mutual trust, mutual benefit, cooperation and settlement of disputes through dialogue.

In recent years, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have reached, within the framework of the Shanghai Five and through consultation and cooperation based on equality, an agreement among themselves on confidence-building in the military field and reduction of military forces in the border areas. This offers something useful for the international community to draw upon in its exploratory efforts for a new security concept.

We have noted with pleasure the positive changes in the situation on the Korean Peninsula and the positive outcome of the successful historic summit between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea. It has shown once again that dialogue and consultation based on equality serve to enhance mutual trust and improve relations between States. We appreciate the efforts made by both the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea to promote peace, stability and development on the peninsula and in the region.

We deeply regret that the tripartite summit at Camp David failed to produce any agreement. We believe that the Middle East peace process will move forward as long as the parties concerned earnestly, patiently and unswervingly engage themselves in negotiating and seriously implement the agreements that have already been reached among them on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, in accordance with the principle of land for peace and in the spirit of mutual trust and mutual accommodation.

In the twentieth century, mankind suffered a great deal from the scourges of war. In the twenty-first century, humanitarian crises of a massive scale must be prevented, and the tragedy of innocent people being slaughtered on a large scale must not be allowed to repeat itself. The United Nations shoulders a primary responsibility for the maintenance of world peace, and therefore it should work harder to stop conflicts and eliminate wars.

In the present-day world, hegemony and power politics still exist. Territorial disputes, ethnic feuds and religious rifts have all led to incessant regional conflicts. Some countries and regions hope that the United Nations will assist them in stopping conflicts, which we fully understand. At the same time, we must not fail to see the complexity of international intervention and the danger of inappropriate intervention. The United Nations intervention should

aim at eliminating the root causes of a given conflict rather than delaying its settlement. It should aim at facilitating reconciliation between the conflicting parties rather than deepening their hatred and hostility. We are of the view that major powers and groups of countries should respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries concerned rather than meddling in their internal affairs or triggering new conflicts.

In the new circumstances, peacekeeping operations remain an important means for the United Nations to fulfil its obligations in safeguarding world peace and security. In this regard, it is essential to ensure and enhance the Security Council's responsibility and political leadership in peacekeeping operations and to ensure the observance of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. United Nations peacekeeping operations should be launched with a sense of realism and within the capacities of the United Nations. The limited resources should be put to where they are most needed.

Human beings are the most precious among all the creatures on earth. To promote human development and protect all the rights and interests of mankind is the primary responsibility of all countries. China is the most populous country in the world. The Chinese Government has taken upon itself to safeguard the independence and dignity of the Chinese nation and to ensure the almost 1.3 billion Chinese the right to a decent life and all-round development. It has regarded this as its sacred duty and will do all it can to achieve this end.

Human rights improvement is an ongoing process. The human rights conditions of a country are up to the people of that country to assess and improve. Since people live under different circumstances, the form in which human rights are embodied changes with these circumstances and with time. Therefore, how to protect and promote human rights depends on the actual conditions and specific needs of a country. To arbitrarily impose a fixed set of human rights rules, regardless of the differences in the specific environment and reality, will not serve the interests of the people of any country. To interfere in other countries' internal affairs in the name of protecting human rights in order to advance one's own political agenda is simply to blaspheme and betray the human rights cause.

The United Nations should vigorously encourage dialogues and exchanges among different civilizations and countries on human rights and discourage confrontation and exclusion — which are the general trend of the human rights movement. In providing humanitarian assistance, the United Nations should give equal priority to the prevention of conflicts and the protection of human rights, on the one hand, and to the reduction and elimination of poverty and the promotion of human development, on the other hand. In this context, the United Nations should work in close coordination and cooperation with the countries and Governments concerned, instead of bypassing them, and ensure human rights for the majority of the people. Otherwise, such operations will trigger a humanitarian disaster of a greater scale. Only when the above-mentioned principles are abided by can the United Nations play a useful role in protecting human rights.

A few days ago, from this solemn podium Chinese President Jiang Zemin proclaimed to the whole world the Chinese people's firm determination to turn China into a strong, prosperous and united country with a high degree of democracy, and to promote world peace and development. In the past 20 years and more since the inception of reform and opening-up, China completed the first and second phases of its modernization strategy. With the advent of the new century, China will begin the third phase of the strategy and enter a new stage of accelerated modernization. Once China becomes a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), there will be major breakthroughs in its opening-up. China will honour its commitments and seriously fulfil its obligations, while enjoying its rights.

Although there will be difficulties, risks and challenges on the road ahead, China is capable of removing every obstacle and achieving its grand objective of modernization. China will unswervingly stick to its independent foreign policy of peace and further develop its friendly relations with the rest of the world on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence. A strong and developed China will not only benefit more than a billion Chinese people but also serve prosperity and progress worldwide.

To resolve the question of Taiwan once and for all and complete the reunification of the motherland is a shared aspiration of the entire Chinese people, including our Taiwan compatriots. Adherence to the

principle of peaceful reunification and one country, two systems in resolving the Taiwan question will serve the development of the two sides on either side of the straits, contribute to amity and unity among compatriots on both sides, and facilitate peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. The Chinese Government and people have committed themselves more strongly than anyone else to a peaceful reunification. They have demonstrated the utmost sincerity and made the greatest efforts to this end. We are convinced that — with the concerted efforts of the entire Chinese people, including those living in Taiwan — China will be able to realize its complete reunification at an earlier date.

We are entrusted with the important task of charting a course for mankind for the coming century. Let us join hands and work together to build a more secure, prosperous and progressive world in the new century.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy, His Excellency The Honourable Lamberto Dini.

Mr. Dini (Italy): I wish to congratulate the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Namibia, Theo-Ben Gurirab, on his wise leadership of the fifty-fourth General Assembly and his able preparation of the Millennium Summit. I would also like to offer the incoming President, Harri Holkeri, my best wishes upon your assumption of this high office. Your commitment and experience will be invaluable in ensuring the success of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

Italy fully supports the statement made on behalf of the European Union by the current President, French Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine, and will make a decided contribution to the objectives he has indicated. Allow me to add that it is also in order to step up our commitment to achieving common goals that Italy is presenting its candidature for the Security Council for the next biennium.

The year 2001 will be the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. By unanimously adopting the relevant resolution in its fifty-third session, the General Assembly demonstrated its great sensitivity and attention to the profound structural changes under way in our national societies. It thereby sent a strong signal on a number of themes that the Secretary-General has put forth in his report on the role

of the Organization in the twenty-first century. These themes cannot fail to include the new face of international migration, whose gravest aspects include illegal immigration and the trampling of human dignity.

Dialogue among civilizations should not be addressed in the abstract, academically. It demands real contact and a bond between individuals and peoples. To ensure that these contacts and this bond do not mutate into tensions and strife, the community of States must try to understand and manage migratory phenomena. We must work together to prevent migration flows from plunging into chaos, a chaos for which the human person ultimately has to pay the highest price.

Migration needs to be governed by fixed, transparent rules. The source, the rationale of these rules is the United Nations, to which the San Francisco Charter in Article I, paragraph 3, entrusts the fundamental role:

“To achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character.”

I submit to you that today migration between or within continents has become an international problem with an economic, social, cultural and humanitarian character.

Any solution to the problems connected with migration must come to terms with the globalization process. Globalization has reduced distance and time. To an unprecedented degree it has linked countries at opposite ends of the earth. There are even those who speak, perhaps not wrongly, of “the end of geography”.

The paradox facing us stems from the real difficulties of globalization extending not only to the economy, finance and information but also to the movements of peoples. Most of these difficulties can be ascribed to the complex transition of many advanced countries to multi-ethnic and multicultural societies.

Human beings are not commodities. When individuals move, they preserve their roots, their specificity and their experience, even when they come into permanent contact with societies different from their own. Hence the need for mutual tolerance, to safeguard our respective customs and traditions.

The growing dimensions of migration have widened the gap between individual government's management capabilities and the individual person's ability to move, which is heavily influenced by progress in communications. All too often this gap is filled by organized crime, by ruthless criminals who, in some cases, traffic in human beings, in what amounts to a modern form of slavery.

We need to ask how we can safeguard freedom while impeding slavery; how we can prevent global economic development from sparking social tensions; how we can ensure that the growing contact between different civilizations will produce dialogue rather than intolerance. It will take a strong, determined commitment from all of us to draft rules that, if applied, can have a positive impact on international migration flows, to the benefit of both home and host countries.

Improving millions of human lives is the fundamental challenge of development: we need a clear, explicit and effective commitment to eradicate poverty. We must realize that in a globalized world, migration can gradually impoverish areas that are already economically and socially disadvantaged.

Development assistance initiatives from industrialized countries and non-governmental organizations alike cannot defeat misery and poverty, unless they are accompanied by an awareness that foreign debt is a huge burden for Governments, families and individuals. Generous remission of the poorest countries' debt is not just an option: I feel it is a must. This is why the Italian Parliament recently approved a law to reduce foreign debt owed to Italy by a total of \$6 billion over the next three years.

Italy will also play a pro-active role in urging the leading actors in the field of development assistance to show determination in preparing the conference on less-developed countries scheduled to take place in Brussels next May. Moreover, my country confirms its support for the needs and aspirations of the small-island States and the landlocked countries, as it has emphasized in the Economic and Social Council and other forums.

But debt reduction is not enough. It should be coupled with sound government policies in the beneficiary countries, as part of an integrated strategy underlying a new international social contract. In other words, we must promote a package that combines

responsible political, economic and social reforms with an opening-up of international markets. The 2001 high-level intergovernmental meeting on financing for development will provide us with a close opportunity to finalize a strategy.

The fears that immigration sometimes generates should not lead industrialized countries to build new walls and fences. Such fears reject contact with diversity and make some feel as if they were strangers in their own country. A Europe built on fear, for example, would ultimately cast immigrants as the imaginary enemy, as a race apart. Any effort to overcome such negative stereotyping should be applauded, such as the Conference against Racism, scheduled for 2001 in Pretoria.

The European Union has a great capacity to take in people, and already has large immigrant communities. But only now is it developing a common approach to immigration. The European Union's strategy relies on cooperation with other countries, since the issue cannot be addressed solely through border patrols and tougher repression of illegal immigration, regardless of the cost.

For many years Europe did not have to worry about the long-term consequences of immigration. But today, with a declining birth rate and an ageing population, Europe needs a strategy that embraces the complex process of integrating people from different regions of the world.

Then, there is the tragic, heinous trafficking in human beings. As the United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright stated in this Assembly, we must put a stop to this trafficking, a stop to boats being cast into the sea, filled with sadness and desperation, driven by hopes in a promised land. The pictures of these illegal crossings have become unbearable. They epitomize a state of affairs governed by the black market, where there is an over-abundance of illegal labour. This new form of piracy would be impossible if those involved knew that they could not count on collusion, safe havens and, all too often, impunity.

For example, the Mediterranean Sea, around which great civilizations have prospered, is being crossed by people who pay ruthless exploiters and sometimes become their victims. In many cases, illegal immigrants find it hard to gain access to the rule-of-law society, and end up being treated as commodities.

As we know, immigration has various causes: poverty, ethnic and religious strife, the repression of totalitarian regimes, and the demands of more affluent economies. Today, as never before, immigration is driven by broadcast images that often distort honest hopes for a better life. Moreover, it has reached unprecedented proportions. In fact, since the early eighties the number of countries that receive immigrants has risen from 39 to 67, while the number of countries of emigration has risen from 29 to 55. We would be fooling ourselves to think that a phenomenon of such proportions could be brought under control solely through bilateral agreements.

The European Union has made cooperation between national Governments a priority since the European Council meeting of October 1999. But recent experience points to the need for an approach in which only the United Nations can confer the indispensable character of universality.

Italy has much to share in this regard. Until a few decades ago, large sections of our population were forced to seek work in distant lands with different languages and traditions. Their lives were often marked by hardship, want and family separation. This chapter of social history had points of light and of darkness, but on the whole it was a source of great moral and spiritual wealth.

Starting in the early 1970s, Italy became a land of immigration, although it could not yet provide full employment for all its people. As a land of both emigration and immigration, Italy is well situated to address in a constructive manner global migration today. Italian domestic law is based on the principle of "soft integration", designed to provide permanent residents with an opportunity that does not force them to renounce the rich heritage of their native cultures.

It is on these grounds that, here before the General Assembly, I urge the United Nations to raise the awareness of the community of States and introduce appropriate instruments. Three instruments, in my view, deserve to be coordinated and integrated. First is assistance to the developing countries; assistance in preventing and quelling the tensions that, at least in part, give rise to migration flows, as well as assistance in easing the integration of their economies with those of the more advanced countries. As we all know, this is a priority that the United Nations is pursuing through various committees and through the

enhanced role of the United Nations Development Programme. We must strive to improve the instruments already available to us, responding to the visionary proposals of Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Secondly, as a deterrent to illegal entry, we need stricter and more consistent law enforcement. Success depends on effective cooperation between the countries of origin, the countries of transit and the countries of arrival. Such efforts should also aim to prevent the spread of pockets of illegality and organized crime by promoting greater stability, moral authority and control in fledgling democracies. This would be invaluable to securing the support of public opinion in industrialized countries for cooperation policies.

Thirdly, we need to manage migration so that it is a source of stability and wealth, to the benefit of all. For this to happen, migration must take place legally. If everyone complies with the law, immigrants will be welcomed in their host countries and become fully integrated into society.

These three guidelines must be set within a global framework. There are plenty of organizations that deal with migration at the international level. Yet while they provide praiseworthy services, their sectorial nature means that they cannot have the kind of overall vision that only effective coordination can guarantee.

A solidarity pact, therefore, is needed to find the best and most effective way of balancing the supply of and demand for labour, while fully respecting the diversity of the people concerned. The greatest challenge in the age of globalization is to design new forms of cooperation between Governments that will enable each to see that its interests are reflected in international policy decisions. The United Nations continues to be the most natural forum for adopting such decisions and ensuring their implementation.

I want to conclude my message today by recalling the words of a great American President, John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Almost 40 years ago he said,

"Now the trumpet summons us again ... to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle ... against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself.

"Can we forge against these enemies a grand and global alliance, North and South, East and West, that can ensure a more fruitful life for

all mankind? Will you join in that historic effort?" (*Inaugural Address, 20 January 1961*)

That is what he said, and this is the wish that I should like to make here: that the United Nations, through its indispensable role, may strengthen its contribution to creating a better and more just world with the unflinching support of its membership.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait.

Sheikh Al-Sabah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the State of Kuwait, it gives me pleasure to extend to you, Mr. President, warm congratulations on your unanimous election as President of the fifty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly. We wish you success in steering the deliberations of this landmark session. Let me assure you of my delegation's commitment to work constructively with you towards meeting the common goals and aspirations of the international community.

I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the remarkable efforts made and prudence shown by your predecessor during his presidency of the last session of the Assembly.

In the same vein, let me once again place on record our great admiration of and appreciation for the crucial role played by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, since he assumed the helm at the United Nations. Mr. Annan has been working tirelessly to improve the performance of the Organization's system in the interest of global peace, security and development and to bring it more in line with the ongoing transformations in international relations.

On a membership note, let me now extend a warm welcome to the Republic of Tuvalu, which has joined our ranks as the newest Member of the United Nations. Tuvalu's admission to membership enhances the universal character of the Organization.

Just a few days ago, United Nations Headquarters hosted an unprecedented, historic gathering of a very large number of heads of State or Government, who come together to renew their commitments to the Charter of the United Nations and to reiterate their unwavering belief in the importance and relevance of the United Nations in developing a better world,

structured on the values of justice, equality, coexistence and cooperation.

The Millennium Summit was a momentous occasion to review and appraise the achievements and failures of the past. It was an occasion to sketch out a vision to face the challenges of the future. The Declaration adopted by the Summit, together with the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century, are a blueprint for addressing the pressing problems and challenges that will confront mankind in key areas. Chief among those daunting challenges that hamper the fulfilment of peoples' aspirations around the globe to achieve adequate levels of freedom, dignity and peace are the arms race, increasing national and racial conflicts, poverty, ignorance, development, human rights abuses, terrorism, environmental degradation and the spread of lethal infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS and malaria. The list can indeed go on ad infinitum. The effects and dangers of those problems cut across national borders and transcend any artificial barriers. If anything, this fact confirms the need for consolidated international efforts and a reinforced United Nations role system-wide.

Here, we note with some measure of satisfaction the ongoing attempts being made at the global level to cope with those problems. Numerous world conferences and special sessions of the General Assembly held in the last few years have facilitated the conclusion of several international agreements and treaties covering a range of subjects. In those meetings, it was reaffirmed that resolve would rid humanity of the risks of nuclear weapons and the alarming dangers posed to international peace and security by their proliferation. In another important area, the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action were entrenched to enhance the status of women and to ensure their full rights. The Copenhagen Summit, with its focus on universal human development, was also the subject of a follow-up conference held recently.

In that regard, the State of Kuwait takes pride in the fact that the United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report 2000* states that Kuwait has maintained its rank of first among Arab countries, and number 36 in the world, in the field of human development. Kuwait is now determined to pursue its efforts to do even better in the future. A key component of our efforts is our

commitment to the implementation of the principles and goals enshrined in the international conventions and treaties covering human development and human rights, and to employ them at the national level with a view to improving our economic and social conditions. Interaction between the Kuwaiti Government and the National Assembly — which is the legislative authority in Kuwait and the product of robust parliamentary and democratic life in our country — will certainly accelerate our efforts to fulfil the goals and aspirations of the people of Kuwait.

In the course of the decades that span the life of the United Nations, the Organization has established a good record of achievement and has proven its effectiveness in the resolution of many disputes and conflicts. It has also helped to contain many problems. Thus, it is now really difficult to imagine a world without the United Nations. The Millennium Summit Declaration reaffirmed that the United Nations is the common house indispensable to the entire family of nations. Having said that, and in view of the profound transformations in the world order and the attendant new problems and challenges, it has become imperative to continue to support and cooperate with the Secretary-General to reform the United Nations bodies with a view to streamlining them in response to the global changes, thereby enabling them to respond better to the challenges of the future.

In that regard, we reaffirm the need to pursue efforts to improve the procedures and working methods of the Security Council. The goal is to make the work of the Council more transparent and to increase the number of permanent and non-permanent seats, with a view to expanding the base of the decision-making process under controls that ensure equitable representation to making an efficient contribution to the Council's fulfilment of its functions and responsibilities in terms of maintaining international peace and security.

At this juncture, we wish to underscore the need for all Member States to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time, both to the United Nations regular budget and to the peacekeeping operations budget. It is indeed essential to provide adequate financial resources to the United Nations so that it may carry out its mandates.

Ten years have elapsed since the Iraqi invasion of the State of Kuwait. That invasion constituted a serious

precedent in international relations because it represented a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the norms and principles of international law. Furthermore, that invasion undermined the security and stability of the Gulf region. Kuwait now recalls with pride the firm stand and resolve demonstrated by the international community in condemning, confronting and defeating that aggression. All of that was distinctly illustrated in a quick series of resolutions adopted by the Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter as of the very first day of the invasion, on 2 August 1990. That historic stand by the international community was a remarkable embodiment and consolidation of the system of collective security. It also ushered in a new international order and represented a clear and strong message to any Government or regime that might pursue a policy of aggression with a view to territorial expansion at the expense of others.

The reverberations of the sinister Iraqi aggression are still being felt by all of us today. The Security Council remains seized with the repercussions of that aggression. Since the invasion, the Council has had to adopt 54 resolutions and numerous presidential statements in response to the persistent procrastination and equivocation of the Government of Iraq, which has constantly sought to evade its international obligations. Indeed, it is regrettable that for 10 years now the Government of Iraq has failed to meet its obligations under Security Council resolutions.

The main requirements yet to be met under the resolutions of the Security Council relate to the question of Kuwaiti and third-country prisoners and hostages. This humanitarian issue illustrates the tragedy facing hundreds of families who continue to grieve over the unknown fate of their loved ones. Little progress, if any, has been made. Basically, we are still at square one. Resolutions 686 (1991), 687 (1991) and 1284 (1999), which requested Iraq to unconditionally cooperate with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to account for prisoners and hostages, remain unimplemented. In fact, since its boycott of both bodies in January 1999, the Government of Iraq has continued to illustrate its disregard for the humanitarian nature of this issue through its insistence on not resuming its participation with the Tripartite Commission and its Technical Subcommittee. Furthermore, the Government of Iraq also insists on non-cooperation with the high-level Coordinator,

Ambassador Yuli Vorontsov, who was appointed by the Secretary-General to facilitate the repatriation of prisoners and hostages.

Let me seize this occasion to reiterate our call to the Iraqi Government to deal positively with this matter, given its humanitarian, religious and moral dimensions. This issue must be resolved in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. Along the same lines, we demand that Iraq cooperate with the high-level Coordinator to complete the return of stolen property. This is also in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. The most important of those assets include military hardware that has been incorporated into Iraq's military system and the irreplaceable archives of the State of Kuwait, which were deemed by the Security Council as the "State memory" of our country. The stubborn resistance by Iraq to return these assets and documents betrays the non-peaceful intentions still harboured by the Government of Iraq towards Kuwait.

What is deeply regrettable is that the Government of Iraq has not only failed to meet the obligations we outlined earlier, but that it has allegedly completed the elimination of its weapons of mass destruction while at the same time not allowing United Nations inspectors to verify those claims. Iraq also claims to have fulfilled all its obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions. In its stance, Iraq stands isolated in the face of the United Nations, the international community and the many regional organizations and groupings that continue to call on Iraq to complete its implementation of Security Council resolutions.

In his report on the work of the Organization this year, the Secretary-General put it succinctly and eloquently when he stated:

"Iraq's lack of compliance with various Security Council resolutions continues to be of grave concern." (*A/55/1, para. 54*)

In addition, the decision adopted by the last ministerial meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, last June confirms beyond any doubt that there is indeed a single unified international and regional position on the need for Iraq to comply with Security Council resolutions. That decision demanded that the Government of Iraq, among other things, continue its efforts to complete the implementation of its commitments under Security Council resolutions in the interest of peace, security

and stability in the region. It also welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1284 (1999) and invited Iraq to cooperate with the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) under the chairmanship of Mr. Hans Blix to implement the provisions of resolution 1284 (1999). That same decision further stressed that Iraq must expressly and clearly admit that its invasion and occupation of the State of Kuwait was a breach of pan-Arab, Islamic and international treaties and laws; a breach of the Charter of the League of Arab States and the Common Arab Defence Pact; the Charter of the Organization of the Islamic Conference; and the Charter of the United Nations. The decision also renewed the Organization of the Islamic Conference's invitation to Iraq to take the necessary steps to demonstrate its peaceful intentions towards the State of Kuwait and other neighbouring countries, both in words and deeds.

Against this backdrop, we would like to know where Iraq stands now vis-à-vis those resolutions and the sincere calls made upon it by regional and international organizations. We note with regret that the Government of Iraq, for a good 10 years now, has not drawn the right lessons. It continues to reveal its non-peaceful intentions and policies of aggression towards the State of Kuwait and neighbouring countries.

The remarks made by the Iraqi President and the announcements by several high-ranking Iraqi officials last month, together with the unjust Iraqi misinformation campaign against Kuwait and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, are perhaps the most compelling evidence that the Iraqi regime is still determined to pursue a course of aggression and feels no sense of remorse or contrition over its actions of 2 August 1990. Therefore, Kuwait calls on the international community to maintain its pressure on the Government of Iraq, with a view to forcing it to implement all relevant Security Council resolutions and to abandon its aggressive attitude, which seriously jeopardizes the security and stability of the State of Kuwait and of other States in the region.

Kuwait, for its part, supports all efforts made by the United Nations to alleviate the suffering of the brotherly people of Iraq, with whom we fully sympathize. We therefore welcome the improvements introduced occasionally by the Security Council sanctions Committee established by resolution 661

(1990) into the operational methods of the humanitarian programme, with a view to facilitating and expediting delivery of humanitarian materials to the brotherly people of Iraq. We note with satisfaction the report of the Secretary-General issued last week, in which he stated that the humanitarian programme had succeeded in providing a great measure of assistance to meet the urgent humanitarian needs of Iraq in all sectors, despite the many obstacles and difficulties that the programme faces.

At the regional level, in keeping with Kuwait's keen interest in ensuring security and stability in the Arabian Gulf region, and in view of the close relations between the sister State of the United Arab Emirates and the friendly State of the Islamic Republic of Iran, we support the position of the States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) on the question of the three Emirates islands. We hope that the efforts being made by the ad hoc GCC Tripartite Ministerial Committee will prove successful in creating a bilateral negotiating mechanism to resolve the current dispute over the islands in accordance with the norms and principles of international law and good neighbourliness. If negotiations fail to bring about a solution, then the dispute should be referred to the International Court of Justice to resolve it in a satisfactory manner. This will help bolster the mechanisms of reconciliation among the States of the region and expand the channels of mutual interests and confidence-building.

In the same vein, we would like warmly to welcome the maritime border demarcation agreement between Kuwait and its sister the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This accord reflects the depth of brotherly relations between our two countries. It also represents a model of civilized cooperation in resolving border disputes and problems. With that outcome, we look forward with interest to the forthcoming talks between Kuwait and the friendly State of the Islamic Republic of Iran to complete the demarcation of maritime borders between the two countries.

We take this occasion to pay tribute to the wisdom shown by the leaders of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Yemen, which resulted in the signing of an agreement on the demarcation of the border between the two countries. This will no doubt consolidate the underpinnings of security and stability in the region.

In the context of the relentless search for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, Kuwait has been closely following the peace process since its inception in Madrid in 1991. That process has time and again experienced obstacles, risks and deadlocks due to the unwillingness of the Israeli Government to carry out the accords concluded with the Palestinian National Authority within the framework of the peace process. Israel has so far demonstrated its non-commitment to, and non-compliance with, the operational principles and framework of the peace process anchored chiefly in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), together with the principle of land for peace.

Israeli intransigence aborted the success of the recent Camp David summit despite the immense and tireless efforts made by the United States Administration. Here, Kuwait wishes to reiterate its commitment to the Arab position of adherence to peace as a strategic option. We also reaffirm our belief that a comprehensive and just peace will not be possible without the full restoration to the Palestinian people of their legitimate rights, including the right of return of the Palestinian refugees, pursuant to paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), and the establishment of their independent state on their national territory, with Jerusalem as its capital. We also call for the resumption of negotiations on the Syrian-Israeli track, with a view to achieving full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Arab Golan to the border line of 4 June 1967.

At this point, we wish to urge the active and effective facilitators in the peace process, especially the United States of America, to redouble their efforts and to bring pressure to bear on the Israeli Government to convince it that the only viable path to easing its security concerns is a return to the framework and principles established at the Madrid Conference, in order to achieve a genuine peace that secures the reinstatement of lawful Arab rights to their legitimate owners.

Still in the context of the Middle East, we would like to express to our brothers in Lebanon — the President of the Republic, the Government and the people — our warm congratulations on the restoration of national sovereignty over their liberated land after more than 20 years of Israeli occupation, which left in its wake vast destruction in the regions of southern Lebanon and western Bekaa. As a contribution to the

rehabilitation and reconstruction of southern Lebanon and with a sense of responsibility emanating from the close brotherly bonds between Kuwait and Lebanon, the Government of Kuwait has made a cash grant of \$20 million and has requested the Kuwait Fund for Economic Development to finance projects for rebuilding infrastructure in villages of the South. Kuwait will in the meantime continue its support for Lebanese Government efforts to extend sovereignty over all its national territory to safeguard Lebanon's territorial integrity and independence.

Kuwait welcomes the positive developments at the national reconciliation conference of Somali factions that was held in Djibouti last month. We pay tribute to the sustained and sincere efforts made by the President of Djibouti, His Excellency Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh. We hope that the remaining factions will join the national reconciliation process in order to shore up the unity and stability of Somalia, which, we hope, will eventually bring that country back into the fold of Arab, Islamic and international life. We take this opportunity to stress Kuwait's support for the people of Somalia in their efforts to rebuild State institutions and to reconstruct the country as a whole.

Turning to the rest of Africa, Kuwait is following with deep sorrow the conflicts and civil wars that have long afflicted a number of countries. These conflicts imperil the peace and stability of many nations and deplete their potentials, capabilities and resources. Even though the problems of Africa have come to be a focus of the global agenda, and even though the United Nations system has embarked on in-depth discussion and analysis of the root causes of those problems, the proposed solutions remain blueprints awaiting implementation. The net result is that the continent continues to be plagued by bitter conflicts and painful political instability, which aggravate already intractable economic and social problems, foremost among them foreign debt, poverty, illiteracy and the spread of contagious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS and malaria, which afflict millions of people and claim the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocent victims every year.

It is very sad indeed that many countries in Africa are suffering from these problems at a time when the modern world has made enormous progress in all areas of human activity. We therefore urge the international community to pursue its efforts more vigorously to help bring peace and security to African nations and to assist them in meeting their economic and social

development goals. A vital role can be played by the international aid agencies and financial institutions, which we hope will redouble their outreach efforts to overcome Africa's daunting problems and challenges. Kuwait believes that any such donor drive will not be effective unless and until African peoples and Governments themselves shoulder their responsibilities and dedicate their full energies to lifting themselves up out of their current misery and onto the path of mainstream modern progress. Another key factor in this process is the need to resolve disputes by peaceful means in order to create a climate of security and stability and to preserve sorely needed economic resources.

The world today is witnessing the emergence of several promising economic phenomena created by the immense information and technology revolution that is sweeping the communication and trade sectors. Of particular significance is the formation of numerous international and regional economic blocs that are seeking to remove customs restrictions and to liberate trade among nations. In response, many developing countries have made drastic changes in their economic and administrative structures in order to align themselves with those transformations and to put themselves in an advantageous position with respect to economic globalization in the hope of achieving better economic growth and progress.

Kuwait thinks that the phenomenon of globalization, notwithstanding its merits, could have an adverse impact on the economies of developing countries unless the very basis of North-South economic relations is restructured in line with the tenets of mutual benefit, common interest, the need to narrow the technology gap, and the removal of obstacles that impede the access of the products of developing nations to the markets of the developed industrialized countries in the interest of both groups. In the meantime, developed countries should provide adequate economic assistance to developing nations to help them strengthen their infrastructures and build up their economies on a sound and solid foundation.

In this context, Kuwait has never shrunk from doing its fair share to meet all its international and regional obligations towards the developing countries. Our assistance is channelled through international aid agencies and institutions as well as through the Kuwait Fund for Economic Development. That fund has provided loans and financial grants for many

development projects and programmes in scores of developing countries. More than 96 countries on all continents have benefited from these loans and grants. Within its means, Kuwait will remain committed to helping the development efforts of developing countries, because of our belief that overall development and broader participation and cooperation are essential for ensuring security and stability for all countries of the world.

We remain hopeful at the outset of a new century that the nations of the world will close ranks to fulfil the noble principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter. We also hope that the Millennium Declaration will be translated into a tangible reality that fulfils the aspirations and the vision of peoples yearning to live in a climate of security, peace, freedom and justice, and in a world where the enormous power of science and technology will be harnessed to serve human development in all spheres of life and to enrich human civilization.

Let us make partnership and cooperation to build a better tomorrow for our children our guiding motto in the new century. Let us pledge ourselves to bequeath to the generations of the coming century the assurance that we have kept our faith to them, and that we have sown for them the seeds of goodness that will yield a better life.

The President: I give the floor next to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago, His Excellency The Honourable Ralph Maraj.

Mr. Maraj (Trinidad and Tobago): I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. At the same time, I record my thanks and appreciation to your predecessor, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia.

We are meeting just after the historic Millennium Summit, which brought together more than 150 leaders of the world. Clearly, there is not much left to say. On the other hand, there is much to be done. Urgent action is needed; the time for implementation is now.

National action is needed more than ever in all countries. The fact is that each nation has the primary responsibility for dealing with its own problems. It is not sufficient to make visionary statements and well-intentioned commitments. The will to bring about change in our societies must be demonstrated in all

nations. We should remember that we are the solution to our problems, and that if we are to be effective the partners of others, we must demonstrate a willingness to help ourselves.

We must eliminate poverty. It is an indictment against humanity that in the twenty-first century more than a billion of the world's people are mired in the dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty. Each country must adopt those policies necessary to engender growth in their economies and to ensure that all their citizens have access to the opportunities that are being created. It now behooves the international community to take concrete and positive action to bring to fruition the commitment made by heads of State or Government in the Millennium Declaration: to reduce poverty levels by the year 2015.

Trinidad and Tobago has already taken action through an appropriate policy framework and other measures of reform. As a result, our economy continues to grow, and we are generating employment while keeping inflation low. We are making efforts to ensure that all our citizens benefit from the country's successes, and we are making strides towards the elimination of poverty and are today ranked very favourably in the United Nations Human Development Index.

Education is the key. It is a powerful force for social change. It is a human right. It goes far beyond schooling. It assists in combating poverty, empowering women, promoting human rights and democracy and promoting international peace and security. According to the United Nations Children's Fund report, "The State of the World's Children 1999", 130 million children in the developing world are denied the right to basic education. Regrettably, almost two thirds of them are girls. This cannot continue. All children must have access to all levels of education. This must be a national objective in every country. United Nations declarations by themselves will not help.

Since independence, Trinidad and Tobago has placed considerable emphasis on education, which continues to rank among the largest items of Government expenditure. The laws of Trinidad and Tobago provide that education is mandatory for all children between the ages of five to 12 years. Tuition is free at public and Government-assisted schools. We continue to improve our system. Pre-school education has developed rapidly in Trinidad and Tobago, and

special education is also being given greater attention. In further recognition of the importance of education, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago recently embarked on a programme which will ensure free secondary education for every child of secondary school age, and this took effect with the opening of the new academic year 2000-2001.

If people are not healthy, they can neither find fulfilment nor contribute to their country's development. The poor of the world need easier access to essential drugs and vaccines to reduce mortality and disability. It has to be a travesty that only one per cent of the budget of global health research is directed to diseases like pneumonia, diarrhoea, tuberculosis and malaria, all of which are concerns of developing countries. In Trinidad and Tobago, health care is given high priority. The health budget continues to be one of the major areas of Government expenditure and, through a decentralized system of regional health authorities, health care is made accessible and affordable to all. The Government is constantly investing in human resources and physical infrastructure to meet the demands of the population. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has reduced the cost of medication for some chronic diseases, such as glaucoma, diabetes, asthma and arthritis. We are also ensuring that equipment for our physically challenged citizens is affordable. Every effort is being made to reduce the backlog of certain common surgical procedures. Next year, a National Health Insurance Pilot Project is expected to be instituted to cover every citizen. Under the proposed system, the Government will pay the contribution on behalf of those persons who cannot afford to do so.

The ravages of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and its devastating socio-economic consequences constitute another of the major health-related challenges for the international community in the twenty-first century. The spread of the HIV/AIDS virus is of particular concern to the Caribbean, the second most seriously affected region. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago views this matter very seriously, and we have long embarked on a programme of action designed to combat this scourge. It is based on research and education and building partnerships with the public and private sectors, as well as actors in civil society. We are also convinced of the need for greater global partnership to develop an effective and more affordable vaccine against HIV/AIDS. The present HIV-related

drugs should be made less expensive. We support the convening as well of a special session of the General Assembly to consider all aspects of this problem.

Our planet continues to experience environmental degradation. The problem will never be solved unless there is international cooperation, especially on the part of industrialized countries, which are mainly responsible for the emission of greenhouse gases. We in the smaller countries, especially small island nations, are the most severely threatened. But even in a situation where we are victims, we do not absolve ourselves from responsibility. Trinidad and Tobago is already doing its part. We have established a Ministry of the Environment and an Environmental Management Authority. We have recently enacted legislation to empower this Authority. We have operationalized an environmental policing system, and we are now in the process of establishing a Green Fund, through which the industrialists in our country will contribute to financing programmes for protecting the environment. The Government is working in close collaboration with the international community on environmental issues and, in this regard, we are a State Party to all of the major Conventions concerning the environment. Trinidad and Tobago is actively involved in the development of national legislation to give effect to these international treaties.

I must join my Caribbean Community (CARICOM) colleagues in lamenting the blatant and persistent misuse of the Caribbean Sea as a trans-shipment route for hazardous wastes. This continues to be a cause for major concern to the Governments of the region. We are not comforted by the assurances of compliance by those who use this route for economic gain. A single accident can threaten the very viability of our societies. Can the commercial benefit from using this route override its potentially horrendous consequences? Accidents can occur, and we again call for a halt to these shipments.

No country can progress without democracy and good governance, which create the environment for progress and development, peace and security. All citizens must be included in the mainstream of national activity. All must be allowed to contribute. Every voice must be heard; every view considered; and every citizen must have access to the opportunities that their societies create. This should be the primary responsibility of every Government in every country. Government must also be based on the rule of law.

Each nation, therefore, has the responsibility to develop effective judicial and legal systems to both protect the rights of the individual and guard the nation against any usurpation of its democratic systems. We in Trinidad and Tobago are proud of our strong democratic traditions. Free and fair elections are held peacefully, regularly and on time. There is freedom of speech and of political association and freedom of the press. Our democratic tradition is buttressed by a very active civil society, involving strong trade unions, dynamic social and cultural groups and other non-governmental actors. We have an independent judiciary, and we have recently embarked on the modernization of our laws and legal system to keep our country in step with modern trends.

Each Government has the duty to ensure the security of both its State and citizens. One of the serious threats to security is the escalation of the worst kinds of crimes within national borders in many countries. This battle against the criminal element is faced by all societies, on differing levels, but it is a battle to which Governments must, of necessity, allocate adequate resources if they are to maintain peace and foster development. In many developing countries, the rise in the level of violent crime is directly related to poverty and the deprivation suffered by individuals. This link between poverty and development on the one hand, and peace and security on the other, should not be minimized. Like most countries, Trinidad and Tobago is battling the phenomenon of crime. In addition to allocating increased resources to our protective services, to provide them with manpower, infrastructure and equipment to deal with crime, we are implementing social programmes to combat deviant behaviour, through the Ministries of Education, Culture, Social Development, Youth and Sport.

Trinidad and Tobago continues to face the challenges of the illicit traffic in drugs. Due to our geographic location, we are used as a convenient transshipment point in the drug trade. We have taken all measures available to us on the national, regional and international fronts to combat this menace to our society. The Government has, in this regard, established an agency to coordinate the overall efforts against drug trafficking and has entered into regional and bilateral arrangements for cooperation in combating this serious crime. Our strengthened legal framework has led to successes in the investigation and

prosecution of crimes associated with drug trafficking. Legislative measures include the Dangerous Drugs Act, the Drug Court Bill, the Drug Abuse Rehabilitation Tribunal Bill and the Proceeds of Crime Bill.

At the international and regional levels, cooperative efforts include a number of bilateral extradition and mutual legal assistance agreements. In July, 2000, Trinidad and Tobago, along with six other Governments, signed an agreement establishing a regional justice protection programme, which provides a framework for regional cooperation in the protection of witnesses, jurors and legal and law enforcement personnel. While we will continue to strengthen existing measures and to expand the spheres of cooperation, we wish to reiterate that this is a problem which the international community cannot successfully tackle without the necessary commitment of all States concerned.

Another growing threat, which is closely related to the menace of the drug trade, is the illicit trade in small arms. We therefore attach great significance to the convening of the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and we fully support the very important preparatory work which will precede the Conference.

The disease of racism, racial discrimination and religious intolerance continues to plague the world as we enter twenty-first century. This is an intractable cultural problem that can be ameliorated only through education and enlightenment. It is the expectation of my delegation that the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, to be held in South Africa at the end of August 2001, will produce action-oriented recommendations to eliminate this scourge. No effort should be spared to rid human civilization of this ugly affliction.

As a pluralistic society, Trinidad and Tobago is proud of its record of harmony. In our country, as immortalized in our national anthem, every creed and race find an equal place. We have become well known as a rainbow society and at present we are seeking to create the institutions and the legal framework to even further deepen our world-renowned harmony.

Whilst I have thus far emphasized the need for national action, we are fully aware that cooperation at an international level is absolutely necessary if we are

to deal effectively with the problems of our planet. In this global village, no country can survive on its own. Today's reality is globalization, borderlessness and integration at the international, regional and subregional levels. The United Nations, therefore, like all other international actors, has a pivotal role to play. For example, the international financial institutions must become more sensitive to the development needs of countries and the world trading system must take into account the special concerns of the disadvantaged and the vulnerable.

As we have already demonstrated, Trinidad and Tobago is willing to be an active participant in the concerted effort of the international community to achieve the goals we have set for ourselves. We have always proven this since becoming a member of this body. We have participated, we have cooperated and sometimes, as with the International Criminal Court, we have led the way.

We wish to achieve a humane global civilization. We wish to bequeath to the future a planet of prosperity and peace for all.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Benaissa, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Morocco.

Mr. Benaissa (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me first of all to congratulate you very warmly, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. The Moroccan delegation will spare no effort in giving you every support to ensure the success of your work. I would also like to thank your predecessor and to wish him every success in his responsibilities.

I also cannot fail to pay a very warm and special tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who has led the Organization with such conviction, tenacity and competence. I take this opportunity to congratulate him on his efforts to ensure the success of the Millennium Summit.

I also wish to convey my congratulations to the State of Tuvalu, which recently joined membership of the United Nations.

Multilateral relations have become the most realistic approach to transnational problems in a world undergoing the process of globalization. It is quite clear that a collective response is more necessary now than ever before in our approach to the serious

problems of today's world. It is obvious that no country or group of countries can claim to be able to take sole charge of the numerous problems of besetting the comity of nations. When we consider nuclear proliferation, weapons of mass destruction, the deterioration of the environment, endemic poverty, organized transnational crime, the drug problem and other such problems, we are compelled to recognize the scope of the strenuous efforts that will have to be made by the international community to deal effectively with them.

Despite the tremendous progress that has been made in recent years in all sectors of human activity, and despite the potential benefits heralded by the globalization of economies and technological breakthroughs, half of the world's population continues to live in a state of abject poverty. Morocco believes that efforts to reduce poverty and to ensure sustainable development require international action in order to integrate the developing countries in the global economy and new reforms, undertaken by the countries concerned, to meet the essential needs of their peoples with respect to health care, education and employment.

Similarly, trade barriers must be reduced for those goods that are of particular benefit to the exports of the developing countries, particularly the least developed countries. Medium-income countries should be relieved of their debt burden so that they can devote the resources thus freed to investments in social and economic infrastructures.

In this context, Morocco believes that the time has come for international institutions, particularly the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, to adopt a new approach to assisting the countries of the South in their development efforts. These institutions must adapt themselves to the new international context in order to redress the imbalances between the countries of the North and the South, which have grown considerably since the external-debt crisis. The total statistical indices available and the lessons learned from the paradoxical trends that are intrinsic to the world economy reveal the need to seek new sources for financing and sustainable development. That being so, Morocco places great hopes on the holding of a world conference in the year 2001 on financing for development and hopes that at that time bold initiatives will be taken in order to alleviate the intensity of poverty in the world.

Morocco is rooted profoundly in its Africanism and is therefore very much concerned about the growing number of hot spots in Africa and also the illicit traffic in small arms that feeds those conflicts. It is extremely regrettable that our continent holds the unhappy record for refugees throughout the world, victims of wars, as well as for epidemics, for example AIDS, malaria and many others. Only a concerted effort on the part of the African countries, with the support of the international community, will be able to reverse the current trend. Africa, which has been torn by armed conflicts, presents the image of a continent drifting aimlessly. Nevertheless, we Africans have always been known for our wisdom and our natural gift for negotiation and conciliation.

We would like here to make a pressing appeal to all those involved to renounce resorting to force as a means of solving disputes. Africa has wasted a great deal of time in internal quarrels, thus passing up valuable opportunities for developing and becoming an integral part of the world economy. The financial and human resources the belligerent parties have wasted killing each other could have been better utilized to serve social and economic development projects in their respective countries and could have helped them to overcome all the problems that they face. That is why we support all the initiatives that have been recommended by the United Nations to set up a strategy to prevent conflicts and to improve mechanisms for intervention in these cases. As always, Morocco supports all those initiatives that help to strengthen peace and security in Africa. In this regard, Morocco has responded to the United Nations appeal to participate in the peace mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The marginalization of Africa is a serious obstacle to its integration in global development. Our continent receives only 2 per cent of international investments, whereas the population of our continent is in excess of 700 million. While it is true that responsibility for development of the continent rests first and foremost on the shoulders of the Africans, it is equally true that the resources available to the Africans cannot meet the considerable needs of their populations in all fields.

For that reason, it is becoming more and more urgent to help Africa by displaying solidarity in order to ensure that it embarks on the road to progress, security and peace, specifically by developing its

human resources, and by educational policies that are adapted to the realities of the continent and are in harmony with the values of that continent and its civilizations. We also have to consider the question of the debt of African countries so that the treatment of this problem can finally generate wealth rather than be an obstacle to development. The effort of African countries should also be supported by opening the markets of the developed countries to their products and their exports.

For its part, Morocco intends to spare no effort to make its contribution to improving the living conditions of African peoples — hence, the decision that was announced by His Majesty King Mohammed VI at the African-European Summit in Cairo, a decision to cancel the debt of the least-developed African countries to the Kingdom of Morocco, and also to remove customs barriers to their exports. We hope that other countries, particularly the rich and industrialized ones, will make a similar gesture.

Morocco believes that the peace that we all aspire to in the Middle East can only be brought about if international legal principles are respected, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the principles which emerged from the Madrid Conference, particularly the principle of land for peace, as well as the commitments and the agreements that were concluded between the parties concerned.

Peace in this region to which Morocco is so attached can only take place when Israel withdraws from all occupied Palestinian territories and the Syrian Golan. The international community must assist the Palestinian people to recover its legitimate and inalienable rights, first and foremost its right to set up its own independent State on its territory with Al Qods Al-Sharif as its capital.

Morocco, on the initiative of His late Majesty King Hassan II, may God have mercy on his soul, and his successor King Mohammed VI, will spare no effort to usher in the establishment of just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

His Majesty King Mohammed VI, as chairman of the Al-Qods Committee, during the State visit to Washington in June 2000, made an appeal to the parties concerned to start upon a fruitful dialogue between the cultures and civilizations and:

“to all believers, people of the Book and in this faith which have united the children of Abraham, to liberate this thrice holy city from hatred and resentment.”

These same principles were reiterated by the Committee on Al-Qods during its most recent meeting, which was held on 28 August under the presidency of His Majesty Mohammed VI. Morocco would like to join its voice with all peace and justice-loving countries so that the current efforts may be crowned with success, which will make it possible for all peoples in the region to live in peace, stability and security.

The Moroccan people share the joy of our brothers, the people of Lebanon, as a result of the Israeli withdrawal from its territory, and we will continue to give our unflinching support to the people of Syria to reassume total sovereignty over the Golan Heights, which is occupied by Israel.

We are also following with some disquiet the burdensome conditions imposed upon the Iraqi people by the embargo which has deprived people, particularly children, of food and medicine and many other needs as well. Morocco, for its part, feels anxious at the deterioration of the food and health situation in Iraq. We support all international efforts to lift sanctions against that fraternal country. We consider furthermore that safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq is a fundamental prerequisite for stability in the region.

Morocco welcomes the suspension of the air embargo imposed on Libya. We also hope that the total embargo will be finally lifted as soon as possible.

Morocco, aware as it is of its responsibilities, is sparing no effort to make the Maghreb an area of peace and peaceful coexistence among all peoples in the region. The partners in the Arab Maghreb Union must get beyond their current economic problems and accept the fact that the only way to develop the region and ensure its security and stability is to build this Union, in which our peoples have placed great hopes, particularly at this time when the requirements of globalization make the establishment of regional groups yet more important.

Among the challenges faced by the Maghreb, there is the so-called problem of the Western Sahara. I would like to take this opportunity first and foremost to

confirm that the Kingdom of Morocco, which initiated the referendum, has cooperated completely in its implementation and has indeed made a number of sacrifices to allow the population of that region to reassert its will.

We have been very patiently following the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General to allow this process to reach a successful conclusion. We have supported all the efforts that have been made, since we are convinced that, in the final analysis, the referendum, while ensuring respect for self-determination, will eventually confirm the rights of our country to territorial integrity and its sovereignty over the entire southern territory.

As everyone knows and as has been emphasized by the Secretary-General and by the Security Council in various reports, the referendum's implementation — to which, in contrast to what some have claimed, we remain committed — has come up against a number of problems that may, if not resolved, endanger and compromise the entire process. What essentially needs to be done is to ensure, without any kind of partiality or leniency, that the entire Saharan population, as has always been agreed, may express its wishes in accordance with the letter and spirit of the referendum plan.

If the referendum is to be democratic, free and equitable, it must be subject to a number of rules that no one can transgress by trying to accommodate one particular party at the expense of the other.

The Secretary-General and his Special Representative are still actively involved in this task. We will continue to give them our total cooperation so that the various difficulties besetting the implementation of this plan can be overcome.

Our country has made its own contribution to the efforts by making a number of suggestions that should be acted upon if we want to have a democratic, impartial and equitable referendum. We would repeat that, for our part, while we remain committed to the continuation of this process and respect the rules set up for it, we will give our total support to any action that the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, Mr. James Baker, undertake to resolve this dispute once and for all. As His Majesty King Mohammed VI stated on 30 June 2000, any settlement must be carried out in the context of the sovereignty, legality and unanimity of the Moroccans.

This being said, Morocco would like to draw the international community's attention to the situation of the tens of thousands of refugees who have been forcefully displaced and who have been living under inhumane conditions, according to the reports of international humanitarian organizations, of diplomats who have had access to the camps, and of the hundreds of escapees who have managed to return to the Sahara. The international community can no longer tolerate the suffering of these people because of delays and considerations they themselves are not responsible for.

No one can disregard the fact that the Kingdoms of Spain and Morocco are joined by the unbreakable ties of their age-old history, their geographical and cultural closeness, and by their common destiny as part of the Euro-Mediterranean region. Because of our desire to safeguard these excellent fraternal and neighbourly relations Morocco has constantly appealed to friendly Spain and to all political forces in Spain to find a solution that will spare our children unnecessary suffering from crises inherited from a painful past.

Spain, which is a great friend and neighbour, must understand that the occupation of the two Moroccan cities of Septa and Melilla and the neighbouring islands is not in accord either with international law nor with the sense of history. Based on similar situations, we are convinced that it is possible to devise a settlement that will both safeguard the sovereignty of Morocco and respect and protect the economic, social and cultural interest of Spain in both of these cities.

For this reason, on a number of occasions the Kingdom of Morocco has suggested — on the initiative of His late Majesty Hassan II, may God preserve his soul — that a Moroccan-Spanish think tank be created in order to bring about a final resolution of the situation regarding Septa and Melilla and the neighbouring islands.

Our two countries are duty bound to spare our peoples and our region from all possible misunderstanding and resentment. It is for this reason that Morocco offers a hand of peace to Spain, inviting it to commit to a common dialogue so as to resolve once and for all this territorial dispute inherited from the remote past.

Morocco, because of its geopolitical position, attaches particular importance to stability and to strengthening cooperation in the Mediterranean basin.

Relations between Morocco and the European countries is of great strategic importance in view of the various historic, political, economic, cultural and human ties that unite us and in view of the values we share. The mutual attraction between Morocco and Europe derives from history, geography and common strategic needs, while a range of mutual interests have naturally made the European Community Morocco's first partner in a number of areas relating to international cooperation. Relations with the European Union have developed quite significantly this year with the coming into force of the Association Agreement of 1 March. This agreement marks a decisive stage in our relations with the European region since it is built essentially on four fundamental pillars: political dialogue; economic, cultural, technical and social cooperation; enhanced financial cooperation; and the progressive and responsible development of a free-trade zone by the year 2012.

Morocco is currently waiting for the European Union to carry out the qualitative leap that will make it possible to redirect our association along new strategic and innovative lines — governed by agreed modalities, by shared responsibilities and by co-development in all sectors of common interest.

It is our hope that the flow of direct investments into Morocco and to the other countries of North Africa as well will be encouraged in order to help create mass employment, which is so essential to keep our youth away from social evils and to consolidate the bases of our progress in regional stability.

It is also our hope that the cultural interests and the cultural identity of our Moroccan community in Europe will be safeguarded and that the dignity of our nationals will be constantly protected in accordance with the democratic values that are the underpinning of the European structure. In this context we can, together, conceive of a Mediterranean region where security and peace prevail as well as a strengthened European/Mediterranean partnership.

In disarmament matters, Morocco appreciates the considerable advances made by the Review Conference of the Parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which took place in New York in May of this year.

We hope that Israel will respond positively to the Conference's appeal to accede immediately to the NPT and place its nuclear installations under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency. We are

convinced that such a decision on the part of the Israeli authorities will be a major contribution to ushering in a climate of peace, trust and stability in the region.

Morocco supports the initiative of the Secretary-General to organize an international conference that would make it possible to find appropriate means to put an end to the nuclear threat.

It is Morocco's firm conviction that the United Nations continues to be the most appropriate tool and instrument for settling conflicts and for building peace. It is therefore high time that the Organization set up credible machinery and early warning mechanisms to react in an appropriate way before conflicts break out as recommended in the report of the high-level expert Panel on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.

The United Nations and its specialized agencies are now more necessary than ever to contain and resolve the problems of security and development.

The United Nations must continue to be the cornerstone of strong multilateral cooperation.

The complexity and interdependence of the problems before us mean that we must increase international cooperation and consultation. For that reason, a new era in international relations necessitates a reform of the Security Council by revising its functions and its membership. Such a reform will undoubtedly confer greater credibility on the Security Council and make it better adapted to perform its mandate in maintaining international peace and security. Despite difficulties, the main point is to ensure the best possible representation in the Security Council of the various current components of the United, particularly the developing countries.

The end of the ideological rivalry between the two super Powers means that we can entertain new prospects that there will emerge an international order based on justice, peace, international legality and human rights as well as democracy and development, an order that will make use of the Charter as a work of reference and that will take into account the growing universalization of the Organization and the fact that new global social challenges are emerging and also that recent socio-strategic changes have occurred.

Finally, we are convinced that if the United Nations directs its actions along these lines, it will finally meet the ideals for which it was founded.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Peru, His Excellency Mr. Fernando De Trazegnies Granda.

Mr. De Trazegnies Granda (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to join those who preceded me in congratulating you on your appointment as President of this last General Assembly of the twentieth century. Peru is pleased that a representative of Finland, a country everyone knows is committed to the objectives of the Organization, is steering the work of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

I am convinced that, under your leadership we will achieve the mandates that are necessary to begin to pursue the vision developed by our Heads of State and Government at the recent Millennium Summit.

I should also like to welcome and congratulate Tuvalu for its incorporation into the United Nations. This will undoubtedly represent an important contribution to the different spheres of work of the Organization.

The Millennium Summit has revealed the enormous challenges that lie ahead and the overwhelming need to forge a new form of international order that will allow future generations to enjoy a world free from the threats of war, poverty, injustice and environmental deterioration and, at the same time, one built on freedom with the participation of each of the great cultures that are part of mankind, without preference or prejudice.

It is extremely important that when we are about to conclude not just a century but also a millennium on 31 December, we stop for a moment along the way to reflect on the future of international relations. Peru is certainly not a decisive country in the development of global relations. Nevertheless it would seem that one of the characteristics that appear at the end of the twentieth century and that will certainly be emphasized in the twenty-first century is the basic role that all countries of the world, whether large or small, have to play in shaping the international order. And, in this sense, the perspective of a country, such as Peru that fully shares Western civilization and yet at the same has its own characteristics that are the legacy of ancient times, may be of interest in carrying out the healthy exercise of approaching the subject from a different angles.

Peru emphatically reiterates that the global order that must shape the conduct of the different international actors within the century beginning on 1 January, must be based on the essential principles of the Charter which, contrary to certain beliefs that we believe to be mistaken, have not only not lost relevance, but are increasingly important for peaceful coexistence, collective security and also for a real possibility for the development of all the specific groups that form part of the abstract element that we call mankind.

May I emphasize, in particular, the rights that refer to the sovereignty of States, to non-intervention in their domestic affairs and to the legal equality between States. These basic principles, which were incorporated in the Charter in San Francisco, have allowed the development of effective mechanisms of self-control and the stabilization of the international system.

That is why we must renew our commitment to these rules of international public law, restoring the functionality that is theirs. Only thus can we ensure that the democratic values that prevail in contemporary society will apply and be enforced within an international system whose emerging features appear to seek new forms of exclusion.

The world today is not the same as the world of 50 years ago. Change and globalization are constantly reshaping reality at a rapid rate and are attempting to impose upon us a new sense of commonality, new morals and a new political ethic that dogmatically and in a partisan manner define what is proper and improper.

Full respect for the international legal order therefore acquires enormous significance since it is the only element that can illuminate the common path, reducing arbitrariness and subjectivity. This is also the best way and the most effective mechanism for the full protection of human rights and human freedom, which are undoubtedly requirements that no member of the international community may evade.

But this new reality also imposes on us a need for commitment to the principle of shared responsibility. The profound interdependence posed by globalization also assumes a collective determination by all the members of the United Nations community to combine their efforts and resources for the resolution of problems that have systemic effects or effects of an international nature. I refer in particular to the

achievement of lasting economic growth within the developing countries; poverty elimination; confronting the real threats to peace of an international scope; public health problems and endemic illnesses that are mainly linked to poverty; finding sufficient financing for development; the digital divide; migration and the free movement of labour; environmental protection and conservation; the world drug problem, beyond a purely military perspective; the scourge of terrorism and the various forms of international crime, including money laundering, arms trafficking and international trafficking in people.

It is highly important for Peru that each of these common problems be tackled within the framework of the United Nations and that common, coherent and comprehensive answers be found. We must be capable of finding effective solutions with sufficient political and financial support. In this context, let me express our particular satisfaction over the commitments made by the heads of State and Government to focus the international community's attention in the coming years on poverty reduction, so that by the year 2015 nearly 600 million people will have overcome their state of chronic poverty.

Similarly, I wish to emphasize the imaginative and constructive proposal presented by the President of Peru, Mr. Alberto Fujimori, at the Millennium Summit, to use the money illegally earned by captured drug traffickers to alleviate the foreign debt of the poorest countries and, in general, to utilize those funds to contribute to the fight against poverty in the world.

There are undoubtedly many and very difficult challenges that we must face during the next century. This is the time of wealth and technological development, but also the time of struggle against poverty. This is the time of globalization, but also the time of the respectful recognition of cultural diversity, which is an asset as important as, or more important than, biological diversity. This is the time of the greatest use of natural resources by man, but also the time of environmental conservation. This is the time of the universal spread of democracy, but also the time of democratic respect for the different ways in which democracy is lived.

Mankind has reached some basic consensuses at this stage of its development. All the peoples of the world share certain values and certain goals, such as freedom, democracy, equality before the law, respect

for human rights, the need to eliminate poverty, the development of creativity and the need for man to always surpass itself. This has been the contribution of modernity, the contribution of the latest centuries consolidated in the twentieth century. But it is also true that humanity is not made up, fortunately, of a single culture. It is also true that these values should find concrete forms of their realization through different mentalities, in different latitudes, at different periods in the history of each people. That is why post-modernity, that world of the next century, must know how to conserve and deepen the values that are the legacy of modernity and carry forward its goals as much as possible. But it must also acknowledge diversity; it must know how to resolve dynamically the dilemma between unity and multiplicity.

Perhaps the most complex of all these challenges, the most difficult of all the *coincidentiae oppositorum* that the twenty-first century will demand is to build an international system based on a genuine democracy. And by this I mean a democracy that does not consist of imposing a political form in the image of and similar to a specific system that is promoted as a model, a democracy that is not built on the basis of a mere check-list of institutions that have been taken from a specific democratic experience and turned into mandatory universal guidelines. Democracy is the practice of diversity and tolerance. It is a recognition that with regard to each subject, including the idea of democracy itself, there can be different interpretations, and none of them is entitled to ban the others. The task that awaits us, then, during the next century is to spread and promote democracy but, above all, to further examine its own meaning to avoid contradictions which would lead to its destruction.

How can we spread democracy without endangering democracy itself? On the other hand, how do we save diversity and particularity without ending up with outdated nationalism? These are the major problems of our time. They are the major dilemmas that will have to be resolved in the twenty-first century.

Any idea of a crusade, even in the name of democracy, is undemocratic, because it is intolerant. And I would almost dare to say that any principle of social organization that seeks to impose itself universally has an undemocratic base. Thus, paradoxically, the missionary enthusiasm for democracy ends up affecting the nature of democracy itself.

Democracy, in fact, implies a delicate and fragile balance between the universal and the singular. Singularity should not be sacrificed on the deified altar of universality. Singularity should not be dissolved within a claimed universality, and the singular should even less be confused with the universal, assigning an absolute value to what is no more than the historic expression of a culture and of a time.

The attempts to apply on an international scale domestic policies and local interpretations of values have always failed. In the second half of the twentieth century, we witnessed the spectacular collapse of Soviet communism, which claimed to be the political doctrine of the future, with which, following Hegel, we would see the end of politics and therefore of history and enter into a sort of rebuilt earthly paradise. The claimed communist universality saw the birth within itself of particularities and differences. Afterwards it had to face other doctrines and world visions that were alien to its principles and values; and contrary to what communism expected, those different perspectives did not vanish when faced with the presumed Marxist truth. Rather, they won the ideological battle and made communism and Soviet Russia disappear. I am convinced that the same will happen with any doctrine, whatever its perspective and the values that support it, that claims to lead the world to the end of history.

This forces us to rethink certain ideas that are too hastily — and, to my mind, inconsistently — becoming commonplace. There is a certain scorn towards the idea of sovereignty and towards the idea of the cultural identity of peoples, under the pretext of building a universal society. Nevertheless, I believe that, even though they will need to be transformed and adapted to a new globalizing outlook, those ideas will continue to prevail in the world of the future if we favour a genuinely democratic way of thinking, in which freedom can also exist under cultural and ideological differences.

There is no doubt that there is a crisis in the nation-State, because the seemingly essential identification between the State as the political and juridical organization of society and the nation as a cultural organization is false: multinational States do exist. The solution in these cases of disparity between the political and cultural organization is not to abandon the concept of State and sovereignty, letting them be absorbed within one of the supranational, globalizing constructs; rather, it lies in achieving within the State

an acknowledgement and complex integration of multiculturalism. It is necessary to articulate diversity at both the State and international levels instead of imposing some sort of homogeneity that will always feel like a strait-jacket.

The new international order cannot be built by a single nation, culture or ideology, but by the interaction of the different attitudes that make up humanity. From a genuinely democratic and liberal point of view, we must avoid the temptation of the new dogmatism, perversely subtle and with a powerful imperialist vocation: the myth of "political correctness".

In this regard, building a new international order for the twenty-first century does not mean solving a mathematical equation or scientifically designing a model to be applied generically to all the countries of the world in a vain attempt to create a universal international society. Reality sweeps away all abstractions with the wealth of its multiple points of view. Moreover, reality is always dynamic and effervescent. It is always in a permanent state of transformation, thanks to freedom, the defining element of the human being.

Therefore, politics, whether domestic or international, is an art, not a science. A domestic or international order must be the result of a complex interaction between different, and even opposing, elements, just like a work of art. Creating the work of art that will be the new international order implies not destroying what is counter to it, but, rather, combining it; combining unity with diversity and freedom with order. To put it in Nietzschean terms, we have to unite the Apollonian with the Dionysian. To build a purely Apollonian society is to fall into a new form of dogmatism and cultural dictatorship, even though, paradoxically, the intention is to establish democracy. Building a purely Dionysian society means slipping into chaos and therefore destroying the social contract.

The society of the future must be capable of living with diversity and expressing different points of view, world visions and interpretations of democracy itself in order to establish an organization of humankind that creates not a single and homogenous international society, but an embodiment of the wealth of social and cultural diversity in search of peaceful coexistence and reciprocal cooperation without burdens or conditions.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Estonia.

Mr. Ilves (Estonia): Allow me to begin, Sir, by congratulating you on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. I wish you all the best in carrying out your duties. I would also like to welcome the Republic of Tuvalu to the United Nations.

Last week my Prime Minister, Mart Laar, spoke to the Millennium Summit on a number of issues Estonia sees as being especially salient to the United Nations this year. In my brief remarks today, I would like to underline four in particular: first, the need to reform the Security Council; secondly, efforts to raise the effectiveness of peacekeeping; thirdly, the importance of narrowing the global gap between rich and poor; and, fourthly, the role of information technology in furthering development.

The first concerns efforts to reform the Security Council. The strong executive power vested in the Council was originally designed for the Council to provide a venue for speedy decisions and subsequent action. In practice, however, the Council is increasingly prone to indecisive waffling, which in turn undermines its own authority and credibility, and thus its effectiveness. In order to combat that effect, Estonia believes that the voting procedures and mechanisms governing the work of the United Nations most powerful body must be revamped.

One such procedure that deserves our attention is the veto. Some permanent members of the Security Council have used the veto, or have threatened to do so, in order to advance their own domestic and foreign policy interests, irrelevant to the particular issue at hand. Because the Security Council derives its legitimacy from all Member States, it is the duty of the permanent members to exercise their veto power responsibly.

The composition of the Council, which still reflects the power relationships current in 1945, is another issue that calls out for resolution. From the inception of the United Nations that year until just a decade ago the people of my country were afforded only rare glimpses of the goings-on at the United Nations through tears in the fabric of the Iron Curtain. When we finally re-established our independence, in 1991, we emerged onto the international arena only to

discover that the Security Council, judging by its composition, was still stuck back in 1945. This strikes Estonia as being anachronistic, if not wrongheaded. The guarantors of, and greatest contributors to, stability in the world have in the course of half a century changed fundamentally. We need not fear opening a discussion on whether the moral and legal reasoning underlying Security Council membership in the wake of the Second World War is still appropriate for the twenty-first century. If countries have fundamentally changed, so should, and so can, the United Nations.

My second point regards peacekeeping. Earlier this year my Government decided to forgo the discount rate that meant paying only 20 per cent of our peacekeeping assessment. Instead, we voluntarily and unilaterally opted to shoulder 100 per cent of what is expected of us. This is because Estonia regards peacekeeping as being among the United Nations most crucial assignments in fulfilling its historical mandate of collective security. Security cannot be had at discount prices. That is why Estonia is willing to pay more for what we hope will be a better product.

Paying our own way is not enough to raise the effectiveness of peacekeeping, however. What we require, as Prime Minister Tony Blair said here last week, is a far broader concept of security. The Security Council took an important step last week towards ensuring the security of people and frontiers with its unanimous resolution to overhaul United Nations peacekeeping operations. Those changes should create a more potent and better financed force that can react quickly where needed.

My third point focuses on the need to increase equality around the globe. In his millennium report, the Secretary-General called on all of us to focus on the eradication of poverty. We can go a long way towards levelling the playing field for all peoples by alleviating debt and allocating more resources for development assistance. It is not as simple as that, however. As my Prime Minister, Mart Laar, said here last week, these efforts must go hand in hand with good governance and

open markets. Without a commitment to these two elements, no amount of aid or debt relief will bring us closer to our intended goal.

The idea that open governments and open markets are a prerequisite for good economic performance leads me to my fourth and final point, namely, the role of information and communications technology in furthering development. In his millennium report, the Secretary-General rightly stressed the need to ensure that the fruits of new technologies, especially information technology, are available to all.

I personally took part in the High-level Panel of Experts on Information and Communication Technology, held here at the United Nations last April, because we have some experience in these matters. Estonia has the honour of finding itself among the 20 most computerized nations in the world. More importantly, we have done this not as a rich country, but as a nation with rather modest means.

Among the Panel's most important findings was the undisputed, if not terribly original, conclusion that information technology programmes are, in fact, beneficial for development. Computer technology can be a wedge, or it can be a bridge. It need not follow that poor nations fall ever behind. Policies can be implemented, as we have discovered, that turn the "digital divide" into a "digital dividend".

We have seen this in my country firsthand through our Tiger Leap programme whereby every school in Estonia has, for some time now, been connected to the Internet. Even more clearly, we have witnessed how access to information technology has brought new possibilities to rural areas, the areas which often bear the brunt of change. This is why Estonia wholeheartedly endorses, and will actively participate in, the United Nations plans to assist all Members in making the information technology dream a reality.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.