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Sixty-sixth session

23rd plenary meeting

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New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar)

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

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

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

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

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

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

Mr. Pereira Neves (Cape Verde) (*spoke in Cape Verdean; English text provided by the delegation*): It is a great honour to participate in the General Assembly and a great privilege to greet Members on behalf of the people and the Government of Cape Verde.

I address the Assembly in the Cape Verdean language, the Creole of Cape Verde. I believe this is the first time Cape Verdean Creole is used in United Nations General Assembly. I do it to share with the Assembly this piece of authentic world heritage, born on the threshold of the fifteenth century. Linguistic

experts consider it the oldest Creole of Euro-African origin and the oldest within the Atlantic context.

I use it also because language is culture, history and memory. All languages are expressions of thoughts, knowledge and practices. Languages are no doubt an expression of civilization. Therefore, speaking in the Creole of Cape Verde, in this most important Hall, at a meeting of heads of State and Government, is a reference to our conviction that the Creole identity is of anthropological value for all humanity. It is a way of highlighting our Cape Verdeanship: our soul and the way of being, the ethos and pathos of Cape Verde, which is the result of the intersection of various peoples of the world. The language is, in and of itself, a synthesis of the meeting of civilizations. By using it, I also pay vibrant tribute to Aristides Pereira, the first President of Cape Verde and a great African fighter for freedom and human dignity, who recently passed away.

The central theme of this Assembly session — the role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means — is a crucial and imperative theme for the world. It reflects the identity, the way of being and lifestyle of Cape Verdeans. As subscribers to the purposes and principles of the United Nations, we believe that peace and human rights are the key factors in the construction of sovereignty, democratic rule of law and sustainable development. Therefore, mediators are required to position and approach matters within the universal matrix of peace and human rights as the highest priorities of all States Members of the United Nations.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.



In addition, we consider it crucial to take an approach focused on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases worldwide, especially in the context of the challenges faced by developing countries.

Let me offer a few special words regarding the development of themes such as desertification, land degradation and drought in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication in preparation for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, scheduled for June 2012, which we strongly and actively support.

One of the most decisive actions taken by independent Cape Verde, soon after 1975, was reforestation, along with orographic correction and the mobilization of water. As a small island developing State at the crossroads of two large regions — the Sahel and Macaronesia — and suffering the effects of the most stringent climatic randomness of one region and the oceanic isolation of the other, Cape Verde is conscious of the importance of the green as well as the blue economy to the objective of sustainable development.

We need the United Nations to work out our part in preventing climate change and food and water shortages. We count on the United Nations and all countries of this great General Assembly to converge both bilaterally and multilaterally towards the green economy and sustainable development. Therefore, in Cape Verde there is an ongoing and ambitious programme for covering 50 per cent of national energy needs through renewable sources by 2020.

Despite remarkable and positive changes — some of which have been internationally recognized, such as our graduation to middle-income country status and being on the path towards full achievement of the Millennium Development Goals — I would still like to take this opportunity to better acquaint the General Assembly with my country.

Cape Verde, with its ten islands in the middle of the Atlantic, strategically positioned in the corridor and the cross-Atlantic flow, is not only a strong partner for global security, geostrategic interests and world trade, but is also an active and useful member of the international community in the fight against trafficking and related crime. The vast oceanic region of Cape Verde is an important space for security in the promotion of regional peace and prosperity and in the

affirmation of an international coalition to fight illicit transnational crime.

Some may wonder, “What country is this?” Some think of it as the nation of Amílcar Cabral; others see it as the country of Cesária Évora. Cape Verde is a land that was once an important entrepôt and trans-shipment base for the African slave trade, for both Europe and the Americas. Its oldest city — Ribeira Grande, or the Cidade Velha — was named a World Heritage by UNESCO in 2009.

Cape Verde is a State that encourages other States to remember, through memory, history and human rights, the international slave routes, just as we remember the Holocaust, another of the heights of human barbarism. In Cape Verde we can defy our lusophone partners in the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and our African partners and the entire world to reaffirm our commitment against barbarism, dictatorship, colonialism and disrespect for human rights through the promotion of the candidacy of the Tarrafal concentration camp on the island of Santiago as a World Heritage site.

Those who know us know that we are a country concerned with development. We do not settle for being middle-income country. We need the partnership with the international community to fulfil our destiny.

In Cape Verde’s transformational agenda, we have identified five pillars of our country’s growth and poverty reduction strategy: promotion of effective governance, strengthening human development, confronting the structural and social challenges arising from competitiveness, and investment in infrastructure for improving social cohesion.

Cape Verde is developing a foreign policy that favours democracy, justice, peace, cooperation and sustainable development. We look at the planet as the home of all, respecting the sovereignty and will of the people while emphasizing the global convergence in the core of humankind. We are therefore concerned about hunger in the Horn of Africa. We are concerned that thousands of children die in Africa every day from hunger. I am concerned that that does not motivate a stronger international intervention, since the dictatorship of hunger is the worst of dictatorships.

We urge the United Nations to be more effective and to make a concerted effort to reverse the image of that human tragedy in East Africa. We must therefore

eradicate the geopolitics of hunger. We all need to take the paradigm of zero hunger in the world.

We are also concerned about wars and tensions that thrive a little everywhere but are now more localized and of more intense in Africa, the Middle East and Asia — to the delight of the dealers in misery, those who invest in the war industry and in the suffering of millions of human beings, especially children, women and the elderly. We must reach a global consensus that security, peace and stability arise from the economic and social development of States and peoples. We must deconstruct war, conflict and tension between countries and peoples and ensure the commitment of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly towards that noble goal. We must reiterate that mediation is essential to settle disputes, whether in Africa or in the rest of the world.

The global economic crisis is acute. In large countries it shows signs of settling and in poor countries it is amplified. If the crisis is global, it requires global responses against recessionary policies, such as the protection of domestic markets, and the war against unfairly priced imports. It also requires global positions that converge towards social inclusion as a way to reduce the impact of the economic crisis.

We reiterate our firm position of respect for international laws, the principles of non-interference in internal affairs and the sovereignty of peoples and nations. We do not support double standards for similar cases, as if peoples and nations were not equal and deserving of the same treatment, as stated in the United Nations Charter.

Before concluding, I must emphasize our position in favour of expanding the reform model of global governance by the United Nations, allowing, among the many benefits, small States to have a greater voice in the decision-making process of the international system. Cape Verde unequivocally supports an increase in the number of permanent members of the Security Council, in the belief that the world is no longer as it was at the end of the Second World War, nor does it resemble that of the end of the Cold War.

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

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

Address by Mr. Peter O'Neill, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea.

Mr. Peter O'Neill, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Peter O'Neill, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. O'Neill (Papua New Guinea): Mr. President, allow me, on behalf of the Government and people of Papua New Guinea, to offer our warmest congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. We pledge support for your statement highlighting the success of global endeavours that are founded on the principles of partnership, justice and responsibility. I also thank your predecessor, Mr. Joseph Diess, for his invaluable contributions to the United Nations, and I wish him well.

I also wish to congratulate the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, on his reappointment for a second term, and to thank him for attending our recent annual Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting in Auckland, New Zealand. His attendance at our regional meeting was the first by a United Nations Secretary-General and is testament to the strengthening ties between the United Nations and the Pacific region. We particularly note his heartfelt comments when describing his experiences on witnessing the adverse effects of climate change on low-lying atolls in the Republic of Kiribati and the various other development challenges faced by many small island States in our region.

Allow me, like other speakers, to take this opportunity to welcome our newest member of the United Nations family — the Republic of South Sudan.

Papua New Guinea continues to benefit from a strong United Nations presence through its delivery of various development programmes. Papua New Guinea welcomed and formalized the "One United Nations Initiative: delivering as one" concept in 2006. That has

unified all the efforts of the various United Nations agencies under one budgetary framework, monitoring and evaluation process.

The concept will enable a more effective and efficient way for the United Nations to deliver on its mandate, particularly the new country programme for Papua New Guinea, to be rolled out at the beginning of January 2012. It will target the areas of governance, social justice, health, education, gender, the environment, climate change and disaster management.

That new country programme is part of our overall efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Since the inaugural MDG report was published in 2004, Papua New Guinea has produced two MDG progress reports. The first, in 2009, was a summary report and the second, in 2010, a comprehensive report. They showed that we have been able to achieve some of the national MDG targets, especially on poverty reduction and child mortality.

In terms of universal primary education, Papua New Guinea is progressing well, with the enrolment of children in grades one to six increasing significantly — by 53 per cent. That is a marked improvement and will increase the literacy rate in the long term. Our Government recently announced a policy of free education from the elementary level to year 10 and subsidized education from grade 11 to university, commencing 2012.

We are also revamping our national health system to improve immunization programmes, to provide a clean and safer water supply, to centralize the purchase and supply of medical drugs, and to reduce maternal and child mortality and the incidence of malaria, HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases. The recent important summit on non-communicable diseases, attended by our Minister for Health, reiterated our equal responsibility for our own, our families' and our communities' health and well-being.

Our Government remains committed to achieving the MDGs, and we are now scaling up progress in all relevant sectors. Our new Development Strategic Plan 2010-2030 and Medium Term Development Plan aim to develop and foster key enabling environments, which will raise Papua New Guinea to a middle-income country and improve its Human Development Index ranking.

We call on all our development partners to complement our efforts to achieve the MDG targets in line with our national development plans and policies. I believe other developing countries will support our call.

We are also investing heavily in the rehabilitation of our major transport infrastructure, including roads, airports and seaports. Aside from that, we are also rolling out rural communication systems and rural electrification. As we are all aware, improved infrastructure will enable effective service delivery.

Women play critical roles in all facets of our development. Our Government is conscious of the need to have more women participate actively in the affairs of state and in the economic life of our country. I am pleased to report that we have recently passed the first vote on a parliamentary bill that will provide for 22 seats reserved for women to contest in the coming elections in 2012. That provision does not stop them from contesting any of the existing seats.

We also appreciate the push by multilateral partners like the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank for gender equality. In the same breath, however, we urge them to support our financial institutions by specifically allocating funds without risk to be lent to women entrepreneurs to develop business opportunities.

We note the recently adopted San Francisco Declaration by the countries member of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) last week, under the leadership of the United States of America. That is a major step forward in supporting women in business and is a powerful tool for women of the APEC member countries. We will encourage our women in Papua New Guinea to take advantage of the opportunities created by that Declaration.

There remain many other global challenges that continue to affect the development aspirations of many of our countries. One is nuclear non-proliferation. The Pacific remains a nuclear-weapons-free zone. We call upon other Member States who are not yet signatories to sign and ratify the Rarotonga Treaty.

The illegal use, abuse and the dangerous proliferation of small arms and light weapons continue to hamper the development aspirations of many developing countries. We therefore call upon the international community to deal seriously with

outstanding issues such as the illegal supply of and trade in small arms. Our Government will do all it can to accelerate the implementation of the recommendations in our own Gun Summit Report.

On transnational crime, Papua New Guinea remains committed to working closely with other Governments and relevant international law enforcement agencies to curb drug trafficking, human trafficking and money-laundering.

As one of the top five remaining rainforest nations, we are committed to addressing the many challenges of climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development of our forests. We continue to maintain dialogue with all stakeholders, being mindful that issues confronting many nations on climate change are very complex.

In the matter of United Nations reform, we support and encourage the reform of the United Nations, its agencies and its Secretariat, to make them more responsive to and active in responding to global, regional and national challenges. We reiterate our call for an expansion of membership in the permanent and non-permanent categories of the Security Council, which must take into account the geopolitical realities of today's world.

In terms of our contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security, I am pleased to announce the deployment of our uniformed personnel as military observers. That is history in the making for our country, and we thank the United Nations for giving us the opportunity for our security personnel to participate in international peacekeeping duties.

On regional issues, tuna is an important source of food and is, along with tourism, an economic resource for the Pacific island States. Papua New Guinea and countries that are parties to the Nauru Agreement are determined to process tuna onshore to add value and create employment for our people. We encourage investors to invest in onshore activities.

At the Pacific regional level, we are conscious of our obligation to conserve fisheries through sustainable fishing. The parties to the Nauru Agreement have introduced the Vessel Day Scheme to limit the total catch for conservation purposes. In addition, Papua New Guinea continues to make funds available to the South Pacific community to tag tuna species so that we

are can quantify and assess the tuna stocks for the future.

Over the past nine years, Papua New Guinea has continued to experience unprecedented economic growth levels of 6 to 8 per cent per annum. That has been largely attributable to significant increases in foreign investments in our mineral and hydrocarbon sectors and to the high prices of our agricultural commodities. Those economic growth levels have positioned Papua New Guinea to become a significant development partner within our region.

Papua New Guinea greatly values the objectives and principles of the United Nations Charter. We reaffirm our support for the maintenance of international peace and security, the development of friendly relations among nations and working together towards the achievement of the aspirations of all of our peoples.

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

Mr. Peter O'Neill, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa.

Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Malielegaoi (Samoa): Samoa joined the United Nations 35 years ago, a decision rooted firmly in our belief in the principle of the sovereign equality of all Member States, each with the same rights and responsibilities. That sentiment underpins our

relationship with our Organization as it evolves into a global family of interdependent nations.

The Organization remains one of the last, if not the greatest, bastion against the serious challenges and uncertainties that beset our world — financial and economic crises, climate change, environmental degradation, land desertification, ocean acidification, destruction of fishery resources, endemic poverty and dangerous threats to peace and security. That is why we continue to support the United Nations and look to its timely interventions and leadership in addressing the challenges the world faces and finding collective solutions to them.

It is in the context of the leadership role of the United Nations that the visit of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon earlier this month to the Pacific region as a special guest of the Pacific Leaders Forum in New Zealand was particularly significant. The visit enabled the Secretary-General to see first-hand the scale of the challenges facing vulnerable Pacific small island countries. The visit, the first ever to the Pacific by an incumbent Secretary-General in the 66 years of existence of the United Nations, was a historical milestone in the relationship between the Pacific region and the United Nations. The fact that the Secretary-General is from the Asia-Pacific region and that the visit took place before the start of his second term, not at the end of it, are positive aspects that were not lost on the Pacific leaders. Mr. Ban Ki-moon's advocacy and support of Pacific issues in the different international forums dealing with sustainable development, climate change and peace and security, as we witnessed on Wednesday when he presented his report to the General Assembly, will be invaluable in placing Pacific concerns at centre stage for attention and support where needed.

The United Nations is the world's premier Organization. Its role in the various areas of development and in improving the human condition must be exemplary and unequivocal. The work and influence of the United Nations to encourage Governments to respect and uphold fundamental human rights is sorely needed in parts of our Pacific region and across the world.

In our region as well, the work of the United Nations to facilitate the choices of Pacific peoples to exercise their right to self-determination continues to form an important part of our Pacific region's

association with the United Nations. In this respect, we strongly urge the United Nations to play a more proactive role towards the achievement of this goal.

Development, security and human rights are mutually reinforcing pillars of the United Nations. Equal progress on all three fronts should be the norm, not the exception. A decade into the new millennium, we find the Assembly meeting against the backdrop of a world teetering on many fronts and replete with uncertainties.

A full recovery of the global economy to pre-2008 levels continues to be an elusive goal. The immediate to medium-term outlook is not promising and does not instil confidence. While some Governments are being assisted with their budgetary difficulties, others, in contrast, are struggling on their own to provide the basic necessities for their people. Achieving the time-bound Millennium Development Goals in their totality is becoming difficult by the day.

In terms of crises, be it economic, climate change or food-related, the most and worst affected by any one of these are, without exception, some of the United Nations — recognized vulnerable groups — the least developed countries and the small island developing States. Samoa belongs to both categories. Though the United Nations has committed, through internationally agreed development frameworks such as the Brussels Programme of Action, the Barbados Programme of Action and others, to help vulnerable economies attain economic growth, sustainable development and the resilience to endure external shocks, the reality is that the needs of these groups always outstrip the resources available to them. This mismatch is due in part to undercapitalized frameworks with no dedicated funding.

Earlier this week, the United Nations focused long-overdue attention on the insidious health threat posed by non-communicable diseases (NCDs). If left unchecked, NCDs will not only devastate the health of our people but also have the potential to wreak havoc in our economies, with the incidence of these so-called lifestyle diseases having a heavy impact on the productive population. Samoa therefore adds its voice to the call to include the reduction of non-communicable diseases in the Millennium Development Goals and which sufficient resources and donor partnership actions should also prioritize.

These are real concerns. Sustainable economic development is a priority issue for Samoa and the Pacific island countries. This is why we are hopeful that the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), to be held next June in Brazil, will allow for a serious discussion and reorientation of the whole United Nations community on the importance of identifying and providing the necessary resources for the implementation of the agreed programmes of action and other global arrangements that the United Nations underwrites.

The theme of this year's Pacific Forum was "Converting potential into prosperity". In line with this is the advocacy led by the Pacific countries to raise the profile of the oceans agenda towards a strong "blue economy" outcome, to ensure that the importance of the oceans to our islands is captured as an integral component of the Rio+20 outcome. The ocean provides the Pacific region with opportunities and challenges, best reflected in the four-pronged focus on conservation, sustainable management, balanced harvesting and greater economic return from the utilization of fishery and marine resources.

The emphasis of efforts on maximizing economic benefits from fisheries is a recognition of its vital contribution in supporting sustainable economic development and attempts to address the long-held concern of Pacific islands that they have been for far too long short-changed and unfairly compensated for the fishery resources found within our waters, which are worth many billions of dollars, with less than 1 per cent received by the island countries.

The Pacific States have long been committed to efforts to conserve and manage fisheries resources in the region. It has therefore also been a point of long-standing frustration that vessels of major fishing nations continue to fish illegally in Pacific waters. Even when they are caught carrying out illegal fishing activities, it is by no means a certainty that prosecution and enforcement of penalties will be successful, when infringing fishing vessels have heavy financial resources backing their defences.

We therefore again urge cooperation from all nations with fishing fleets in the Pacific to work together with our Pacific countries to stop illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing practices in the Pacific. The Pacific carries the last major stocks of some key fish species that in other oceans have already

been depleted, contaminated and devastated. Successful conservation and the effective management of harvest levels in the long term is absolutely critical, not just for Pacific countries and distant-water fishing nations, but, ultimately, the availability of fish supplies to the rest of the world in the years ahead. The successful conservation and management of fish stocks in the Pacific is, pure and simple, good business for everyone.

Climate change was again singled out by Pacific leaders during their just-concluded summit as the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific. Natural catastrophes are capable of destruction that devastates entire communities. From the tragic experiences that our country has endured, we know of the great pain from the loss of lives, the destruction of property and the setback to the national economy that disasters are capable of inflicting.

It is therefore imperative that adequate resources be available and that they may, indeed, be accessed with ease through different direct modalities in order to assist countries in meeting their mitigation and adaptation programmes. The Copenhagen Green Climate Fund is now in the design phase. The representatives of Governments and experts involved would do well to pay attention to the existing climate change funding architecture so that the shortcomings of other funding mechanisms are not repeated.

Without the necessary financial resources and technical support, Samoa's ability to adapt to and mitigate climate change will be severely curtailed. Thankfully, Samoa continues to benefit under the fast start finance window, both bilaterally and through regional projects made available by the generous support of our traditional and new development partners, such as Australia, China, the European Union, Japan, New Zealand, Italy, the Asian Development Bank, the Global Environment Facility, the World Bank and the United Nations, to name but a few. We are, indeed, very, very grateful.

Countries in different parts of the world look to the United Nations and its stronger members for peacekeeping arrangements to give those communities in strife time to re-establish and to find lasting solutions. Samoa continues to lend its unwavering support to that aspect of the United Nations mandate. I reaffirm that support, which is underpinned by my

country's contribution and the involvement of our police officers in the United Nations peacekeeping operations in the Sudan, Liberia and Timor-Leste. Additionally, Samoa continues to be an integral part of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands under the umbrella of the Pacific Forum.

Samoa warmly welcomes the admission of South Sudan as the United Nation's newest member in July this year.

Samoa joins the international community's support for the courage of the people of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and now Syria in seeking relief from oppression and in gaining the freedoms and human rights to which they are rightly entitled.

At this rostrum a year ago, I did not expect the Arab spring, and spoke in earnest of the hope that progress would come in the then historic process to bring permanent peace to the peoples of Israel and Palestine (see A/65/PV.19). It is our long-held conviction that an independent Palestinian nation, taking its rightful place in our global family and living side by side with a secure Israel, is the only road to permanent peace. However, while we all know that that is the sensible outcome that must be achieved, it will sadly remain elusive without a clear sense of commitment and willingness by both sides to negotiate in good faith.

For genuine and permanent peace between Palestine and the State of Israel, there must be direct negotiations between the two countries. Addressing the symptoms, but not the root causes of the conflict is short-sighted and the result unsustainable. Solutions must be decided by the two parties, not imposed from outside. Without that strong buy-in from the Israelis and Palestinians themselves, any solutions will, at best, be short-lived. More than ever, visionary leadership, on both sides, that sees beyond the immediate dictates of short-sighted interests and that is, instead, willing to seize the opportunity to fashion a just and durable peace settlement, is critically needed at this point.

Terrorism, in its various forms and manifestations, is responsible for the horror and fear that have continued to grip the world's attention. No country is immune from the reaches of terrorism, and we are all affected to varying degrees. Terrorist acts committed under whatever pretext or purpose can never be justified as morally acceptable. Equally, countering terrorism does not confer immunity from

the rule of law, nor the abandonment of the principles of a civilized society.

No country can win the war against terrorism on its own. Only by pooling our resources and working collaboratively with each other can we stand a chance of defeating that senseless menace. Samoa, despite the heavy cost, is doing its best to meet our obligations in that collective effort.

Modest progress has been achieved in the efforts to reform the Security Council. Samoa remains convinced that an expanded Security Council that mirrors present-day realities is essential for multilateralism and for the Council's integrity and credibility. Increases in both the permanent and the non-permanent categories should be part and parcel of the reform package.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted from the rostrum.

**Address by Mr. Meltek Sato Kilman
Livtunvanu, Prime Minister of the Republic
of Vanuatu**

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

Mr. Meltek Sato Kilman Livtunvanu, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Meltek Sato Kilman Livtunvanu, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Kilman (Vanuatu): Vanuatu joins other delegations in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. My delegation vows our full cooperation, and believes that, with your leadership, we will conclude a successful session.

Allow me to also acknowledge the leadership of your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss, for his exceptional guidance and for the considerable and important achievements of the previous Assembly session.

In the same spirit, on behalf of my Government, I take this opportunity to congratulate His Excellency Ban Ki-moon on his re-election to the post of Secretary-General and to commend him on his vision, leadership and tireless efforts in moving towards achieving the common interests of all humanity.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government and the people of the Republic of South Sudan on the birth of their new nation on 9 July. Vanuatu recognizes the sovereignty of South Sudan, and offers the young nation our full support.

The theme of this year's General Assembly session, "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means", calls for more creative and feasible peaceful multilateral solutions to many of our long-standing disputes that, unless resolved peacefully, will have far more extensive global consequences. The settlement of disputes by peaceful means is central to the United Nations system, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter and in numerous international conventions and treaties. In that context, we, like many others, encourage our brothers and sisters in Israel and Palestine to continue the peaceful negotiations that will ensure regional and global stability. We also call upon the United Nations to visit the framework with which it fulfils its mediation mandates and to develop closer partnerships with mediation actors within regional groups. To succeed as responsible nations of this global village, we must continue to cultivate an environment that thwarts the seeds of bitterness, hatred and vengeance.

In establishing the United Nations in 1945, many nations, great and small, entrusted it with the responsibility to assist in maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations, and promoting social progress, better living standards and human rights. However, 66 years after the founding of this multilateral Organization, the world that we live in is far from the ideals for which its inception was intended. Across the globe, people from all walks of life continue to be subject to colonial rule, death threats, arbitrary detention, torture and worse,

and are killed for exercising their rights to freedom of expression. Untold crimes against humanity and other human rights atrocities still continue.

While we reaffirm our faith in multilateralism, with the conviction that bilateral diplomacy cannot substitute for multilateralism, we also believe that our nations have a greater need of a more robust multilateral system that is swift and efficient in responding to the multitude of challenges that members of this highly esteemed system, acting unilaterally, would be hard done to defeat. We are delighted to note that one of the four priorities of the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session is to continue the work on the reforms within the United Nations.

In that context, this year's establishment of the Change Management Team within the Organization, in particular, is a step in the right direction. That initiative comes at a time when members of this body are calling on the United Nations to play a more prominent role in a period of rapid change and financial restraint in building a culture of transparency, accountability, good governance and enhanced democratic participation, and to achieve efficiency and results.

As regards the Security Council, Vanuatu is steadfast in its belief that reform measures must provide for democratic and geographically strategic representation in both the permanent and the non-permanent membership to reflect the realities of this century. We continue to lend our invaluable support to the candidacies of the many countries vying for membership within the non-permanent seat category of the Security Council. We hope that sustained reforms will help to boost the Security Council's peacekeeping role and to increase efficiency and transparency in promoting the universal standards and common values and customs that form the basis of global security and development. At this juncture, let me acknowledge the work of the peacekeeping and nation-building missions of the United Nations in supporting new countries, such as Timor-Leste, South Sudan and others, in their nation-building.

On 9 September 2011, we marked the tenth anniversary of the twin towers bombing that wreaked havoc in the city of New York and claimed more than 3,000 lives. Such acts of terrorism can never be justified, whatever the causes they claim to be

advancing and to whatever grievances they claim to respond.

Despite international efforts to counter terrorism, major threats remain. Indeed, the world cannot sit idly by, watching the forces of evil threaten humanity's right to peace and security. Terrorism cannot and must not be allowed to flourish. Vanuatu condemns, in the strongest possible terms, all forms and manifestations of terrorism, and calls on all countries to join forces to fight against its evil ideologies, activities and financing in order to make the world of tomorrow a safer place. All countries must work closely in eliminating that scourge.

Today, the lack of progress on disarmament and non-proliferation, cornerstones of global security, is disturbing. The world's nuclear Powers must fulfil their vows to meet their obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to take decisive and practical steps towards irreversible disarmament. Only then will the proliferation of arms reverse.

My people welcome the strenuous efforts of President Obama and other world leaders, working together at the vanguard to advance negotiations on denuclearization. The very recent events in Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster clearly show that whatever safeguards are in place, there can be no absolute guarantee that those can withstand the unforgivable ferocity of Mother Nature. They are important lessons for us.

Four years after the global financial crisis began, in 2007, the economies of many developed countries continue to struggle, stirring financial markets worldwide with fresh fears of impediments, default and possible recession. For small developing countries, such as Vanuatu, the rise in food prices, high fuel costs, soaring commodity prices, fears of a global recession, as well as the other unforeseen effects of the global financial instability and uncertainty that remain in many developed countries, are having multifaceted consequences.

Such developments, coupled with the ongoing effects of climate change and natural disasters, continue to threaten the economies of small island nations, and to undermine all efforts towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to ensure that sustainable development is achieved.

Vanuatu has made some progress towards achieving the MDGs, but much more needs to be done by pooling our own resources at the national level and by engaging the international community in coordinating efforts so as to achieve our MDGs.

The convening of this year's thematic group on non-communicable diseases (NCDs) is indeed timely. In my country, it is estimated that approximately 75 per cent of deaths each year are related to NCDs. Furthermore, the immediate causes of the NCD epidemic — tobacco use, unhealthy diets, physical inactivity and the harmful use of alcohol — are becoming increasingly widespread in our society, especially in urban areas. Those self-inflicted diseases are, therefore, becoming a major barrier to our socio-economic development and to achieving healthy islands and the MDGs.

At this point in time, my country is undertaking, for the first time, a national NCD STEPS survey to determine and to better understand the burden and the extent of NCDs and their determinants in our communities so that we can better target our intervention efforts in future. Early this year, Vanuatu launched its revised NCD strategy and policy for the period 2011 to 2016 to guide our implementation efforts in the coming years. We have also implemented, over the years, many key NCD strategies to empower our people to increase control over their health and its determinants, with the assistance of our development partners, such as the World Health Organization, the Australian Agency for International Development and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

In terms of economic performance, Vanuatu's economy grew at an unprecedented average rate of 6 per cent between 2003 and 2008. Economic growth has since weakened, mainly as a result of exogenous shocks felt during the ongoing global financial crisis. That has had a negative impact on Government revenue in the past few years, adding further strain on the economy. That said, the need for significant increases in financial support from development partners remains pressing. The announcement of a considerable increase in credit facilities at the Group of Twenty London summit in 2009 was welcome news. However, the reassertion of those financial commitments and swift action need to be rigorously followed up by the donor community.

The previous assessment by the United Nations Committee for Development Policy of Vanuatu's development status as a least developed country has showed a progressive pace in development. While graduation may be imminent, I must underscore, before the Assembly, that most challenges of the small island developing States are permanent. The challenges of smallness, the distance to major metropolitan markets, extreme vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change, the sea-level rise and vulnerability to tsunamis all constitute permanent characteristics of our island nations. It is therefore important for the United Nations to ensure that multilateral mechanisms for graduation and a transition package must not be detached from those permanent realities. We are delighted that the President of the General Assembly has vowed to pay special attention to vulnerable States such as ours.

Climate change and ocean acidification remain the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific, particularly for small low-lying Pacific islands. High greenhouse gas emitting industrialized countries must start to embrace and to accept the common but differentiated responsibilities in historic contributions to climate change.

As the former Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum, I, along with my fellow leaders of the Pacific Island nations, particularly welcome the historic visit of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to the Pacific. I call on the United Nations to undertake more senior missions to the Pacific region so as to establish a more comprehensive understanding of how susceptible the people of the Pacific are to the adverse impacts of climate change and sea-level rise, as embodied by the case of Kiribati.

I call on leaders of advanced nations to renew and honour their pledges to finance, in particular, efforts to help the most vulnerable communities to address their adaptation needs in order to ensure that island nations survive the impending global disaster that climate change may afford. An increased global fund to strengthen the capacity-building efforts of vulnerable communities, in particular, to integrate climate change into economic policies and actions, is pressing.

As we prepare for the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 17) talks in Durban, my Government urges all delegations to work tirelessly to

pledge to a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. Durban must advance all aspects of the climate change negotiations and devise strategies to operationalize the COP 16 decisions if any concrete, balanced and ambitious outcomes are to yield results.

Colonialism and all forms of imperialism must be addressed by the United Nations, for one of the reasons why the United Nations system was created was to develop friendly relations among nations, based on respect for the principles of equal rights and the self-determination of peoples. Therefore, colonial rule is obsolete and must be addressed with new drive and vision. The United Nations, as well as the international community, must continue in their efforts to address issues of decolonization in those Non-Self-Governing Territories that still yearn for freedom.

The mandate of the Special Committee on Decolonization must be strengthened. All means should be accorded to the Committee to allow it to magnify the suppressed voices of the peoples in all Non-Self-Governing Territories that are still under the control of administrative Powers, especially where serious human rights violations are reported.

My country, Vanuatu, was the last in the Pacific region to be decolonized. Since our independence in 1980, we have continued to speak out for the inalienable rights of the colonized indigenous peoples of Oceania and in certain parts of the Asian region, where either administrative or colonial Powers still retain authority.

My Government also calls upon the United Nations to ensure that the demands for French Polynesia's right to self-determination are not rejected. We, along with many other Pacific island nations, support calls for the reinstatement of the French-administered Territory with the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization. That would be the first major step in the process of their self-determination. Vanuatu encourages the French-administered Territory of French Polynesia and, in the same spirit, that of New Caledonia to continue to seek meaningful dialogue with France in order to find ways to ensure that the freedom of the colonized peoples of Oceania is fully realized.

Enshrined in the core principles of the United Nations Charter, the Organization must guarantee universal respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all the oppressed. The universal pursuit of

democratic reform, good governance and adherence to human rights conventions have often concealed the suffering of many people, denying them their right to decide their destiny without fear or reprisal. The United Nations must step up its efforts to exercise their freedom from the tentacles of foreign rule, so troublesome a misgiving in these modern times.

One day, all the indigenous peoples of Oceania and beyond must reach their goal of freedom, a destination promised to all humanity and a right that the Creator endowed upon all peoples and that no earthly Power can deny, to determine where they live and to be self-ruled in free association with the international community of nations.

Let me take this opportunity once again to reiterate to this eminent Assembly our serious concerns over the infringement by foreign forces on the political freedom of many of our nations today, a right denied to the people of the land to exercise their freedom to control their lands, a freedom denied by the injustices of the global world order that demarcated many of our lands, dividing peoples, families and cultures and disconnecting us from the traditions of our ancestors. Denying the right of a country to exercise its political freedom over its maritime territorial boundaries and preventing the indigenous people of a country from exercising their culture and traditional linkages with integral part of its lands, sovereign since time immemorial, remain one of the greatest crimes of our times. We are therefore calling on the United Nations to ensure that our fundamental rights can be exercised in all parts of our territory.

Mr. Allam-mi (Chad), Vice-President, took the Chair.

As the world unites in addressing some of the major challenges of our times, the lifting of the economic embargo on Cuba is long overdue. Denying the good people of Cuba from fully participating in the global economy is inhumane. It is high time that the Cuban people be allowed to enjoy their rights and freedom as an independent and sovereign nation.

It is time that we all revisit the aspirations and the ideals with which the United Nations system was created and join forces to weed out injustice, colonialism, poverty, hunger, war crimes, terrorism and the like in the hope of creating a peaceful and secure world for generations to come. All nations, great and small, must respect each other's sovereignty, for that is

the way to achieve trust and to ensure a dignified confidence among all friends gathered around the table of the United Nations.

I also welcome Fiji's commitment to full and democratic elections by September 2014. As a Pacific neighbour, such an announcement is timely.

In conclusion, I wish to take this final opportunity to express my gratitude to Vanuatu's development partners for the support that they provide in building our economy. I believe that more can be done to help small vulnerable island countries like Vanuatu to address the rising challenges confronting them.

Leaders of the world, the resounding echoes of history drum in our ears and remind us of what must be done tomorrow. The global forces driving the changes that will shape our future must beckon towards a world where people of all races, ethnicities, creeds, beliefs, faiths, cultures, traditions and origins can live in harmony and peace, as brothers and sisters.

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

Mr. Meltek Sato Kilman Livtunvanu, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Danny Philip, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands.

Mr. Danny Philip, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Danny Philip, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Philip (Solomon Islands): Solomon Islands, with much pride, wishes to thank our Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for honouring my country with a historic visit earlier this month. He is the first Secretary-General to have set foot on a Pacific small island developing State with least developed country (LDC) status. His re-election

to a second five-year term speaks to his strong conviction in advancing multilateralism and his attentiveness to the challenges facing all members, including the vulnerable countries. We once again pledge our support to the Secretary-General during his second term in office.

Let me take this opportunity to acknowledge the leadership and tireless work of Mr. Joseph Deiss as President of the General Assembly during the past session, and to congratulate the President of the current session on his election. I am confident that, under his leadership, the responsibilities of the United Nations will be strengthened, especially at a time when there is nervousness in world markets, with the threat of a possible double-dip recession becoming more real every day; a time when the world is witnessing unrest in Asia, riots in Europe and famine in the Horn of Africa; a time when the narrow interests and ambitions of some are being cycled through the United Nations system, thereby harming the principles for which this Organization stands.

In this respect, the theme for the sixty-sixth session, "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means", is fitting and timely. The Organization was set up to preserve peace for all, not conditional peace for some. It is about honest international cooperation built on a spirit of optimism and positivism. It is about interaction between States with a sense of duty and an awakened conscience to effect change. Multilateral diplomatic and political initiatives need to take centre stage instead of military solutions, which may lead to lengthy and protracted conflicts.

The role of mediation in Solomon Islands is about creating a common voice among the 87 different languages spoken in the country. The Government remains committed to building a cohesive multicultural society with equal opportunities for all. The Solomon Islands Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace, along with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, is in its third year of continuing to build bridges between formerly conflicting parties by conveying a message of tolerance, respect, dialogue and understanding among Solomon Islanders.

I am pleased to say that my Government is reforming and improving our democratic system by setting the goal of continuing national consultations on the Political Parties' Integrity Bill, introduced in 2009

by the previous Government. We are developing a comprehensive policy to identify legislation that needs to be reviewed or enacted.

Solomon Islands has set itself progressively ambitious goals within the various international frameworks. We can achieve all of those goals only by having focused a relationship with the United Nations. We feel that the United Nations needs to engage in special outreach to countries with special needs, especially those lagging furthest behind, so as to assist them in implementing the outcomes of global agreements. To make a difference, the international community must honour its commitments, and do so by giving sufficiently to ensure that the required economic transformation occurs in LDCs and small island developing States (SIDS).

Multilateralism has provided the basis for our foreign policy. We opened a second Permanent Mission to the United Nations, in Geneva, in June this year, and would like to see our action reciprocated with an enhanced United Nations country presence in Solomon Islands. We have an over-regionalized United Nations system that has seen problems grow in the Pacific. Small as we are, three of our Pacific countries have experienced conflict over the past two decades, and five of the 12 are listed as least developed countries.

Today, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) claim six in every 10 lives in the Pacific. Non-communicable diseases are pandemic in the region. In that regard, Solomon Islands has put in place a non-communicable diseases strategic plan for the period 2011-2015. Prevention remains the cornerstone of our NCD policy, as does the development of our primary health coverage across the country. We will continue to need sustained external support in the short to medium term so that we can implement our NCD programmes.

Solomon Islands, as a least developed country, applauds the adoption in May of the 10-year Istanbul Programme of Action for the least developed countries. The Programme provides an opportunity to lift 880 million people within the international community out of poverty. The 48 LDCs have developed a programme with the ambitious target of seeing half of the LDCs graduate by 2020. The programme focuses on investing in the productive sectors of LDCs in order to tackle our development challenges by triggering stable, sustained and inclusive economic growth. Partnership is critical to support investment in income-

generating activities, employment creation, infrastructure development, rural agricultural development and investment in smallholder farmers. Solomon Islands, in reaching out to the 85 per cent of its population living in rural areas, is currently implementing parallel sectoral and constitutional reforms and land reform programmes.

Solomon Islands supports the call for the Secretary-General to conduct structured discussions on a post-2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agenda. As we all must realize and admit, we will fall short of achieving the Millennium Development Goals come 2015. The review must examine the means of achieving the social and development goals. That means looking at the MDGs from a sustainable development perspective. Solomon Islands looks forward to that discussion.

On climate change, we call on the Secretary-General to garner the necessary political will from our developed partners to adopt a second commitment period in Durban under the Kyoto Protocol. This would avoid a gap between the first and second commitment periods and would be sufficient to ensure the survival of all vulnerable people and prevent climate change impacts from reaching irreversible levels.

Problems associated with climate change are growing challenges for our country. We are taking several practical measures. The Government is planning the relocation of our national referral hospital to higher ground. Efforts to build a resilience policy on food and water security are progressing under the adaptation programme. Our climate change challenges are growing, and fast-track funds promised two years ago must be made available to vulnerable countries as a matter of real urgency. Solomon Islands is in the process of establishing economic growth centres throughout the country, and we are looking at powering these centres with renewable energy, which we view as a necessity and a condition for growth.

Solomon Islands is grateful for the growth of South-South cooperation and its policy engagement within the international community, especially support from such countries as Cuba, India and Papua New Guinea. We also welcome new non-traditional partners with our region, including Luxembourg, Georgia and Italy, who have rendered support and are instrumental in complementing the support from our traditional

partners the European Union, Australia, New Zealand, the Republic of China and Japan.

Solomon Islands, as a post-conflict country, remains engaged with the Australia-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI), with support from New Zealand and other Pacific Islands Forum member countries. The Secretary-General, during his recent trip to my country, had a bird's eye view of the achievements of RAMSI in the restoration of law and order and the reform of our economic and governance systems. My country remains grateful to all our Pacific neighbours for their support and reiterates that any winding down of RAMSI activities should be done in a calculated and responsible manner.

We continue to seek homegrown solutions within the region. The Melanesian Spearhead Group has agreed to establish a Melanesian regional police academy, bringing together Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands discipline forces to respond to emerging needs, from disasters to conflicts. Solomon Islands hopes to join Fiji, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea in having its police force participate in United Nations missions. Work is still in progress, and we hope to conclude it soon.

Within my region, Solomon Islands continues to support the inscription of the French territory of New Caledonia on the United Nations decolonization list and will extend similar support to French Polynesia, working with all stakeholders, including the Administrator. In particular, the Melanesian Spearhead Group countries strongly support the inscription of New Caledonia and French Polynesia for decolonization.

The current international system has pushed us to the edge of our finite natural resources. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio next year will be another global opportunity to identify gaps within existing sustainable development frameworks, from the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy, which recognize the special situation of small island developing States, to the Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs. We strongly urge signatory countries to honour their commitments.

Solomon Islands looks forward to the negotiations scheduled for late this year. Already, we are in the midst of preserving the last global stock of tuna by creating the world's first sustainable industrial

fishing industry through a subregional intergovernmental mechanism. Fisheries remain our source of food and income, and we will need to maximize returns from these resources in a sustainable manner by bringing together three pillars of sustainable development on equal footing and in a balanced and sustainable manner.

Solomon Islands is host to the regional Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, and we continue to register our interest in hosting the regional marine scientific and technological centre of the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea to advance marine scientific research in the Pacific region and to foster the transfer of marine technology for the development of our ocean and marine resources.

Solomon Islands believes in dialogue and engagement with all countries of the world, including Fiji. We do so within the framework of the United Nations Charter and the Melanesian Spearhead Group principles, with mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality, mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence with each other. We would like to encourage all States to do likewise.

I am equally pleased to say that, since my Government came into office some 14 months ago, we have established relations with more than 27 countries and will continue to reach out to all countries to ensure that Solomon Islands remains connected in our interlinked world. On this note, I welcome a new member to our family of nations, South Sudan. We offer South Sudan our friendship and look forward to working with it on all issues of common concern to our countries.

The 51-year-old economic blockade of Cuba remains an issue stuck in time. Solomon Islands, in a spirit of friendship and in observation of the principle of good neighbourliness, makes a humble call on our partner and friend, the United States, for the unconditional lifting of the economic blockade against the people of Cuba. We request that the two States renew, restore, revive, redeem and reclaim their friendship and respect for each other's sovereignty within the letter and spirit of the United Nations Charter.

Solomon Islands will host the eleventh Festival of Pacific Arts next year to celebrate and promote the

unique and diverse indigenous cultures of the Pacific. The Festival will give us an opportunity to express our sense of pride, awareness and recognition of the "Pacifinness" of the isolated communities within the Pacific and to develop and preserve a deep sense of solidarity and unity through our ancient music, body art, dances and languages. We look forward to receiving our guests in 2012.

On the long-standing conflict in the holy land, Solomon Islands supports the work of the Quartet. We note that more than two-thirds of United Nations Member States recognize Palestine as a State. Solomon Islands, in the name of peace, believes that the international community must have the strength and stamina to act decisively, build on the two-State solution and overcome the distrust that exists in the region multilaterally.

On Security Council reform, Solomon Islands continues to support the intergovernmental negotiations on expansion in the number of permanent and non-permanent seats of the Council. My delegation is mindful of the fact that the most recent Security Council reform occurred in 1965. The world has changed since then. We need to streamline the current negotiating text within our informal intergovernmental negotiation process and join other small island developing States in calling for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council explicitly for small island developing States.

On the issue of human rights, I am pleased to say that Solomon Islands has submitted its national human rights report to the Human Rights Council. For a developing country, the right to development is the core of the country's policy. Putting people at the centre of development, their meaningful participation and the fair distribution of national wealth and benefits will bring peace to an angry man, feed a hungry child and empower our womenfolk.

My delegation would like to acknowledge the change in nomenclature within the 53-member Group of Asian States to the Asia and the Pacific Small Islands Developing States Group. This is an important development and truly represents the diversity of membership that exists within the Asia Group. We applaud our Asian colleagues for taking such a decision.

On the issue of gender, Solomon Islands has huge challenges, to the extent that it will seek a regional seat

within the Executive Board of United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Solomon Islands is presenting its candidate as a Pacific SIDS-endorsed candidate, and with the support of the Assembly it hopes to give an LDC and SIDS flavour to the Board.

On Taiwan cross-strait relations, my delegation continues to commend the ongoing dialogue between the Republic of China on Taiwan and the People's Republic of China. We note Taiwan's continuous contributions to the global health system in terms of a wide range of international development programmes, and welcome its participation as an observer to the World Health Assembly. We continue to call for such arrangements to be extended to other United Nations treaty bodies, including the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to ensure the meaningful participation of Taiwan and its people in the affairs of the international community. Solomon Islands also acknowledges Taiwan's climate change mitigation and renewable energy programmes with developing countries, and would like to see the application of similar observer arrangements extended to Taiwan within the UNFCCC.

Let me conclude by expressing once again my delegation's confidence in translating our global agenda into action within the next 12 months. Many lives depend on that. On behalf of the Government and people of Solomon Islands, I assure the Assembly of our support and cooperation.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Primer Minister of Solomon Islands for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Danny Philip, Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Lord Tu'ivakano of Nukunuku, Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Defence, Information and Communication of the Kingdom of Tonga

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Information and Communication of the Kingdom of Tonga.

Lord Tu'ivakano of Nukunuku, Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Defence, Information and Communication of the Kingdom of Tonga, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Lord Tu'ivakano of Nukunuku, Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Defence, Information and Communication of the Kingdom of Tonga, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Lord Tu'ivakano (Tonga): Like others who have spoken before me, allow me to add my warm congratulations to Mr. Al-Nasser on his election as President of the General Assembly for our current session. My delegation and I assure him, as always, of our support and cooperation. I also wish to thank Mr. Joseph Diess of Switzerland for a successful term as President at the sixty-fifth session. We also remember another former President of the Assembly, Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland, who passed away earlier this year but who left a lasting impact on the good work of the General Assembly and the United Nations.

As for the ongoing leadership of the Organization, I wish to extend my congratulations to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his appointment to a deserved second term. He and the Secretariat continue to show the firm resolve needed during these challenging times of global crisis. We pay tribute also to the memory of those members of the Secretariat who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of international duty.

A further example of the critical role played by the Secretary-General during these difficult times was the convening earlier this week of the High-level Meeting on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The dangerous potential of NCDs, unchecked in small States like mine, threatens not just livelihoods and lifestyle but whatever gains may have been achieved as they relate to Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 6 and the other MDGs.

At our annual meeting of Pacific Island Forum leaders in Auckland earlier this month, we adopted a statement on NCDs in which, among other things, we committed our Governments to implementing five key interventions in areas known to reduce NCDs: Controlling tobacco, improving diets, increasing physical activity, reducing alcohol intake and facilitating access to essential drugs and technologies.

In that respect, Tonga was pleased to join other Member States in adopting the Political Declaration (resolution 66/2, annex) of the High-level Meeting on the prevention and control of NCDS. I sincerely believe that the Meeting was a good step in the right direction for setting a healthier and enjoyable future for us all.

We were pleased that the Secretary-General was able to visit a number of countries in our region on his way to his historic attendance at the Pacific Islands Forum. He was able to assess for himself the dominant impact of climate change on countries in the Pacific and to validate the activities of Pacific small island developing States like Tonga in international forums. We must use the positive foundations laid down collectively in Copenhagen and Cancún to embrace the promise that might lie in Durban at the seventeenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in December.

We are pleased that, in July, under the able presidency of Germany, the Security Council took solid steps to seize the moral imperative by holding an open debate and producing a presidential statement on the Maintenance of international peace and security and the impact of climate change (S/PRST/2011/15*). The Council and its membership, now and in the future, must not turn from their vigilant duty to keep themselves in a position of leadership over this issue and its implications for Member States like Tonga and others in the Pacific.

While last year's High-level Meeting on MDGs offered small island developing States like Tonga an opportunity to take stock of their progress towards achieving those Goals in 2015, we consider that we have a similar chance to do so as we all prepare for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development next year. We stress the critical importance of the sustainable development, management and conservation of our ocean and marine resources — living and non-living — as a proper source of livelihood and income for our communities and Governments. Ensuring that States like ours enjoy a greater share of the benefits derived from such resources is key. What we within the Pacific small island developing States have come to refer to as the "blue economy" will be our challenge to the Rio Conference to meet the expectations and development aspirations of our peoples.

As such, Tonga continues to observe its obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and notes the decision taken by consensus by the States parties this year relating to the workload of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, whose work is much valued by coastal States such as mine. Tonga, together with another sister State from the region, again actively participated in the work of the International Seabed Authority this year and noted the decision by the Authority to grant exploration licenses to entities sponsored by our respective Governments. This represents a creative path for States like mine, within the spirit of the Convention, towards solid partnership and development. The common heritage of mankind, if it is to have any true meaning, ought to be common to all and not just to some or the few with the capacity in that area.

Tonga reiterates its call for the creation and definition of a formal small island developing States category within the United Nations system. We are in need of a definition that is not based upon a one-size-fits-all approach. Like others, we must have a definition that separates and addresses those States' diversity of size, population, remoteness, isolation and different levels of socio-economic development. Such a definition would not only improve linkages within the United Nations system but also, we believe, set a good benchmark for the international community that is both coherent and practical. It would strengthen the position of the United Nations and the international system in addressing small island developing States and the special and unique challenges they face.

Like others, we, too, welcome the Republic of South Sudan as our newest State Member of the United Nations. Tonga has long been supportive of the efforts to find a comprehensive, just and enduring peace in the Middle East. The shifting sands of change known as the Arab Spring throughout the surrounding region earlier this year has made such a peace and genuine security all the more challenging, but not impossible. This is indeed a moment of truth for those with genuine hope, not just for a secure Israel and a viable Palestine, but for those who for so long have had such hopes for an ambitious peace.

Tonga's interest in developing renewable energy sources, within the context of our Tonga energy road map, continued to evolve with our election to the Council of the International Renewable Energy Agency

(IRENA) at the first session of the Agency's Assembly, in April 2011. We will work in earnest to ensure that the voices of developing States such as Tonga and others on the new Council are heard, given the key leading role it will play in the Agency's decision-making and future direction. To take on such a role, IRENA must be prepared to be innovative. The Agency's work will take on greater significance in the coming International Year of Sustainable Energy for All and its related activities. I would also like to recognize the strong support of the Government of the United Arab Emirates as host State for IRENA.

I am pleased to have addressed the Assembly as the first democratically elected Prime Minister of Tonga. In the wake of the elections held in November of last year, I took office the following month, in December, after an evolving process of principal reforms that, within the context of our 1875 Constitution, included the peaceful transfer of executive power from His Majesty in Privy Council to the Government of the day; a Parliament in which the majority of members are elected by universal suffrage; a Prime Minister elected by a majority of the elected Members of Parliament; a Cabinet nominated by the Prime Minister and chosen largely from those elected Members of Parliament; a constitutional monarchy; and a strong and independent judiciary free of political influence.

Notwithstanding this peaceful evolution, the fundamental freedoms and values guaranteed under the Constitution continue to afford legal protection and comforting reassurance to all Tongans.

To address the uncertain future of the current global economic and financial climate, my Government has approved the Tonga strategic development framework, which provides an overall framework to guide the Government's activities for the next four years. It involves nine priority areas, from building strong, inclusive communities to improving health and education standards for a safe, secure and stable Tongan society. Earlier this month, my Government signed separate agreements with the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank to improve information and communications technology services for Tonga so as to make them affordable and accessible. Improving such services will enable Tonga to enhance its related education, health and Government services as well. My Government sincerely believes that this framework will put Tonga

on a firm path to improving its ability to meaningfully achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

As such, in closing my Government happily reaffirms its commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and we pledge to support the ongoing work and reform of the Organization.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Defence, Information and Communication of the Kingdom of Tonga for the statement he has just made.

Lord Tu'ivakano of Nukunuku, Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Defence, Information and Communication of the Kingdom of Tonga, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic.

Mr. Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Ali (Somalia): Let me take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Al-Nasser on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. I would also like to congratulate the Secretary-General on his appointment to a second term. We Somalis would like to thank him for his leadership in putting Somalia at the top of the agenda despite so many competing priorities. We hope that Somalia will become peaceful and stable during his tenure.

It is my honour to address the General Assembly for the first time as Prime Minister of Somalia. I come here mindful of the enormous challenges at this important moment in our history and determined to act

boldly in the cause of peace, justice and stability — not only in the Horn of Africa but on the African continent at large and in the world as a whole.

The United Nations was founded on the conviction that the nations of the world could come together in a spirit of cooperation to tackle their common problems for the sake of the whole of humankind. I wish to speak of the challenges facing Somalia, whose effects have found ample expression in the current dire situation in the country, and some of which threaten every country represented here.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the Prime Minister of Turkey for his genuine leadership and for highlighting the plight and suffering of those affected by the famine in Somalia. The seemingly unending humanitarian crisis in Somalia has many and varied causes. Decades of conflict, the demise of the central State, poor and kleptocratic leadership and struggles between clans for limited resources, exacerbated by cycles of devastating droughts, have created chronic food shortages and an underdeveloped economy, and driven the population to despair.

In recent years, the global terrorist organization Al-Qaida has sought to exploit these divisions and weaknesses to plot and carry out attacks on the rest of the world. Our people know only too well the destruction that a few, blinded by an ideology of extremism and terror, can wreak on a country. It is this small minority, and primarily the Al-Qaida affiliated group Al-Shabaab, that is responsible for the famine currently spreading throughout the country, through their policies of systematically looting grain stores, forcibly recruiting and extorting farmers and their families and preventing access by aid agencies to the most affected regions in the south.

However, the threat they pose is not limited to our borders. Foreign fighters have sought to export their noxious extremism to the rest of the Horn of Africa, recruiting and sponsoring acts of terror in neighbouring countries such as Uganda, where last year they murdered 76 innocent people. The insecurity they have created in southern Somalia has led to a large influx of refugees into Kenya and Ethiopia, straining resources and spreading instability across the region.

They are also actively planning to strike further afield. Just this week, one of the leaders of Al-Shabaab said that the group was committed to continuing its

battle against the Government of Somalia and was seeking to destroy both the United States and the United Nations. It is also well-known that Al-Shabaab has been focusing its recruitment and radicalization efforts on Somali diasporas in Australia, Europe, Canada and the United States of America.

Clearly, the battle against Al-Qaida is one in which we all have a stake, and in which we all therefore have responsibilities. In Somalia, we have been doing what we can, within our limited resources, to fulfil our obligations in this regard. Barely a month after United States forces killed Osama bin Laden, one of his most wanted deputies, Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, was shot dead by Somali security forces on the outskirts of Mogadishu. Shortly thereafter, with the aid of African Union forces, the Somali National Army succeeded in forcing the extremists to withdraw the bulk of their forces from the capital. As a result, we can now begin to provide needed humanitarian assistance to the city's ever-increasing population of internally displaced persons, who are fleeing the areas still held by the extremists where the famine has hit hardest.

Although the extremists' retreat from Mogadishu is a welcome development, it may herald a new and more dangerous phase of the conflict, as they increasingly turn to asymmetric tactics such as suicide bombings and the use of improvised explosive devices that target the civilian population. As we continue to build up our own capacities, our security agencies are alert to this threat and have already successfully disrupted a number of planned attacks, including several targeting the hungry at feeding centres.

Terrorism preys on decaying States, exploiting their poverty and ungoverned spaces to radicalize, recruit and plan. That is why the extremists have consistently fought against the Somali peace process and sought to destroy the institutions it has generated. Somalia's leaders are redoubling their efforts to achieve national reconciliation and entrench democratic governance. Three weeks ago, with the help of our international partners, we hosted the first national consultative conference in Mogadishu, at which the Transitional Institutions and representatives of regional administrations came together to adopt a road map for the re-establishment of permanent, legitimate and representative Government in the country.

The conference, which was the culmination of Somali-led reconciliation initiatives dating back to the Arta Declaration of May 2000, represents the best hope for Somalia to establish a firm political foundation from which to rebuild. The road map is a significant achievement for the Somali peace process. Its adoption marks the first of many steps on the path to the eventual conclusion of the transition process in a responsible and productive manner. It has also shed light on the remaining transitional tasks, including the drafting and promulgation of a new Constitution. The Transitional Federal Institutions have committed to meeting the specific timelines and benchmarks for their implementation as outlined in the road map, which will allow the Somali people to monitor our performance in this regard.

The support of the international community is also crucial to ensuring its success. Indeed, the conference itself could not have taken place without the continued engagement of the international community. Let me also take this opportunity to express gratitude, on behalf of my entire nation, to the African Union, and especially Uganda and Burundi, for the support they have given and the sacrifices they have made to date in this worthy cause. The fact that the conference was safely held in Mogadishu is testimony to the achievements in security that their forces have made possible in the city. I must also thank all the countries represented here for the bilateral and multilateral support given to both the Transitional Institutions and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), without which none of what has been achieved would have been possible.

Going forward, as we embark on the final leg of the transition process, we will continue to need the help and support of the United Nations. The road map has illuminated the path and, although dangers may lie in the shadows, we will not deviate from it. We ask that the Organization continue to accompany us on this journey and to provide the needed resources as we advance towards full sovereignty.

Despite the remarkable progress we have made so far, our gains remain fragile and consolidating them will require resilience and unity from all. It is critical that the Somali Army and AMISOM be reinforced as soon as possible, so they can prevent a security vacuum in the areas of Mogadishu recently vacated by the fleeing extremists, and ensure that the city is safe for both residents and aid workers. The immediate

deployment of the extra 3,000 AMISOM troops already authorized by the Security Council will be a crucial first step.

In addition, we must also begin to show the people the fruits of peace and democracy and to reverse the harmful effects of radicalization. Somalia needs the help of the outside world to rebuild its economy and provide jobs for the millions of our young people who have been deprived of opportunities by the anarchy of the past two decades. We must show them that there is a better alternative to the barrel of a gun.

The effort must begin at home. Let me be the first to acknowledge that we Somalis have made mistakes in the past, which eroded the international community's trust in our institutions. Somalia can and must do better. In this time of national crisis, we the Somali people must set aside our differences and come together to confront our perils. Reconciliation must become our mantra as we work to further the peace process and create an environment conducive to the delivery of aid. We in the political class must also accept our responsibility for the errors of the past and resolve to do better. The Somali people have had enough of war, hunger, political wrangling and corruption. They demand, and indeed deserve, a Government that puts the national interest before personal ambition — one that fosters unity, not division.

The Transitional Federal Government is making efforts to reverse this and to instil a sense of patriotism and responsibility. We are making good progress in injecting professionalism and transparency into the revenue collection and economic management system, strengthening internal mechanisms governing the distribution of Government money and creating a more open and accountable fiscal and monetary system.

The Central Bank of Somalia is up and running. The economic reforms we have made have resulted in the doubling of revenue from the Mogadishu seaport and quadrupled those from the Aden International Airport. The funds are being reinvested in the provision of services to the people as our current capability allows. For example, 15 per cent of the revenue collected from the seaport has been set aside for the rehabilitation of the city. As a result, for the first time in 20 years, Mogadishu is being cleared of rubble, roads are being repaired and streets lit, and

markets, hospitals and schools are reopening. A register containing the names and biometric data of all the members of the security forces has been compiled, and our soldiers are receiving their allowances regularly.

As required by the road map, we have also embarked on the process of identifying nominees for the Interim Independent Anti-Corruption Commission. We are also formulating a national fiscal budget for the coming fiscal year.

As with the gains in the security sector, in order to entrench and safeguard these reforms and to deliver on the expectations of the Somali people, we in the Transitional Federal Government must improve on our performance and create the necessary conditions for the growth of the Somali economy. However, the scale of the challenge is such that we will continue to rely on the help of our international partners.

It is understandable that, in the prevailing global economic environment, many in the wealthier countries will be tempted to look to their own problems, to the detriment of providing aid and investment to their poorer cousins in the developing world. I would caution against this. The visionaries who founded this body understood that it was impossible to secure economic benefits for a section of the global population as long as these remained a distant dream for the rest, and sought to establish an interlinked global political and economic infrastructure that ensured that citizens in every country could participate in, and partake of the fruits of, global prosperity. I therefore urge the international community to continue its generous support for the emerging economic institutions, as we strive to rebuild destroyed infrastructure and jump-start economic activity in the areas our forces are securing.

To the business community I would say that Somalia is truly Africa's sleeping giant, and a relatively small investment there will go a long way. With the longest coastline on the continent, bountiful and unexploited natural wealth and an entrepreneurial tradition that dates back to the Roman times, a peaceful Somalia will be a force for moderation and an engine of growth and prosperity for the region and for the continent.

Furthermore, the integration of Somalia into the global economy will have a considerable and beneficial impact on the phenomenon of piracy from our shores, which imposes huge costs on global trade. As has been

noted by many observers, a lasting solution to this menace is not to be found in policing the high seas. The regeneration of a vibrant economy on land, providing jobs and opportunity for all, is the sole antidote.

The humanitarian situation in Somalia remains dire. The United Nations has declared famine in a sixth region, which means that up to half the population is now facing the prospect of starvation. Many of our people continue to come to the capital seeking refuge, with more than half a million others having already arrived. To deal with this situation and to oversee the delivery of humanitarian assistance, a high-level committee has been created. As per its recommendations, the Government has established several camps to house and feed refugees. A disaster management agency, comprised of members of civil society, has also been established. We are working with United Nations agencies such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme to synchronize our efforts to deal with the famine.

On behalf of the entire Somali nation, I wish to express my gratitude for the pledges of assistance that we have received from Governments and humanitarian agencies around the world. The greatest need, however, continues to be felt within areas still under the effective control of the extremists, where access by international humanitarian agencies is severely restricted. The insurgents are also hampering the freedom of movement of millions who are trying to reach help, either in Mogadishu or in neighbouring countries.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Without urgent interventions to change the situation, it is estimated that up to three quarters of a million people may perish in the next few months. Although normal to above-normal rainfall is expected to return in the next three months, that is unlikely to result in a significant easing of the crisis in the short term, since the harvest will not be expected until February. In any case, the production from the short rainy season only accounts for a third of the total annual cereal production. The displacement of farmers by the current famine will only further reduce the expected yield. In fact, the United Nations has

indicated that it expects the famine to spread to the rest of the south by the end of the year.

It is therefore critical that we accelerate efforts to reach those in Al-Shabaab-controlled areas, while at the same time ensuring that international humanitarian workers are afforded a measure of security against attacks and kidnappings by the insurgents. As I noted earlier, the international community must urgently reinforce our efforts to extend the zone of safety for aid workers beyond Mogadishu and into these areas. In the meantime, my Government will continue to work closely with humanitarian agencies to collect and share information on needs. We stand ready to cooperate with all actors to ensure that aid gets to the most critically affected populations, wherever they may be.

As I stated before, the challenges I have outlined have been aggravated by the increasing cycles of devastating drought that we experience as a result of changes in global climate patterns. We in the Horn of Africa have been affected more than most. As I speak, the region is experiencing its worst drought in a generation. The scale of the suffering in my country is a testament to price we are having to pay.

There needs to be a concerted effort not just to address the causes of climate change but also to mitigate its adverse effects, especially in countries such as Somalia that have contributed little to the problem but are bearing the brunt of its consequences. In that regard, let me reiterate the appeal issued during the recent summit on the Horn of Africa crisis, held in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, for developed nations to facilitate the transfer of technology and build up the capacity of developing nations to adapt to these challenges. Somalia will require assistance to improve water resource management and reduce our reliance on rain-fed agriculture even as we strive to implement the targets agreed to at the Nairobi summit of 10 per cent forest cover and irrigated land by the year 2017.

Moreover, we fully support the right of Palestine to become a full member of the community of nations. We believe in the two-State solution for the Palestinian-Israeli problem, where Palestinians should be allowed to live in peace and dignity in their own homeland. We have all seen the changes happening in the Arab world. The international community must support the peaceful and democratic aspirations of all peoples.

We must also support the National Transitional Council of Libya in order to bring peace and stability to that country.

In conclusion, today, the future of Somalia hangs in the balance, and with it the prospects for peace, stability and prosperity in the Horn of Africa and security for nations across the world. Resolute global action in support of our efforts is now required if we are to consolidate and build on the gains already made and extend them to the rest of the country for the sake of future generations.

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

Mr. Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government of the Somali Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Gilbert Fossoun Hounbo, Prime Minister of the Togolese Republic

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

Mr. Gilbert Fossoun Hounbo, Prime Minister of the Togolese Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Gilbert Fossoun Hounbo, Prime Minister of the Togolese Republic, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Hounbo (Togo) (*spoke in French*): My country, Togo, welcomes the election of the President of the Assembly to direct the work of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. On behalf of the Government and people of Togo and on my own behalf, I would like to convey our warm congratulations to him. We wish him every success in accomplishing his noble and exhilarating mission.

Today more than ever, the ever increasing number of challenges facing the planet call for greater solidarity to provide an effective global solution worthy of our peoples' aspirations. When world leaders bringing forth their nations' ambitions meet in this forum to reflect upon the main issues of the hour, it is to give their people hope for a brighter tomorrow.

In order to address those various challenges, Togo has for several years endeavoured to relaunch its economy to achieve sustainable development for the well-being of its people. We have made strengthening national unity and good governance, reviving economic growth and combating social injustice our rallying cry.

In terms of political governance, Togo remains faithful to its new vision of sharing its victory with all stakeholders of goodwill, including political parties that have lost in elections. Above all, this is about emphasizing the peoples' victory and not that of any political party. In our opinion, that concept of power should inspire all leaders who seek greater stability following elections.

Based on its desire to strengthen the gains made in the area of democratization, the Government of Togo supports the implementation of the recommendations made by the European Union election observation mission, including institutional and constitutional reforms, especially against the backdrop of the local and legislative elections to be held in 2012. In that respect, faithful to the policy of openness and cooperation initiated by our head of State, the Government has renewed its dialogue with all political and civic stakeholders under its permanent framework for dialogue and cooperation in order to pursue discussions on all subjects concerning the management of governmental affairs.

The Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, launched two years ago with the task of promoting national reconciliation, is currently at the critical stage of holding both public and closed hearings, according to witness preference. That is an opportunity for all Togolese men and women to talk to each other about the most painful moments of their history and to speak truthfully in order to ensure justice and reconciliation, thereby making it possible to turn the page once and for all.

In terms of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the Government of Togo has made commitments to increasing State capacities to protect individuals and property and guarantee fundamental freedoms in order to prevent Togo's young democracy from losing ground with regard to the progress made in shaping its identity, as well as to avert any exploitation of differences. In that regard, Togo has just provided the governing body of the Human Rights Council in Geneva with its national report in connection with the

universal periodic review that will take place in a few weeks.

Togo would like to reaffirm its determination to honour its international commitments. We will continue to combat all types of human rights violations and to take action against their perpetrators. My country will therefore tirelessly continue the work already begun in order to strengthen the gains of democracy and peace, while making greater efforts to implement the Millennium Development Goals.

In terms of economic governance, Togo is pursuing reforms for better management of its public finances, in order to optimize domestic revenues. We are working for a more robust financial sector, privatizing public banks, operationalizing the Court of Auditors and instituting a new public tendering code that is fully aligned with international standards. All that is in addition to the steps we have taken towards membership in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. Among other things, those various measures have allowed us to successfully conclude our participation in the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative and to benefit from about \$1.8 billion in debt cancellation. The broad ongoing programme to improve and rehabilitate road infrastructure throughout our national territory is an illustration of the effective implementation of this reform. On behalf of the Government and the people of Togo, I would like to thank all our partners that have assisted in our process to improve governance.

This meeting is taking place at a time when Africa is again threatened by famine such as we have not witnessed in 20 years. All countries, as well as the United Nations, must take urgent measures to confront that exceptional situation if we wish to avoid a large-scale humanitarian tragedy.

With respect to resolving conflict and promoting peace and security throughout the world, which is the theme of this session, it is encouraging to note that significant progress has been made. That is particularly in the case in Africa, where peace and security have been restored in Côte d'Ivoire, thereby enabling the relaunching of socio-economic activities in that country.

The peaceful resolution of the lengthy conflict in South Sudan, which has become the Organization's 193rd Member State, gives us reason to hope that any conflict can be resolved acceptably and sustainably so

long as the parties concerned work in good faith to achieve that goal.

Also as we meet here, parts of the world continue to face waves of demonstrations and uprisings, especially in Africa. Those legitimate movements contribute to the blossoming of democracy for the people concerned. In addition to delivering on their legitimate expectations, they also help to avoid any risk of wavering in the medium term that might jeopardize peace and national unity. That seems to be true for all conflicts, because we believe that no sustainable solution is possible outside of negotiation.

With regard to the Middle East, my country therefore firmly believes that the parties to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the international community must continue to seek a political solution to that old conflict. The Middle East must know peace. Israel and Palestine must coexist in two States with well-defined borders, in peace and security. We are fundamentally convinced that the aspirations of the Palestinian people for a national State and those of Israel for sustainable peace and security are not contradictory, but complementary, objectives.

Despite the many efforts and determination of the United Nations to eradicate terrorism in all its forms, that scourge is gaining even more ground and is compromising the chances for building a world of peace and security. This year, as we commemorate the tenth anniversary of the tragic attacks on 11 September 2001, the international community and all States must continue to work synergistically so that humankind will not again experience such indiscriminate and wanton attacks as those of 9/11 or those that recently victimized the peaceful people of Norway and the headquarters of the United Nations in Abuja.

Those crises and conflicts, as well as new threats to international peace and security, such as maritime piracy, cyber crime and drug trafficking, which undermine efforts to build peace throughout the world, require the international community to rethink the role of the United Nations in the context of security and socio-economic development. At a time when the West African subregion is witnessing an increase in violence due to drug trafficking and terrorism in the area, we cannot allow our shorelines to be taken hostage by pirates, as was recently the case in the waters off Benin and Togo. I call for stricter cooperation among all countries to effectively combat this new phenomenon.

As I just said we need to rethink the role of the United Nations. While it is widely acknowledged that nothing can replace the Organization, it is just as true that, 65 years after it was established, the United Nations needs to be reformed. My country therefore calls on Member States to pursue and conclude the process of Security Council reform, which began more than 15 years ago. Like the majority of Member States, Togo hopes that this General Assembly session will provide us an opportunity to take decisive steps with regard to Council reform. In so doing, we have the opportunity to correct flagrant and unacceptable injustices and to make the Security Council truly representative of all the regions of the world, thereby making it better placed to resolve the crises and conflicts that we face.

With regard to the process of replacing non-permanent members of the Council, the Assembly will elect five new members in October to replace those whose terms will end on 31 December. Togo is among the candidates from the Group of African States that are seeking the votes of Member States in those elections.

Contrary to the practice observed today in Africa with respect to elections to the Security Council, three candidates are in the running this year for the two seats that go to Africa. Togo, whose candidacy enjoys the endorsement of the Economic Community of Western African States and the African Union, of course attaches great importance to the sovereign right of each State to apply for a seat on any United Nations body. However, I would like to ask all delegations to bear in mind the need to see emerge, after the elections, a Security Council that is balanced and representative of all the major regions in Africa, especially West Africa.

My country has participated in United Nations peacekeeping operations for many years. We are currently involved in the missions in Côte d'Ivoire and the Sudan, and will soon participate in the one in South Sudan. We wish to sit on the Council in order to make a contribution, however modest, to the work of the organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security.

If elected, Togo will focus on the importance of preventive diplomacy in the peaceful settlement of conflicts and the link between peace and security, on the one hand, and social justice and development, on the other. We would also not neglect combating the

scourges to which I referred earlier, as well as new threats to international peace and security.

Togo's noble ambition can only come to pass if we have the support of delegations for our candidacy. It is my hope that all Member States will wish to provide their invaluable support for our candidacy. I wish very much to thank them in advance for their support.

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

Mr. Gilbert Fossoun Hounbo, Primer Minister of the Togolese Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Michael Spindelegger Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of the Republic of Austria

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of the Republic of Austria.

Mr. Michael Spindelegger, Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of the Republic of Austria, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Michael Spindelegger, Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of the Republic of Austria, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Spindelegger (Austria): This year has once again confirmed the importance of the United Nations as the truly indispensable multilateral forum for addressing today's global problems. The humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa, ecological disasters such as Fukushima, political developments like the Arab Spring and terrorist attacks such as the assault on the United Nations building in Abuja last August require concerted action by the United Nations and its Member States. Ten years after 9/11, joint action in the fight against terrorism continues to remain central on the multilateral agenda.

In the past nine months, we have witnessed momentous changes in the Arab world that nobody

expected when we met one year ago. Pressure for change is driven by the wish of women and men to choose their own fate and to improve their chances for a better life. These are legitimate demands. An overwhelming number of young people were at the forefront of this enormous tide, which started in Tunisia and Egypt. We should pay tribute to their courage.

In Libya, thousands lost their lives in the struggle for freedom and democracy. In Syria, and to some extent in Yemen, the suppression is ongoing. Austria strongly condemns the systematic human rights violations and the violence against peaceful demonstrators. We strongly urge those responsible to immediately stop the bloodshed and to engage in meaningful dialogue and reforms. Austria supports the Libyan people in its struggle for freedom. Over €150 million blocked in Austrian bank accounts has been de-frozen for humanitarian use. Both the Austrian Government and private sector have provided medicine, relief supplies and desperately needed fuel to Libya.

The international community and the United Nations have to support and assist the transition process in the Arab world as the United Nations does now in Libya. This period of change may last for some time and will be full of challenges. Austria welcomes all efforts undertaken by Governments in the region for peaceful and credible change. We encourage the newly empowered authorities to create a constitutional framework based on democracy and human rights, in order to fulfil their mandate for democratic change responsibly and peacefully.

The events in the Arab world notwithstanding, we must continue to focus on the Middle East peace process. The Middle East took centre stage this week here at the General Assembly — and rightly so. We must build trust and we have to foster the belief among Israelis and Palestinians that a negotiated settlement can be achieved — a sustainable solution based on two States living side by side in a secure and peaceful neighbourhood within mutually recognized borders. We have no choice but to return to direct negotiations between the two parties. The Quartet, in its statement yesterday, has shown a way to do that and has also proposed concrete timelines. Austria fully supports the Quartet statement. There is no time to lose.

Austria welcomes President Al-Nasser's choice of theme for this year's general debate. We appreciate Qatar's strong track record in that regard.

Last year's tenth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security reminded us that the promise of women's full and equal participation in all efforts of maintaining peace and security, including in mediation processes, has not yet come true and that we all need to intensify our efforts.

In that context, let me also mention an Austrian contribution to international mediation efforts. By inviting political decision-makers from both Khartoum and Juba to Vienna in recent years, Austria has managed to offer the two sides a platform for discussion. We are ready to continue to do so. The Sudan and South Sudan have a shared past and must resolve their remaining problems peacefully.

The United Nations headquarters in Vienna serves as a dynamic hub for the promotion of peace, security and sustainable development. I am proud to announce that a liaison office of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs will open in Vienna soon. Over the past year, the International Anti-Corruption Academy set up its headquarters near Vienna, and the Vienna Centre for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation and an office of the International Peace Institute were established.

Austria fully stands behind the campaign launched by the Secretary-General on Monday to achieve universal access to modern energy services. We support doubling the rate of improvement in energy efficiency and the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix by 2030. Austria provides substantial support to the energy and environment efforts undertaken by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. Last June, we hosted the Vienna Energy Forum, where about 1,400 participants discussed alternative energy concepts to reach the energy goals of the United Nations.

The Fukushima nuclear catastrophe should become a turning point in our approach to nuclear safety. We owe it to future generations to make safety concerns come first when using nuclear power. Austria decided, in 1978, to forgo the use of nuclear energy. Some countries have recently adopted a similar course, which we welcome.

The last time I spoke at the United Nations, it was during the thematic debate held in April on the rule of law and global challenges. That was an important step in the preparation of the high-level meeting on the rule of law that will take place in September 2012. Next year's meeting will provide an important opportunity to renew the efforts of both the United Nations and Member States to promote the rule of law. As a medium-sized country and as a strong supporter of multilateralism, Austria attaches particular importance to the rule of law, including at the international level. The international system can only properly function if it based on clear and predictable rules that apply equally to all Member States.

The promotion and protection of human rights is a core priority of Austria's foreign policy. We are proud to serve on the Human Rights Council for the period 2011-2014. For our membership in this body, Austria has identified the following priorities, on which we will take action.

Austria is firmly committed to respect for freedom of religion and belief. We are deeply troubled by recurring attacks against religious minorities in all parts of the world and among all religions. To foster tolerance, Austria has hosted a number of high-level dialogues between religious and secular leaders over the past decade. We think that that has become a new and promising field of modern diplomacy, putting the emphasis on conflict prevention.

Various forms of child trafficking and exploitation constitute gross violations of children's rights. As a member of the Human Rights Council, Austria will work to address that issue and to help develop counter-strategies. We highly appreciate the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and we strongly support the renewal of her mandate.

Racism, xenophobia and discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin, gender, age, sexual orientation and religious belief are ongoing challenges and of concern to all of us. Austria is committed to the fight against those abuses, including anti-Semitism. Therefore, we will continue to press for action, including in the framework of the United Nations. We will also take initiatives during our membership in the Human Rights Council to strengthen the protection of journalists against all forms of threat and intimidation.

Austria has a 50-year-long track record of contributing to United Nations peacekeeping operations. And we will continue our engagement. We recently decided to deploy 160 Austrian troops to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), in addition to our continued presence in the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force and the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization. Through its participation in UNIFIL, Austria wishes to make an active contribution to the maintenance of peace and security not only in Lebanon but in the region as a whole.

Austria welcomes the positive momentum in international security policy over the past couple of years. We salute the Secretary-General's determined leadership, including his five-point plan on disarmament. We look forward to continuing our work in this positive spirit at the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to be held in Vienna in May of next year. We, and hope for progress with regard to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

Nevertheless, despite our collective efforts, we have not been able to move forward on new

disarmament and arms control issues. The multilateral machinery, and in particular the Conference on Disarmament, remains deadlocked. Unfortunately, the momentum that we had hoped to generate over the past year has not materialized. Therefore, in Austria's view, the Conference on Disarmament has not only lost its credibility, it is also risking its legitimacy. Austria will therefore encourage the adoption of a draft resolution, at the next session of the First Committee, on how to move multilateral disarmament negotiations forward.

Austria remains committed to multilateralism and to the United Nations as the noblest form of international cooperation. We will therefore support the efforts of the President and the Secretary-General to further strengthen the Organization in order to better enable us to face the challenges of our time.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of Austria for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Michael Spindelegger, Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of the Federal Republic of Austria, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.