



General Assembly

Seventy-fourth session

5th plenary meeting
 Wednesday, 25 September 2019, 9 a.m.
 New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Muhammad-Bande (Nigeria)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Rai (Papua New Guinea), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

Address by Mr. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine

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

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

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

President Zelenskyy (*spoke in Ukrainian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): On behalf of Ukraine, I congratulate Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. Ukraine supports the implementation of all the ambitious priorities on the Assembly's agenda.

Let me be frank — all of us present here have different interests, views, values and issues. However, there is one thing that unites us all — each and every one of us once delivered a statement from this rostrum for the very first time. I ask that everyone recall the feelings they experienced at that very moment. Every one of these reputable and respectable leaders today

was once a fresh-faced and, I am sure, honest politician. At that time, the cocktail of pragmatism, scepticism and a tough geopolitical reality had not yet extinguished their eagerness, romanticism and steadfast faith in their ability to change the world for the better. I ask them to recall how important it was then to convey the problems and troubles of their own countries and peoples, and how important it was then to get their message across and be heard. I am experiencing those same feelings today.

I am going to tell a story — the story of a person for whom being heard gave his life meaning. That is because this man had a divine voice. He was considered one of the best baritones and countertenors in the world. His voice filled Carnegie Hall, here in New York; Notre Dame and the Paris Opera; and the Royal Opera House in London. Each of us here today could have had the chance to listen to his incredible singing in person, but unfortunately that is now impossible. That is because of the bullet I have with me here. It is 12.7 millimetres long, and it ended not only his career, but also his life. By the way, it costs only \$10. Unfortunately, that is the price of a human life on our planet. There are thousands of such stories and there are millions of such bullets. Welcome to the twenty-first century — a century of opportunities, where instead of being heard you may be killed.

The man whose story I have just recounted about was Vasyl Slipak. He was Ukrainian and a soloist at the Paris National Opera who was murdered in Donbas while defending Ukraine from the Russian aggression. The war in Donbas has gone on for five years. Five years have passed since Russia occupied

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Ukrainian Crimea. Nowadays, when there are thousands of pages of international law and hundreds of international organizations tasked with protecting it, our nation — with arms in hand — is losing its citizens as they defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity. More than 13,000 people have been killed and 30,000 wounded, while 1.5 million people have been forced to leave their homes. These awful numbers are reported here annually with only one difference — they continue to grow.

Ending the war, recovering all occupied Ukrainian territory and restoring peace are my primary objectives, but not at the cost of the lives of our citizens, our freedom or Ukraine's right to make its own choices. That is why we need broad international support.

While I realize that every country represented here has its own challenges to tackle and that the problems of others should not concern us more than our own, I understand that in the modern world we live in, there is no longer such a thing as someone else's war. None of those here will feel safe while Russia is waging war against Ukraine in the middle of Europe. The notion that none of this has anything to do them or will ever touch their interests could be fatal. We cannot think globally while turning a blind eye to small things or trifles, as some may consider them. Because that is how the foundation of two world wars was laid and as a result, millions of human lives were lost owing to negligence, silence, inaction and unwillingness to relinquish one's own ambitions.

As the horrible lessons begin to fade from human memory, Ukraine remembers them. Ukraine has always demonstrated to the world its readiness to ensure peace in a civilized manner and has taken specific steps to ensure international security, such as when it abandoned its nuclear arsenal, which at the time exceeded the nuclear capacities of the United Kingdom, France and China combined.

We appear to believe in a collective effort to build a new world in which a country's faults are heard and reckoned with, regardless of whether it possesses nuclear weapons or not, and in which a country is respected for its deeds and not for having nuclear warheads. At the end of the day, in this new world, my country has lost a part of its territory and keeps losing its citizens almost every single day. For that reason, Ukraine has earned the right to speak about the need to reconsider and review the rules that are still in force even as they

are trampled upon. We are certainly not calling into question the credibility of international institutions, in particular the United Nations, but we have to recognize that the existing system is not perfect. It has begun to unravel and malfunction; therefore, it needs to be revised. Let us be candid. Are the nations indeed united nowadays? If they are, what unites them? Is it disasters, calamities and wars?

From here, the world's highest rostrum, we continuously hear calls for fair changes, righteous promises and new initiatives. It is high time that those calls were supported by action. For, in a modern world where a human life is worth just \$10, those words are cheapened. Let us remember that the goal when the United Nations was established in 1945 was to maintain and strengthen international peace and security. But what should we do when the very fundamentals of international security are endangered?

Every war today, be it in Ukraine, Syria, Libya, Yemen or elsewhere in the world, no matter the number of casualties, is the biggest threat to civilization as a whole. That is because in 2019, human beings — *homo sapiens* — still prefer to resolve conflict by murdering their own kind. In the course of its existence, humankind has always figured out ways to cover distances transmit information and cure diseases. The only thing that remains unchanged is that disputes between peoples and States are still resolved by missiles, not by words. Let us not imagine that war is somewhere far away. Methods of warfare, technologies and weapons have proven that our planet is no longer very big. The time I will have spent delivering this paragraph of my statement is sufficient to raze the world to the ground.

This means that every leader bears her or his share of responsibility, not only for the fate of her or his own country but also for that of the entire world. In my opinion, we all need to understand that a strong leader is not one who, without batting an eyelash, sends thousands of troops to certain death. A strong leader is one who cares about the life of every individual.

Let us ask ourselves: What results do our meetings produce for humankind? For some the General Assembly is merely a political stage where they can put on an act and declare their good intentions that will later be voided by the darkest of acts. But it is not merely a rostrum or a stage, and the planet's 7.5 billion people are not merely spectators but participants. The fundamental principles of the script will be established

here today, and the matter of whether life will go on depends on everyone here.

I will admit that I hope one day that this statement will be referred to as the 15 minutes that changed the world, but I am well aware that it is impossible to change in 15 minutes what has been happening for centuries. According to behavioural theories, war is an essential part of the human being, but the world is changing and humankind is changing together the world. The fact that we once developed writing and mathematics, invented the wheel, discovered penicillin and explored outer space means that humankind still has a chance. Acknowledging all the dangers and challenges of civilization, we must create new values and fight for a new mindset free from aggression, anger and hatred.

On this day, 25 September, in 1970, Erich Maria Remarque died, and his novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* was first published some 90 years ago. Its epigraph read:

“It will try simply to tell of a generation of men who, even though they may have escaped the shells, were destroyed by the war.”

Ninety years ago saw the publication of another novel, *A Farewell to Arms*, in which Ernest Hemingway wrote: “War is not won by victory.” No one has ever stopped when they were winning. The world must remember that every new crippled generation is the path to a new war that cannot be won through victories. Someone may say today that there will be no Third World War, and that the Second was last. I hope that my words reflect an understanding of the danger facing the world and are not a mere announcement from the rostrum.

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

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

Address by Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania

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

Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Iohannis: I am honoured to address the General Assembly and present Romania’s renewed commitment to multilateralism and the rules-based international order, with the United Nations at its core. With the fall of the hideous communist regime 30 years ago, my country embarked on a new era of freedom, democracy and prosperity. The Iron Curtain was replaced by our strong determination to rejoin the family of Western values and to interact openly with the rest of the world, driven by our deep respect for democratic principles and the international rule of law.

Today all of us are profoundly interconnected by multilateral governance and, more than ever, we must value the genuine spirit of cooperation that the United Nations has always promoted and which is indispensable for finding efficient solutions to international challenges. The forthcoming seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations in 2020 will be an opportunity for our Organization to step up the implementation of the Secretary-General’s ambitious reform package, renew our Organization and make sure that it delivers for all. The United Nations can count on Romania and our active commitment to fulfilling these ambitious endeavours.

Undoubtedly, climate change is a global challenge, from the shortage of water and food insecurity to sea-level rise. I thank the Secretary-General for his leadership in generating a meaningful agenda on this issue throughout the year. Unfortunately, Romania has not been spared by the adverse effects of climate change, but we came to this session of the General Assembly with a sense of hope and responsibility — hope that it is not too late to secure a safe and environment-friendly planet for our children, and responsibility to undertake concrete steps in order to keep the pace with our promises under the Paris Agreement and the rules agreed in Katowice, including by pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5° C above pre-industrial levels. Our national strategy on climate change has been conceived with the aim of shaping an economy resilient to climate change, with low carbon-dioxide emissions, and able to integrate climate policies through smart economic growth. Our objective is to reach by 2050 a society in which economic,

social and environmental policies are interconnected and designed to ensure sustainable development, high living standards and quality of environment.

Further, advancing the European Union agenda on climate change was a priority for Romania during its mandate as President of the Council of the European Union in the first six months of this year. The transition to a climate-neutral economy was intensively debated within the European Union, and its long-term strategy on climate change is to be finalized soon. At the same time, Romania answered the call of the Secretary-General to come up with national initiatives for nine portfolios, entailing concrete actions with the potential to curb greenhouse-gas emissions and increase global action on adaptation and resilience. A list in this regard was sent to the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the 2019 Climate Change Summit.

Adaptation tools and mitigation of the negative effects of climate change are parts of the wider strategy of sustainable development at the national and global levels. In Romania, a dedicated strategic document launched last year, the revised National Strategy for Romania's Sustainable Development 2030, guides our action over the next 12 years. Based on a broad public consultation, the Strategy mirrors the expectations of our society and maps the policies needed to meet the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The establishment of sustainable development units in the Administration and the creation of a civil society coalition for sustainable development are just a few tools we have envisaged in order to scale up our national effort in this area.

Development and security go hand in hand. Nevertheless, the approach based on the security-development nexus may not be enough to overcome security challenges as they may have roots going beyond development per se. Unfortunately, in our region, we continue to witness deliberate actions aimed at undermining security. The belt of unresolved conflicts around the Black Sea, which has strategic importance for transatlantic security, remains a serious source of instability, hampering regional cooperation and overall international security. Military presences on other countries territories without their consent, military build-ups, aggressive gestures, threats of the use of force, and the use of hybrid tactics to undermine internal stability are worrying developments and should be rejected by all of us.

Romania remains a strong supporter of the multilateral rules-based international order built around the United Nations, which represents our best hope for tackling such challenges. The effectiveness of this international order depends on the willingness of all United Nations members to engage in finding lasting multilateral solutions that conform with the core values of the United Nations. Romania is strongly committed to acting in this way as a pillar of stability in the region, and we have constantly supported the United Nations efforts aimed at tackling such risks, including through General Assembly resolutions pertaining to these matters.

Romania participated, and continues to participate, in United Nations peacekeeping operations, covering countries all over the world, from Afghanistan and the Sudan to Georgia and Haiti, and now Mali. In mid-October, 120 Romanians and four helicopters will start their mission in Mali — a critical area in support of the United Nations effort to help the Malian Government to achieve stability and build a safer future for its people by promoting sustainable development, peace and security.

Romania reiterates its deep concern about the global spread and magnitude of terrorism and condemns in the strongest terms the continued recurrence of terrorist attacks, including those targeting representatives of diplomatic missions. Recently, such attacks in Kabul, Afghanistan, tragically ended the lives of two Romanian citizens and seriously wounded one. I reiterate the firm commitment of Romania to combating terrorism at the international level by using all available tools, including international law. Romania has welcomed the reform launched by the Secretary-General at the beginning of his term and supported the efforts of the United Nations to enhance coordination and improve coherence in the implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

In conclusion, let me reaffirm Romania's full support in the endeavour to galvanize multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion at the General Assembly throughout the seventy-fourth session.

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

Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Barham Salih, President of the Republic of Iraq

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

Mr. Barham Salih, President of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Barham Salih, President of the Republic of Iraq, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Salih (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me pleasure to address the General Assembly on behalf of Iraq, a founding Member of the United Nations. I wish the General Assembly every success at its current session, particularly as we note that our priorities in addressing the challenges of climate change, health care and sustainable development represent a constructive step that we hope to make towards finding common international ground in reaching the solutions that the planet and humankind need.

Since its establishment, the United Nations has pursued the principle of partnership among nations to achieve the noble values that would lead to implementing its objectives, ensuring international peace and security, resolving conflicts peacefully and enshrining human rights as a superior value and ultimate purpose. The long journey of implementing these endeavours has been full of achievements at the international level, as well as obstacles and setbacks. Millions of people around the world still place their hopes in the Organization to enhance dialogue and enable mutual partnerships to address the crises of poverty, health care, education, security and development that continue to cast a heavy shadow over the world.

I address the Assembly today at this important meeting to speak about the hopes of our people and their aspirations to confront and defeat terrorism by ensuring a life of freedom and dignity for our citizens, strengthening security, providing services and achieving economic growth and sustainable development not only in Iraq but throughout the Middle East.

Terrorism has ravaged our country, which has gone through difficult and dangerous times. There were some who expected worse than that. The terrorist Da'esh plan was an evil quest to destroy Iraq and the region. Our people and the armed forces — the army, the popular

mobilization forces, the Peshmerga and others — made great sacrifices to secure freedom and resist terrorism, with the help and assistance of the international coalition and other friends, whom we thank and appreciate. History will testify that the Iraqis, through their unity, steadfast resolve and the significant role played by the higher religious authorities, have succeeded in defeating the takfiri plan and in protecting the world from its evil.

Iraq now is on the verge of important positive developments in the security, political and economic spheres. There is a positive trend of transformation in Iraq that we have not seen in years past — a trend that fills us with hope for a promising future. Given the current security and stability, we must assess and build on those positive developments, bearing in mind the suffering of Iraqis for 40 years owing to oppression, campaigns of genocide, such as the Anfal genocide, mass graves, the use of chemical weapons in Halabja, the draining of its marshes, environmental degradation, wars, siege, the ravages of terrorism, the destruction of infrastructure and corruption. Perhaps no other country has endured what Iraq suffered during that period. The stability achieved is an important accomplishment that must be preserved, not forsaken.

We also note the current positive climate in dealing with the accumulated problems between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government pursuant to the Constitution. We note the important role of the United Nations office in Baghdad, especially with regard to the issues of Kirkuk and the disputed areas, in helping us to find solutions commensurate with our Constitution.

Despite what I have just said, challenges remain. The gains of our victory over the total elimination of terrorism still require regional and international cooperation to combat this dangerous scourge and to address the conditions that gave rise to an environment conducive to its growth and proliferation. Measures towards rebuilding the areas damaged by the war and ensuring the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) are still at their early stages. There is an international role and responsibility in that regard, some features of which were determined during last year's Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq, and we are striving to activate them with the assistance of our brothers and friends.

We must not allow ourselves to be distracted from the need to confront terrorism in all its manifestations. While a military victory against Da'esh is important, we must be aware that there are still terrorist remnants who are trying to reorganize themselves. We also note the existence of dangerous terrorism and extremism hotspots in Syria and other States, not to mention the tensions and conflicts in the region, all of which constitute dangerous factors and create an environment that gives terrorism room to come back. Terrorism takes advantage of security and political vacuums. We must work together to fill those vacuums.

The Middle East region suffers conflicts and wars year after year. We must seriously unify our efforts in order to turn the areas of conflict into areas of renaissance. The ongoing tragic situation in Syria, coupled with an environment that is favourable to terrorism and extremism, requires effective efforts to allow Syrians to arrive at a permanent political solution that will achieve stability and security and guarantee the rights of Syrians to peace, security and freedom and enable them to determine their own future without any guardianship or interference.

We emphasize the need to work seriously to reach a just and comprehensive solution for the Palestinian question, in accordance with international resolutions and in a manner that guarantees the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. We reiterate our solidarity with the Palestinian people, their suffering and their legitimate right to establish their independent State on their territory. However, the recent announcements to annex the Jordan Valley and northern Red Sea are a blatant violation of international law and an exacerbating factor that will only prolong the crisis and deepen the wound that threatens the future of stability in the region and the world.

The continued war in Yemen is a source of great concern in the light of the security and humanitarian repercussions that are affecting the region. In view of those current dangers, supporting Yemenis in arriving at a comprehensive political solution that restores peace throughout the country is a necessity. Attempts to target the security of the Gulf and our sister country the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia constitute a dangerous development. We in Iraq are concerned by that tension and escalation. Our security is tied to the security of the Gulf and the region. The international community must offer serious assistance in containing such escalation,

which could have disastrous repercussions on the security of the region and the world.

The situation in the region is dangerous and threatens to bring about disastrous consequences that we must contain. We have had enough wars. We do not need a new war in the region, especially since the most recent war on terrorism has not yet been settled definitively. Our position is firm: it is important to give precedence to dialogue over tension and escalation. That position is based on facts and a desire to defend the interests of the peoples of the region. We believe that combating terrorism and extremism and achieving economic transformation in order to offer work opportunities to our unemployed youth take precedence over current disagreements.

The solution starts with a comprehensive understanding based on the concepts of non-interference in the internal affairs of the countries of the region and mutual respect for their national sovereignty. It also lies in upholding the values of human rights. There is common ground between us that we all agree upon — we all desire a better tomorrow for our children. Let us work to calm the situation and work constructively. Despite the disagreements in the region, the stability of Iraq is of common interest to everyone and could be a launching pad from which to establish important common ground.

The absence of Iraq was a source of tension and instability throughout the region. Iraq is now recovering, and we are determined to move the country towards permanent stability. Iraq plays a pivotal role in the region and has many geopolitical, economic, cultural and religious considerations. Iraq is the cradle of our prophet Abraham, peace be upon him. Iraq has Muslim and Arab neighbours. It is a meeting point of great nations in the region, be they Arabs, Persians, Turks or Kurds. This mix of different components — Shiites and Sunnis, Arabs, Kurds and Turkmen, Muslims, Christians, Sabaeans, Yazidis and Shabaks — makes Iraq a contributing factor in help establish peace and understanding among countries. It also allows my country to be an active part of all efforts to undertake reconstruction, make progress and be innovative.

For a very long time, Iraq was a battleground for others. We and the region have paid a very high price because of the instability in Iraq. Our interests and those of the region make it imperative for Iraq to become a bridge to build understanding between its brothers and

neighbours. From this rostrum, we emphasize our call to establish a joint security system in the region and a system of economic integration and political and security coordination so as to uproot terrorism and ensure stability.

Iraq's approach to the crises in the region is based on fundamental principles. We neither want our country to be part of any regional or international conflict nor an arena for settling regional and international scores. Our people have paid a high price for wars and conflicts, and Iraq will not be a part of any war against another party. We have had enough wars. We do not want a new war. We do not want any people to suffer the ravages of war, as we have suffered. Iraq will not be a launching pad for aggression against any of our neighbouring countries. We hope that our country will become an arena for building and stability, not for tension and conflict.

Our interests and the security of the region are contingent upon a good neighbourly relationship between Iraq and its surrounding countries. Iraq's policy today is contrary to that of the former regime in terms of dealing with its neighbours militarily. Our relationship is strengthened by our common Arab and Gulf roots. We insist on growing those relationships and developing them as an important part of our stability and security. We also care about our relationship with our neighbour Iran, with whom we share cultural and religious ties, as well as mutual and cross-cutting interests. We care as well about our neighbour to the north, Turkey. We are making efforts to raise the level of bilateral relationships with those two neighbours in order to achieve more development in different spheres.

A federal, democratic and stable Iraq will present a chance to join together all of our brothers and neighbours in the region and to enhance understanding and agreement among the countries of the region to create a regional system that is based on economic integration and common security.

The stability achieved in Iraq is valuable and important. We must not take it lightly; rather we must work on entrenching it. We expect our neighbours and the international community not to make Iraq pay for their own disagreements and conflicts. Our hands and hearts are open to all. We hope that there will be more understanding for Iraq's situation and for our desire to complete our victory over terrorism, rebuild what previous wars destroyed, return displaced persons

to their homes and offer work opportunities to our young people.

We need a consensus both internationally and regionally in order to ensure continued stability and combat extremist ideologies and terrorism. However, the most important task at hand is that of enacting the reforms necessary to secure good governance for our citizens, combat corruption and offer our young people job opportunities. Those are urgent challenges that we are addressing, and we believe that achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will be an important framework for our efforts. Advancing education, health care and sustainable development is the right way to put us on track towards combating extremist ideology and uprooting terrorism, by raising generations capable of building a better future.

Throughout history, Iraq's civilization, history and religious, national and sectarian pluralism has made us a beacon of tolerance and cooperation and religious and intellectual brotherhood, as well as a platform for disseminating thought, culture, literature and science. The Mesopotamian civilization, one of the oldest in human history, represents an important and impregnable barrier to the growth and spread of extremist ideology, whether religious, sectarian or nationalistic. The Iraqis are continuing their battle to achieve the renaissance that they deserve, and to combat corruption, empower young people and women and achieve sustainable development. Those challenges continue and come on top of those of returning IDPs and rebuilding ruined areas.

A few days ago, the Iraqi Government drafted a law establishing a council for reconstruction, and together with our Prime Minister, we will submit it to our Parliament in hopes that it will be enacted. The reconstruction council will investigate rebuilding our infrastructure through the joint efforts of the Government and the Iraqi and foreign private sectors. Iraq needs comprehensive reconstruction, and we hope that such projects will provide the legal and administrative environment we need to encourage private investment and meet Iraqis' desperate need for services and employment opportunities. Iraq is a promising market. Given the needs of Iraqis and our natural and human resources, we can transform our country from an arena of conflict and violence into an economic hub in the region. Some may think that this is a far-fetched dream, and I admit there are great obstacles and challenges involved, but I am confident that it is

both necessary and possible at the national level, in Iraq itself, and also at the regional and world levels.

Terrorism and corruption are two sides of the same coin. We believe that efforts to defeat terrorism must be accompanied by effective efforts to eliminate corruption, which is the political manifestation of violence and the main source for financing terrorism. Without drying up the sources that finance terrorism and preventing public funds from being diverted from their proper goal of funding education and services to funding social, political and security crises, we cannot take firm steps towards stability. The world must take serious action to establish an international alliance, similar to the international alliance against terrorism, combating the corruption networks that smuggle and launder money and drying up their sources of financing. That will enable Iraq to regain its stolen assets and eradicate this dangerous scourge.

Mesopotamia is the cradle of civilization and has done great service to human civilization, just as it has suffered and witnessed many disasters. We read the message of peace in the faces of our mothers and fathers and in the smiles of our sons and daughters, whose childhoods have been scarred by war. We see it in the eyes of our young men and young women, in the alleys and streets of our cities that have been beaten down by conflict. We all read the message of peace in our consciousness as a ray of hope for future generations and all humankind. I salute our citizens, our young people and the families of our martyrs, as well as the victims of oppression in mass graves and of the Anfal genocide. I salute their legitimate aspiration to live a life of freedom, dignity, peace and stability. It is our duty to support and meet those aspirations. We have serious challenges ahead of us, but with our will and determination, alongside the support and backing of the international community, we will prevail, God willing.

(spoke in Kurdish; English translation provided by the delegation)

I salute our citizens, our young people and the families of our martyrs, as well as the victims of oppression in mass graves and of the Anfal genocide. I salute their legitimate aspiration to live a life of freedom, dignity, peace and stability. It is our duty to support and meet those aspirations. We have serious challenges ahead of us, but with our will and determination, alongside the support and backing of the international community, we will prevail, God willing.

(spoke in Arabic)

Peace is the greeting of Islam and the essence of Islam throughout history. Peace is the message of Moses, Christ, the messengers, the prophets and of good people. It is the basis of all religions and great human doctrines. We start with the call for peace and with the call for peace we end. Peace be upon us all with God's mercy and blessings.

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

Mr. Barham Salih, President of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. George Manneh Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia

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

Mr. George Manneh Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. George Manneh Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Weah: I am honoured to address the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session on behalf of the Government and the people of Liberia. Before I begin, I would like to ask the Assembly to kindly join me in observing a moment of silence for the deaths of the 28 young scholars who died last week in a tragic fire in Liberia. May their souls rest in perfect peace.

I would also like to thank the large number of members that shared in our grief and loss by sending us condolences through personal telephone calls and social media. God bless them for their compassion.

Allow me first of all to congratulate His Excellency Professor Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. His election is not only an honour for him and for the Government and the people of Nigeria; it is also an honour for West Africa and the African continent at large. We are convinced that he will lead this body successfully and live up to the expectations and the

confidence reposed in him. I wish to assure him of Liberia's fullest support in the discharge of his duties.

Permit me also to congratulate his predecessor, Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, on the astute manner in which she administered the affairs of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

Let me also pay special tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for his enthusiasm and personal dedication to the work of the United Nations and for ably steering its affairs. His far-sighted leadership qualities keep the United Nations focused on its objectives in the face of daunting challenges.

As I have acknowledged on many occasions, Liberia is a United Nations success story. After the country was devastated by a brutal civil conflict that lasted for 14 years, peace was restored and maintained by what was then the largest peacekeeping force in the history of the Organization. Under the auspices of United Nations Mission in Liberia peacekeepers, Liberians enjoyed 16 years of unbroken peace. We are pleased and grateful for the efforts and sacrifices they made to secure our peace.

When the peacekeeping force was withdrawn two years ago, the responsibility for maintaining peace in Liberia was passed on to the Liberian Government. This is a responsibility to which I attach the greatest importance, because without peace, our world would be difficult. We are all aware of the terrible destruction of lives and property caused by civil war.

However, long after the guns have been silenced, the survivors have to live with the collateral damage of the war- wounded, the shattered families, the displaced populations, the resettlement of refugees and all the other negative consequences of a national socioeconomic fabric that has been torn apart.

Since I assumed the leadership of my country almost two years ago, I have remained focused on my charge of ensuring that peace prevails in Liberia. At that time, we committed ourselves to upholding our constitutional mandate, which is to ensure that all the democratic rights of our citizens are guaranteed and protected. I am proud to say that I have kept this promise and that our country is today a beacon of democracy in Africa, where freedom of the press, freedom of expression, freedom of association and other political and democratic rights are respected, under the rule of law.

The political environment remains vibrant, with political actors and parties freely exercising their franchise and participating in various elections. I am delighted to report that there are no political prisoners in Liberia and that laws that hindered or threatened press freedom have been abrogated. Several protests have taken place from time to time, all of which have ended peacefully and have been welcomed by my Government as a positive manifestation of our democratic maturity.

This is the democracy for which our country has yearned; this is the freedom for which our people have struggled and suffered; and this is the emancipation for which many of our citizens have paid the ultimate price.

However, we are beginning to witness the emergence of a creeping threat to our democratic space and to our hard-won peace and stability. Some individuals, within and outside of our country, particularly those who have lost democratically held elections, have resorted to incitement, threats of violence, misuse of social media and hate speech, with the aim and objective of achieving power through undemocratic means. This is unacceptable and must not be encouraged by those who would wish Liberia well. For democracy to thrive, all Liberians, including both the ruling parties and the opposition parties, must respect the rule of law and abide by the procedures and regulations prescribed therein.

As the leading opposition party in Liberia during the past 12 years, our party, the Congress for Democratic Change, accepted the disputed results of the two previous presidential elections, in 2005 and 2011, in the interest of peace. Nevertheless, throughout those two terms, we continued to engage the Government of the day in a constructive manner, even accepting to serve as peace ambassador when called upon to assist them to maintain the peace under their regime.

We must all learn to respect the mandates of our electorates, even when that mandate is not in our favour, and not be selective in our support for democracy, supporting it only when we win.

The Liberian civil conflict came to an end when all parties and warring factions signed the Peace Agreement between the Government of Liberia, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia and the political parties in Accra in August 2003. The accord called for the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to provide a forum that would address issues of impunity, as well as an opportunity for both the

victims and the perpetrators of human rights violations to share their experiences in order to facilitate genuine healing and reconciliation.

That Commission was duly established, concluded its hearings and produced a final report in 2009. Among other things, the report called for the establishment of an extraordinary criminal tribunal to prosecute those identified as having committed gross violations of human rights and economic crimes between 1979 and 2003. It is important to note that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report also recommended the use of the palava hut, a conflict-resolution mechanism traditionally used in Liberia whereby in various district meetings conducted by community elders, perpetrators can publicly request forgiveness from their victims and the aims of restorative justice can be served.

When I spoke before the Assembly last September (see A/73/PV.8) after my first nine months in office, I indicated a preference for dialogue as a conflict-resolution mechanism, so that as a Government and a people we could together focus our efforts on poverty reduction, growth and economic development, rather than retribution. Since then, however, we have heard a rising chorus of voices from many quarters calling for the establishment of an economic and war crimes court. They are the voices not only of thousands of war victims but also of alleged perpetrators, who seem to want to cleanse either their names or their conscience. Support for establishing such a court has also been voiced by many international organizations, as well as some of our international partners. We are at a loss to understand why the clamour for establishing a court is now being heard, almost four decades after it was first called for, and during which time no such pressure was brought to bear on the Government that grew out of the Accra Peace Agreement.

Nevertheless, our Government is a listening Administration, and we have been paying keen attention to the voices of our people. What I have discerned from their cries is that it is important to bring closure to the wounds from the 14 years of Liberia's brutal civil war, and that we need to agree on a mechanism that would guarantee the sustenance of peace, stability, justice and reconciliation, as well as enhance our prospects for economic recovery. Considering the importance of this matter, I have already begun consultations with our national legislature — the representatives of our people — and we intend to have a broader engagement

with the Liberian judicial system and with our strategic international partners and organizations in order to determine pertinent issues such as the legal framework, timing, venue and funding, among other things. It is my hope that at the end of this consultative process, a national consensus will evolve that will determine the pathway to resolving this issue. I therefore ask for the Organization's unflinching support as we embark on this important national endeavour.

We are gathered here today at a time of uncertainty and heightened tension in global politics, security and trade. The global economy is also under undue stress and security tensions are on the rise in many parts of the world. Trade protectionism and climate change are having unintended consequences, especially for developing countries. We strongly believe in the ability of the United Nations, however, to maintain international peace and security, foster friendly relations among nations and promote social progress, better living standards and human rights. We continue to have faith and confidence in the United Nations as the best universal institution for guiding the nations of the world in peaceful and harmonious interaction.

The theme of this seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly is "Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion", which certainly reminds us of our responsibility to focus on achieving the purposes of the United Nations in principle and practice. My Government has developed and is implementing a national development plan that supports this theme. Our Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development is intended to serve as our compass for reconstruction, development and modernization. While it gives priority to poverty reduction, it is also intended to support the efforts of middle- and upper-income Liberians to grow and prosper. It is equally centred on infrastructure development, road construction, road connectivity and agriculture. The Pro-Poor Agenda also emphasizes women and youth empowerment, as well as qualitative education and good health-care delivery.

However, at this juncture we are beginning to face significant implementation challenges, due to the continued decline in prices of our major exports, as well as revenue shortfalls and structural imbalances. Increasing inflation and currency depreciation are tending to reduce the purchasing power of our citizens, putting further burdens on their standard of living. We have done our best as a Government to address those

challenges and will continue to do so. Many of them persist, however, and are demanding our full attention to the problem of finding practical solutions to them. We therefore want to appeal to the United Nations for its continued assistance and expertise. My Administration has recently developed a new investment framework of incentives and tax reliefs that will directly benefit the private sector, and we invite the investment community to take advantage of that new opportunity. We have also established several other initiatives to address those challenges. For example, we are presently engaged in talks with the International Monetary Fund with the aim of entering into a programme with it. We are also reorganizing the leadership and management of our central bank to make it more efficient, independent and responsive to the issues of formulating and supervising monetary policy.

As part of our efforts to ensure an inclusive and participatory dialogue on the problems confronting our economy, including the urgent need to offer appropriate solutions, we recently initiated a national economic dialogue involving all local and international stakeholders. We have taken due note of their recommendations and have already begun to implement those that are most urgent and pertinent.

I want to assure the Assembly that Liberia remains engaged as a responsible member of the international community at all bilateral, regional and multilateral levels. We will continue to work with the United Nations and its entities to foster peace, security and harmony among the nations and peoples of the world.

To my fellow Liberians, both at home and abroad, I would like to say that without peace there can be no progress or development. All Liberians therefore have a responsibility to maintain the peace that we now enjoy, especially those who want to be future leaders of Liberia. I want to remind my fellow Liberians that it was the love of liberty that established our country, it was our unity that made us the first independent African republic, and it will take our joint efforts to sustain peace, achieve development, reconcile our nation and gain economic stability.

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

Mr. George Manneh Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by General Michel Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic

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

General Michel Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency General Michel Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Aoun (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I am pleased to be able to congratulate the President on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session, and I wish him every success in his work. I would also like to thank Ms. Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garcés for her excellent leadership of the work of the Assembly at its previous session.

On 16 September, the General Assembly voted to adopt resolution 73/344, on the establishment of the Academy for Human Encounters and Dialogue in Lebanon (see A/73/PV.107). In that context, on behalf of my country I would like to thank all the Member States that sponsored the resolution and voted in favour of it, encouraging us to move forward with this initiative, which I launched before the Assembly two years ago (see A/72/PV.11).

I will follow up the creation of the Academy with keen attention, because I believe that true peace is established not on paper but between human beings, and because I also have faith in Lebanon's role and vocation as a land of convergence and dialogue, and in the experiences and expertise of its people and its pluralistic society, which have enabled them to reject intellectual and religious extremism and live in tolerance and acceptance of others. The Academy is all the more important because it embodies an international project for fostering the convergence of various cultures, religions and ethnicities, while promoting a spirit of coexistence and spreading a culture of knowing and accepting the other, in line with the principles of the United Nations and with what this Organization aims for through its noble programmes, which strive to bridge the gaps between peoples and to advance the preventive diplomacy that can ultimately help to eradicate the causes of conflicts.

Two days ago, the Secretary-General convened the Climate Action Summit here at the United Nations. In that context, Lebanon, as one of the first signatories of the Paris Agreement, joined the group of countries supporting the initiative of President Van der Bellen of Austria for a more ambitious approach to climate action.

Lebanon has also taken numerous steps this year to promote the role of women. In fact, the Lebanese Government has adopted a comprehensive national plan to put into effect Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, and has begun implementing it. We have also completed all the steps related to the work of our National Commission for Human Rights and Torture Prevention Committee.

While the fierce war that raged across many countries in the Middle East in the past decade has subsided somewhat, its effects and consequences for our countries and societies are becoming more widespread and entrenched, especially at the economic and social levels. The theme of the General Assembly's debates this year is "Galvanizing the multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion". I would like to once again remind the Assembly of the enormously adverse impact of the Syrian displacement crisis and its repercussions for Lebanon in the security, political, social, economic and environmental arenas, as well as on our infrastructure and growth and unemployment rates. It is a serious threat to Lebanon's ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and has aggravated our economic crisis.

As Lebanon strives to tackle this difficult economic situation, it is also relying on a set of drastic structural measures and reforms to its economic and financial system, in cooperation with the relevant international institutions. However, I also want to call on all world leaders to work for the safe return of Syria's displaced persons, especially considering that it is certainly not Lebanon's sole responsibility to address this crisis but rather a shared international duty that makes it imperative that we all work together urgently to find solutions to it. The international community cannot content itself with merely providing minimal assistance to the displaced and refugees in the regions where they are displaced, while ignoring programmes for their safe and dignified return. The conditions for that return are in place. In fact, as international reports have shown, the security situation in most of Syria is now stable, while military confrontations are limited to

the Idlib area, and the Syrian Government has officially declared over and over again that it will welcome the return of the displaced. To date, around 370,000 of them have left Lebanon, of whom more than 250,000 have returned to Syria with no reports that they have been persecuted or mistreated.

On the other hand, we have many question marks about the positions of certain influential States and relevant international organizations that have been obstructing this return, and about the allegations that the security situation in Syria is dangerous. They sow fear among the displaced, in a clear indication of the political perspectives under which the displacement crisis is being tackled, as if the displaced have become hostages in an international game, to be swapped when settlements and solutions are imposed. That is very likely to drive Lebanon to promote the return process that has begun, in agreement with the Syrian Government, in order to resolve this dilemma, which is threatening our very existence. The fact is that the experience of displaced peoples anywhere in the world as they wait for political solutions is not at all reassuring.

We have seen two discouraging experiences in this respect in our history, one in 1974, after war broke out in Cyprus and a large number of Cypriots took refuge in Lebanon. They quickly returned to their country as soon as a ceasefire was declared, without waiting for a political settlement, which has not been achieved to this day. The other began in 1948, when waves of Palestinians were displaced to the countries of diaspora and particularly to Lebanon, where they are still living in camps, nurturing the dream of return, and where they have now been awaiting a political settlement and the implementation of resolution 194 (III) for 71 years.

In a related context, I want to warn against the danger of reducing the services provided to Palestinian refugees by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which have added to the social and fiscal strains weighing on them and on us and threaten to turn Palestinian school students into young people seeking revenge. In that regard, I want to note Lebanon's categorical rejection of any attempt to undermine or modify UNRWA's mandate. I call on the countries that contribute to its budget to double their contributions in order to enable it to restore its vital role.

The crisis in the Middle East, which has lingered for decades, is becoming more complicated, because all

approaches to reaching a settlement and all of Israel's practices run counter to the founding principles of the United Nations. The Judaization of Al-Quds, the policy of systematic colonization, the laws that contravene human rights, the recognition of the annexation of lands occupied by force, as in the case of the Golan Heights, the election promises to annex new lands, with all the leaks about the so-called deal of the century, changing the borders of some States and undermining their territorial unity, while eliminating the Palestinian cause and keeping the Palestinians where they are, as well as the damage that Lebanon is likely to suffer as a result because it hosts a large number of refugees — all of these undermine any chance for peace in the Middle East and unquestionably point to a dark, unknown future. And yet people continue to have rights however long it takes.

Israel's violations of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) have not ceased, and neither have the continued acts of aggression against Lebanon's sovereignty by land, sea and air. Last month's blatantly hostile attack on a residential area in the heart of Beirut is a serious infringement of the resolution, while the fires that lasted for days in the occupied Shebaa farms as a result of incendiary Israeli shells represent an international environmental crime that demands that those who caused them be condemned. From this rostrum, I want to reiterate that Lebanon is a peace-loving country and that we are committed to resolution 1701 (2006) and always strive to respect it, but that commitment does not obviate our natural inalienable right to legitimately defend ourselves, our land and our people by all available means. I also reiterate that Lebanon retains its sovereign rights over the occupied areas of Shebaa Farms, Kfar Shouba Hills and northern Ghajar. We will spare no effort to affirm our internationally recognized land borders, which are firmly documented at the United Nations, and to demarcate our maritime borders under United Nations supervision, while welcoming help from any country in this respect, at a time when exploratory oil and gas drilling operations will start in our territorial waters by the end of the year, in accordance with international laws and norms.

As Lebanon embarks on preparations to celebrate the centenary of Greater Lebanon, the United Nations, founded on 24 October 1945, will be celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary. Since then the world has known many wars and conflicts, especially in

the Middle East, the constant flashpoint where the temperature rises or falls but never cools down. It is our peoples who continue to pay a high price with their security, stability, peace, economy and even demographic diversity. The core of the problem is the same — a contradiction between the interests of the strong and the rights of the weak. Thus, principles, logic and justice are lost and solutions disintegrate.

The political aberration prevailing today has cost the world its stability, now that all the guiding milestones have been undermined and there are no more criteria to confine and control differences and thereby solve them according to the applicable rules. This has made many peoples incapable of taking political decisions beyond their borders and prevented them from coming together and cooperating. Many opportunities for conflict resolution have been lost and the door has been opened wide for chaos.

The United Nations has undertaken many initiatives to make the voice of peace and development heard. Some have succeeded while many have not attained the desired outcome. We hope that the United Nations today will promote the general principles, international law and charters that serve as the only references for safeguarding our rights. No justice shall rise, no right shall be granted and no peace shall be established as long as the principle prevailing in our world is "might makes right".

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

General Michel Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Eswatini

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Head of State of the Kingdom of Eswatini.

King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Eswatini, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of

the Kingdom of Eswatini, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

King Mswati III: It is an immense honour for me to address the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. When the United Nations was established by our predecessors back in 1945 the main purpose was to reduce tensions and avert another conflict after the Second World War.

Today, our Organization faces the multiple challenges confronting humankind. The United Nations should give hope to the people of the world and be alive to the multifaceted issues through the promotion of safety, peace and security. The past seven decades have shown us that multilateralism is an essential ingredient of a peaceful world. In pursuing that mandate over the years, the United Nations has developed into an important organ for fostering collective action to respond to today's global challenges. It is that collective endeavour that has brought about cooperation and supported a global economy aimed at lifting more than a billion people out of poverty.

However, as we are all aware, threats to peace and violent conflicts, including mass atrocities, still exist in different regions of the world. We note with sadness that some of those conflicts and other inhumane suffering are sponsored by those who believe they have the right to dictate and impose their ideologies on other nations of the world. We call upon the Secretary-General to act swiftly and discourage such behaviour because it is against the objectives of our Organization. We are all equal, irrespective of country size and economic power.

The States Members of the United Nations must speak in one voice to defuse all tensions, while encouraging dialogue and protecting civilians and the innocent victims of conflict. My plea is particularly directed to the regions of the world where there are still pockets of conflict. We should all work towards an integrated, prosperous, peaceful and multilateral world.

The urgency of the theme of the general debate for the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, "Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion", cannot be overemphasized. In effect, the theme underscores and reiterates the inescapable need to make the United Nations even more relevant to all people at times like these.

We encourage the Secretariat to note the proposals made by the leaders of the world and put them into action. Humankind is looking to us to change its living landscape for a better future. It is imperative that we take up the multilateral agenda with a renewed commitment to ensuring peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies for future generations.

Most contemporary challenges such as terrorism, climate change, migration, transnational organized crime and many others, cannot be effectively addressed without multilateral cooperation. That will require the inclusion and participation of all Member States through cooperation, dialogue and the reform of existing organs where needed. We therefore implore the General Assembly to play its role in bridging the gaps and promoting collective action. That can be achieved only through close coordination and collaboration with the Organization and all its agencies to address all international issues that deserve our attention.

Globally, eradicating poverty remains our priority and a daunting challenge, especially in the face of climate change and food insecurity, to mention but a few obstacles. We acknowledge and appreciate the actions taken by the international community to mitigate the situation. We want to stress that more investment is required to build strong societies and social protection systems that will ensure the inclusion of special-interest groups affected by poverty. While we have a responsibility to channel a significant proportion of national expenditures into social protection programmes, developing countries actually need financing for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in order to transform their economies and social fabric.

As an example, financing development for a country such as Eswatini may become challenging over time with global economic austerity. That reality places constraints on the extent to which our nation can mobilize resources for development at a time when massive investments are needed to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Eswatini is enhancing its resource mobilization strategies by exploring cooperation with the global community, and we seek the support of the United Nations in that endeavour. It is evident that the integration of African economies, through innovative approaches, creates many opportunities to achieve the SDGs. Such efforts are important in generating new ideas, projects and ways to enable voices to be heard and to drive innovation and promote development.

The recent launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area will greatly assist in the fight to eradicate poverty on the continent. Likewise, with the launch of the African E-trade platform anticipated in the next few weeks, we are confident that steps such as these will usher in a new era in the lives of our people. They will bring the impetus we need to change the landscape and economies of Africa. As a continent, we are focusing on building and growing our economies, and with those new initiatives well established, we will be able to increase our trade with the entire world and become self-sufficient. We therefore urge the United Nations to lend its full support to the initiatives launched by Africa to ensure that the continent improves the lives of its people and becomes the Africa we want.

The African continent continues to face challenges beyond conflict, and those are health issues, including diseases such as Ebola, HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and many others, and to overcome them we need significant funding. After making some progress in our fight against those pandemics, we are unfortunately sometimes confronted with new outbreaks, reversing the gains made. Yet our vision as African States is that all those epidemics should be eliminated so that we can focus on our development goals. Unfortunately, developing countries continue to face significant gaps in funding, making it difficult to adequately detect and respond to problems while still providing basic health services and building the capacity of the health sector.

Africa carries a high burden of malaria cases. Although there have been improvements, Africa needs additional funding if it is to make progress in eradicating malaria on the continent. The Kingdom of Eswatini is among 21 countries globally with the potential to reverse indigenous malaria transmission by 2020, thereby achieving the goal of malaria elimination. In my capacity as Chair of the African Leaders Malaria Alliance, I am delighted to announce that early this year we launched the End Malaria Fund, a public-private partnership aimed at closing the funding gap and putting an end to the disease by 2022. We are pleased to note that in the wake of Eswatini's establishment of a malaria fund, many more African countries have followed suit and are actively launching similar funds. We are also proud to inform the world that the Kingdom continues to make progress in ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2022. However, we still need support in our prevention efforts and in prolonging the lives of those who are already living

with the disease. We are grateful to the friends of the Kingdom who continue to support us in addressing those challenges, particularly the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. They support our initiatives to eliminate AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, while building stronger health systems that will enable us to achieve universal health coverage.

Climate change has serious implications for development prospects everywhere, and even more so on the African continent, where climate extremes have continued to intensify. As we have witnessed in the Southern African Development Community region, natural disasters know no boundaries, and the worst affected countries lack the resources and capacity adequate to ensuring preparedness and responding to the devastation and impact of such disasters, including with respect to infrastructure and lives lost. It is Eswatini's view that countries should work together to devise sound contingency plans aimed, first, at establishing a permanent regional disaster fund to help create a cushion against the effects of natural disasters, and secondly, at setting up subregional humanitarian hubs that will be equipped to respond swiftly to disasters. That will mitigate the impact, save lives and ensure that the countries affected can recover rapidly. The price of not taking prompt action to address climate change is too high.

The Kingdom of Eswatini is fully involved in working towards a knowledge-based economy through science, technology and innovation infrastructure in a bid to facilitate research and enhance development. Our Royal Science and Technology Park is doing notable work in advancing scientific research and also promotes start-up enterprises and innovation labs. We appreciate the friends of the Kingdom of Eswatini who support us in those initiatives. We are still seeking more support to strengthen our knowledge-based programmes, as they will help us to attain our national Vision 2022 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

We are committed to becoming a leading pioneer and role model in achieving the SDGs in Africa. We remain confident that the SDGs and the African Union's Agenda 2063 will continue to give us the proper guidance and the impetus we need to eradicate poverty and create inclusive and sustainable development for all. We commend the close partnership between the United Nations and the people of Eswatini, which guarantees that the SDGs are fully integrated into our planning processes. In that regard, we have launched a five-year

strategic road map for the period from 2019 to 2023 that will ensure sustainable economic development, financial stability and growth, with a view to improving the quality of life of Eswatini. The road map outlines five key sectors based on their ability to grow our gross domestic product, create employment and mobilize revenue — manufacturing, agriculture, mining and energy, tourism and education, and information and communications technology.

No nation can develop beyond its educational capacity, particularly that of its teachers. As we all strive to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all, we must also give the necessary assistance to countries that need help in developing their educators' capacities. In that regard, we must guarantee access to free and quality primary and secondary education, as well as affordable and inclusive vocational and technical education, while working to make opportunities available to disabled boys and girls. I am pleased to share with the global community that the Kingdom of Eswatini has embarked on those initiatives, and we are seeing positive results.

As we all know, young people face a variety of challenges that require a comprehensive, coordinated and multilateral response. We are a youthful world, with more than half the global population aged under 30. We therefore need strategies to encourage the labour market to absorb the growing young working class and ensure that it is appropriately trained for the needs of our markets. We also have to develop programmes aimed at increasing the opportunities for our young people to start their own businesses.

The United Nations bid to leave no one behind will remain elusive if we continue to deprive other nations of the world the opportunity to play a pivotal role in the affairs of this universal Assembly. We firmly believe that Taiwan is essential to the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Its inclusion is a crucial step in realizing the pledge stipulated in the preamble to resolution 70/1, adopted on 25 September 2015. We once again call on the United Nations to uphold the principle of universality, continue its multilateral efforts towards total inclusion and allow Taiwan to participate in relevant efforts on a dignified and equal footing.

I want to reiterate how keen my Kingdom is to prioritize the overall implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Africa's Agenda 2063. Like other

middle-income countries, one of the challenges we face is a decline in official development assistance due to our categorization, which has worked against our development and poverty-reduction efforts. To that end, we strongly advocate for a reassessment of realities on the ground when official development assistance is allocated to the countries most in need.

Finally, we pledge our support to an effective multilateralism aimed at ensuring inclusion, promoting quality education, peace and security for all and lifting countries up from all forms of poverty. Addressing all the challenges that the United Nations family is facing is our first commitment. We want to recognize the Secretary-General and his entire staff for continuing to steer the affairs of the Secretariat with a focused commitment to United Nations efforts in pursuit of global peace and security, equity, justice and inclusiveness in all matters of the Organization. We are firmly convinced that together we will overcome every issue that seems impossible, as we continue to strive for unity, solidarity and mutual benefit and, above all, to galvanize all our efforts to achieve a better world for everyone, everywhere.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Head of State of the Kingdom of Eswatini for the statement he has just made.

King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Eswatini, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rouhani (*spoke in Farsi; English text provided by the delegation*): I would like to congratulate the President on his well-deserved election to lead the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session, and

to wish him and the Secretary-General good luck and every success.

At the outset, I want to commemorate the freedom-seeking movement of Hossein and pay homage to all the seekers of freedom of the world who do not bow to oppression or aggression and who tolerate all the hardships of the struggle for rights, as well as to the spirits of all the oppressed martyrs of terrorist strikes and bombings in Yemen, Syria, occupied Palestine, Afghanistan and other countries, including Iraq.

The Middle East is burning amid the flames of war, bloodshed, aggression, occupation and religious and sectarian fanaticism and extremism, a situation in which the oppressed people of Palestine are the biggest victims, as acts of discrimination, the expropriation of land, settlement expansion and killings continue against them. The plans that the United States and the Zionists have imposed on them, such as the deal of the century that recognized Beit Al-Maqdis as the capital of the Zionist regime and the addition of the Syrian Golan to the other occupied territories, are certainly doomed.

In the face of issues such as the destructive plans of the United States, the Islamic Republic of Iran's regional and international assistance and cooperation on security and counter-terrorism have been quite decisive. That approach is clearly exemplified in our cooperation on the Syrian crisis with Russia and Turkey in the Astana format, and our peace proposal for Yemen, based on our active cooperation with the Special Envoys of the Secretary-General, as well as our efforts to facilitate reconciliation talks among the parties in Yemen with four European countries, which resulted in the conclusion of the Stockholm Agreement on Al-Hudaydah port.

I come from a country that has resisted the most merciless economic terrorism and defended its right to independence and the development of science and technology. While imposing extraterritorial sanctions and threats on other nations, the United States Government, has tried very hard to deprive Iran of the advantages of participation in the global economy and has resorted to international piracy by misusing the international banking system. We Iranians have been pioneers for freedom-seeking movements in the region while seeking peace and progress for our own nation as well as our neighbours. We have never surrendered to foreign aggression or imposition. We cannot believe in an invitation to negotiations from people who claim

to have applied the harshest sanctions in history to the detriment of the dignity and prosperity of our nation. How can one believe in that in the face of the silent killing of a great nation and efforts to exert pressure on the lives of 83 million Iranians — particularly women and children — by United States officials, who pride themselves on such pressures and have become addicted to exploiting sanctions against a spectrum of countries that includes Iran, Venezuela, Cuba, China and Russia? The Iranian nation will never forget or forgive those crimes and criminals.

The attitude of the current United States Administration to the nuclear deal, otherwise known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), not only violates the provisions of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) but also constitutes a breach of the sovereignty and political and economic independence of all the world's countries. Despite the United States withdrawal from the JCPOA, for a full year Iran remained fully faithful to all of its nuclear commitments under the agreement. Out of respect for the Security Council's resolution, we provided Europe with the opportunity to fulfil its 11 commitments in compensation for the United States' withdrawal. Unfortunately, however, we heard only beautiful words and witnessed no effective measures. It is now clear to all that the United States reneges on all of its commitments, and that Europe is unable, indeed incapable, of fulfilling its commitments. We even adopted a step-by-step approach in implementing paragraphs 26 and 36 of the JCPOA, and we remain committed to our promises in the deal.

However, there is a limit to our patience. When the United States does not respect the resolutions of the Security Council and Europe cannot act, the only option left is to rely on national dignity, pride and strength. They call us to negotiations while they run away from treaties and deals. We negotiated with the current United States Administration at the negotiating table with the Security Council permanent five, Germany and the European Union, but it failed to honour the commitment made by its predecessor. On behalf of my nation and State, I want to announce that our response to any negotiations conducted under sanctions is negative. The Government and people of Iran have remained steadfast against extremely harsh sanctions in the past year and a half and will never negotiate with an enemy that seeks to make Iran surrender with the weapons of poverty, pressure and sanctions.

If members of the General Assembly require a positive answer, the only way for talks to begin is to return to commitments and compliance, as declared by the leader of the Islamic Revolution. If there is sensitivity to the name the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, there should be a return to its framework and compliance with Security Council resolution 2231 (2015). Stop the sanctions so as to open the way for the start of negotiations.

I would like to make it crystal clear: if the minimum is satisfactory, we will also content ourselves with the minimum, on either side. However, if more is required, more should also be paid. If members stand by their word that they have only one demand for Iran, that is, the non-production and non-utilization of nuclear weapons, that could easily be attained under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency and, more importantly, with a fatwa of the Iranian leader. Instead of a show of negotiation, there should a return to the reality of negotiation. Memorial photographs are at the last stage of negotiations, not the first.

Despite all the obstructions created by the United States Government, we in Iran remain on the path of economic and social growth and prosperity. In 2017 Iran's economy registered the highest economic growth rate in the world. Today, despite fluctuations emanating from foreign interference in the past year and a half, we have returned to the track of growth and stability. Iran's gross domestic product without oil has again become positive in recent months and the country's trade balance remains positive.

The security doctrine of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based on maintaining peace and stability in the Persian Gulf and on providing freedom of navigation and safety of movement in the Strait of Hormuz. Recent incidents have seriously endangered such security. Security and peace in the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz could be provided with the participation of the countries of the region and the free flow of oil and other energy resources could be guaranteed provided that we consider security as an umbrella in all areas for all the countries.

In line with the historical responsibility of my country in maintaining security, peace, stability and progress in the Persian Gulf region and the Strait of Hormuz, I should like to invite all countries directly affected by the developments in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz to the coalition for hope within

the Hormuz Peace Endeavour. The goal of the coalition for hope is to promote peace, stability, progress and welfare for all residents of the Strait of Hormuz region and to enhance mutual understanding and peaceful and friendly relations among them. The initiative includes various areas for cooperation, such as the collective supply of energy security, freedom of navigation and the free transfer of oil and other resources to and from the Strait of Hormuz and beyond.

The coalition for hope is based on important principles, such as compliance with the goals and principles of the United Nations, mutual respect, an equal footing, dialogue, understanding, respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, the inviolability of international borders and the peaceful settlement of all disputes, as well as, more importantly, the two fundamental principles of non-aggression and non-interference in the domestic affairs of each other. The presence of the United Nations seems necessary so as to establish an international umbrella in support of the coalition for hope. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran will provide more details of the coalition for hope to the beneficiary States (see S/PV.8626).

The formation of any security coalition or initiative under any title in the region with the centrality and command of foreign forces is a clear example of interference in the affairs of the region. The securitization of navigation is in contravention of the right to free navigation and the right to development and will escalate tensions, further complicate conditions and increase the mistrust in the region while jeopardizing regional peace, security and stability.

The security of our region will be realized when American troops pull out. Security will not be provided by American weapons and intervention. After 18 years, the United States has failed to reduce acts of terrorism. However, the Islamic Republic of Iran managed to terminate the scourge of Da'esh with the assistance of neighbouring nations and Governments. The ultimate way to achieve peace and security in the Middle East involves inward democracy and outward diplomacy. Security cannot be purchased or supplied by foreign Governments.

The peace, security and independence of our neighbours are our peace, security and independence. America is not our neighbour. It is the Islamic Republic of Iran that is the neighbour, and we have long been

taught that neighbours come first, then comes the home. In the event of an incident, the international community and we will remain alone. We are neighbours with each other, not with the United States.

The United States is located here, not in the Middle East. The United States is not the advocate of any nation, neither is it the guardian of any State. In fact, States do not delegate the power of attorney to other States and do not bestow custodianship on others. If the flames of the fire of Yemen have today spread to Hijaz, the warmonger should be sought and punished rather than levelling allegations and grudges against the innocent. The security of Saudi Arabia will be ensured through the termination of aggression against Yemen rather than by inviting foreigners. We are ready to exert our national strength, regional credibility and international authority.

The solution for peace in the Arabian peninsula, security in the Persian Gulf and stability in the Middle East should be sought inside the region rather than outside it. The issues of the region are too great and important for the United States to be able to resolve. The United States has failed to resolve the issues in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria and has been the supporter of extremism, Talibanism and Da'eshism. Such a Government is clearly unable to resolve today's more sophisticated issues.

Our region is on the brink of collapse — a single blunder could fuel a conflagration. We will not tolerate the provocative intervention of foreigners. We will respond decisively and strongly to any transgression against, or violation of, our security and territorial integrity. However, the alternative and proper solution for us is to strengthen consolidation among all the nations with common interests in the Persian Gulf and the Hormuz region.

This is the message of the Iranian nation: let us invest in hope towards a better future rather than in war and violence. Let us return to justice, peace, law, commitment and promise and, ultimately, to the negotiating table.

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

Mr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Tommy Esang Remengesau Jr., President of the Republic of Palau

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

Mr. Tommy Esang Remengesau Jr., President of the Republic of Palau, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Tommy Esang Remengesau Jr., and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Remengesau: Allow me to begin by congratulating His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on becoming President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. I applaud his emphasis on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Palau looks forward to working further with him on that important priority.

Let me also express my thanks to his predecessor, Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, for her leadership over the past year.

I also want to express my deep condolences to the people of the Bahamas and all the victims of Hurricane Dorian. They must know that, as fellow islanders, the people of Palau stand in solidarity with them.

I would like to recall the words of my predecessor in his first address to the General Assembly 25 years ago, after Palau was formally admitted as the 185th member of the United Nations. He said,

“My country, with approximately 20,000 citizens, will be one of the smallest Members of this Organization, but we are large in the things that count: a strong cultural heritage; a commitment to human rights and a democratic Government; resources — both human and marine — which we are particularly proud of; and, most of all, the support and friendship of our brothers and sisters in the international family of nations.” (A/49/PV.89, p.5)

On the eve of our twenty-fifth anniversary of independence, those words still ring true. To my predecessor's list, I would add only that Palau is also large in its sense of responsibility for protecting the marine environment and the climate system. As a large ocean State, we strongly believe that our small island nation has much to contribute to those global efforts, and that important work must begin at home. In that

regard, my Government had the pleasure to present its first voluntary national review to the High-level Political Forum of the Economic and Social Council.

The voluntary national review recognized our important achievements, such as universal education, ending hunger and establishing our protected area network. Palau has proclaimed 2019 as the Year of Innovative Learning and Excellence, in recognition of the fact that our people are our greatest resource. Improving education and developing our human capital is necessary to thrive in a globalized world.

Palau has made recent progress in achieving near-universal health coverage, but challenges remain in the area of improving the quality of health care and the durability of health-care systems in the face of the climate crisis. However, our voluntary national review also identified areas requiring greater attention, including improving nutrition, transitioning to a low-carbon energy system and building the resilience of our public infrastructure and essential public services.

In my address last year (see A/73/PV.9), I highlighted the prevalence of non-communicable diseases in Palau, which has one of the highest rates of obesity in the world. One step since then has been a directive that I signed for all Government food service systems to serve pelagic fish as a way of encouraging traditional, healthier diets. However, that issue deserves much greater attention at the United Nations.

Sustainable marine protection has been a tradition in Palau that extends back thousands of years. For most of our history, the greatest threat has come from overfishing. When fisheries started to decline, the elders would develop a *bul*, or prohibition, and all fishing in that area would cease. Knowing when to exercise restraint has been key to the sustainable management of our marine environment.

Palau has some of the most well-preserved coral reef ecosystems in the world. However, we face many challenges brought on by a globalized world. Local fishermen are not the only ones trawling our waters today, and the climate crisis threatens to render island lives and livelihoods untenable. Therefore, like our ancestors, Palau has once again declared a *bul* against fishing — but this time on a scale the world has rarely seen.

In just a few months from now, on 1 January 2020, the Palau National Marine Sanctuary will enter its

implementation phase. Eighty per cent of our exclusive economic zone (EEZ), approximately 500,000 square kilometres of ocean, will be protected as a no-take area. The remaining 25 per cent will be open to artisanal fishing, where we also intend to develop our domestic fishing industry. Our ocean is a precious resource. We need to safeguard its health so that future generations can continue to benefit from its abundance.

We also look forward to hosting the seventh Our Ocean Conference in August 2020. We aim to galvanize further momentum on ocean action, as well as to take stock of what we have achieved so far and what remains to be done for the protection of our oceans.

As co-Chair of the High-level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, I am working with 13 other serving Heads of State to rebalance humankind's contract with the ocean. As the Panel continues to develop its recommendations for achieving a sustainable ocean economy ahead of the 2020 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 — conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development — to be held in Lisbon, we reiterate our invitation to industry and the private sector to join us in that effort.

We also look forward to the successful conclusion of negotiations and the adoption of a new treaty on high seas biodiversity that will set the multilateral framework for us to effectively protect the high seas and complement our national efforts.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) today presented its *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*. Its warnings about the impacts of the climate crisis on the ocean paint a picture of ocean neglect and of warming and acidifying seas that threaten fish life cycles and coral reefs. For a country like Palau, whose economy, culture and way of life are dependent on the ocean, that is of existential concern, but the IPCC's report also tells us that the health of the ocean should concern all countries.

If we are going to slow and stop the worst effects of the climate crisis, we cannot do so without turning to the ocean. The High-level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy also issued a call this week for ocean-based climate action to support the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Investing in nature-based solutions, decarbonizing ocean industries

and securing sustainable food are solutions that we can all take collectively.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his leadership in convening this week's Climate Action Summit. Palau is honoured to have been a member of the energy transition track for the Summit and to have presented and developed the small island developing States (SIDS) sustainable energy package, which is part of the commitment by SIDS to systematically and ambitiously transition to low-carbon economies. The package seeks to build the partnerships that generate action on the ground by scaling up the SIDS Lighthouses Initiative; SIDS will be empowered to develop ambitious and achievable plans for renewable energy and to attract new investment.

In Palau we are about to begin the task of installing the world's largest microgrid, which will enable us to meet our nationally determined contribution under the Paris Agreement well ahead of 2025. The formation of a public-private partnership has been critical to that endeavour. It is also vital that we see an ambitious response by our developed country brothers and sisters to replenish the United Nations Green Climate Fund. We thank those that have recently announced new commitments this week, including Denmark, Sweden, Monaco and South Korea, and we look forward to others coming forward to also increase their pledges of support.

The seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations next year has been identified as an important opportunity to reduce the trust deficit among nations. As part of the work to revitalize multilateralism, our United Nations institutions must be fit for purpose. The reform of the Security Council remains an urgent task in that regard. We urge the President of the General Assembly, together with the Secretary-General, to undertake consultations to advance the reform process and ensure that the Security Council better reflects the geopolitical realities of the world today.

The Security Council must also be prepared to take on the most pressing security challenges of our generation. We therefore reiterate the call of Pacific islands for the Secretary-General to appoint a special representative on climate and security.

Our pathway to realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is enabled by a strong multilateral system. The political declaration adopted by the High-level Political Forum on sustainable

development reminds us that accelerated action depends on accessible means of implementation. While Palau has made considerable gains in some key areas, progress can be greatly accelerated by durable partnerships and greater multilateral cooperation that take into consideration the needs of SIDS.

The mid-term review of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway also reiterates the special needs and circumstances of SIDS and emphasizes the importance of scaling up financing modalities. In particular, we welcome its recognition of the limitations of an income-only measure of development and its call to deepen and enhance partnership with SIDS. As was made tragically clear in the Bahamas, our vulnerabilities as SIDS to disasters and climate impacts are unique and threaten to undermine all our sustainable development efforts.

Implementing the Secretary-General's recommendations for reform of the United Nations development system also remains an essential objective to ensure that no country is left behind. I therefore look forward to the establishment of a United Nations multi-country office in the North Pacific. As affirmed at the Micronesian Presidents Summit earlier this year, basing a multi-country office in one of the North Pacific countries will bring greater coherence to development support in the region and enhance the efforts of Micronesian SIDS to achieve the SDGs.

Our collective commitment to leave no country behind also demands that we end our exclusion of Taiwan and its 23 million people, not only here in the General Assembly but also in the range of international bodies that are essential to establishing effective multilateralism, such as the World Health Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We know from our partnership with Taiwan about the strength of its commitment to the SDGs; its equal and dignified participation in 2030 Agenda processes will only strengthen our global effort to realize the Agenda.

The United States has been our friend for the longest time — our histories are deeply intertwined. We share its commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific. We are proud of our close relationship through our Compact of Free Association and look forward to beginning discussions on its renewal.

One early step in our national journey was the development of our maritime capabilities to secure our large EEZ. Australia stepped forward to support that step by donating a patrol boat in 1996. We are delighted that Australia has extended its commitment to the Pacific patrol boat programme and will be replacing the *PSS Remeliik* with a new patrol boat in 2020. Australia's long record of support for capacity-building of marine law enforcement has been especially important in preparation for the implementation of the Palau National Marine Sanctuary.

The Government of India has been a growing partner in health and other fields by supporting our health-care system and diffusing small-scale solar technology through Palauans who have now been trained under the Solar Mamas project.

We view with concern North Korea's recent ballistic missile launches that violate Security Council resolutions. They threaten peace and stability in our region and around the world. Weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles of all ranges must be dismantled and the cooperation of all States is essential to fully implement relevant Security Council resolutions.

It seems like the last 25 years have passed in the blink of an eye. The first generation of Palauans born to an independent republic are already coming of age. Now our second generation of independent Palauans are just starting school. I am very confident that they can look forward to another 25 years in a country that is large in the things that count — large in its commitment to friendship and solidarity with this great family of nations.

I am hopeful that they will live in a world that has seized this critical moment in history to avert the worst effects of the climate crisis; a world that has rebalanced its relationship with the land, the atmosphere and the oceans; a world that works with nature and not against her. This family is what gives me hope. It is what gives the people of Palau hope.

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

His Excellency Mr. Tommy Esang Remengesau Jr., President of the Republic of Palau, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Ms. Salome Zourabichvili, President of Georgia

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

Ms. Salome Zourabichvili, President of Georgia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Salome Zourabichvili, President of the Georgia, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Zourabichvili: It is an honour to address the General Assembly today as the President of Georgia. Georgia is a small country on the edge of Europe that for the past 28 years has experienced quite a few shocks and transformations — recovering its independence, opening its borders, the first wave of globalization, shifting to a market economy and enduring open or protracted conflicts, war and occupation. At the same time, despite all of those things, Georgia is among the democratic countries of the world that enjoy economic and social development, and it remains one of the main islands of stability in a complex region.

We are a country with a small population, and we know very well the price of solidarity. Given our location, we know that we are an integral part of a region where, without peace, global challenges cannot and will not be overcome. We are also fully conscious that the destiny of the planet is also our destiny.

Georgia, like all present here, faces the global challenges that confronting today's world — climate change, biodiversity loss, universal and accessible health, education for all, and overcoming poverty, unemployment and inequalities. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are all essential to tackle those challenges. They provide the path towards a radical transformation in both the way we look at the world and our behaviour patterns. The only way to overcome global challenges is to see and treat them as a whole — a complex, multifaceted threat, but doing so is far from easy. The world is much more complex than that, and so are the answers that we must find to those challenges. We need more systemic approaches and holistic thinking.

Georgia will spare no effort in working towards the 2030 Agenda's SDGs, together with all actors in society,

be they public or private, together with our neighbours and partners, because solidarity and joint effort will be key for success. That is why we are here all here today, and that is why we believe in the necessary conciliation between sovereignty and multilateralism.

While looking towards 2030 and with the determination to achieve our common goals, there are some more immediate challenges that we must overcome in order to succeed. We need new thoughts. We must dare, experiment and develop new options. We can no longer be afraid of initiative.

What is true for the world and is true for Georgia. Our leading challenge, and thus our priority, is peace — the ultimate goal of every society— but it is the very essence and the *raison d'être* of the United Nations. Global security is a global challenge. Wars, conflicts and terrorism pose a clear and massive threat to the lives of millions of citizens and provoke mass migrations and hordes of refugees.

We share the grief of the families of the victims of terrorism. We understand their fear and anger. And we will play our part in the common fight against that invisible enemy. Georgia is therefore a substantial contributor to peace missions, whether yesterday in Iraq or today in Afghanistan, whether in Mali or the Central Africa Republic, far from our borders but close to us in our duty of solidarity.

War and conflict have been part of our history. For centuries, Georgia has suffered numerous invasions by numerous invaders. Tbilisi, our capital city, has been burned down 26 times, while parts of our territory have been occupied for short or long periods, and its religion and identity have been actively suppressed at different times. Yet Georgia has survived, and today we proudly remain on the map of independent sovereign democratic countries. We responded with the same resilience in confronting the tragic war of 2008, which led to the occupation of 20 per cent of our territory by Russia.

As President of Georgia, I must speak out here on the plight of our people living on the administrative boundary line that divides relatives and villages, where incidents and provocations have become constant and where illegal demarcation is actively pursued, preventing a normal, peaceful life for our citizens. I have to speak out for our citizens living in the occupied territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali, who are subjected to continuous human rights violations and restrictions of their freedom of movement and access

to health and education services. The crossing points to both regions are periodically closed, causing immense humanitarian suffering.

I have to speak out and warn the world — in occupied Abkhazia not only the Georgian language but also the Abkhaz language, which the Georgian Constitution recognizes and I must defend as the President of Georgia, as well as the Abkhaz identity, are on the verge of disappearance. Abkhazian people are suffering a drastic demographic reduction. I must warn the Assembly: a world without the Abkhazian language, identity and traditions will be a much poorer place. We must all unite to protect and save that rich cultural diversity, which led the Arabs to refer to the Caucasus as the mountain of languages.

I have to speak out for our internally displaced persons and refugees, who for decades now have been unable to return to their homes and lands.

Our response to the tragedy of war and occupation has been multifaceted. Our response has been to preserve peace and development by keeping our word and respecting to the letter our commitments under the ceasefire agreement of 2008. Hence we have no military forces whatsoever close to the occupation line, and Georgia has unilaterally renounced the use of force.

Our response has been to extend our hand through the Step to a Better Future peace initiative, which allows citizens from the occupied territories access, whenever they are not prevented from exercising it, to enjoy health and education services, share in business opportunities and take part —even if, alas, only marginally — in Georgia's economic development.

Our response has been openness and tolerance. Last year, for instance, we received 1,500,000 Russian tourists without any incident being reported.

Our response has been to stay the course on our determined path of economic and democratic development, and not to let anything divert us from our ambitions and concrete goals of European and Euro-Atlantic integration. We have managed to make remarkable progress on all those fronts without ever changing course or restricting our efforts, and always with a clear vision of our destiny. That has been, to some extent, our peaceful victory over war and occupation, tragedy and destruction.

When we talk about the goal of peace and ending conflict and occupation, however, we must also act. We

need movement and diplomacy. We have renounced the use of force but we have not renounced dialogue. We are resilient but we are not reconciled and resigned to the status quo. We need to make change happen, and that is what we cannot do alone. We need the engagement of all towards the objective of sustainable peace in the region.

We must enhance the political dimension of the existing formats for dialogue in order to at last to allow discussions on substance. We need to move from expert discussions to genuine political negotiations. Political will is needed on all sides to make the Geneva format, for instance, an instrument for solving the conflict and not solely managing it. Political will is needed to invent, if necessary, new formats.

Every forum and dialogue, formal or informal, should be used to engage Russia in discussions on the strict implementation of the ceasefire agreement and on allowing the European Union Monitoring Mechanism, as was agreed, to monitor all Georgian territory, because de-escalation along the line of occupation is our top priority, which would then pave the way towards an effective settlement. It should also be very clear that new conflicts should not cause us to forget older ones, for that would be a destructive message and peace is not divisible.

Peace is not challenged only by war, but also and increasingly by a new internal threat that is gradually affecting all our States and societies. Polarization, the erosion of civil values and of mutual respect, hate speech, fake news and conspiracy theories are creating a black hole that is undermining the fabric of our society and eroding the foundations of democracy. The answer is there, in front of us — we must revive our traditional values. Tolerance is one essential value; pluralism is only an empty word if it does not mean respect for the ideas of others.

Georgia, which has for centuries been a model for religious, ethnic and cultural tolerance and openness, could be at the forefront of a battle that must involve us all. International society must be made of free citizens and healthy societies. We cannot achieve anything — let alone the SDGs — if we are weakened from within, divided and fighting each other. That is my appeal to Georgians, but not only to Georgians.

Overcoming poverty has been the leading concern for Georgian Governments. Georgia is on the right path to sustainable growth, striving to modernize and raise our economy to international standards so that it can

take its place in world markets and make better use of its unique standing between the European and Asian markets to which it has free access.

Yet we need to do more. Education and the acquisition of skills are key to overcoming unemployment and poverty — they are not only the fundamental right of any human being but a vital condition for the sustainable development of any country. Ensuring quality and affordable education is one of the main priorities of Georgia today, and a key objective of national development. That priority is not only a matter of words but is also backed by numbers in the budget, which plans to bring the share of education to 6 per cent of gross domestic product by 2022. We have undertaken a number of reforms aimed at transforming our education system to raise free citizens who will be competitive on the international platform.

Science and technology research and innovation are the basis for our future development, and we attach great importance to the internationalization of education through cooperation with leading European and American institutions and by opening our doors to foreign students. Georgian students are eager to become part of the larger world, and 3,600 students have taken part in the European Erasmus programme.

Migration has become our common plight, generating widespread fear and anxiety. Some countries fear a future decline because they are losing their vitality, their brains and their younger generations to the outside world. Others, seeing foreign migrants arriving en masse, fear that those newcomers will take natives' jobs and dilute their national identity. Some migrants are legally moving to countries with better opportunities; most are illegal and looking for what they cannot find in their home countries, which they are fleeing primarily because of war, destruction or persecution.

In addition, climatic changes are on the verge of producing a massive new category of migrants, who will leave territories turning to deserts, flooded by rising seas or destroyed by hurricanes or fires. On this issue, too, the answer must be global. States need to find common approaches to regulate what cannot be stopped.

Georgia, today facing both emigration and immigration, in addition to its 300,000 internally displaced persons, is actively looking for solutions. Reducing illegal migration is necessary to preserve

one of the most precious benefits of our European integration process — visa liberalization. Beyond better controls at the borders, which are needed and are under way, but short of reinstating a strict visa procedure, there are solutions. One is to increase the standards of living and bringing to our country social protection, job security and the quality of life that most emigrants are seeking elsewhere. Georgia sees its European integration path as the most direct way to that end, and we are on that road.

The second path is to regulate the flows, by bilateral or multilateral agreements among States, to allow for legal and temporary employment in fields of mutual interest. Georgia is actively working to develop agreements on circular migration with its main partners. Uncontrolled and unregulated migration will remain a factor of major disruption that could affect peace and stability, but managed and regulated migrations can become assets for better mutual understanding and communication among cultures and civilizations, and vectors for more tolerance and mutually enriching experiences.

I represent a country which, by mythology, is linked it to health and medicine through Medea, the goddess of medicine. It is therefore not surprising that we traditionally attach significant value to health. Nor is it surprising that we have produced outstanding doctors who practice throughout the world. Georgia is increasingly becoming a destination for health tourism because of its numerous thermal resorts, which are being modernized.

We share the core principle that health is the inalienable right of every human being, which means providing universal and affordable access to quality health services. That inalienable right is threatened today by the rising cost of treatments and medicines. In today's world, we are curing ever more illnesses and medicine makes incredible miracles possible, but the costs are rising exponentially, challenging social budgets, public services and individual resources.

Georgia has made the political choice to move towards a universal health coverage system and tripled health allocations across all sectors. Today, 90 per cent of our population has access to essential primary-care services. We have also attained notable progress in the fields of maternal and child health, tuberculosis and drug-resistant tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS has almost been eradicated. We have successfully implemented

a hepatitis C eradication programme with the support of the United States Centers for Disease Control, the World Health Organization and private partners, thereby setting a global precedent for nationwide chronic-illness eradication through treatment. That is major cause of hope.

We still have significant challenges to overcome but I am proud that just two weeks ago we announced the launch of a centre for paediatric oncology, with the support of the United States Agency for International Development. We hope that this project will be the basis for international cooperation in Georgia.

Climate change, it is clear to us all, affects every individual and every country. We are already directly feeling its effects and we understand our responsibility to act to preserve our planet so our children have a place to live. Some territories are being turned into deserts, flooded by rising seas or destroyed by hurricanes, as we have just witnessed, or fires.

Georgia, as a party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, is fully committed to the objectives of the Convention and endorses the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Georgia therefore updated its nationally determined contribution, in parallel with the elaboration of a climate action plan for the 2021-2030 period, ensuring that in 2030 greenhouse gas emissions will remain at 40 per cent below the level recorded in 1990. The Climate Action Summit demonstrated the momentum and showed the potential to leap forward by giving the climate community more ambitious measures for implementing the Paris Agreement.

Georgia, like many small countries, does not have industries that produce greenhouse gases, but like any other State we are feeling the impact and adapting. We aim to build a climate-resilient Georgia and to reduce climate-driven losses.

Georgia today represents a unique reservoir of biodiversity of fauna and flora, with a great number of endemic species. We are conscious that this unique geographic situation and our unique biodiversity must be preserved for the future of our planet. We are therefore developing an integrated climate policy process, led by the Interministerial Committee on Climate Change, and putting in place climate-friendly incentives in the energy sector, as well as green-economy and energy-efficiency policies.

Prevention is key. It is true that we cannot control the weather, but there is nothing inevitable about natural disasters. What is more, by helping local communities to understand and reduce disaster risk, Georgia is strengthening a culture of resilience that is a core value of democracy and self-government.

Finally, we cannot fight together if we do not share the same basic values. One of these is democracy. It is what allows for the full involvement, responsibility and commitment of each and every citizen in this global war we are embarking upon against global threats.

It has been 28 years since Georgia chose to become a democratic country again, as it was during its first period of independent. Gradually, we have shifted from being a presidential Republic to a parliamentary system. We have moved through peaceful transitions of power to an ever more transparent and open electoral system. The adoption of a fully proportional system for the upcoming 2020 parliamentary elections may even result in a coalition Government. Pluralistic and vivid media has become a reality in today's Georgia. Reporters Without Borders ranks Georgia 60th, which represents robust progress from our 104th ranking of a few years ago. The most recent decision of the Strasbourg European Court of Human Rights reinforces property rights, including in the media sector, and has resulted in more pluralism.

The new Constitution, adopted last year, reaffirms the strict principle of the separation of powers, guarantees all fundamental rights and sets a high standard by introducing a large set of new social rights, making it one of the most progressive Constitutions of the world — as was the 1921 Constitution of Georgia, which contained early recognition of the right of women to vote and be elected. Five women participated in the first Constituent Assembly. Georgia was the first country to elect a Muslim woman to office. Today, I am among 11 women Presidents in the world, and the first in our region.

Georgia is now embarked on the fourth wave of judicial reforms, which aims at ensuring a higher standard of independence in the judiciary and building public confidence in the court system. This stage is the most delicate and the one for which we need increased support and assistance from partners. Progress has already been made and can be measured. The number of complaints submitted by Georgian citizens to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg has

decreased 11-fold over the past six years, from 4,453 to 415. Georgia is ranked 41st out of 126 States in the *Rule of Law Index 2019*.

Beyond the law adopted in 2014 on the elimination of all forms of discrimination, we are also taking important steps towards ensuring equality and safety in labour relations, employment and occupation and prohibiting sexual harassment, as well as developing the code on the rights of the child, fully aligned with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The President took the Chair.

To conclude, 50 years ago we had a dream and humankind landed on the moon. We shall not forget how difficult that was in terms of human, financial and scientific resources and sacrifices — and we faced those challenges. But today, we have a new challenge, a new dream. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is probably the most ambitious global agenda humankind has ever designed. It could be summed up by a simple message — come back to Earth. We have inherited one planet and it is where Georgians want to live, peacefully. We all have to remember that we have only one life to live and only one planet to save.

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

Ms. Salome Zourabichvili, President of Georgia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

**Address by Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera,
President of the Central African Republic**

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, President of the Central African Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations General Assembly His Excellency Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, President of the Central African Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Touadera (spoke in French): As I join the great family of the international community for the 74th session of the General Assembly, I would like to begin by extending to you, Mr. President, Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, my warm and sincere

congratulations on your election to preside over our work. Your election is a well-deserved honour for and a tribute to the entire African continent, and in particular your country, the Federal Republic of Nigeria. I continue to believe that your perfect understanding of the international scene, as well as your great personal qualities, are an asset to and a guarantee of the success of our work.

I also take this opportunity to commend Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés for her excellent work and achievements at the seventy-third session. We offer her the full expression of our gratitude and satisfaction.

Allow me to reiterate my gratitude to and trust in Secretary-General António Guterres for his sustained commitment to peace and development in the world and, above all, for his tireless and multifaceted support for the Central African Republic.

The seventy-fourth session is being held at a time when the world is faced with threats to international peace and security — terrorism, poverty, climate change and migration. I have therefore come to share with the Assembly my country's concerns and ideas about the theme "Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion". The relevance of the theme is matched only by the challenges the world faces today. The globalization movement has nurtured among the peoples of the world the common dream of seeing the Earth become a true global village.

Regrettably, however, we have never seen so many walls and barriers being erected. In the era of globalization, we are subjected to the perils of nationalism and identity-based isolation. The intolerance of differences and growing extremism are expressed with increasing violence. Needless to say, times like these allow for a period of individual introspection and for exchange so that, together, we can meet the challenge of building bridges of brotherhood and peace that transcend borders.

As we all begin to unite our efforts, we will overcome the various sources of ongoing tension and crises in the world. No country, no nation is immune to the threats facing humankind today. The challenge for us as leaders is to have the courage to dare to take action. We must dare to question ourselves in order to develop innovative, effective and efficient solutions to build peace and stability and create a solid foundation for sustainable development.

Several of our countries, including my own, are faced with a security situation that remains a source of concern and deserves the full attention of the international community. We must therefore bear in mind the fact that so long as one of our Member States does not have peace, the entire community of nations that will be affected.

The situation in the Middle East is of the utmost concern in terms of international security. We maintain our call for a peaceful, just and equitable resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on the solution of two States living in perfect symbiosis and harmony within safe and recognized borders. At the same time, we urge the entire international community to invest in the quest for genuine peace in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, in accordance with international law.

In Africa, the current situation shows that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is a real threat to peace and security. More than ever, our States are called upon to unite their efforts and pool their resources, primarily in the areas of intelligence, prevention and early warning. The joint summit of the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Central African States, held in Lomé in July 2018, should inspire more concerted and coordinated action at a time when the circulation of small arms and light weapons defies national borders. That has led to unsafe situations that remind us that the effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty would significantly reduce that threat to our continent. In that regard, the Central African Republic strongly supports the actions taken by our Organization, under the leadership of the Security Council, in order to achieve general and complete disarmament with regard to weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons alike.

While development requires a minimum of peace, it is equally true that peace cannot prosper in the enclaves of abject poverty and insecurity, which present a distressing picture to the world. Beyond words that confirm our good intentions, let us drive forward a virtuous momentum of poverty eradication through concrete and strong action. Such action should help us to devise appropriate forms of social protection for all. It must contribute to generating wealth, the equitable distribution of which, with the aim of a common minimum standard of living, is among the factors that prevent conflict.

In that regard, in line with the deep aspirations of my people, I have urged my Government to prepare the National Plan for Recovery and Peacebuilding in the Central African Republic, which considers the main thrusts of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Agenda 2063 of the African Union. The challenges of transforming the world and our countries require that our populations have the necessary tools to remain active players in an ever-changing world.

To that end, on the heels of national reconstruction, my country intends to invest in education that combines quality with the efficient use of resources. Investing in learners, as well as in teachers, is our wager. And in my country emerging from the crisis, all our efforts must be directed towards the opportunities offered by new technologies. In addition, we would like to engage in an international discussion on education with a view to avoiding several pitfalls, such as education-for-all programmes, which wind up simply being literacy classes, when the resources do not follow to support quality education. Quality education is the tool that must should be used as a basis for more lasting and harmonious development, while also constituting a solid bastion against extremism in all its forms.

While we applaud the progress that has been made in recent years with respect to the development of our countries, albeit unequal, we must also deeply reflect on humankind's impact on the environment. The abusive exploitation of natural resources is one of the causes of climate change, which is seriously disrupting and jeopardizing the future of humankind. Although the Central African Republic is far from being a major polluter, we stand in solidarity with the international efforts undertaken to preserve our planet; it is our historic responsibility.

I firmly call for the effective implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and its ratification by all States parties. We hope to see a significant reduction in the carbon emissions of developed countries and the fulfilment of financial commitments for carbon credits, in order to strengthen the resilience of developing countries against climate disasters.

Without contriving new lines of actions to take, our collective responsibility is to implement all our commitments, including the resolutions resulting from the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as the recommendations made

at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Addis Ababa, which has afforded us the opportunity to reaffirm our support for the implementation of the sustainable development agenda.

From all the foregoing, it is clear that combining the efforts of the States members of our Organization, within the framework of multilateral action, is the cornerstone of success in our shared ideal of a more just and balanced and safer world for all, everywhere. That is evidenced by the mobilization of international solidarity that allowed my country to turn the page to a new chapter in its history, thanks to the signing, under the auspices of the African Union, of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic between my Government and the 14 armed groups on 6 February. Today, we are mobilized for the implementation of this Agreement with the support of the guarantors, the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States, and the facilitators, chief among which is the United Nations through the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic.

With the support of all our partners in the subregion and around the world, we are making progress, modest but steady, on the extending the State's authority throughout the country and reforms in the security and defence sectors, which will facilitate the gradual redeployment of the defence and security forces and the continuation of the national disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration programme. We also welcome the recent launch of development programmes to demonstrate that the first peace dividends are a reality.

Without denying our satisfaction at the singular momentum given to the peace process by the signing of that Agreement, much remains to be done. The situation in my country remains fragile, despite some real progress being made. Armed groups continue to acquire their war supplies and ammunition through illegal channels, committing mass and repeated violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. But, as members of the Assembly know, the embargo was imposed only on the legal and legitimate forces of the Central African Republic, thereby depriving the State of the resources to fulfil its mission to protect its citizens and territory. In line with the Central African Government, the States members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions

in Central Africa supported the call for the lifting of that embargo at its forty-eighth ministerial meeting, in May, in Kinshasa.

Today, I welcome the unanimous vote of the Security Council on the adoption of resolution 2488 (2019), which contributed to the easing of the arms embargo on our defence and security forces. However, I solemnly repeat the Government's request and the Central African people's legitimate aspiration for the total lifting of that embargo to enable the State to extend its authority throughout the national territory, with a view to protecting the civilian population. Indeed, the midterm report of 15 June 2019 submitted by my Government shows that the conditions set by the Sanctions Committee have been met, in addition to important strides made in the process of reforming the defence and security sectors.

To overcome the crisis that has shaken my country, and in line with the theme of our session, I call for multilateral, dynamic, concerted, coherent and coordinated action. I hope that the international community will remain mobilized alongside the people and the Government of the Central African Republic and will continue to support them in my country's recovery.

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

Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, President of the Central African Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Iván Duque Márquez, President of the Republic of Colombia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Iván Duque Márquez, President of the Republic of Colombia.

Mr. Iván Duque Márquez, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Iván Duque Márquez, President of the Republic of Colombia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Duque Márquez (spoke in Spanish): One year ago, we came to the General Assembly for the

first time to lay out the road map that we had chosen to build a Colombia based on legality, entrepreneurship and equity (see A/73/PV.8). My country, which will celebrate its 200 years of independence this year, is today on a path towards a future imbued with fairness, in which the only thing that separates men and women from realizing their dreams is the honesty and sacrifice that they invest in their work.

We are living at a time that demands that none of us lose sight of our most urgent challenges — ending extreme poverty, defending democracy, protecting the environment, fostering entrepreneurship, promoting innovation and upholding the rule of law. Those are the ethical, social and political beacons guiding our commitment to Colombia and contribution to an international order based on multilateralism, solidarity and independence. We sincerely believe in legality, entrepreneurship and equity.

The greatest challenge facing all of us is climate change and, naturally, what it entails for our oceans, high-altitude ecosystems, known as *páramos*, snow-capped mountains, glaciers and coasts. As I have said repeatedly throughout this week, Colombia produces only 0.4 per cent of all global greenhouse-gas emissions. We possess the sixth cleanest energy grid in the world. Our country accounts for 50 per cent of the planet's *páramos*, and 40 per cent of our territory is considered rainforest, much of which is found in our region of Amazonía.

Colombia is also one of the most vulnerable countries to the effects of climate change. All of us must therefore think globally but act locally. A few days ago, we saw the young people of the world demand that we take our own action. The time has therefore come to shift from making speeches to taking action, and I can say that Colombia is indeed taking action.

We have declared our biodiversity as a strategic asset, including its protection within our national security policy. It is clear to us, in our case, that deforestation in Amazonía, and in all our forested areas, is directly related to illegal activities, with armed groups acting outside the law, seeking space for their illicit activities fuelled by drug trafficking. In just one year, we have committed ourselves and reduced deforestation by approximately 17 per cent and remain more committed than ever. Furthermore, our goal is to plant 180 million trees by 2022 so that together we can protect our shared home.

I can proudly inform the Assembly that, earlier this month, together with Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Guyana and Suriname, all of which are Amazon countries, we signed the Leticia Pact, which is an international commitment to protecting the Amazon and which provides us with the means to measure risks and progress related to the actions we take. The Pact strengthens our ability to manage, protect and prevent damages to this important heritage, which is vital to our existence. We will protect the Amazon without compromising our sovereignty, as that is how we must manage shared problems.

In protecting nature, combating drug trafficking, criminality and transnational crimes, defending democracy and liberty, strengthening free trade and managing migration, we must unite in order to develop and strengthen multilateral responses involving governance that allow us to come together, recognize problems and develop road maps to move forward in resolving them. We must work to build a society more aware of the fact that our time on this the planet is fleeting but that the damage we cause can be irreversible.

Our ability to conceive of new development alternatives must be complemented by our creativity to reduce their negative impact. One year ago, when our Government first came to power, barely 0.1 per cent of our energy grid was based on non-conventional renewable-energy sources, such as solar and wind power. We proposed making the leap from less than 60 megawatts that we began with at the beginning of our Government's mandate to more than 1,500 megawatts by the year 2020. That is a genuine energy revolution, and, at the same time, a major environmental commitment.

We know that the challenge is great. Further action is required of everyone — the international community, entrepreneurs and civil society leaders — but we remain convinced that together we can successfully arrive at the same end. We believe in the combination of the rule of law, the promotion of entrepreneurship and the search for equity. That is how we will succeed in closing social and economic gaps.

Today, I am able to inform the Assembly that we have made steady progress towards the transformation of our model of production. Now, as never before, Colombia is advancing on an economic path paved with inspiration, creativity, technology and value-added services. We therefore proudly support the establishment of micro, small, medium-sized and large businesses, the “orange

economy”, new technological innovations and every endeavour responsible for delivering the products resulting from the ingenuity, effort and optimism of the people of Colombia to every corner of the Earth.

In that regard, in keeping with the Sustainable Development Goals and our development plan for the coming years — “Pact for Colombia, Pact for Equity” — and a legislative package for economic revitalization, we succeeded in reducing the tax burden on companies and create incentives so that our country can compete without hindrance in international markets. As a result of these initiatives, in times of turbulence for the regional and perhaps the global economy, our growth has surpassed the average growth of the countries of the region, which has merited the major recognition of the world's investors.

We are, without a doubt, the resilient Colombia that is enterprising and growing with equity. In facing obstacles today, Colombia therefore persists in building a culture of legality in which we recognize our differences and choose coexistence, and the rule of law is forged as the indissoluble marriage of security and justice.

One year ago, I stated in this Hall that my Government would work to successfully advance the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration process. Today, I come again to this Hall to assert that peace with legality is being built with firm steps, with more than 29 productive collective projects, linking more than 1,400 people, who have taken a gamble for a new life, and, in total, more than 13,000 Colombians remain in the reintegration process.

With the calm that has come from our tireless efforts, I can say that, today, before this Assembly, a single nation speaks, convinced that violence has been eradicated on the basis of legality. I repeat how valuable the support and work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia has been. The support and validation of the international community has been invaluable in this process of stabilization, and we truly hope that it will continue to witness the path that we are building, the path of peace with legality.

Just as we have discharged our duty towards those who chose the path of legality, we also warn those who persist in the path of crime of the consequences of that choice. A few weeks ago, a group of criminals, under ideological guise, tried to frighten Colombia. The reality is that for them there never was reintegration

or a laying down of arms because they simply never stopped committing crimes. They lied to Colombia and, moreover, allied themselves with the dictatorship oppressing the people of Venezuela. Their threatening intentions ran afoul of a Government that does not give in to threats and, above all, of a people which will not be intimidated and does not suffer the mafia camouflaged as ideology. On that score, there is no doubt that I, as President of all Colombians, will do everything in my power to guarantee for Colombia peace based on legality. On this conviction, we shall not yield even an inch.

Violence finds support in the illegal economies based mainly on drug trafficking. Our Government has appropriated more than 200,000 hectares of coca plantations and, with great pains, we have managed, for the first time in more than seven years, to stop their exponential growth. To date, my Government has eradicated coca from and replaced more than 90,000 hectares, and we will not stop there. Drug trafficking is a predator for the environment and human society; it is a nest for corruption and fuels terrorism. The more coca there is, the less peace. That is why the fight against drug trafficking and illicit economies is a battle that requires the engagement of all nations against the lure of drug production, distribution and consumption. No country is exempt from this threat. Drug trafficking is a global problem, and we must tackle it as such.

I can say with conviction that some of the worst effects of drug trafficking are that it feeds corruption, weakens institutions and infects the social fabric. The fight against corruption unites us of all in this Hall today and unites us all Colombians, and we are one in the fight against this scourge. There is no political, social or cultural system that does not face the abyss when its institutions are eroded by corruption. All institutions are doomed to fail if they let corruption knock on their doors. In Colombia today, such effective transparency measures as the Statutory Law on Accountability, which binds all public servants, are already a reality. We are not alone in that struggle either. Together with friendly nations, we are promoting a project to create an international anti-corruption court because, like drug trafficking, the scourge of transnational corruption transcends and ignores borders and the international community needs a strong tool to confront it.

Colombia believes in multilateralism not only as a means of integrating economies, ideas and politics, but also, above all, as the stage for solutions — solutions

that are built on such inalienable principles as solidarity, fraternity, love for freedom, utmost respect for the decisions of peoples and the unrestricted defence of democracy, on the rejection of all forms of tyranny and on the economic pillars of free enterprise, workers' rights and free trade.

At least 4.2 million people have left Venezuela since 2015 on account of the brutal dictatorship of Nicolás Maduro. They are fleeing from a nation that was once rich and today is starved, that was once a democracy and today is an authoritarian regime without means or freedoms, where there are no institutions because they have shut down or been completely co-opted by the dictator. Venezuela is a country that once lived in peace and today suffers oppression, that was once an economic power and today has seen the destruction of all private initiative.

Colombia has received approximately 1.4 million Venezuelans migrants who have fled hunger and despair and has done so with open arms, guided by the ethical principles of solidarity and fraternity. It is precisely because we understand the difference between the brotherly people of Venezuela and the regime that oppresses them that we reach out to our brothers who continue to cross the border. We are aware that solidarity and fraternity must translate into tangible actions and policies. We have set up various instruments to help Venezuelans. We have welcomed the 25,000 children born on Colombian soil to Venezuelan parents since 2017 who were at risk of statelessness. All child in the world have the right to a nationality and, in this case, Colombia has given them one with affection and commitment.

The migrant crisis that we warned of a year ago, in this very Hall, is a reality and is made increasingly worse the longer the dictator remains in power. The Venezuelan tragedy has a name and surname, and we all know what they are. Colombia's position vis-à-vis the dictatorship is not about geopolitical disputes, but about the need of the Venezuelan people to see their democracy completely restored.

Colombia is not alone in clamouring for freedom in Venezuela. The Lima Group and more than 50 nations around the world recognize the legitimate presidency of Juan Guaidó and actively participate in denouncing all the crimes committed under the dictator's leadership. As President of Colombia, I respectfully call for us, together, within the framework of international law

and the instruments of multilateralism, to return Venezuela's democracy and freedom to it.

It is time to call a spade a spade. The Venezuelan dictatorship is one more link in the chain of transnational terrorism. Its corrupt structures serve the drug cartels. Its minions work for the mafia and feed the violence in Colombia. They shelter murderers, child rapists and the completely lawless. Of course, those who claim to be unaware of all these facts end up becoming accomplices of the dictatorship.

My Government has strong and convincing evidence corroborating the dictatorship's support for criminal groups and narcoterrorists operating in Venezuela to attack Colombia. As President of Colombia, I will proffer to the President of the Assembly and the Secretary-General evidence that supports these allegations. This 128-page file contains the body of evidence demonstrating the complicity of Nicolás Maduro's regime with the terrorist cartels that attack the Colombian people. Before the international community, we present the list of a gang of less than 20 criminals who betrayed the generosity of the Colombians, and today reside in Venezuela, taking full advantage of the logistical capabilities provided by the dictatorship.

In this report, we also reveal the location of more than 1,400 men in arms belonging to the most dangerous blocks of the National Liberation Army (ELN) and 207 locations controlled by this criminal organization in Venezuelan territory. We also include the testimonies of Venezuelan citizens who complain about the presence of the ELN in their territory, the brazen presence of criminals in training camps, as well as the existence of 20 landing strips at the service of drug trafficking. This unequivocal evidence shows the sponsorship and support of Nicolás Maduro's dictatorship for the aforementioned criminal structures.

Venezuela has become fertile ground for criminal structures allied with the ELN, which knows no borders. Those ringleaders who today enjoy Maduro's protection are the same ringleaders who for years claimed responsibility for attacks on oil pipelines, causing irreparable environmental damage and turning them into the greatest ecocides that humankind has ever known. This is an unacceptable conduct, which as Head of State I must denounce before the international community. Let us not kid ourselves: Colombia is not and will never be an aggressor country, nor will it allow

itself to be provoked by warmongering insinuations. But it will always — always — raise its voice to denounce tyranny.

Venezuela needs an end to usurpation, the installation of a transitional Government, a Government that allows for economic and social recovery. And it urgently needs to hold truly free elections and to fully recover the rule of law. Nicolás Maduro's crimes against his people can be compared only to those of Slobodan Milošević in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Fialho Rocha (Cabo Verde), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We cannot be idle witnesses of so much pain in our Latin America. That is why, last Monday, 23 September, the Thirtieth Meeting of Consultation of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Organization of American States, acting as the consultative body under the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, adopted a historic resolution, which states that the participation of authorities and entities linked to Nicolás Maduro's regime in illegal activities, in particular drug trafficking, asset laundering, terrorism and its financing, corruption and the violation of human rights, is a regional threat. For 16 Latin American countries, it is evident that the dictatorship is violating the obligations established in Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). We therefore strongly affirm that all these criminal activities, associated with the humanitarian crisis generated by the deterioration of the political, economic and social situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, represent a threat to the maintenance of peace and security on the continent.

I would like to reiterate that this challenge requires constant collective action that develops the principle of global solidarity under the ever-present primacy of multilateralism. We are a strong voice in the region asking the Maduro regime to cease its support for narcoterrorist groups. We ask the international community to adopt all appropriate sanctions to safeguard the rights and freedoms of present and future generations of Colombians and, of course, of our Venezuelan brothers and sisters.

For all of these reasons, here, on this world stage, I courageously express to the international community that Colombia will continue to be committed to the defence of democracy in Venezuela, but, my fellow representatives, without the support of this community, without the true support of the States Members of the

United Nations, those who left their homes with the desire to return will not easily find their way back. We will continue to work, with all love and passion, for the construction of a Colombia based on the rule of law, entrepreneurship, the promotion of individual initiative and the closing of all social gaps. All — absolutely all — of our efforts are oriented towards fairness.

Today Colombia is telling the world that now is the time for us to find the determination needed to transform our societies. It is the time for us to firmly confront tyranny. It is the time for us to show our greatness, so that all of us, citizens of the world, can live our lives with dignity.

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

Mr. Iván Duque Márquez, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Danny Faure, President of the Republic of Seychelles

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

Mr. Danny Faure, President of the Republic of Seychelles, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Danny Faure, President of the Republic of Seychelles, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Faure: I take this opportunity to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Muhammad-Bande, a distinguished son of our sisterly country, Nigeria, on his election to preside over the General Assembly at this session.

This session of the General Assembly sits on the cusp of the seventy-fifth year of the foundation of our Organization, which was forged from the ashes of a devastating world war. Our forebears sought to build a more just and equitable world order, based on the rule of law and guaranteeing fundamental freedoms. The United Nations was charged with upholding the idea

that, as a collective, our differences could be resolved through dialogue and international diplomacy.

Over the past decades, we have maintained the longest period of prosperity in our collective memory. However, as we approach our seventy-fifth year, we also need to be conscious that many of our people have been left behind. Because of our shortcomings and inaction, humankind is today threatened by conflict, economic hardship and climate change. We cannot afford to have disillusioned people who have lost sight of the visions of hope and security that were promised when our Organization was founded.

Equality is for everyone, regardless of gender or race. In Seychelles, my Government believes in placing people at the centre of development. We continue to invest in them so that they can live in dignity, realize their full potential and contribute to our vibrant democracy. Inclusivity is the key that will drive our nations further towards the goal of a secure and sustainable future. I believe in the human spirit and its unyielding capacity for good. I believe in the founding principles of the United Nations — that multilateralism is key in bringing nations and people together and ensuring mutual prosperity and lasting peace.

More than most, island nations must have faith in the multilateral international order. We are by nature isolated and, by design, our livelihoods are tied to the rest of the world. We rely heavily on that premise, as well as on the actions or inactions of others for our very survival. Climate change has become an existential threat, not only to the lives of people in island States but to the world as a whole. It is clear that we are no longer in a position to indiscriminately plunder the environment under the guise of development for the sake of short-term profits. I am aware that development has lifted our people out of poverty, but through overexploitation we are dooming future generations to a planet beyond their ability to repair.

Fortunately, young people around the world have taken a stand to secure their future. In Seychelles, we are seeing youth-led non-governmental organizations partnering with the Government to prioritize the fight against climate change, pollution and other threats to the environment. Youth-led grass-roots movements led to a ban on many single-use plastics and continue to advocate for ocean protection.

To us islanders, the ocean represents not only our livelihood but also a way of life. The Seychellois people

are bound to the sea and are cognizant of the untapped opportunities that it represents. Our pioneering development of the blue economy has the potential to unlock multiplier effects that will increase economic opportunities while at the same time protecting the ocean for generations to come. In our view, the ocean is the last frontier. If used responsibly, it will lead to shared prosperity, food security and innovation.

In part, we are harnessing the potential of the oceans through the blue economy to meet our sustainable development goals and climate obligations, as dictated by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Samoa Pathway and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Seychelles is also championing the development of the blue economy in Africa and we are working with willing partners towards the international deployment of the blue economy. Seychelles will remain at the forefront of the discourse on climate change. We will fight — with a passionate sense of urgency — against inequalities that directly impact us. It is unacceptable that 50 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions are produced by 10 per cent of the planet's wealthiest inhabitants living in the richest nations.

We will continue to voice our concerns as our people demand it. The Seychellois people do not have the luxury of “what if”, they require action now. We islanders can no longer afford to see ourselves as dots lost in a sea of blue — we are sentinels, guardians of two thirds of our common blue planet. The deep ocean is the beating heart of the planet, yet we have better maps of Mars than we do of the ocean floor. That needs to change, as we gather the information available to identify priority areas for protection. That information should be used to take concrete action to preserve our oceans, extending beyond national jurisdictions. It is a global issue and it therefore needs a global approach.

We must translate the political will of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement into decisive action. Bringing law and good governance to the ocean is the only way we can ensure our collective survival. Seychelles is 100 per cent committed to the ongoing work of the United Nations to develop a legally binding framework to conserve our oceans in areas outside national borders. If we want to survive, that is the only way forward.

We anticipate a transparent and inclusive instrument that offers due recognition of our special circumstances as a small island developing State and

an adjacent coastal State, which implies the inclusion of appropriate mechanisms for benefit-sharing, capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology.

Seychelles has challenged the established model of a donor-recipient relationship through innovative financing that promotes ocean conservation and climate action. Through the use of that type of financing, we have pioneered the world's first debt-for-adaptation swap, established the world's first sovereign blue bonds and protected ocean space in our exclusive economic zone, which is approximately the size of Germany. My country, Seychelles, is on track to conserve 30 per cent of its 1.4 million-square-kilometre maritime territory by 2020, thereby achieving the 30-by-30 target a decade early.

Suffice to say that today, big ideas come from small islands. For too long, we have been relegated to the sidelines of international discourse. We seek to change that dynamic by highlighting what is most important. Earlier this year, Seychelles partnered with the Nekton mission and the Oxford University to conduct research in a bid to conserve our maritime spaces and the Indian Ocean. In April of this year, I was proud to deliver a speech, broadcast live from 407 feet below the ocean's surface, calling for greater worldwide effort to protect the beating blue heart of our planet — our oceans. But the novelty of the event should not overshadow the message. Safeguarding the oceans and marine life from climate change, overfishing, plastic pollution and other threats is an urgent global responsibility.

Today, here at the United Nations, I say that we are the guardians of two-thirds of this blue planet's surface. We must act accordingly. The issue is bigger than all of us and we cannot wait for the next generation to solve it. We are running out of excuses to not take action and we are running out of time.

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

Mr. Danny Faure, President of the Republic of Seychelles, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

**Address by His Excellency
Mr. Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani,
President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania**

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President El Ghazouani (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I am pleased to congratulate Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, Permanent Representative of the sisterly State of Nigeria, on assuming the presidency of the United Nations General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session and I wish him every success in his new tasks. I want also to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés for the high efficiency and professionalism with which she steered the previous session of the General Assembly. I also pay tribute to the great efforts and continued endeavours of Secretary-General António Guterres regarding the reform and management of our Organization for the sake of international peace and security.

Each session of the General Assembly is an opportunity for States to go beyond their individual situations and debate the common destiny of humankind with a view to establishing guidelines and adopting programmes, plans and strategies that ensure a prosperous and sustainable future for our planet and people. In that respect, at its seventieth session in 2015, the General Assembly launched the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes a group of interlinking goals aimed at addressing major global challenges concerning the environment, climate, health care and education, as well as security, stability, development and others, for a better, more sustainable and more comprehensive future for humankind.

In the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, we are committed to these goals and have incorporated sustainable development into our development strategy.

We have made considerable achievements in this domain by focusing on renewable energy — both solar and wind energy. We have thereby achieved 40 per cent clean energy out of the total energy consumed. We are working continuously to increase that percentage because we are aware of the importance of clean energy, its positive impact on the environment and its great contribution to reducing pollution.

Moreover, along with other States of the Sahel, we have launched the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative to counter the negative impact of desertification and climate change on our environment and agricultural resources. The aim is to bridge the gaps in our production systems and to compensate for the economic and social harm caused by these negative impacts.

We have also made considerable progress in the fight against desertification while reclaiming for future use large surface areas that have been affected by desertification, complementing our efforts within the Permanent Interstate Committee to Fight against Drought in the Sahel. We have also made gradual progress with regard to rationally use our maritime resources and have been able to restore our magnificent biological diversity.

We are currently working with 10 States of the Sahel within the Desert to Power programme launched by the African Development Bank with the aim of making the Sahel one of the most productive regions in the world in terms of solar energy. The initiative will provide over 29 million people with access to clean energy in the short and medium terms. Like other Sahel countries that benefit from it, we attach great importance to the initiative, which will certainly have a positive impact on the environment and development in our region.

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania is determined in its tireless pursuit to establish the principle of mandatory education and accomplish gender equality in this domain, as well as to build schools for future generations to be educated while upholding the principles of liberty, equality, tolerance and openness based on the characteristics of our culture and civilization. We are also working continuously to improve the quality of education in both of its components, scientific and vocational, in line with the need of our national economy to keep pace with globalization. We have also made significant achievements in this domain, as reflected in the major indicators of our educational

system, including access, total coverage and proactive capacity ratios.

With a view to ensuring that all of our citizens, particularly those in vulnerable circumstances, have access to basic services, we have managed in Mauritania to considerably improve our total health coverage by strengthening health infrastructure — hospitals and equipped medical centres — and by investing in human resources, including high-level medical personnel.

In the context of the fight against poverty, and within the framework of our strategy for accelerated growth and shared prosperity, we have focused on addressing social inequalities by targeting vulnerable sectors, supporting disadvantaged groups and promoting social solidarity. We are currently working to launch a series of ambitious projects within a variety of programmes that include supporting purchasing power and access to such basic services as electricity, drinking water, health care and education.

We have also made great efforts to accelerate the pace of economic growth and to improve the business climate, while supporting partnerships between the public and private sectors, as well as developing processing industries, so as to liberate our economy from being exclusively dependent on the export of raw materials. We have also focused on training and rehabilitating our young people through an approach aimed at enabling them to access the labour market and contribute to the development of the national economy. We have also enabled woman to play their role by becoming strongly involved in political life and public affairs.

Our work to achieve sustainable development would be essentially in vain if we were not also to consolidate the rule of law, reinforce good governance, safeguard human rights, promote democracy and champion both individual and collective freedoms. To that end, our country has chosen transparency as a comprehensive approach to managing public affairs. We have resolutely fought against all forms of corruption and bribery and have developed legal and regulatory mechanisms to eradicate those development scourges. At the same time, we have also worked to strengthen the rule of law and consolidate public freedoms, particularly the freedom of the press, to develop democracy and to guarantee flexibility and transparency in the work of public institutions that oversee political life.

That general approach culminated recently in the holding of transparent presidential elections, in which the outgoing President did not participate, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, which does not authorize more than two consecutive terms for the same President. The handover of power between the two democratically elected Presidents took place smoothly and calmly.

Aware of the fact that security and development are linked, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania has established an effective strategy to combat terrorism and all forms of extremism. The strategy follows a comprehensive approach that takes into account the security, intellectual, economic and social dimensions. Our country, hand-in-hand with the fraternal Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and through its participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations, has contributed to restoring peace and security in the Sahel region and the African continent in general. We are consistently committed to the policy of good-neighbourliness and to distancing ourselves from conflict. In that context, Mauritania has provided a haven of safety and security for more than 50,000 refugees from the sisterly country Republic of Mali. We welcome them while we await the restoration of peace in their villages and towns in the north of Mali, despite the considerable pressure that has been placed on our population and economy, especially in the eastern part of the country.

Our country has steadfastly defended just causes in all international forums. We reiterate our unflagging commitment to the right of the Palestinian people to dignity and sovereignty within a viable, independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant international resolutions. We also denounce the continued Israeli violations of human rights in Palestine and the rest of the occupied Arab territories.

In Libya, we support international efforts aimed at establishing peace in that fraternal country and ensuring its territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Turning to the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, we reiterate the need to work seriously to find a political solution that would preserve the unity of that fraternal Arab country and safeguard its independence, the dignity of its people and its right to live in peace and security. We welcome the formation of the consensual

Constitutional Committee with a view to drafting a constitution sponsored by the United Nations.

Concerning Yemen, we affirm our support for legitimacy in that country and we call for the adoption of a peaceful solution that is in line with Arab initiatives and relevant international resolutions. We also condemn the terrorist attacks targeting the national security of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. We welcome the political agreement concluded by the sisterly Republic of the Sudan and we call for its name to be removed from the list of State sponsors of terrorism. We also strongly support the Government of Somalia in its efforts to restore security and stability.

We reiterate our full commitment to achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. May God help the people of the world to achieve sustainable and comprehensive development that preserves the future of our planet and provides every human being, wherever she or he may be on the face of the Earth, with a decent life while ensuring his rights, freedom and dignity.

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

Mr. Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Kersti Kaljulaid, President of the Republic of Estonia

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

Mrs. Kersti Kaljulaid, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Kersti Kaljulaid, President of the Republic of Estonia, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Kaljulaid: Forty years ago, forty years after Europe had been divided between those with power — between those who never hesitated to use their power to the benefit of their own nations and to the detriment of others — 45 people from the Baltic

States sent out an appeal to the United Nations, the European Union and the countries involved. Their appeal, later known as the Baltic Appeal, carried the hope that multilateral cooperation based on the rule of law could deliver for the small occupied States located between the two global blocs — the liberal democratic world and the Soviet Union. Just 12 years later, the three Baltic States rejoined the world of free and independent States. This was a victory for democracy and multilateral cooperation.

This year, Estonia celebrates the fortieth anniversary of the Baltic Appeal by undertaking a responsibility that we could not even dream about during the occupation — becoming an elected member of the Security Council of the United Nations. We took this responsibility because we care. We care about the weaker and the weakest among States and within societies. We care about those whose voice needs amplification by the multilateral world in order to be heard. We care about nations facing genocide and we care about their women and children. We care about nations facing long-term conflicts and suffering from terror and we care about their generations of boys for whom the only known profession is that of a soldier. We care about nations facing extinction through a slow weapon of mass destruction — the climate catastrophe. We care about nations facing famine and famine-induced disturbances due to climate change. We care about nations depending on this multilateral cooperation, based on the rule of law, which is the United Nations. We care because we know that true harmony for humankind — which has not yet been achieved — depends on our capacity to show compassion for the fate of others.

Multilateralism is nothing but showing compassion for the fate of others. Compassion was shown to us when we regained our independence and rebuilt our State. We are now ready to return this compassion shown to us. We are ready to take an elected seat for the period of 2020-2021 behind the most difficult table of international cooperation — the Security Council. We are ready to serve our electorate and all others, too, as true service for humankind in a multilateral system always demands. We will talk with countries, not just about them.

Respect for the international rule of law and the efforts made by those who preceded us in implementing it will guide our actions, our decisions and our debates. We have nothing but respect for varied yet sincere positions and opinions on how to resolve the pressing

issues we are facing to support our decision-making. Those steered by compassion for humankind and for the planet we inhabit can always rely on Estonia. The moral authority of the United Nations as the global carer for humankind is dear to our hearts.

We have a lot of long-standing and painful issues to tackle, such as the fate of women and children in conflict zones, but we also have new, emerging challenges related to new technologies. Estonia is to this day the world's only digitally transformed nation, running its Government totally online, but many are following us into the cybersphere. New threats to our sovereignty are emerging, related to cybercrime, as well as cyberspace as the new military domain. While Estonia contributes globally to the leapfrogging efforts based on e-governance, we also recognize our responsibility to protect cyberspace as well. Hence, we are striving towards a better application of international law in the digital space, as well as in our work in the Security Council. Estonia has already declared its own intention to apply national and international law where cyberspace is concerned. We invite all nations to do the same in order to clarify how international law applies in the digital sphere.

We support and also actively participate in the reform efforts of the United Nations, led by Secretary-General António Guterres. We want the United Nations to be ready to lead in the twenty-first century, fully benefiting from the technological advances of humankind that have made it much easier for those who are not big and powerful — the majority of United Nations Member States — to follow and contribute to the Organization's various bodies and numerous discussions.

We support the thematic consolidation of United Nations actions and regional focus on its aspirations, such as the High-Level Steering Group for Every Woman Every Child, or the better common management of United Nations actions in various countries. We also support those, like the African Union, that say they want to be much more independently responsible yet supported by the United Nations in taking steps towards a collective regional approach to long-standing problems.

Through the United Nations Development Fund, UNICEF and other United Nations bodies, we participate in resolving global miseries. We also strive to use our own development resources, leveraged by those of the European Union and the United Nations,

to suggest State-building based on digital solutions, seeing the potential of the Internet and mobile access even among the poorest. It allows States to provide for their people, starting with population registries, effortless access to online birth registration and online learning tools for those whose access to classical schooling is limited by geography, ongoing conflict, social stigma or disability. We see the Internet as a wonderful tool for educating girls and offering jobs for women globally, thereby reducing global population growth by emancipating women.

We support the view that saving our planet is also the civic responsibility of each and every one of us. Nowadays, with the help of technology, we can shoulder this responsibility and feel the serious global effect of the action of each and every person. World Cleanup Day took place just last Saturday, when for the second year in a row the civil movement born in Estonia spread to 179 countries and territories, including Antarctica, and involved over 20 million people and counting.

Encouraged by this, the Estonian start-up sector underwrote a memorandum with global ambitions, promising to be climate neutral in all their actions by 2030. They bring some serious market power and start-up thinking to the table, including their ability to quickly and globally mobilize masses of people. Sometimes we associate their ability to change our world only with the negative — closed bubbles, an antagonistic debate style, disruption of work patterns and risks to our social service provision by allowing a global jobs market incompatible with our industrial era tax models. But this ability can also be used to mobilize the masses for good, making a real difference. Estonia's pledge to become climate neutral is open to all start-ups and other green-minded companies ready to support grass-roots movements to save our planet. I urge everyone to join. Today, one week after initiating the process, the number of signatories has already more than doubled and spread beyond Estonia, now covering more than 70 companies across Europe.

We need these civic movements, among other things, to encourage policymakers to see that idealism and a readiness to act for the benefit of humankind today and the children yet to be born still exists. That allows us politicians to set aside resources for stopping climate change, which will inevitably reach and probably exceed 1 per cent of the global gross domestic product.

The main reason we are not globally efficient in putting existing technologies for green energy production into practice is due to the fragmentation of our actions. It is an obstacle to global grid development and it is an obstacle to harnessing solar energy for the benefit of us all, even though we know that a surface smaller than the territory of Spain is all we need to cater for the global energy needs of us all. It is an obstacle to making each and every microgrid globally rely on renewables and to developing access to electricity among those who currently have none.

Only the United Nations can help us overcome this fragmentation. We welcome the first global Climate Action Summit as a sign that the United Nations is ready for this challenge.

Climate change remains the greatest existential challenge that the world is facing. In this light, it is disturbing to note that we still keep subsidizing, to the tune of trillions of dollars, its source — the fossil fuel industry.

The destructive force of climate change is not evenly distributed around the world. Some places are more vulnerable than others. However, no place on Earth will be untouched, and none of us can escape it. Many people across the globe are already experiencing threats regard to their livelihoods and, indeed, lives.

The Himalayan glaciers have been melting at double the rate since the turn of this century, threatening water supplies throughout Central, South and East Asia. Arctic permafrost is melting decades earlier than even worst-case scenarios had predicted, threatening to unlock vast amounts of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas.

Many people in small island developing States live in constant fear of inundation by rising seas. The situation will only get worse unless we address it now, with ambition and urgency. Yet our efforts and progress are far from being sufficient to avert the obvious adverse effects of this global crisis, a crisis that no country can solve alone. Security issues related to climate change are addressed further by the Group of Friends on Climate and Security, in which Estonia participates.

Science tells us that climate change is happening and imminent, and it also indicates the best practices to tackle it. In our quest for the best solutions, we must rely on science. There is a common perception that replacing fossil fuels with biomass is carbon-neutral, whereas science has told us that this is not entirely correct.

Renewable energy is not necessarily carbon-neutral. In fact, burning wood can actually increase carbon dioxide emissions and would make it even harder for us to reach climate-neutrality goals by mid-century. Instead, it is more efficient to use wood for making products, which is not only carbon-neutral but carbon-positive, as such products store carbon for their entire lifetime. We in Estonia appreciate this, and every fourth wooden house exported globally is made by Estonians.

Climate change and environmental degradation is an area where we need to share collective responsibility. In this battle we are all on the same side; that is the only way we can win. We have one good example from the past where our collective efforts once paid off. It was back in 1987, when we agreed to protect the ozone layer by phasing out numerous substances that were responsible for its depletion. As a result, the ozone hole in Antarctica has been slowly healing.

Next year we will be celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations. I would encourage us all to take the 12 months leading up to the birthday party as an opportunity to think about what we can do, both individually and jointly, to safeguard and strengthen the United Nations and multilateralism.

The reality is simple; this global, interlinked and globally warming world cannot survive unless our goodwill and positive actions go beyond the artificial limitations created by the various fragmentations of global society, which from the viewpoint of humankind as a whole are artificial — fragmentations that have dogged us and keep dogging us.

It is the lack of true multilateralism and of true and idealistic thinking for the benefit of humankind as a whole that continues to undermine the positive effects of our global efforts. We must overcome this obstacle, and the United Nations is our tool to do so. This tool has to be sharpened, it has to be supported by new technologies, and it has to be connected to civil societies through digital means, allowing individual efforts to join with global movements; but it can never be replaced.

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

Mrs. Kersti Kaljulaid, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea

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

Mr. Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Condé (spoke in French): It is a pleasure for me at the outset to extend to President Tijjani Muhammad-Bande my most sincere congratulations on his outstanding election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. I take this opportunity to assure him of my full support for him in the discharge of his mandate.

I wish also to pay well-deserved tribute to María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés for the excellent work she did during her term, which will go down in history as a successful presidency. Her unflagging energy and effectiveness do honour to all women.

We live in a world that is replete with of challenges of all kinds — inequality, armed conflict, terrorism and violent extremism, global warming, natural disasters, intolerance and the phenomenon of migration. A world that is more just and characterized by greater solidarity has always been one of my aspirations, first as a young revolutionary student and later as a political activist, at a time where the dream of a better world was our *raison d'être*. I often look back with nostalgia at that time, when we put human beings, their future and their status at the heart of our concerns. A sense of ethics and moral considerations were fundamental to our system of values.

But everything is different today; why and how did we lose sight of our values and reach a point where we no longer respect anything or anyone? Our situation today is a reflection of that transformation. Look at how we treat our fellow human beings, be they migrants or religious or ethnic minorities; what has happened to us? We forget that we are all here only temporarily and that our mission and duty is to protect and respect our neighbour and to preserve this Earth, which we

inherited from our ancestors and which we must in turn pass on to future generations.

We must get back to our values. A perfect world is perhaps a pipe dream. But if each and every one of us takes a step with the goal of improving our welfare and that of our brothers and sisters, a better world is possible. For my part, I have tried to make my modest contribution throughout my life, particularly since my election to lead my country. Throughout my life it has been my ambition to contribute fully to a more just Guinea, one with greater solidarity, where all citizens, irrespective of their background or social status, can flourish in a healthy environment. The first years were hard; the coffers of the State were empty, and our country found no sympathetic ear at, or credibility with, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank or other international organizations. We had to set out on the long and difficult path of negotiating and convincing. We managed to cancel the debt and make the necessary reforms. For example, we had to force more than 4,000 army officers into retirement. We had to make difficult choices and give the country a boost in the context of the emergence of Ebola. We went through a very difficult period that we overcame thanks to the sense of responsibility and collaboration of all Guineans, to whom I pay tribute. Believe me, they are a great people who have always had the courage to get themselves back on their feet.

Putting Guinea back on the investors' map has not been easy either, but today we are at last seeing strong growth in private investment in Guinea across all sectors. With regard to the fight against poverty, the Guinean Government has established national agencies for financing local authorities and social inclusion, which are facilitating a better distribution of wealth, particularly through the allocation of 15 per cent of mining revenues to local authorities and direct cash transfers to vulnerable populations in remote areas of the country.

Since I have dedicated my mandate to young people and women, their participation in the decision-making process is central to our Government's actions. The establishment of a microcredit programme has enabled the transfer to women of more than 100 billion Guinean francs in the form of revolving credit. We have built modern empowerment centres for women and thousands of women are benefiting from training across every sector. In the field of employment, 6,857 women were recruited into the civil service between

2010 and 2018. In the agricultural sector, 3,314 women farmers have been trained in improved agricultural production techniques. Those measures naturally also benefit people with disabilities, who are encouraged to participate in active working life. In terms of the environment and the fight against global warming, Guinea has committed to reducing greenhouse-gas emissions by 13 per cent, and a vast reforestation programme covering 2 million hectares throughout Guinea's territory is planned by 2030.

Gender equality is one of my Government's priorities. In addition to ensuring parity in school and university enrolment, as well as the elimination of early marriage and other discriminatory practices, I want to emphasize projects that will help women to become self-sufficient economically, keep girls in school and ensure that they have access to technical and scientific fields. To combat unemployment, we have also set up public-private partnership programmes for young people and women that have disbursed \$140 million so far, and we expect that amount to rise significantly.

We have managed to launch many projects in the area of infrastructure that have changed the face of Guinea, and with the participation of our public and private partners, we have established a programme for launching significant construction projects in social housing and road, rail and port infrastructure, including the establishment of special economic zones, which will enable Guinea to finally become an exporter of finished products.

Under my presidency of the African Union, the African Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI) was launched at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. That transformative initiative, launched and led by Africa, is designed to accelerate, intensify and exploit the continent's immense potential in renewable energy resources, sustainable development and respect for the climate, which are the watchwords of that initiative. Despite the great scepticism that accompanied the creation of AREI in a general context in which we have become accustomed to never fulfilling the goals we set, today I have the pleasure and honour to announce to the Assembly that on 23 September the AREI Board of Directors confirmed that our target of funding 10 gigawatts of electricity, set for 2020, has been achieved, as we are already at 9.99 gigawatts.

I am also pleased to inform the Assembly that 92 other projects are at the technical evaluation stage and in the course of being approved. That will enable us to provide clean energy to millions of households across every geographic regions of the world. We can therefore say that with that renewable energy initiative, Africa is acting in the fight against climate change for both our continent and the world, better positioning Africa for participating in the world's open trade networks. Two-thirds of Africans do not have access to electricity. I am making an appeal here to encourage and solicit the involvement of more public and private partners from around the world to invest in the renewable energy sector in Africa. That will enable our continent to use its resources more efficiently and make life more enjoyable and attractive to our young people so that they can finally see emigration as a choice and not an unavoidable constraint. When Africa wins, the world wins, because Africa is the future of the world.

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

His Excellency Mr. Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia

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

His Excellency Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Lungu: Let me join previous speakers in congratulating His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. I would like to assure him of our full cooperation in the discharge of his responsibilities, and I am confident that his wealth of experience and wisdom will prove invaluable in guiding us successfully through the current session. I also want to express Zambia's sincere gratitude to Her

Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés for her exemplary work during the seventy-third session.

The theme for this session, “Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion”, presents an opportunity to re-examine our priorities, redefine our mission and sharpen our vision as we approach the seventy-fifth anniversary of this Organization. It is a call for us to generate an atmosphere in which the United Nations family can implement its priority programmes, especially in key areas such as alleviating poverty, in order to enhance the human condition throughout the world.

The eradication of poverty is feasible — we have seen remarkable progress across every dimension of poverty, while malnutrition and youth illiteracy have both substantially decreased. Such progress is gratifying but is still inadequate. One billion people continue to live in extreme poverty. If anything, the recent gains should spur us to do even more to finish the job and ensure that no child goes to bed hungry anymore. We must ensure that nobody is forced to choose between sending her daughter to school and sending her to work. Everybody has the opportunity to fully participate in their country’s economic and civic life.

Zambia applauds the leadership that the United Nations provides in tackling climate change, as was illustrated only a few days ago by the hosting of the Climate Action Summit. Climate change frustrates efforts to raise the standards of living for the world’s poor. Scientists have spoken and we have seen with our own eyes the devastating impact that climate change has had on our environment. Early this year, three of Zambia’s neighbouring countries — Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe — were affected by cyclones. Not far away, half of Zambia experienced a severe drought that has since resulted in low crop productivity and low water levels for hydroelectricity generation. Therefore, opposite climatic extremes occur in the same neighbourhood.

As a consequence, Zambia is now scaling up its efforts to diversify energy production. Other priorities include increasing the adaptive capacity to reduce vulnerability and building resilience against extreme weather events, such as droughts and flooding. The impact of climate change requires global collaborative efforts and support for mitigation and adaptation strategies. As a developing country, Zambia needs

assistance to enhance its capacity in key areas, such as scientific research, early warning, rapid response and the transfer of appropriate technologies to help cope with the negative impact of climate change.

In addition, scaling up global efforts to address climate change should certainly include providing increased accessibility to financial support, in particular for countries with limited resources, in order to enable them to make their fair contribution to the global effort and also bear the general climate-change-induced cost burdens. The need to secure and promote the well-being of wildlife flora and fauna as an environmental good for ecological and socio-economic benefit cannot be overemphasized.

In that regard, Zambia appreciates the hosting of the Elephant Summit initiative in Kasane, Botswana, in April this year, as well as Africa’s Wildlife Economy Summit in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, in May this year, convened by the African Union and the United Nations Environment Programme. Those summits, among other things, recognized the need for partnerships with communities and the private sector as key in securing wildlife and enhancing economic benefits from wildlife. In our continued effort to support that cause, Zambia will host a follow-up summit in May 2020, in the tourism capital of Livingstone. I call upon our international collaborators to work with the countries of the region to achieve a successful outcome for our wildlife.

Over the past years, Zambia has made important developmental efforts and we are determined to foster an all-inclusive development paradigm based on Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Barely one month ago, on 7 August, Zambia had the honour to host a launching ceremony in Lusaka for the Sustainable Development Goals Subregional Centre for Southern Africa. The establishment of the Centre underscored our collective resolve as Southern African countries to win the war against poverty, hunger, disease and illiteracy, through the exchange of best practices and joint action. However, we must also keep in mind that most African countries were not able to attain the forerunner Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), mainly because of various challenges, including inadequate financial resources.

In our quest to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the MDG trend is, unfortunately, likely to continue unless Africa devises more innovative ways

of addressing its development challenges. The Centre in Lusaka will bring the initiative closer to home for our Southern African region. It will be a vehicle for facilitating engagement among Governments and other stakeholders to accelerate the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and for deepening regional integration.

My Government attaches great importance to the needs and welfare of all, with a specific focus on women, children and youth. To that end, Zambia's seventh national development plan has targeted the most vulnerable members of society to enhance their capacity to be involved in the country's economic and social life, in an effort to raise their standards of living. My Government has taken steps in that regard to ensure that there is equitable access to quality education for all Zambians, by providing universal basic education within the shortest realistic time frame.

A comprehensive programme of health reforms is also under way and that should also result in the improvement of the well-being of our people. However, the measures and programmes that the Government has undertaken are not enough to fully attain the objectives of those programmes of action, mainly due to limited financial resources. We call on all partners to join efforts. Together, let us help to improve the lives of our peoples.

The horrifying shadows of poverty are darkened even further for Africa's refugee children. Zambia is a plateau of peace and a home to many refugees. We appeal to the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations of the world to help us share that burden. Together, we can restore dignity and help look after refugees.

Zambia continues to make tremendous strides in the campaign to end child marriage. We have also continued in that regard to engage traditional leaders to reform traditions and customs that promote child marriage. Currently, we are in the process of harmonizing statutory and customary law on marriage to prohibit early marriages. We are also repealing several discriminatory and outdated statutes related to children in order to come up with a children's code to domesticate the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

As a designated African Union Champion on Ending Child Marriage, I am encouraged that the campaign is growing from strength to strength. However, much

more needs to be done. We call on all partners to join efforts and together, let us raise our voices to protect our children and young people.

Peace, security and the rule of law continue to be the basis for the meaningful development of any society. In keeping with that understanding, Zambia was, for a year, until last month, Chair of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation. In that role, Zambia contributed to the regional mechanism on conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts.

As a State party to several international instruments aimed at countering the threat of proliferation, Zambia hosted a SADC regional awareness meeting on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). The resolution is a vital element in the global architecture to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons to non-State actors, including terrorists. If properly implemented worldwide, it stands as a major contributor to preventing possible humanitarian, political, economic and environmental catastrophes should any of those weapons be used to cause large-scale casualties and suffering. It is clear that such a possibility is not just theoretical.

The spectre of international terrorism has, in recent times, assumed a dangerous momentum of its own. Terrorism does not discriminate between combatants and non-combatants. Innocent bystanders have to bear the brunt of that scourge. To protect human life, the international community should continue to seriously address that vice. The Assembly must expedite its conclusion of the long-overdue comprehensive Convention of the Organization of the Islamic Conference on Combating International Terrorism.

In our pursuit of the fight against terrorism, the Zambian Government has recently established an anti-terrorism centre, a national body that includes all national stakeholders, to coordinate the counter-terrorism efforts of individual security agencies, in keeping with the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

There is no doubt that the United Nations remains the only multilateral institution capable of addressing the challenges of our "one world". The world looks to the Organization to encourage dialogue among civilizations on all global challenges in an inclusive manner, which offers the only practical way to ensure meaningful and effective international cooperation.

To be effective and efficient, there is a need to reform the United Nations, as we will over the coming year in commemoration of its 75 years of existence, and to reflect on its future.

Zambia believes that in the context of the evolution of the United Nations, the time has come for meaningful reform, including of the Security Council, which should be representative, democratic and accountable to all Member States, irrespective of status. That is essential for its integrity as the custodian of international peace. Given that Africa constitutes the second largest block of United Nations membership, proposals to reform the Security Council should heed Africa's call, as espoused in the Ezulwini Consensus.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm Zambia's commitment to cooperate with the international community in addressing the numerous problems affecting our people, including in efforts to end poverty. We should not remain indecisive and indifferent to that serious issue, neither should we forgo this opportunity to make the world a better place for all humankind.

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

Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President, Head of State and Head of Government of the Republic of Chad

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President, Head of State and Head of Government of the Republic of Chad.

Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President, Head of State and Head of Government of the Republic of Chad, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President, Head of State and Head of Government of the Republic of Chad, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Deby Itno (*spoke in French*): At the outset, on behalf of myself and my delegation, I would like to extend my warm congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, Permanent

Representative of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the United Nations, on his commendable election as President of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly. I wish him every success in his mission and assure him of the Chadian delegation's support throughout his term of office.

I would also like to express our sincere thanks and congratulations to Her Excellency Ms. Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, the outgoing President of the General Assembly, on her excellent work during her term of office and the attention given to the countries of the Lake Chad Basin, including my own, by making a field visit in May 2019.

May I also express my high appreciation and full support for His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres for his leadership and commitment to revitalizing the role of the United Nations to better meet the enormous expectations of all peoples, through strong engagement with regional organizations. Chad welcomes in that regard the exemplary partnership that is developing between the United Nations and the African Union.

The theme of this session of the General Assembly — “Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion” — is a timely one to assess progress on the implementation of some of our commitments under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

That theme, the relevance of which I applaud, underlines both the weakness of the efforts made to address shared socioeconomic and environmental challenges and the urgent need for greater mobilization of the international community in order to achieve, in accordance with the commitments made within the framework of the 2030 Agenda, the main Sustainable Development Goals, which include the eradication of extreme poverty, access to quality education, the fight against climate change and the reduction of inequalities.

We note with regret that the fervour that prevailed at the time of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in September 2015 has not been followed by convincing results in relation to the commitments made. Yet, the Agenda has been a consensus document that has reconciled the concerns and positions of all stakeholders.

In the absence of vigorous action and the planned resources which have not been mobilized, our shared dream of building a stable and peaceful world where

all our peoples flourish together, is giving way to anguish and uncertainty, because the issue of poverty is closely linked to crises and conflicts, migration and climate change.

The eradication of extreme poverty is the first of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. That reflects the paramount importance of its implementation. The joint fight against poverty requires the fulfilment of the commitments made under the 2030 Agenda in terms of specific actions to be taken. The necessary resources for that purpose are well within the reach of the international community provided it demonstrates resolve and unity.

In that regard, Africa's priorities and expectations, which my country shares, are well known and are enshrined in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. Four years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda (resolution 70/1), the expected results are far from being achieved. The lack of progress on all fronts is more than concerning at a time when our expectations for development are more than pressing. How can we claim to fight poverty if the commitments made to that end under the Addis Ababa Action Agenda never go beyond the pledging stage?

I believe that it is urgent that some of our main concerns receive our collective attention, particularly with regard to the industrialization necessary for processing the tremendous natural resources on our continent, diversifying our economies, combating the illicit flows of capital that siphon significant resources from our countries, access to markets, innovative funding to support the development and marketing of technology and reforming the international financial institutions, so as to ensure the effective participation of African countries in decision-making processes that concern them.

The lack of tangible results in relation to commitments made also affects the fight against climate change despite the immense hope raised by the historic Paris Agreement. The serious impact of climate change is felt above all in Africa, particularly in the Sahel, as evidenced by the advancing deserts, the drying and silting up of watercourses such as Lake Chad and the Niger River, increased deforestation, land degradation and so on.

Through its adverse effects, climate change also exacerbates crises and conflicts over natural resources

and causes food insecurity and large population displacements. It disrupts access to basic social services and increases poverty to the point of pushing the unemployed youth into the arms of terrorist groups.

Given that serious threat, Chad joins many other countries in reiterating its strong call for a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and increased resilience to climate change. The Paris Agreement is achievable only if it is supported by concrete actions to meet the commitments made by all parties, in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibility.

I would like to emphasize the urgent need to fulfil the commitment made by developed countries to mobilize \$100 billion a year by 2020 to meet the mitigation and adaptation needs of developing countries. The full operationalization of the Green Fund is extremely urgent in that regard.

Our children's access to quality education is a key driver for a sustainable fight against poverty and climate change. Quality education is also a vehicle for knowledge and the transformation of our societies. It goes without saying that it is the best guarantee for a better world. However, hundreds of millions of children around the world are now deprived of access to the most basic education. The main causes that make schools inaccessible to those children continue to be underdevelopment, poverty, devastating conflicts and obscurantism, among others.

Despite an acute economic and financial crisis, while drastically reducing our investment in key sectors, Chad continues to pay particular attention to education, allocating between 15 and 16 per cent of its annual budget to it. Over the past 10 years, student enrolment has increased tenfold. We plan to increase that rate in the budget to 20 per cent in the coming years.

Given the extent of educational needs, the challenges are immense and the resources available are insufficient; hence, the urgent need for continuing mobilization to act together, in a spirit of solidarity and complementarity, in support of the least wealthy countries so as to give all the world's children the opportunity to access quality education.

For almost a decade, Africa has been plagued by a growing rise in terrorism. The Sahel and its immediate vicinity are suffering the full force of the ravages of the evil of this century, which causes our peoples to mourn daily and jeopardizes all our development efforts.

Within our means, we actively participate in addressing the existential threat of terrorism as part of both the Multinational Joint Task Force of countries of the Lake Chad basin and the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel).

In the fight against a blind and often invisible enemy developing unexpected resilience, the huge sacrifices made have not enabled us to overcome that evil. The affected States in the Sahel region spend between 18 and 32 per cent of their annual budgets on that increasingly unsustainable effort. The international community, whose support is vital to winning the fight, cannot remain indifferent to this ongoing mobilization of such States against terrorism in recent years.

In that regard, I reiterate from this rostrum the call of the G-5 Sahel member States to the Security Council members to provide sustainable funding for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force from the Organization's regular budget under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

Furthermore, in view of the ongoing pooling of efforts by the G-5 Sahel Force, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Economic Community of West African States, we underscore the need for greater and more tailored coordination among the actions of all actors present in the Sahel, including such international forces as the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and Operation Barkhane, while respecting the mission of each entity. Chad stands ready to make its modest contribution to this coordinated structure in order to lead a more effective fight against terrorism.

I cannot mention terrorism and insecurity in the Sahel without mentioning the Libyan crisis, which is having incalculable consequences on the region. Despite commendable efforts by the international community to put an end to this long-drawn-out crisis, the situation remains highly worrying and continues to take a dramatic turn. Efforts to help our Libyan brothers restore peace are being compromised by inter-Libyan armed confrontations, aggravated by diverse and multifaceted external interference. Resolving this crisis requires the individual and collective awareness of our Libyan brothers themselves. They must understand that they are the primary masters and authors of their destiny, and that violence will not provide a solution to the crisis. In this war, there will be no victors or vanquished, but one loser: the Libyan people.

We must all work towards a comprehensive and inclusive dialogue that will bring together all the protagonists of the crisis. With this in mind, we call on all armed parties, including tribal and community leaders, to engage in a national dialogue that will serve as a prelude to the holding of credible elections. We are always ready, as we have been in the past, to support the efforts of the United Nations and the African Union to restore peace and stability to this country. The return of peace and stability to Libya is a condition for the return of peace and stability to neighbouring countries and, in large measure, the Sahel in general. In this regard, Chad calls for the strong involvement of the African Union alongside the United Nations in the search for a lasting solution through a synergy of efforts. Whatever we may say, Libya has been and will always continue to be an African country.

The question of United Nations reform—particularly that of the Security Council, which Africa earnestly calls for at every sessions of the General Assembly—deserves our necessary and full attention. This legitimate demand cannot be diluted by endless negotiations that have been going on for years without any tangible progress. Africa is asking for nothing more than compensation for the blatant damage done to an entire continent of more than one billion people, unjustly deprived of its legitimate place in the United Nations system. I reaffirm Chad's commitment to the Common African Position on the reform of the Security Council, as set forth in the Ezulwini Consensus, and I appeal to the sense of justice and solidarity of all nations to accelerate this much-desired, long-awaited reform.

To conclude, I would like to express the solidarity and sympathy of Chad with all countries facing difficult situations due to crises, conflicts or natural disasters. In this regard, Chad welcomes the momentum for dialogue and reconciliation that has begun in the Central African Republic, the Sudan and South Sudan, and urges all relevant stakeholders to redouble their efforts to achieve lasting peace in these brotherly countries. Chad also reaffirms its position of principle regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict, calling on all parties to support a two-State solution where Israel and Palestine live side by side in peace, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002.

Lastly, Chad reiterates its call for the lifting of the embargo unjustly imposed on Cuba, which is causing serious harm to the people of that country. It is because we are attached to the founding principles of the

United Nations and because we believe in its ideals of peace, justice, sovereign equality between States and prosperity for all that we come every year to this great meeting that is the General Assembly. Let us ensure that the behaviour of each Member State aligns with the rules we have set ourselves so that peace, justice and solidarity may triumph around the world.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President, Head of State and Head of Government of the Republic of Chad for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President, Head of State and Head of Government of the Republic of Chad, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado, President of the Republic of Honduras

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

Mr. Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado, President of the Republic of Honduras, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Hernández Alvarado (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to extend to all participants a special greeting from a beautiful land called Honduras.

I will begin by telling the story of my country. The last few decades have seen a major tragedy in relation to the history of our republic. Corruption prevails with impunity, creating a vicious circle in which criminal gangs has managed to infiltrate all sectors. We are tackling and will continue to tackle this impunity until the last day of our Government. At one point, we were the most dangerous country in the world; that is no longer the case. We had one of the highest homicide rates; today, we have more than halved it. We purged the police, set up investigation mechanisms, dismantled organized crime networks and built maximum security prisons, with the result that we now have much stronger institutions.

Gangs have been the armed branch of drug traffickers. They have committed extortion and terrible assassinations and massacres. They have managed to infiltrate demonstrations, turning them violent and engaging in looting, arson and attacks on society. They have attacked the media and the security force. These criminal groups are the allies and friends of some politicians who have admitted to being their friends and close collaborators. This enemy's goal is to supplant the rule of law. It is a legacy of mourning and pain, with the loss of more than 67,000 lives in the last decade and a half, more than those killed in the Viet Nam war on the United States side. The violence displayed by these illegal groups affect the economy, security and national sovereignty. We must consider such transnational groups, including the Salvatrucha and 18th Street gangs, as non-State entities that violate fundamental rights.

Is what I have just described not a true abuse of fundamental rights? And I ask myself — and I leave the Assembly to ponder the question — why it is that, today, we still cannot find grounds under international law to hold gangs, organized crime and drug traffickers accountable?

We have set up a new system of institutions. We have also restructured some of our institutions to make them robust and prepared to confront organized crime. In this Hall, I would like to thank justice officials in my country, be they public prosecutors, the judiciary, the police, the military, intelligence agents and all those Hondurans who have undertaken the fight with us. They are brave, highly effective men and women who have given up everything, including, for some, their lives. We have taken up the fight on land and on sea in order to counter drug trafficking. We have created an extradition process, extradited the biggest drug lords and adopted laws against money-laundering, among other important measures. We have reformed the prison system and today have special anti-extortion and highly effective anti-gangs task forces.

It has not been an easy fight. Today, I decry the fact that, owing to the fight we have begun and continue to lead against organized crime, I am the subject of attacks and a smear campaign led by drug traffickers, gang members, corrupt police officers who have been terminated, confessed killers, certain business people who abet the criminals by funding their activities, even politicians. It is truly an international political structure that does not shy away from working with

the criminal world, promotes hatred and instils fear in social communicators, leading them to self-censorship out of fear. Others serve to undermine our society through, inter alia, social networks and fake news.

Today, I want to highlight what some scholars and friendly countries call “fourth-generation warfare”. We must be on our guard, as it is a destabilizing force, causes chaos and intimidation, undermines the economy and institutions and generates transculturation and a misinformation war. We are the victims of these political attacks with obscure interests aimed at destabilizing the country. The attacks are also coming from Venezuela, led by the regime of Nicolás Maduro, with his partner in Honduras named Mel Zelaya. This story is not new, nor am I the only one who has experienced it. It is a subject with global dimensions.

Drug trafficking, gangs and organized crime generate violence. Violence slows down development and violates human dignity, which, in turn, generates forced and irregular migration. Criminal organizations, human traffickers, unscrupulous non-governmental organizations and politicians seeking to destabilize the Government organized migrant caravans in which thousands of children, fathers, mothers, including pregnant women, have risked their lives on a path of cruelty, exploitation and false promises. I ask: Is this not a crime? Of course it is, because the freedom and lives of human beings are at risk.

At the beginning of my presidency, in 2014, I said that irregular migration should be addressed by attacking the root causes, by taking shared but differentiated responsibility, strengthening institutions and increasing security and prosperity. To that end, States must promote opportunities to support the excluded and vulnerable. Honduras is doing its part, with responsible macroeconomic policies designed to make the economy more certain, thereby generating stability that allows us to promote investments, create jobs and access to credit at concessional rates from multilateral organizations so as to develop productive and social infrastructure.

In that regard, as an aside, I also want to express my gratitude to the Government and the people of Mexico for the support pledged to us to create opportunities for entrepreneurs and massively promote reforestation through the Sowing Lives programme. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Guterres for committing, at our bilateral meeting yesterday, to the fight to mobilize

green funds and convene a pledging conference to finance the Comprehensive Development Plan for Central America.

We in Honduras have set up a scheme to encourage the creation of small businesses and their access to soft credit, in order to support those that generate 70 per cent of jobs in our economy but only account for 3 per cent, if that, of the loans granted by the financial system and have been historically excluded from the financial system. In a short amount of time, over 3,000 small businesses have been created under a programme entitled “My business online”.

We have also built the “Better life” platform for social protection, which seeks to ensure minimum wage, food security, decent housing, job creation and competition. In the past five years, we have reached 4 million beneficiaries — almost half of our population — with at least one intervention for each of those beneficiaries. We are on the path to reaching the Sustainable Development Goals.

We are continuing to support our young people in order to guarantee a future for the building of our Honduras. We have an innovative programme of more than 15,000 students on national scholarships attending national universities, and hundreds are now obtaining graduate degrees in various specialties at the best universities all over the world.

I would like to touch upon a very important theme that we discussed this morning. One of the causes of migration is the coffee crisis, which is driven by low prices and the effects of climate change. Honduras is the fifth largest coffee producer, and coffee production makes up 5 per cent of its gross domestic product. Our coffee-bean harvest decreased by 15 per cent, and we have lost revenue amounting to more than \$400 million over the past two years. But the impact is also social because 90 per cent of those who produce coffee are small-scale coffee farmers.

I would like to ask a question to all coffee consumers worldwide — would any of them dare to ask the sellers from whom they buy their cup of coffee whether they, the sellers, are paying a fair price to the coffee producers? We should think about it because I am sure that if the seller can answer in the affirmative, that would be a very powerful thing. It would be so powerful that it could change the lives of the more than 120 million families of coffee growers worldwide.

I now want to bring up a topic that everyone talks about but does not yield any concrete results. Let us not fool ourselves — there are no concrete results. Will we continue to wait for floods and droughts to devastate us and for thousands of people to be displaced without a future and even lose their lives? This is the reality. Whoever needs proof, whoever wishes to experience those phenomena need only come to Central America, to Honduras. There are destructive rainfalls, protracted droughts, diseases and plagues like never before. They call this climate change and climate crisis.

The Germanwatch Global Climate Risk Index indicates that Honduras, Puerto Rico and Myanmar are the three places in the world most affected by extreme climate events. Nevertheless, neither Honduras, Puerto Rico nor Myanmar are among the greatest contributors to environmental degradation. This is not fair. We have to pay for the irresponsibility of other countries, which, I believe, is one of the greatest injustices of the twenty-first century. In some fraternal countries, being able to obtain a glass of water can mean the difference between life and death — survival itself. I wonder if we have to wait for that to be the case in Honduras and in the rest of the world? I leave it to the Assembly's conscience.

We in Honduras cannot wait. We in Honduras have decided to not wait. In my country, there are places where water is so scarce that it provokes violence. The Assembly should take note of it. Wars have been fought over oil. In the future, wars will be fought over water. Must we wait for that to happen?

Honduras has begun its fight against climate change. We have allocated national resources to combat it because we could not wait. One decade ago, the Green Climate Fund was established with great fanfare, but poor management and bureaucracy makes access almost impossible. In my country, I am asked if this an ugly joke. I also leave that to the Assembly's conscience.

In Honduras, we are promoting systems of agricultural production that are adapted to climate change, with our own resources. We are implementing new technologies and establishing centres for agricultural research and innovation. We are also building such protected agricultural structures as greenhouses, intelligent irrigation systems and water reservoirs. In addition, we are leading reforestation initiatives, creating jobs and encouraging our young people and children to preserve our forests. We fund all these efforts ourselves.

It is now or never. Let us move from words to deeds. We must hold accountable those who are truly responsible for climate change. We must put an end to organized crime, youth gangs and other gangs, and drug traffickers that undermine the fundamental rights of people. We must form a common front in order to generate prosperity and promote sustainable development. We must take action to combat climate change if we wish to live, if we wish to survive.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly I thank the President of the Republic of Honduras for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

Address by Mr. Scott Morrison, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia

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

Mr. Scott Morrison, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Scott Morrison, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Morrison (Australia): Much has changed since the United Nations was established many years ago. Australia was there in the beginning and we are here today because we continue to believe that differences can be resolved through dialogue and mutual respect; because we believe that an international rules-based order is essential for global stability, security and prosperity; and because we know that there can be no prosperity without peace.

The world today is complex and contested. Many fatalistically see a polarized world where countries feel pushed to make binary choices. Australia will continue to resist that path. Australia will continue to seek to honestly maintain our great alliances and comprehensive partnerships in good repair, from our

great and powerful friends to our smallest Pacific Island family neighbours.

As it approaches its seventy-fifth anniversary next year, the United Nations must reform and evolve to respond effectively to the challenges of the twenty-first century. And, to fulfil its core mandate, the United Nations must be ever mindful of the principles and values that have always been foundational to the Organization's efforts and success: the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with international law; respect for the sovereignty and independence of all States; open markets that facilitate the free flow of trade, capital and ideas; freedom of faith and freedom of expression; respect for human rights; and combating disadvantage, discrimination and persecution based on disability, gender, religion, sexuality, age, race or ethnicity.

Those are the liberal democratic values that underpinned the United Nations at its inception. Those are Australia's values. We believe that they should remain the guiding principles of the United Nations into the future. The alternate path of lowest-common-denominator transactionalism and relativism is a dead end. The United Nations is the prime custodian of the rules-based order. It is also the custodian of the mechanisms for dialogue and adjudication that buttress them. It has a challenging task ahead of it.

For Australia's part, we will continue to practice what we preach. Last month, Australia ratified a maritime treaty setting out a new sea boundary with Timor-Leste. That followed the first conciliation initiated under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It demonstrates that the United Nations and its norms are central to a cooperative, rules-based approach to global challenges.

In the Pacific, we are also stepping up. Australia is the single largest development partner for Pacific Island nations. That is an instinctive response for Australia, consistent with our clear national interest and our commitment to our Pacific family — our *vuvale*, our *whanau*. Our goal is simple — to ensure that the south-west Pacific is secure strategically, stable economically, sovereign politically and sustainable environmentally.

The Organization's work, in partnership with Australia, has also helped to build a more sustainable and resilient Pacific, to support local climate change actions and resilience, to strive for gender equality through the empowerment of women and girls, to

support continuing improvements in health outcomes and to bolster regional peace, including through the Bougainville Referendum Support Project.

Today, however, I would like to take the opportunity to speak about Australia's response to the great global environmental challenges. First among them is how Australia is acting to protect our oceans. Australia is an island continent. It has the world's third largest maritime jurisdiction, stretching from the Great Southern Ocean to the vast Pacific and Indian Oceans. Over 85 per cent of Australia's population lives within just 50 kilometres of the coast. Australia's indigenous peoples have been linked to our land and sea for more than 65,000 years.

Our oceans connect Australia with the world. Some 99 per cent of Australia's trade, by volume, is carried by sea. By 2025, marine industries will contribute around \$100 billion each year to our economy. Our prosperity and security rely on the established laws that govern freedom of navigation, be it in the Strait of Hormuz or closer to home.

Protecting our oceans is also one of the world's more pressing environmental challenges. To protect our oceans, Australia is committed to leading urgent action to combat the plastic pollution that is choking our oceans, to tackle overexploitation of our fisheries, to prevent ocean habitat destruction and, of course, to take action on climate change. Scientists estimate that in just 30 years' time, the weight of plastics in our oceans may exceed the weight of fish in those oceans.

Recently, I announced that Australia will ban exports of waste plastic, paper, glass and tires, starting in 2020. That is about 1.4 million tons of potent recyclable material. Australia is also leading practical research and development into recycling, turning recycled plastic and glass waste into roads, manufacturing 100-per cent recycled PET bottles and capturing methane and waste to create energy.

New technologies are coming on line, with the potential to recycle used plastics into valuable new plastics, creating a circular plastics economy. These include innovations like bioplastics, compostable plastic replacements and technologies like the Catalytic Hydrothermal Reactor — an innovative Australian-designed technology that converts end-of-life plastics into waxes, diesel and new plastics. Those innovations show us that a truly circular economy is not only possible, but achievable and, of course, essential.

As Australians, we intend to do more. Australians will invest \$167 million, through our Government, in an Australian recycling investment plan. Our focus is to create the right investment environment so that new technologies are commercialized, preventing pollution from entering our oceans and creating valuable new products. Australia supports the High-level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy and we are working through the International Maritime Organization to address the way shipping contributes to plastics pollution in our oceans. Australia supports the Group of 20's work on marine plastic debris and the Osaka Blue Ocean Vision, championed by Prime Minister Abe.

We welcome the contributions and leadership from business and the private sector to address these challenges, including Australia's own Munderoo Foundation. Industry-led mechanisms for investing in new recycling technologies and mitigating plastic waste in rivers, beaches and oceans on a global scale are absolutely essential for the way forward.

We must also act to safeguard the sustainability of our fisheries. That means cracking down on illegal fishing. There are too many nations standing by while their nationals are thieving the livelihoods of their neighbours. Australia is not only acting in its own interest, but also helping its Pacific island family to reduce illegal fishing, which depletes the fish stocks of Pacific islanders, who rely on them for their jobs, revenue and food security.

We have also worked together with Indonesia, and for that I congratulate President Widodo. We are jointly committed to an action plan to combat illegal fishing in South-East Asia, and we thank Indonesia for its regional leadership. We are also working with regional organizations to improve fisheries governance. In addition, we provide patrol boats to 13 countries, supported by aerial surveillance through our Pacific Maritime Security Program, which assists Pacific Island nations police illegal fishing in their own waters.

We are leading efforts to preserve natural habitats and biodiversity, including through partnerships with other countries to protect migratory birds and their habitats. We have also worked hard to prevent commercial whaling and to end whaling in the Southern Ocean. In 2015, Australia set up the International Partnership for Blue Carbon with the aim of protecting and conserving mangroves, tidal marshes and seagrasses for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The Great Barrier Reef remains one of the world's most pristine areas of natural beauty, and everyone is welcome to visit it. The reef is vibrant, resilient and protected under the world's most comprehensive reef management plan. The UNESCO World Heritage Committee has found that Australia's management of the reef is highly sophisticated and considered by many as the gold standard for large-scale marine protected areas. Australia's \$2-billion Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan is based on the best available science and draws on 40 years of analysis and experience, underpinned by the management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. Australia's continued support for reef, coral and water quality science will ensure that the Great Barrier Reef remains one of the best-managed World Heritage sites.

Australia is also taking real action on climate change and getting results. We are successfully balancing our global responsibilities with sensible and practical policies to secure our environmental and economic future. However, Australia's internal and global climate change critics willingly overlook or, perhaps, ignore our achievements because the facts simply do not fit the narrative they wish to project about our contribution. Australia is responsible for just 1.3 per cent of global emissions. Australia is doing its bit to combat climate change and it rejects any suggestion to the contrary.

By 2020, Australia will have surpassed its commitments under the Kyoto Protocol and reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 367 million tons more than is required to meet its 2020 Kyoto target. There are few members of the United Nations or the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development that can make that claim. Our latest estimates show that Australia's emissions per capita and the emissions intensity of its economy are at their lowest levels in 29 years. In 2012, it was estimated that Australia would release some 693 million tons of emissions in 2020. As of 2018, that estimate has fallen to 540 million tons.

Australia's electricity sector is producing fewer emissions. In the year to March 2019, emissions from Australia's electricity sector were 15.7 per cent lower than the peak recorded in the year to June 2009. While Australia is a resource-rich country, it is important to note that it produces only around 5.5 per cent of the world's coal production. Having met and on its way to exceeding its Kyoto targets, Australia will also meet its commitments under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change — and we stand by them. We have

committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 26 to 28 per cent below our 2005 levels by 2030. That is a credible, fair, responsible and achievable contribution to global climate change action. It represents a halving of emissions per capita in Australia or a two-thirds reduction in emissions per unit of gross domestic product.

At the centre of our domestic efforts is our \$3.5-billion climate solutions package, which I campaigned on during our recent national election and successfully launched as Prime Minister. It supports practical projects, such as capturing methane from waste and the revegetation of degraded land and soil carbon. Through our climate solutions plan, we are supporting the transition to renewable energy with projects such as Snowy 2.0, the largest pumped hydro station in the southern hemisphere. We are also investing significantly in research and development to use the best science and business expertise to commercialize new renewable technologies and integrate renewables into our electricity grid. Australia now has the highest per capita investment in clean energy technologies of anywhere in the world and one in five Australian households has rooftop solar systems. In 2018, \$13.2 billion were invested in clean energy technologies in Australia. That builds on the estimated \$10 billion that was invested in 2017.

We are also doing the right thing by our neighbours. We recently committed to investing an additional 500 million Australian dollars over five years from 2020 for renewable energy, climate change and resilience in the Pacific region. We have decided to invest that directly from within our international overseas development programme, rather than by making an additional budget contribution to the Green Climate Fund. That enables us to target our support directly to Pacific island nations to ensure that they receive that support directly, and in a more timely and targeted fashion. At the same time, it provides greater transparency, fairness and accountability for Australian taxpayers, who rightly demand attention and support from their Government to address the significant challenges at home, in particular with regard to boosting drought resilience through our investment in national water grid infrastructure.

Australia is also committed, among other countries, to the Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer, an agreement that will help protect the world from ozone depletion and combat climate

change. Under the Montreal Protocol, Australia will further accelerate its efforts and will use 60 per cent fewer hydrochlorofluorocarbons than permitted. I can proudly inform the Assembly that Australia is on track to fulfil those commitments and I urge all other countries to do likewise.

All of that adds up to significant and comprehensive action by Australia in response to the world's greatest environmental challenges. Australia is under no illusions about the challenges that the global community will confront in the years ahead. Today, I want to reassure all Member States that Australia is carrying its own weight and more, just as we always have. We are a generous nation playing our part in securing our shared future. We are reforming the rules of global governance, setting common standards to ensure global connectivity in a digital future, preventing conflict, building the capacities of developing nations, supporting essential health projects, protecting our oceans, taking action on climate change and achieving results.

Like many of the leaders here, I get many letters from children in Australia who are concerned about their future. I take them very seriously and I deeply respect their concerns. Indeed, I welcome their passion, especially when it comes to our environment. My impulse is always to seek to respond positively, to encourage them, to provide them with context and perspective, and in particular to generate hope, focus their minds and direct their energies to practical solutions — things they can do, positive behaviour — that will deliver enduring results for them. I seek to encourage them to learn more about science, technology, engineering and maths, because it will be through research, innovation and enterprise that the practical work of successfully managing our very real environmental challenges is achieved.

We must respect and harness the passion and aspiration of our younger generations and we must guard against others who may seek to compound or, worse, facelessly exploit their anxiety to advance other agendas. At the same time, we must not allow their concerns to be dismissed or diminished, as that can also needlessly increase their anxiety. What parent would do otherwise? Our children have a right not just to their future, but to their optimism. Above all, we must let our children be children, let our kids be kids and let our teenagers be teenagers while we do the work positively together to deliver the practical solutions for them and their future.

I am confident that, as Australia stands here once again, together we will have the wit, the capacity and the will to surmount the challenges that will come our way, just as those who have come before us in this place have done, consistent with the values that have made that possible.

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

Mr. Scott Morrison, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by the Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry of the Republic of Fiji

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry of the Republic of Fiji.

Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry of the Republic of Fiji, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry of the Republic of Fiji, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Bainimarama (Fiji): We have witnessed inspiring calls to action this week at the United Nations in pursuit of a more vibrant and resilient world, but with few exceptions those contributions have not come from leaders. They have come from young people who are tired of watching helplessly as their future is hijacked by nations too blind to the catastrophe at our doorstep or too impotent to do what must be done; young people who are living in terror at what the coming years will bring, but who are choosing to speak out rather than cower in fear; young people who know that a secure and prosperous future remains within reach, only if we, as leaders, choose to act and act now to save them.

Of all the contributions made and words spoken at the United Nations this week, some of the most thought-provoking, and certainly the most passionate, have come from our young people, inspiring and, sometimes, goading us, as national leaders, to use our

power and influence, look beyond our narrow political objectives and think more broadly about the world that they will inherit.

A few hours ago, the world's leading climate scientists, through the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), issued a report that adds a new dimension of horror to the world that our children and grandchildren will inherit. They warn that global warming is turning our seas into a huge potential threat to humankind, reporting that global average sea levels could rise by up to 1.1 metres by 2100, in the worst-case warming scenario. This is a rise of 10 centimetres over previous IPCC projections because of the larger ice loss now happening in Antarctica. That is heart-breaking news for tens of thousands of Fijians in our coastal areas and all people in low-lying areas around the world.

It adds considerable urgency to the mission of Fiji's Climate Relocation and Displaced Peoples Trust Fund for Communities and Infrastructure, which I launched Monday night here in New York. I urge everyone to read the report. It is from the top minds in their scientific fields. I would tell anyone living in denial of the climate emergency, some of whom sit at the apex of certain Governments the following, that if they readily listen to scientists and take heed of the best research available in every other field of human endeavour, they should not refuse to listen to scientists of climate change. One of our youngest climate warriors — Timoci Naulusala — makes the case far better than I ever could. He watched his village ripped to pieces in Cyclone Winston, and he is now demanding that the world act to spare other young people the same suffering he personally endured.

If we fail to act, Timoci's worst fears will be realized, as we will condemn him and all young people to a hellish future. For all 193 States Members of the United Nations, this is our moment of truth — the defining issue that will determine the course of history. Previous generations fought each other to uphold their own interests, but now the world must unite around our common interests to fight a more powerful enemy — a monster we created ourselves, a heating planet staggering under the excesses of all who have taken its resilience for granted.

Every nation has a role to play, but only the industrial nations have the economic capacity and advanced technical know-how to lead the world to

victory in this struggle. Defeat is not an option, so I would again ask those who did not come to New York this week with fresh plans to tackle the climate crisis or who came merely out of curiosity to observe to please examine the evidence and the facts and, for the sake of our children and grandchildren, face up to their responsibility to lead.

To stave off catastrophe, there is no alternative but to commit to net zero carbon emissions by 2050. There is no alternative but to cap the average global temperature at 1.5°C above the pre-industrial age — and preferably even lower — because even at 1°C warming entire species are being made extinct and our coral reefs are dying. There is no alternative but to rapidly scale down the use of fossil fuels and rapidly scale up the development of renewable energy. And there is no alternative but to rapidly phase out the use of coal. No more coal mines. No more coal-powered electricity. Unless we stop burning coal, we have no hope of achieving net zero emissions in 31 years' time.

We must put oceans at the heart of the process of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 25), or Blue COP, in Chile in December, because we cannot have a stable climate without a healthy ocean.

My message to my own people, and especially young Fijians, is that I hear them and that their nation and Government are doing everything they can to get the world to confront the climate threat. We assumed the presidency of COP 23 not for prestige, but to play our part in ensuring their survival and everything we hold dear, not only our precious surroundings, but our culture and traditions, in order protect the dreams and aspirations that every Fijian has for him or herself and the hopes they all have for their children.

Small as it is, Fiji will fight. We will continue to be a voice for more climate ambition and further climate action. We will continue to advance our case in the great forums of the world, on behalf not only of Fijians and other Pacific islanders, but of the climate-vulnerable everywhere. This week, Fiji answered the call of the Secretary-General to come to New York with increased ambition to reduce our own emissions. They amount to only 0.04 per cent of total global emissions, but we will be submitting our revised nationally determined contribution next year, which will include a commitment

to achieving net zero emissions by 2050. For leadership is about leading by example, not lecturing others or expecting them to shoulder the burden alone.

COP 23 was not the first time that Fiji demonstrated leadership in the world. For four decades, we have served the world through our contribution to United Nations peacekeeping. Our troops have travelled across the globe to some of the most violent trouble spots and placed their lives on the line to protect the innocent. More than 60 Fijians have paid the ultimate sacrifice — it has been a sacrifice not only for their loved ones, but for our nation of fewer than a million people. We have done it proudly because we see it as our duty to serve. With the assistance of our development partner, Australia, we are establishing a new training centre in Fiji for our peacekeeping activities and to provide a rapid response to climate-induced disasters in our region. Fiji will continue contributing to United Nations peacekeeping with better trained and equipped troops. While conflict zones in particular feel the stress of climate impacts, our peacekeepers will be even better prepared to assist affected communities.

In the climate fight, we have launched a host of initiatives to serve our people, the region and the world. We are working to reduce the emissions of our transport sector on land through electric buses and higher fuel standards and, at sea, working with our Pacific neighbours to convert our shipping fleets from diesel to hybrid and make them more efficient. We are working to protect our vulnerable coastline and our coastal communities and towns from rising waters and extreme weather events, including our global gateway, Nadi. We are working to ensure that when disaster strikes — as Cyclone Winston did three years ago, costing us one-third of our gross domestic product in 36 hours — we have access to appropriately packaged insurance to bounce back.

We are working to access adequate and affordable finance from public and private sources for climate adaptation. We are bringing solar power to communities that are off the national grid. The first of these projects — on Vio Island — will be the start of a programme that we hope can be replicated throughout the Pacific. We are working to secure our infrastructure from extreme weather events, such as by putting power lines underground and raising roads along our shores that are already threatened by the rising seas. We started building back better after Cyclone Winston and we will

continue to build back better so that homes, schools and public infrastructure are more resilient.

We are relocating threatened communities to move them out of harm's way. Our Climate Relocation and Displaced People's Trust Fund is operational and we are seeking global support to assist our displaced people and to move the infrastructure they rely on, such as schools, health centres, roads, bridges and public utilities. We are raising money ourselves in Fiji for the Fund through an environmental levy, but this effort needs to be scaled up.

For me, personally, one of our most exciting initiatives is to preserve and plant more of our forests and mangroves and to monetize these through carbon-trading arrangements in the international marketplace. In addition to reducing our own carbon footprint as an important component of our revised nationally determined contribution, we want to fire the imaginations of our people and encourage them to protect our trees, our mangroves and our coral, too. This is because they will not only have natural value, but will be worth serious dollars and cents.

Fiji is also becoming one of the first countries to enshrine our implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and other strands of our climate campaign in a new national law. The Climate Change Act gives us the legal tool we need to place climate action and ambition at the centre of national life. When it is enacted by our Parliament within the next few months, the decisions of the Government and the private sector will have to factor in climate change and other laws will be amended to fall into line with the Act. The draft legislation is now online for public feedback on the Fijian Government's website. It is ground-breaking and something other countries can emulate — state-of-the-art nationally determined contribution enhancement, guided by a long-term vision and backed by force of law that reinforces Fiji as a global leader in the climate fight.

All of these measures are part of a holistic response to secure the future of every Fijian. However dire the climate threat may be, our people can rely on my Government to do everything we possibly can to protect them, especially in times of crisis. For 13 years, empowering our people has been the hallmark of my Government. We have done so, first and foremost, by levelling the playing field so that every Fijian enjoys equal opportunity in our new democracy. We are providing free education for the first time so that no

Fijian child is left behind, ending the heartbreak of parents unable to send their children to school. We are providing more access to higher education with scholarships and tertiary loans, training tradespeople and building national capacity in our network of technical colleges.

We are providing better access to health care, plus free medicine for low-income earners, and entering into public-private partnerships to improve our hospitals. We have raised social wages and extended maternity leave, family care leave and paternity leave. We have improved our standards of governance and accountability, fighting corruption and prudently managing the nation's finances. We are ensuring that those living in rural and maritime areas enjoy the same access to services as those in our towns and cities, providing incentives for investment and creating a record number of jobs. We are harnessing the might of multilateralism through deeper partnerships with — and leadership within — financial institutions and development organizations.

Fiji's willingness to give time and energy to answering critical global calls to action, whether in peacekeeping, addressing climate change or preserving our oceans, has earned us unprecedented respect. The reason these achievements have ultimately been possible is because my Government has united the country, empowered our people and given them a sense of purpose. They will not permit those who would seek to divide us and take Fiji backwards to ever succeed.

But all of that progress remains at risk if the world does not heed the voices of our young and summon the collective will to confront the climate threat. It is our duty, as the leaders of our own generation, to secure the future of our planet and our only home — for them and for the generations to come. We must lay out a vision of the great opportunities that await the world when we embrace a sustainable energy future and a sustainable future for all living things.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry of the Republic of Fiji for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry of the Republic of Fiji, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.