



# General Assembly

Seventy-fourth session

**12**<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting  
Saturday, 28 September 2019, 3 p.m.  
New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Muhammad-Bande ..... (Nigeria)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Al Hassan (Oman), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3.40 p.m.*

## Agenda item 8 (continued)

### General debate

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Highness Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates.

**Sheikh Al Nahyan** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the President of the Assembly at its seventy-fourth session and to thank Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés for her distinguished stewardship of the previous session, which demonstrated what women can achieve when they assume leadership positions. I am pleased as well to be able to pay tribute to Mr. Hazza Al Mansouri, the first Emirati astronaut to embark on a mission to the International Space Station. I want to express our appreciation and pride in the fact that what he is doing is a major step, demonstrating that the United Arab Emirates is entering a new era in which it will contribute alongside other countries to investing in space science and building a new generation in a world based on science, technology and enlightenment.

This year in Abu Dhabi, in conjunction with our declaration of 2019 as a Year of Tolerance in my country, His Holiness Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmed Al-Tayeb, signed a document on

human brotherhood that constitutes a historic message of peace aimed at promoting tolerance and coexistence.

Building safe communities requires the will to take concrete initiatives and make concerted efforts to address the tensions caused by extremism. The United Arab Emirates has participated in regional and international efforts aimed at easing tensions and reaching political solutions to the crises in the Middle East, including in Libya, Yemen, the Sudan, Syria and Palestine. We believe that strengthening multilateralism is the most effective approach to de-escalating those crises and addressing transnational challenges, including extremism and terrorism, in order to achieve international peace and security. However, multilateralism has succeeded neither in resolving existing crises nor in preventing new ones. In order to achieve the goals for which the United Nations was established, we must therefore examine the problems that are obstructing international efforts and explore ways of enhancing their effectiveness.

Our collective efforts have achieved remarkable successes in tackling the challenges of the twenty-first century, particularly in the area of sustainable development. Unfortunately, however, our efforts to bring about regional and global stability have stalled, especially in our region. Today we are witnessing violations of States' sovereignty and interference in their internal affairs. As conflicts continue and new crises emerge, we are seeing a growing presence of extremist and terrorist groups, which have developed their capabilities with the support of rogue States that aim to destabilize and dominate the region. Terrorist

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groups such as Da'esh, the Muslim Brotherhood, Hizbullah, Al-Qaida and the Houthis have been able to access the weapons and funding they need to implement their agendas, thereby exacerbating existing crises. The terrorist attacks on our sister nation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the ongoing strikes targeting its civilian and vital infrastructure, the most recent being a heinous attack on ARAMCO's facilities, have been condemned. Such attacks not only threaten the security of both Saudi Arabia and the region but also affect the stability of the global economy. In that context, we emphasize the importance of restoring a reasoned approach and securing maritime navigation and energy supplies while working to find sustainable solutions based on respect for the sovereignty of States and non-interference in their internal affairs.

Despite the efforts of the international community, we have to admit that multilateralism has not responded to the challenges that have emerged in the past few decades, mainly owing to weak enforcement of international law and Security Council resolutions and disregard for the role of regional organizations and States in supporting political solutions. While international mechanisms for the maintenance of peace and security do exist, an inability to take a firm stand against some States' aggressive policies has hindered international efforts.

Even when there has been international consensus on the importance of taking collective measures to maintain peace and security — such as curbing Iran's nuclear ambitions by signing a nuclear agreement with that country — the agreement involved failed to achieve expectations in correcting Iran's behaviour and compelling it to abide by international law and the principle of good-neighbourliness. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action should have taken into consideration the views of the countries of our vital region that fully understand its history and should also have addressed every aspect of Iran's behaviour, such as its interference in the internal affairs of States, its development of a ballistic-missile programme and its provision of arms to terrorist groups. This is a country that is seeking to export its revolution.

We have an opportunity to achieve sustainable solutions that serve the interests of the region through a political initiative supported by the international community that focuses on the following four areas. The first is promoting the implementation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations as core

pillars in preventing the collapse of the international order and preserving relations among States. To that end, we should support States' capacity to implement their legal obligations, and hold accountable States that violate those obligations. My country will continue to make it a priority to urge States to respect their legal obligations and abide by the principle of good-neighbourliness. In 48 years the United Arab Emirates has never renounced its claim to sovereignty and legitimate rights over the three islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, which are occupied by Iran in a flagrant violation of international law and the Charter. The historical records assert that the United Arab Emirates owns the islands and that they have been under Arab rule since ancient times. We therefore want to emphasize once again from this rostrum the firm position of the United Arab Emirates regarding its legitimate right to sovereignty over its three islands. We will never abandon the demand that Iran restore our rights to us. My country has called on Iran to peacefully resolve the issue through direct negotiations or through the International Court of Justice, but those calls have gone unanswered.

Secondly, regional organizations should be permitted to play a greater role in addressing regional tensions and achieving security and stability. We should emphasize that it is they that are best positioned to develop effective solutions to the issues of their member States. This year our sister nation of Saudi Arabia hosted Gulf, Arab and Islamic summits, in a successful example of coordinating regional and international positions to address the critical security situation in the region. We also look forward to the assistance of the United Nations in promoting consultations and cooperation with those organizations when discussing regional issues. The part played by the African Union in supporting peacekeeping operations, especially its recent role in the Sudan, is a successful model that we welcome and encourage others to follow.

Thirdly, we should enhance political action and make it more effective in easing tensions and resolving crises in order to fulfil the legitimate aspirations of our peoples. That requires building trust among States and strengthening mediation efforts, including those of United Nations envoys. For that to succeed, the relevant parties must work within a comprehensive, transparent and cooperative framework. Accordingly, the United Arab Emirates considers political efforts vital as the primary option for de-escalating and addressing crises.

When my country joined the coalition to support legitimacy in Yemen we focused on restoring the role of the legitimate Yemeni Government, rejecting the fait accompli that those who carried out the coup tried to impose and supporting a political process that could lead to stability and peace. Despite the violations by the Houthis, my country will continue its efforts to achieve peace. Similarly, we believe that a political path is the best option for addressing regional issues and we appreciate the efforts of the United Nations, the international community and friendly States in that regard. We welcome the role of the Secretary-General in supporting the political track with regard to the issue of the Moroccan Sahara and commend the efforts of our brothers in the Kingdom of Morocco to find a political solution to the issue.

The chaos that has engulfed the Arab world during the past decade made us even more committed to finding political solutions and more appreciative of the importance of the stability of States and the security of their peoples. The Palestinian question will remain the central issue of the Arab world. Stability cannot be established in our region without a just, comprehensive and lasting solution that enables the Palestinian people to establish an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital. Violations committed by the occupying Power against the Palestinians, including the creation of new facts on the ground in Jerusalem, will enable extremist groups to exploit the suffering of the brotherly Palestinian people.

Lastly, with regard to focusing on development and investment for fostering our peoples' prosperity, the starting point should be rebuilding post-conflict countries, supporting their national institutions and strengthening their rule of law. More broadly, we need to fight extremism and spread the values of tolerance and pluralism while ensuring that women and young people contribute to such efforts, which will lead to a brighter future for all.

We must not forget the suffering of millions all over the world that results from war and natural disasters, whose severe impact requires intensified humanitarian efforts. In that context, my country continues to spread a message of peace by assisting those affected, regardless of their race or religion. In particular, we have also stepped up our humanitarian and development assistance in response to the crisis in Yemen, which has worsened as a result of the fact that the Houthis have been obstructing people's access to

assistance and even stealing aid supplies and equipment to finance their criminal acts.

Stability has been lacking in our region for a long time, but it can be achieved through hard work and united international efforts. We believe that the next few years will begin a new era for our region, which will become a global economic and cultural centre where new technology, science, renewable energy and artificial intelligence will thrive. To that end, we are hosting Expo 2020 and seeking to launch outer-space projects and create a new environment for young people in which they can aspire to a brighter future with open minds. As individuals, Governments and peoples, we have a choice to either start a new decade in which we safeguard the future of our region and the world, or to abandon our world to terrorist groups and destructive extremist ideologies. We will continue to fight the latter with all our might.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdallah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman.

**Mr. Abdallah** (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I have the pleasure of congratulating Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande and our brother country of Nigeria on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. I want to assure him of the full support and cooperation of the delegation of the Sultanate of Oman in working for the success of this session. And I would like to express our appreciation to his predecessor, Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, for the manner in which she steered the work of the seventy-third session and the achievements during her presidency. We also express our appreciation for the efforts of Secretary-General António Guterres to strengthen the role of the United Nations and developing its mechanisms.

The United Nations is mandated with various tasks, including maintaining international peace and security, addressing international challenges and conflicts, working diligently to settle disputes through preventive diplomacy, deploying efforts to achieve peace and stability in the world by promoting confidence-building measures and resolving differences through diplomacy, as laid down in the Charter of the United Nations. My country believes that dialogue and negotiations are the most appropriate means for resolving differences. We have always affirmed that Oman and other countries

will make joint efforts and use their good offices to support regional and international initiatives that will help achieve peace and promote a culture of security and stability in the region. In the Sultanate of Oman we believe that peace is a central building block for stability and sustainable development. Accordingly, we hope that international relations can be restarted on a new footing and based on the principles of good-neighbourliness, respect for national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, with a view to building a world of justice, fairness, coexistence and tolerance for all in which everyone can enjoy prosperity, security and stability.

Achieving peace in the Middle East has become an imperative. It is high time to put out the fires in the region. Those raging fires pose a threat to international peace and security and enormous economic, social and security challenges for the peoples of the region. They have created many problems, including violence, extremism, terrorism and a continued and unprecedented wave of displacement and migration to various parts of the world. We believe that the United Nations and the international community must take serious steps to build a regional and international consensus and support peaceful efforts to end instability in the region. From this rostrum, we also call on all disputing parties to look to the future and to rise above their differences, prioritize their ultimate national interests and adopt political and diplomatic approaches that safeguard the unity and cohesion of countries and their peoples' dignity, security and decent livelihoods. In that regard, we welcome the peaceful political agreements that have been reached in the sisterly Republic of the Sudan and the signing of documents on transitional civilian authority, which should help to achieve peace, security and stability for our brother people of the Sudan. We also highly appreciate the regional mediation efforts that have led the Sudanese parties to this great national achievement.

The Sultanate of Oman is concerned about maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, as we are one of two countries bordering the Strait, which is considered one of the most important in the world. As a matter of fact, some of its shipping lanes are within our territorial waters. Given Oman's national sovereignty and international responsibilities with regard to ensuring the vital issue of the safety of maritime traffic and ships in the Strait of Hormuz, the Sultanate of Oman calls on all countries to cooperate constructively and respect

its navigational separation lines, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, particularly articles 37 and 38, which cover the right to continued transit passage, and article 39, which sets out the duties of ships during transit passage.

We also call on all parties to avoid escalation and resolve differences through diplomatic means, thereby avoiding any repercussions for the region that could endanger freedom of navigation, international trade and the world economy. We believe that the international community and States with an interest in using the Strait of Hormuz should strive to find peaceful compromise solutions as the best way of maintaining the stability and safety of maritime navigation and more secure and effective than any other arrangements.

The ongoing conflict and war in Yemen and the failure of the warring parties to reach a political settlement to end it have resulted in a humanitarian, economic and social situation for Yemenis that is both tragic and unprecedented in the country's history, and one that must compel us all to redouble our political, diplomatic and humanitarian efforts to help Yemen put an end to the increasingly complex armed conflict. Oman supports every effort aimed at reaching a political solution in Yemen, particularly those of the United Nations and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths. We call on all the parties to cooperate and engage positively with those efforts. The emphasis for the next phase should be on the political track, with a view to reaching a political settlement that can ensure security and stability in our brother country of Yemen and preserve the security and interests of its neighbours in the region. From this rostrum, we call on all the Yemeni parties to prioritize the country's best interests and urge Yemen's political leaders to take the initiative to end the conflict for the sake of Yemen and its good people. We also call on the countries of the region and the international community to support the efforts to restore peace and stability to Yemen in particular and the region in general.

Given our geographic proximity and deep historical, social and cultural ties with Yemen, we emphasize that Oman will continue to provide our brother people of Yemen with facilities and humanitarian assistance. We call on the international community and all parties concerned to undertake serious humanitarian efforts to enable humanitarian access to every region and province of the country, without exception or impediment, and to



facilitate the use of all ports, airports and entry and exit points for that noble humanitarian purpose.

The establishment of a sovereign independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem its capital is a compelling strategic requirement for achieving peace, stability and peaceful coexistence. An integrated vision for special relations between the Palestinian and Israeli parties, as well as their neighbours, should therefore be based on the values of peace, coexistence and common interest of all the peoples of the region, with a view to delivering security, peace and economic prosperity for all. We believe that failure to establish a Palestinian State will mean continued violence and terrorism. Cooperation between the international community and the relevant actors in creating the necessary conditions to end the more than 70 years of conflict is crucial to building a stable and prosperous new Middle East. Based on its steadfast position in support of peace and stabilization in the region, the Sultanate of Oman is prepared to make every effort and cooperate with the international parties in order to ensure that negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis are resumed and to support efforts leading to an agreement on a two-State solution, which would contribute to security and stability in the region.

Sustainable development is one of the most important pillars of Oman's vision for the future and consecutive five-year development plans, which are an extension of the values and principles of sustainability as a means of achieving lasting equality, justice and peace in Omani society, as clearly reflected in our basic law. In that regard, my country was an active partner in all the international and regional forums, deliberations and dialogues that resulted in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Oman has sought to implement its international obligation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by setting up long-term policies and strategies and mid- and short-term plans and programmes that have become a fundamental component of our ninth five-year plan for the period from 2016 to 2020 and of Oman Vision 2040. Against that backdrop, in July my country submitted its first voluntary national review on the Sustainable Development Goals, commended by all thanks to our positive development indicators.

In conclusion, my country renews its call to all countries of the world to adhere to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law in order to resolve their differences through peaceful

and diplomatic means. We also call for a bigger role for the United Nations and regional and international organizations in resolving disputes, consolidating international peace and security and promoting a culture of peace and tolerance, with the aim of sparing humankind the scourges of war and conflict that undermine the aspirations of our peoples to peace, stability, well-being and prosperity.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Rashid Meredov, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan.

**Mr. Meredov** (Turkmenistan) (*spoke in Russian*): First and foremost, I would like to convey our congratulations on the opening of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, and our wishes for success in its work to all the participants, from President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov of Turkmenistan. I would like to congratulate Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his election as President of the Assembly for this session and to wish him every success in his important role. I also want to thank Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the Assembly at its previous session, for her effective work in that position.

In formulating Turkmenistan's approach to this session, we started from the premise that current world realities, and the nature and trends of their political, economic and social processes, clearly demand increasingly close and coordinated interaction among States and major international organizations in achieving our main goals — ensuring peace and security, providing the conditions for sustainable development and preserving the legal and institutional foundations of the modern world order. In many respects, the degree of effectiveness of this cooperation and our ability to find a reasonable balance between national interests and those of the entire international community will determine whether we succeed in solving other, equally important global problems, including those related to the environment, energy and the fair distribution of water resources. Moreover, at bottom, a balance of interests and a high level of mutual understanding are what enable us to address problems such as poverty, terrorism, drugs, natural disasters, infectious diseases and other challenges. In our view, what is key to dealing with all of those issues is the restoration and reinforcement of trust and predictability, which are vital factors in building

constructive relations in the international arena and making informed and responsible decisions.

We firmly believe that this process should begin with respect for universally recognized norms of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. In that context, it should be emphasized that the United Nations, despite all the difficulties that it has to overcome in the process of adapting to new geopolitical realities, remains the principal and uncontested guarantor of today's global security architecture, a bulwark of our world order and international law and a symbol of justice, humanity and respect in international relations. That is why the United Nations must take on the role of initiator in strengthening trust and developing a multilateral dialogue, based on its universal legitimacy, and in translating the character and direction of international communication into constructive direction.

In recognition of its own share of responsibility for the state of world affairs and in its deep belief in the high moral authority of the United Nations, Turkmenistan initiated resolution 73/338, which declared 2021 the International Year of Peace and Trust. The idea was first put forward in the President of Turkmenistan's address to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session (see A/73/PV.15), and the Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 73/338 just a few weeks ago, on 12 September, with the co-sponsorship of 73 Member States. I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all States Members of the United Nations, especially the sponsoring States, for their support and solidarity in the implementation of that initiative.

Promoting comprehensive peace and security and maintaining strategic and regional stability means ensuring that the international community has instruments in its toolkit capable of providing effective solutions to its challenges. We believe that one such tool is preventive diplomacy. As experience has shown, preventive diplomacy under the auspices of the United Nations can produce real results. That is particularly evident in the work of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, which serves as an effective link between the United Nations and the countries of Central Asia with regard to resolving numerous emerging issues. Needless to say, the most important of those is the work of preventing and neutralizing the various threats facing the region and establishing a solid foundation there for peace, security and sustainable development.

In the course of our joint work with the Centre, we have been developing common approaches to urgent problems such as terrorism, extremism, organized crime, the illicit drug trade, environmental issues, the management of transboundary water resources and regional stability. We believe in general that this practice should be harnessed in other areas so as to create a comprehensive arsenal of political, diplomatic and socioeconomic instruments for preventing risks and addressing challenges.

It will be essential to ensure that the concept of neutrality plays a crucial role in building non-confrontational and balanced international relations today. We believe firmly that a neutral model of foreign policy, with its inherent principles of non-interference in conflicts and non-participation in military associations and alliances, is bound to have a significant positive impact on the entire course and direction of global policy, bringing it greater clarity and predictability. As a State whose neutral status was unanimously affirmed and acknowledged by the United Nations on 12 December 1995 (resolution 50/80 A), Turkmenistan has always been and will continue to be true to its chosen foreign policy path and to the trust that the international community has put in us. It was therefore only logical that on Turkmenistan's initiative the Assembly established a new date in the global political calendar, the International Day of Neutrality, celebrated every year on 12 December (resolution 71/275). By that decision, the international community acknowledged the unqualified positive significance of neutrality as an essential factor in modern world politics, and its relevance to the long-term strategic goals of the United Nations.

In that regard, we believe that the practical applications of the political and legal principles and ideological foundations of neutrality should be a focus of close attention within the United Nations, first and foremost with regard to the peacebuilding potential of neutrality and the possibilities of conducting United Nations mediation missions with the participation and on the territories of neutral countries. There are a number of examples, including recent ones, when just such an approach has helped to achieve agreement and reconciliation. Based on that, we think it would be a good idea to hold a broad multilateral dialogue at the United Nations during this session on the use of the principle of neutrality in the practice of international relations, and we would like to ask Member States to

support our proposal to develop a United Nations code of rules for the effective application of the principles of neutrality in resolving international issues.

On 12 December next year, we will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the international recognition of Turkmenistan's permanently neutral status. In that connection, in Ashgabat in December 2020 we will hold an international conference on issues of peace, security and development. We stand ready to work with the Secretariat, Member States, international organizations and all interested parties in order to prepare for and hold this forum.

Cooperation with the United Nations on sustainable development issues remains a priority for all of us in the long term. It is clear that despite the efforts that have been made, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is encountering various problems, including financial ones. In our opinion, they can be overcome if we harness political will and our efforts is properly organized. It will be essential to ensure a clear algorithm and the coordinated provision of adequate financial resources for specific projects and programmes aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. To that end, we think we should consider convening a United Nations conference on financing for development. To do that, we propose establishing an international coordinating group under the auspices of the United Nations to discuss the dates, venue, provisional agenda and other relevant issues for such a forum, which we believe can provide the impetus needed to ensure financial support for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

During this session, Turkmenistan will take further steps to establish a broad international partnership in the field of comprehensive energy security. To that end, my country will submit a draft resolution on the subject to the General Assembly during this session. We hope that Member States will participate actively in drafting it and agreeing on its provisions.

For Turkmenistan, one strategic direction of our work in the United Nations continues to be partnerships in the area of transport. My country will undertake efforts during this session to establish a systematic multilateral dialogue on transport issues. We believe that cooperation on international transport can be successful if it has a clearly articulated global focus that covers extensive areas and the various complexes

of routes and railways that unite entire regions and continents.

The environment and its protection have traditionally been central to Turkmenistan's activities at the United Nations. During this session my country will add the Caspian Sea issue to its list of well-known environmental initiatives. In August Turkmenistan held the first Caspian Economic Forum, at which the President of Turkmenistan launched an initiative creating a new Caspian environment programme at the United Nations. Considering the universal importance of preserving the Caspian Sea as a unique natural complex, we hope to have the support of the international community for that initiative. Another important item for Turkmenistan on the agenda for this session is saving the Aral Sea. We will continue to work diligently to promote the idea of establishing a special United Nations programme for the countries of the Aral Sea basin, and we invite all interested parties to take part in the consultations on that subject.

The implementation of international agreements on climate change reached in the framework of the United Nations is a major focus for my country. With a view to mobilizing activity aimed at fulfilling our commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the President of Turkmenistan approved our updated national strategy on climate change on 23 September, the very day of the Climate Action Summit in New York.

The issue of the conservation and use of water resources is one of the most important and urgent challenges of our time. It is not an exaggeration to say that today the course of various global processes and the prospects for ensuring stability, development and well-being all over the world depend to a large degree on its resolution. Water issues, which have political, economic and social implications, require international consensus and demand that States concert their efforts on a common platform, where secondary and local interests and benefits must give way to an acknowledgement of truly global aims and priorities and the creation of a unified long-term strategy of action. The key condition for such concerted activity should continue to be an unconditional commitment to the principle of fair and equitable access to water resources and the recognition that it is a basic human right. Ensuring and assuming responsibility for the right of access to water is an obligation for every State, primarily because water is a common good every people

on our planet. In adhering strictly to those principles, Turkmenistan has formulated a detailed position on water issues that can be summed up as follows.

First, water issues in the various regions of the world should be addressed based on the universally recognized norms of international law and the relevant United Nations conventions in particular. Secondly, water issues should be considered based on the principles of mutual respect and consent and consideration of the interests of all States that share basins of transboundary rivers, water sources and shared-border lakes. In that regard, Turkmenistan opposes the construction of new hydraulic facilities on transboundary rivers, which is linked to high environmental, socioeconomic and humanitarian risks. Thirdly, we support greater and more active involvement on the part of international organizations in addressing water issues.

Turkmenistan is approaching the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly with a fully responsible attitude. We see our task as one of contributing as much as we can to the work of the United Nations in strengthening global peace and security, fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals and deepening trust and predictability in international affairs, and in bringing creative impetus to our joint work within these walls. While we recognize the difficulties and problems that stand in the way, we believe that with goodwill and firm resolve we can overcome them together. Turkmenistan believes in the enormous potential of the United Nations, and in its authority and ability to effectively address complex issues. We will therefore do everything possible to further strengthen the United Nations, actively contributing to its peacebuilding efforts and working tirelessly towards our horizons for development and progress.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Saleumxay Kommasith, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

**Mr. Kommasith** (Lao People's Democratic Republic): At the outset, I would like to congratulate President Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his election to lead the General Assembly at this session. He can count on our full support for the duration of his presidency. I am confident that given his extensive experience, he will lead this session very successfully. I would also like to commend his predecessor, Ms. María Fernanda

Espinosa Garcés, for her excellent work as President of the previous session.

The international community is facing myriad challenges. Many parts of the world have been experiencing more frequent and more severe effects of climate change, which has extensively affected the livelihoods of people globally. Heatwaves have swept across Europe and droughts have persisted in many parts of the world, while in others, floods have inundated residential areas and productive land. While developed countries may be more resilient to climate change and better able to adapt to it, developing countries, particularly the least-developed countries — including my own country — remain very vulnerable. In the past two months we experienced unexpected heavy rainfall throughout our country as a result of Tropical Storm Podul that inundated nearly every province, causing enormous damage to infrastructure, agriculture and people's livelihoods. It has already cost millions of dollars to rehabilitate and restore normalcy in the affected areas.

Conscious of the importance of combating climate change, the Lao Government is now focusing on the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We have already mainstreamed our nationally determined contribution, and we have integrated climate change efforts and natural disaster risk reduction into our national socioeconomic development plan. In addition, our National Assembly has approved a law on disaster management that is expected to be enacted soon. We are currently formulating a national strategy and action plan on disaster preparedness and risk reduction.

At the regional level, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has also made a common effort to address the impact of climate change and disaster risk management, among other things. In that connection, we very much appreciate the United Nations support to ASEAN through the implementation of the ASEAN-United Nations Joint Strategic Plan of Action on Disaster Management 2016-2020 and the World Bank Group's Climate Change Action Plan 2016-2020. But having this legal framework in place is not enough to combat climate change. While the full and effective implementation of these instruments is key, it will require joint efforts at both the national and international levels to ensure their full and effective implementation. In that regard, as we commit to action at the national level, we call on the developed



countries and all our development partners to honour their commitment to contributing \$100 billion a year to support the developing countries' mitigation and adaptation needs.

Peace and security represent another important pillar that the international community must consolidate. We are fully aware that without peace, development cannot take root and human rights cannot be upheld. That was the core objective and firm foundation of the United Nations when it was founded. Since its inception, our Organization has made significant achievements on many fronts, including important contributions to the maintenance and promotion of global peace and security, creating an environment for countries and regions around the world that is conducive to making social and economic development progress and thereby lifting millions of people out of poverty. In that regard, multilateralism and the enhancement of regional and international cooperation remain highly relevant. We therefore believe that the reforms of the United Nations and other international organizations, including the international financial institutions, should be carried out in an inclusive, open, transparent, predictable and democratic manner, with a view to addressing regional and global inequalities and challenges. Otherwise, our journey towards eradicating poverty and narrowing the development gap within and among countries will remain an uphill task.

Against that backdrop, we welcome the operationalization of the repositioning of the United Nations development system so that it can respond effectively to addressing the development needs and priorities of Member States, with particular attention given to meeting the needs of countries in special situations, especially least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked least developed countries (LLDCs) and small island developing States, in order to help them deal with acute vulnerability and external shocks.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic also continues to support the efforts of the international community to achieve the objectives of disarmament and non-proliferation, and we have therefore ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We also welcomed the commemoration of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, which took place here at the United Nations two days ago.

In the past few years, alongside existing challenges such as conflicts, terrorism, poverty, pandemics,

climate change, natural disasters and trade friction, we have seen increasing confrontation and tension threaten international peace and security and erode development gains. We therefore call for strong political will and a genuine commitment to strengthening multilateralism by adhering to the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, particularly the principles of the sovereign equality of States, independence, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of others. We believe that is the best and only path to responding to and overcoming existing and emerging challenges. Yet despite the countless efforts of the international community to resolve conflicts in various parts of the world, many of them continue. In our region, ASEAN has enjoyed long-lasting peace, security and stability, creating favourable conditions for the national socioeconomic development of all its member States. In ASEAN, we continue to promote regionalism and multilateralism that emphasize the importance of inclusivity and mutual benefits and respect, forming a solid foundation for all of the essential cooperation frameworks within ASEAN.

On the issue of Palestine, the Lao People's Democratic Republic reiterates its hope that the protracted Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be resolved by peaceful means and in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. The application of unilateral measures with extraterritorial implications is not only contrary to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, it also hampers the national development of other countries. In that regard, my delegation once again calls for lifting the embargo on the Republic of Cuba so that sovereign country and its people can enjoy the freedom to participate in economic and trade relations with other countries in accordance with international law.

The Lao Government attaches great importance to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is highly committed to it, with the goal of developing our economy and narrowing our country's development gap. Despite the various policy measures that we have undertaken, progress remains slow as a result of capacity limitations and funding constraints, and the development gap persists, especially between urban and remote rural areas. In that regard, regional and subregional development plans tailored to people's actual needs at the provincial and district levels are needed in order to deliver basic social services to the local population, especially in the areas of education,

health care, income opportunities, better market access for agricultural produce and improving the livelihoods of people in rural areas. In order to finance those national development plans and strategies, we have mobilized the resources required from every source available, undertaking initiatives to promote domestic investment, attract high-quality foreign direct investment, carry out tax reform, diversify the economy and promote public-private partnerships in order to finance our national development agenda.

We firmly believe that in addition to national ownership and leadership, we need to scale up global partnerships in order to accelerate progress towards the effective implementation of development agendas such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and programmes of action for groups of countries in special situations, with the ultimate objective of transforming our world into a healthy planet so that all humankind can live in peace and prosperity. On that note, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the successful deliberations of the first United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development — and other high-level events held on the margins of this year's session of the General Assembly — since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Forum will provide strong recommendations and input for the realization of our common ambitious Sustainable Development Agenda and its lofty goals. The Lao People's Democratic Republic stands ready to work closely with all Member States and other stakeholders to achieve a secure and prosperous world so that present and future generations can live in peace, harmony and development.

In conclusion, allow me to take this opportunity to announce that the Lao People's Democratic Republic has decided to present its candidacy for membership of the Economic and Social Council for the term from 2023 to 2025, the first time ever that the Lao People's Democratic Republic, which belongs to the vulnerable groups of both the LDCs and LLDCs, will seek membership of that important United Nations organ. The Lao Government would greatly appreciate the valuable support of all Member States for its candidacy.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Wilfred Elrington, Attorney General and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Belize.

**Mr. Elrington** (Belize): On behalf of the Government and the people of Belize I would like to congratulate the President on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. Unlike any other, this session represents a critical turning point for multilateralism, as appropriately captured in the theme the President has wisely selected for this debate.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the challenges of our planet and its people are colliding, with far-reaching consequences. The course of action that we, the States Members of the United Nations, decide on in the next 15 months, will inevitably have a profound impact on the future of both humankind and our planet. If we choose to ignore the signs, the science and the millions striking for change, and instead proceed in the illusion that everything is going to be all right, our sons and daughters and all our heirs may well inherit an Earth that is wholly unliveable. That is our understanding of the majority view of the world's most eminent environmental scientists. We in Belize are persuaded by that view and we do not wish to bequeath such a poisoned legacy to our children, nor must we.

Indeed, the legacy to which we are committed, the legacy that is promised, is clearly set out in the Charter of the United Nations.

“We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war ... to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person ... to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.”

Belize is resolved to remain faithful and true to that commitment. And in the remaining time allocated to me, I will set forth our vision of the leadership we need from the United Nations to confront three fundamental threats to our world — the runaway threat of climate change, the uphill struggle to achieve sustainable development in a rapidly changing world and the lingering threats to peace and security, both internationally and at home.

To our Bahamian brothers and sisters, the people of Belize extend their heartfelt condolences. We share their pain and sorrow. Belizeans are no strangers to the kind of death, destruction and utter devastation

wreaked by Hurricane Dorian on the islands of the Bahamas and its people. Indeed, in 1961, 20 years before Belize celebrated its independence, we suffered a similar catastrophe when the category 5 Hurricane Hattie made a direct hit on our fledgling coastal capital and settlements south of it. The resulting devastation was unprecedented and so extreme that the World Meteorological Organization retired the name and the Government of Belize relocated our capital some 50 miles inland as quickly as we could.

Back then, almost six decades ago, a category 5 storm was an anomaly. Today, storms of that and even greater intensity are the new norm. Indeed, Dorian joins a long list of extreme weather events indelibly etched in the minds of citizens living on small islands and low-lying coastal States the world over. Some we endure as daily occurrences, such as the incessant drought presently affecting Belize and the relentlessly encroaching seas and saltwater erosion. That which we do not experience near shore is constantly occurring offshore, in the deep ocean, where the very life-support system of our planet and its resources are slowly degenerating, deoxygenating and acidifying. Meanwhile, a million species are on the brink of extinction.

In the past, such disruptions to earth systems would have occurred over prolonged periods of time. But the measure of change now is our own lifetime. These events are so frequent, visible and impactful that even our children are now alarmed by them. They are witnesses to near-apocalyptic images. They are experiencing a climate crisis unfolding before their very eyes, impelling them to action and to assume leadership roles in the search for solutions to this crisis. Learned scientists are advising us that the world has at best a decade to get on the path to 1.5°C in order to ensure planetary sustainability and, for small island developing States (SIDS), our very survival. It is therefore urgent and imperative that we work to halve global emissions from their 2010 levels by 2030. We must also ensure the phasing out of coal and the achievement of net-zero emissions by 2050. Because some countries will be gravely and negatively affected by such measures, dedicated resources must be made available to enable the most vulnerable to adapt to their new realities and to compensate for the permanent loss and damage that they will inevitably experience.

Belize thanks the Secretary-General for conveying the need for urgent action and heightened ambition. The Climate Action Summit has laid bare the mammoth

challenges we face. But we must remain unbowed by the scale of the task before us. We must be defiant in our resolve to overcome the many emerging challenges. We are convinced that the solutions lie within our grasp. We must start with policies and programmes at the community and national levels. Belize is a willing climate front runner. We are committed to the SIDS ambition package and have joined the SIDS Sustainable Energy Initiative, which aims for 100 per cent renewable energy for SIDS by 2030. We are already beginning that transition at home.

Some 54 per cent of Belize's electricity is already generated from renewable sources, and our electric company is now finalizing plans to replace a significant portion of our imported electricity — 37 per cent — with 40 megawatts of local solar-powered energy. The project for the first 30 megawatts of the new solar source will be signed before the end of October, and the plant will be ready to start producing within a year after that. The company is also piloting electric vehicles.

My Government is combining incentives for climate and other sustainable development with benefits such as health, food security and youth empowerment. Initiatives are being undertaken that will result in large-scale reforestation drives. We are introducing climate-smart agricultural practices, and we are applying nature-based solutions through integrated coastal-zone management and sustainable fishery practices that have mitigation, adaptation and development potential. We in Belize believe that Governments must lead the way with the highest possible ambition, in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, especially the 1.5°C goal. The private sector and other financial actors, including multilateral banks, must follow suit and pivot towards environmentally sound policies and climate-informed investments. People must press their leaders unceasingly and must also do their part to attenuate the drivers of climate change.

Belize entertains no doubt that the science is clear and compelling. We are in a global state of emergency. As one of the first responders to that emergency, my country and my people urge the Assembly to join us on the front line and to take the bold measures that our people and planet need to secure our children's future. The failure to act by those with historic responsibility has already manifested in lost opportunities for the most vulnerable. A storm such as Hurricane Dorian has the potential to wipe out two times our gross domestic product and with that, our hard-earned development

gains. Twenty-five years ago, the international community collectively agreed on targeted responses to address the special case of small island developing States. But with steadily mounting challenges from exogenous shocks, it has been necessary to periodically expand those responses. We have once again come to the table to account for the implementation of the SIDS agenda, and we are concerned. The midterm review of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway tells a story of a global system that is unresponsive to our unique characteristics and particular circumstances. It tells a narrative of fragmented system-wide policies, one-size-fits-all approaches and the seemingly forgotten special case of SIDS.

SIDS are still far behind in making progress to achieve their priority sustainable development objectives. That is especially worrying because climate change is shutting the window of opportunity for us. Belize welcomes the agreed outcome of the midterm review of the SAMOA Pathway and the solemnity it brings to action that is urgently needed if SIDS are ever to have a chance of expanding our development horizons. Implementation is upon us. A swift response is needed from the international community and the United Nations system to allow SIDS to access grant and concessionary finance from which, incredibly, we are completely shut out. Many SIDS have been graduated out of eligibility for official development assistance. Absurdly enough, that means that the most vulnerable countries, which bear no responsibility for the climate crises, are being taxed to access the support that we need to save ourselves. In some cases, we are being priced out of financial markets because of our high-risk profiles. We are small, we are islands and low-lying coastal States, and we are severely exposed.

The midterm review outcome provides an opportunity to correct that fallacy. What we need is simple and timely access to affordable finance, smart investments and debt relief to help us break the cycle of poverty, relieve us from the stranglehold of debt and make headway with building the resilience of our people and economies. We call for a SIDS-specific resilience fund and the endorsement of a debt-for-climate swap initiative to channel investments into much-needed adaptation initiatives and green industries.

Belize has never shirked its responsibility for national development. We remain fervently committed to advancing our growth and sustainable development

strategy, with the ultimate aim of improving the quality of life for all Belizeans. In that regard, my Government has now rolled out phase three of its Belize City Southside poverty alleviation project in one of our most impoverished areas. That project, with a total value of \$12 million, will see 100 houses either newly built or improved for families in need in the targeted constituencies. The infrastructure components to improve neighbourhoods and lives will wrap up the last leg of what has been a transformative multi-year initiative. Also, our food pantry programme increases every year, even if only incrementally. It constitutes one of the anchors of our pro-poor policies, continually uplifting the lives of disadvantaged citizens.

In education, we have achieved a milestone in bridging the divide between education and technology. In partnership with the national telecommunications company, we have deployed our DigiLearn project, which will introduce a cloud platform and service that facilitates digital teaching and online learning. Already a pilot project has been completed involving nine high schools. More than 360 students participated, and all of the schools have endorsed DigiLearn for their institutions. We anticipate rolling out DigiLearn to 43 secondary schools starting this month. Our ultimate goal is to provide a free laptop and digital classroom to every student, teacher and administrator in every high school in our country, and we aim to do all that over the course of the next five years. Importantly, we are in the process of expanding what has become another staple of our educational outreach, directed specifically towards at-risk youth in districts registering higher poverty incidence. The annual subsidies currently given to high school students for the first two years of the secondary programme will be given to every student in every Government high school in every district.

In April, with a view to ensuring a healthy environment for our people, we made the bold move, with the full support of our fisherfolks, to more than double the area of fisheries replenishment zones in Belize's waters. The total area of our territorial waters under no-take status now stands at 11.6 per cent and has almost tripled our marine-protected areas. Belize is also pleased to be supporting efforts to protect 30 per cent of the world's oceans by 2030 and finalize an agreement for marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction in 2020.

Belize is making commendable strides to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but here too



there is a need for greater urgency in global action and the delivery of support. Too much is at stake if we miss the 2030 targets. Young people and children are already experiencing that first-hand. Youth unemployment rates are three times those of adults. About 1 billion children live in countries where the SDGs are out of reach. Women and girls are still suffering from substantive inequalities, and the gaps between the rich and the poor and the educated and the ignorant are not narrowing. Those are only the struggles of which we are aware. There are many data gaps that must be addressed, particularly in vulnerable countries and for vulnerable peoples, lest we inadvertently overlook even more acute issues requiring our urgent attention.

The United Nations has a central role in marshalling the strength of nations and other development actors in order to foster enhanced cooperation and support in accelerating the pace of attaining the SDGs. But the Organization itself is under threat, as is the concept of multilateralism. It is therefore incumbent on us to reinforce the centrality of the United Nations and to ensure that it is fit for purpose in order to harness global solidarity to act on new and emerging challenges that are likely to undermine the SDGs. The United Nations development system needs to be better aligned with the sustainable development priorities of the countries that it serves, and it needs the resources to ensure that it can support countries in achieving those priorities. Its priority, and our priority, should be to enhance the delivery of development gains for people on the ground.

It is regrettable that the full weight of the global commitment and action to tackle the biggest challenges of our generation, planet and future is consistently being undermined by man-made disasters. The deliberate policies and actions of countries that give rise to armed conflict or result in the imposition of sanctions, economic embargoes and blockades invariably result in the strangulation and/or destruction of the economies of the targeted countries and stymie their overall development. Sadly, and invariably, those draconian measures affect not only the targeted countries but also the regions around them. They lead to humanitarian crises, mass irregular migration and human exploitation, and they simultaneously divide regions, inhibit cooperation and collaboration and conduce greatly to the increase of persistent poverty — all unintended collateral damage, but grave damage nonetheless. When the United Nations and Governments fail to act in the face of those harmful and unjust practices, the

suffering caused by natural causes are only magnified by those man-made acts.

At present, more than 7 million Palestinians continue to suffer under an oppressive regime. We urge a quick and just resolution to that chronic and tragic state of affairs and call for a two-State solution to be reached at the earliest possible moment.

The Sahrawi people are still being prevented from exercising their right to self-determination, notwithstanding their efforts to attain that right for decades.

Cuba and its people continue to labour under the weight of a protracted, unilateral economic, commercial and financial embargo that is getting worse rather than better.

The General Assembly has consistently and overwhelmingly agreed that those and other lingering injustices worldwide are in violation of international law and should not persist, yet they do. Belize deeply regrets that an organization founded on the rule of law should allow such exceptionalism to the rule of law to fester. The immortal declaration of Martin Luther King, Jr., could not be more appropriate: an injustice anywhere is an injustice everywhere. We call on the world community to redouble its efforts to put an end to those injustices, which clearly do great harm and no visible good.

Symptomatic of those injustices is the exclusion of Taiwan, with a population of 23 million, from representation in the United Nations. In our view, it is a travesty of justice for this institution to rely doggedly and erroneously on resolution 2758 (XXVI), adopted in 1971, to block Taiwan's participation in any of its bodies. Belize calls upon the United Nations to end what is effectively a political and humanitarian embargo against the people of Taiwan.

The situation of Venezuela is also particularly troubling. Not too long ago, Venezuela was a thriving country in Latin America, willingly sharing its vast resources through a progressive Petrocaribe programme, which included, inter alia, access to badly needed capital for participating regional countries on concessionary terms for infrastructure development and poverty alleviation. Sadly, the current circumstances in that country are leading inexorably to the impoverishment of the nation itself and a worsening in the social and economic conditions of the countries

that benefited from it. It has upended Venezuela's integral role in the region. We call for greater efforts to bring a speedy end to the state of affairs in that country and to the undeserved hardship and suffering of its innocent citizens through dialogue and diplomacy.

Belize accepts that the need to enlist the mechanisms of the United Nations to prevent any threat to or breach of peace anywhere should be a matter of last resort. That is why, for as long as Belize has been independent, it has engaged in diplomatic efforts to finally end Guatemala's territorial claim to our country. I am therefore very pleased to announce today that, following the commitment made in the special agreement signed with Guatemala to submit that country's territorial claims on Belize to the International Court of Justice, the people of Belize, in a referendum held on 8 May, voted by a convincing majority to authorize the Government to submit the case to the International Court of Justice. That will finally bring an end to an age-old atavistic claim that has hindered Belize's development and made more difficult the relations of friendship and cooperation that both our peoples aspire to and deserve.

As we comply with the requirements of pursuing the case before the Court, and during the years it will take for the case to be heard and decided, both countries are under an obligation to not allow any step of any kind to be taken that might aggravate or extend the dispute of which the Court is now seized. In that connection, Belize continues to be concerned about the illegal encroachment by Guatemalans into our territory, resulting in even greater deforestation of our protected forests, the illegal extraction of our natural resources and attempts to establish farms and residences on our Belizean territory. Belize is also concerned about activities by the Guatemalan armed forces in the Sarstoon River — our southern boundary — which pose a threat to the peace and security of the border area. Belize is strenuously seeking to establish a *modus vivendi* with Guatemala for the peaceful shared use and enjoyment of the Sarstoon River.

We take this opportunity to acknowledge with gratitude the work of the Organization of American States in facilitating the ongoing efforts of Belize and Guatemala to implement confidence-building measures, and we urge the international community to continue to support those and other similar measures.

Finally, Belize and Guatemala are forever neighbours, and we in Belize certainly have the most fervent wish to live side by side with the Government and the people of Guatemala in peace, harmony and close cooperation. It is the same aspiration that we have for peoples far beyond our borders. Belize remains determined to defend and uphold the purposes and principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations, not only in our words but, most important, in our actions. As a responsible Member of the United Nations, it is the right and just thing for us to do.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Teodoro L. Locsin, Jr., Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines.

**Mr. Locsin** (Philippines): The Philippines congratulates the President on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. He has our full support. We also congratulate Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the Assembly at its seventy-third session, for her success in making the United Nations relevant for all at a time of determined efforts to make it irrelevant. Working here at the United Nations, I witnessed that her heroic efforts brought off brilliant effect. It was a privilege to serve with her.

Since the first session of the General Assembly, in 1946, States Members of the United Nations have gathered annually to pledge their commitment to peace, because that is what the United Nations was founded for after the Second World War. Peace first; the big words and ideas proposing ways to create the right environment to make peace meaningful and thrive, or not, are secondary. But we know that peace comes for sure when the fighting stops, not just long enough to wash the dead and bury them but long enough for survivors to start over. To be sure, they never get back what they loved and lost, but they start again with what little is left, because hope springs eternal. We are in the United Nations to sustain that hope and fight off despair.

As we approach the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, predictions are rife with the demise of multilateralism. One piece of evidence proffered is the democratic election of strong Governments that talk tough and brush aside the demands of the United Nations — well-meaning for the most part — about how Governments should do their job more kindly, by standards more honoured in the breach than the observance in the West. Weak Governments, unable

to protect their people, appear desirable because they make the case for multilateral intervention at the prompting of conscience of course — but sometimes at the unilateral prompting of great Powers or violent or civil non-State actors.

Strong Government is better. That is why Government was invented, to get things done, but always consistently constitutional in its actions. Firm is good and severity is justified, but all within the law. Far from dying or dead, the United Nations is alive and strong, although only as much as its Members make it. Most United Nations States Members are democracies. And do not say there are democracies and “democracies”. All democracies are pretensions in some degree. The growing electoral trend towards strong Governments does not change their democratic character. That trend proves the United Nations has achieved one of its key goals for peace — the spread of democracy — because they lean more to peace than war, although the jury is still out on that one.

Some in the rest of the world might not like the electoral result, but the people back home are happy with their choice. It is theirs to make and regret, but it is not the United Nations to decide. The next election might change it more to one’s liking, or not. Still, we are warned of States eroding multilateralism by each asserting too much sovereignty. But in what respect? Perhaps by insisting on carrying out a State’s defining duty to protect its population against harm by any means efficient to achieve that purpose. That may cause dismay among the civil in society — civil society is free to complain. Better yet, they should run for public office to gain legitimacy and be able to do something about it. But the United Nations is not free to interfere with the State in its defining function of protecting its citizens and stamping out threats.

In a reflective mood, my President asked me,

“When did it happen that the rule of law no longer means the rule of law but the rules of crime. When did the presumption of innocence, which attaches only after arrest and arraignment, attach itself to the perpetrator the instant he is caught? That makes it legally impossible to suspect, let alone arrest him on probable cause. There are no more suspects, only victims of human rights violations when enforcing the law for the protection of citizens.”

All I could say was, “I do not know. I just do not know.”

The nations herein united should not let this platform be used to threaten others with accountability for taking a tough approach to crime, instead of taking seriously what they cannot, the Western proposition that the sure-fire way to end crime is to legalize it. Then it is no longer criminal. Well, that works after a fashion, not to punish lawbreakers but sit down and talk them out of repeating the only thing at which they are any good — crime. That is something I learned at the Munich Security Conference on human trafficking — not as the evil it is but as a regular job. The pay is not bad. Traffickers know only how to traffic — anything, as a German expert said, and they will not stop, because they cannot stop, until they are stopped.

The threat to multilateralism comes as much from its own vain attempts to usurp State functions as from unilateralists attempts to oust it from the world stage and return us to the anarchy of the pre-war period out of whose ashes the United Nations was born. Talk before fighting is what the United Nations is about. And if talk fails, talk some more. War is really the ultima ratio regis.

In the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) we are still talking; knowing that talk, so long as we give up nothing vital in the process, does not hurt. We are negotiating a code of conduct with China in the South China Sea. We have had incidents with swarming Chinese ships and lost a reef in our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). But, so far, we have had no interference in the joint exploration and development of oil and gas in areas within our EEZ, but China claims them as well. I crafted a memorandum of understanding on oil and gas, which China accepted, that allows us to move forward without the slightest compromise or diminution of our respective sovereign and international rights. But who can tell?

The code of conduct is a code of reality, the reality of the proximity of the soon-to-be biggest economy in the world in one place, with a commensurate industrial war-making capacity. But war is a totally remote possibility. All parties have built so much and achieved such material progress that none of us, or any outside Power, will risk losing the richest market in the world. It is therefore a code of live and let live with China — until it is not. We have all asked of each other, ASEAN members and China, for mutual restraint and complete respect for the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, to which all of us are signatories, binding ourselves unqualifiedly thereto, including

China. Then it is something else. We will come to that and cross that bridge when we get there, maybe.

Multilateralism has come into question because it allows itself to be bent to unipolar purposes — or worse, to the purposes of non-State actors — against multilateralism's reason for being, namely, the protection and safety of the weak and many, against the strong and few. Multilateralism is not owned by a select club of Member States. It is by and for all, or no one. The Philippines believes that the United Nations stands on the single pillar of the aggregated sovereignties of its Members. That is parlous but stable enough for a time. The United Nations is a collection of sovereign States, not a sovereign collective itself. It is only as effective as its Members make it. It harnesses sovereignties, not for some against others but to common purposes of peace and productive cooperation.

Sovereignty is as much a duty of care as it is an assertion of unlimited freedom of action. In the United Nations the two combine in the willing assumption of that duty on the part of States towards the international order to ensure peace and the well-being of “we, the peoples of the United Nations”. The Philippines is a proud founding Member of the United Nations, present at the creation even before we were independent. Carlos P. Romulo proclaimed in 1946 at the General Assembly during its first session:

“By the circumstances of our birth as a free and independent State, we are committed to the aims and purposes of the United Nations.” (*A/PV.41, p. 819*)

Even as our State was cloaked with sovereignty at birth, so was it saddled with the duty, commensurate with that power, to use it only for good.

Our engagement with the United Nations has been in the belief that the United Nations work must reflect the realities of the times, so as to be practical and useful in achieving the aspirations of “we, the peoples of the United Nations” — peoples as they are, in the real situations they are in, and not the Member States. The United Nations does not work with abstractions, that is for politicians and professional do-gooders. Only then can the United Nations stay relevant and become effective. The aspiration of the vast majority of my people today, call them short-sighted or just plain wrong, is to be free of drugs and safe from crime. Is that so hard to understand? It seems impossible for some to accept. But the cartel can be persuasive in kind, if not in

reason. The United Nations is the core of the multilateral global order. As long as the United Nations exists, none can trumpet the end of multilateralism. But it must be a United Nations strengthened and capacitated in its every Member, so that all, collectively, may achieve its aim of peace and safety.

An increasingly complex security and global situation, which is to say an anarchy beyond that of the inter-war years between States, but which now includes non-State actors, both violent and civil, requires the Security Council to adapt, reform and expand its membership, but only of formal States — throw everything in the pot and nobody can eat it. It needs to be representative, even at the risk of stasis, and democratic, for the sake of legitimacy. It cannot let itself be paralysed when the situation screams for humanitarian action. It must be prompt, yet circumspect and sharply focused, when it takes action, attempting no more than to end the carnage, with just enough rebuilding to enable reason and compassion, not hysteria and the usual self-dealing, to find a good way forward. No one expects the best.

We ask the Security Council to provide the General Assembly with multiple candidates — especially women — for the post of Secretary-General, with due regard to gender balance and regional rotation. Something is not right with its mindset and system if, after nearly 75 years, the United Nations has failed to have a woman Secretary-General. Do not blame it on the vote. The vote goes only as far as the Security Council lets it. From my experience, women know best how to build, men how to tear down.

Central to United Nations reform is funding. The Philippines is deeply concerned with the United Nations deteriorating financial situation. States look to the United Nations to implement their priority agenda — peace and security, of course, humanitarian assistance foremost, along with human rights, and lately sustainable development, climate action, migrants and refugees. But States will not provide it with the means to meet those mandates. They come to complain about what they expect from the United Nations, but step down from the rostrum without committing what all States can spare, which is far more than even the poorest actually contribute. Almost all the countries of the world can afford to give more to the United Nations, as I know all Governments have the capacity to do so if they are careful not to waste and steal at home what they can well afford to give to the United Nations.



Some can give more money to peacekeeping, others to personnel. No country can take the lion's share of credit there: they all wear the same uniform, with the same badges and the same Blue Helmets. They bleed the same colour and give up their last breath like any other. But the United Nations itself must engender trust in its use of funds. The Secretary-General's financial reform proposals would do well to uphold accountability, transparency and sustainability. The public is awash with stories of fiscal irresponsibility.

In 2015, with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we vowed to end poverty. The incidence of poverty in the Philippines fell from 27 per cent to 21 per cent from 2015 to 2018. But, as my President says, the important number is the 6 million Filipinos who are still very poor. It can be done, and it has been done on a far-greater scale than anyone thought possible. The new China lifted 800 million out of utter poverty in 20 years into what is, by any economic indicator, a real middle class. Aligned with the SDGs, our development plan points in the direction of achieving the aspirations of the Filipino people. Their aspirations are no different than those of any other people or nation: getting out of poverty, attaining a comfortable lifestyle, feeling secure about the future, especially for one's children, and being safe by stopping crime, especially drug dealing, which strikes at the victim's reason and soul.

I know that drug dealing falls somewhere between race, religion, political belief and gender as something to be equally protected. Admittedly, the drug experience is a bit religious. Therefore, prohibiting it is a crime against humanity up there with the others. But drugs are the reason my Government was elected by a landslide — a mandate that has only grown to 80 per cent because of unceasing criticism. In defending it, the public now own it. But that, as I said, is the problem with democracy: you cannot pick and choose the winner based on your delicacy. It depends entirely on the vote. The one with the most votes wins, while the others — more to one's taste — lose.

Whatever the phraseology adopted to express them, those aspirations are not captured by measuring poverty based solely on income per capita. To truly gauge the progress of our strategies, we have to stop reporting the wrong metric. That is why we have begun to use the Multidimensional Poverty Index. Education is how people lift themselves out of poverty. It does not happen by itself. Philosophers are poor. Charity and social programmes are how we, as individuals

and Governments, lift them out faster. Even more Filipinos received basic education this year, with over 27 million enrolled. Over 600,000 out-of-school youth and adult learners are benefiting from an alternative learning system. Tuition is free in State-run colleges, universities and technical and vocational institutions, at both the national and local levels. Tuition is tightly controlled in private institutions.

I urge all States to implement the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. It is telling that advocates of multilateralism conveniently leave out issues of migration. Migration is as multilateral as it gets. Migration is the pervasive reality today. The positive contribution of migrants fosters growth in countries of origin by remittances and countries of destination by industriousness. Migrant labour raises great cities out of deserts and mans the ships that enable global trade. Migrant health workers care for the sick, the children and the elderly, giving to strangers as much care as they gave their own loved ones back home. Sure, they are paid — and for that we are grateful to the host countries of our migrant peoples. Migrants themselves are grateful for the love that is sometimes returned, and sad when they are hurt instead.

Climate change — or, as Secretary-General Guterres calls it, the climate crisis — is the defining development issue of our time. Failure to address it nullifies all other endeavours in the long run. As one economist puts it, climate change matters so much for poverty: it is the poorest who are, and will be, hit earliest and hardest. John Maynard Keynes was prophetic: in the long-run we are all dead.

Climate change has brought my country — already one of the most vulnerable countries to disasters — extreme weather events of increasing recurrence and strength. Disasters are the reverse of God: they can make nothing out of something already there, built with great sacrifice. They wipe out socioeconomic gains like an eraser wipes the lesson off the blackboard at the end of the school day. Disasters do more — they reverse economic growth, so that we must start again not just from nothing, but with far less strength and spirit to try again. If climate action does not measure up to what is needed, we all face the same fate, that is, a diminished existence, then extinction altogether. But those who are most to blame will suffer less and much later than those who are least at fault.

We already have the global frameworks to address poverty, sustain development and combat climate change. Let us just do it. To borrow from Kung Fu Panda, “Enough talk; let’s fight.” The Secretary-General urges us to actually plant trees rather than plan some more to plant them. I think he is fed up.

When President Corazon Aquino addressed the General Assembly in 1986, after her peaceful People Power Revolution, she said, “[p]erhaps it is only the tragedy of conflict that teaches us the true value of peace” (*A/41/PV.5, p. 11*). Everything we have, such as it is, everything we work for, everything we wish and strive for — indeed, the world as it is, with much to be desired and the better world we think we can make — will all be erased in an instant by nuclear war. We must eliminate that possibility — and we have tried. The universal ban on nuclear weapons was overwhelmingly adopted at the United Nations and swiftly ratified back home, except in the Philippines, for bureaucratic reasons no one can divine unless they work in Government. Let us not wait for conflict to make us value the peace we have. Let us hope that President Cory Aquino is proved wrong and that we will learn by reading and recollection, rather than living through our violent mistakes all over again.

Terrorism, with its links to drug trafficking and organized crime, is the most pressing threat to us all. The fight to retake the city of Marawi, which left it looking like Swiss cheese, was triggered by an attempt to serve a warrant of arrest for drug trafficking on the leader of an Islamic jihad. Some would argue that we should have just let him get on with his business. Unfortunately, my President will not oblige. He wants to eliminate the drug trade. I know this is terrible — where will we get our fix?

Peace is out of the hands of peacemakers — it is entirely in the hands of lawbreakers, who have attained a level of organization far superior to poor States like mine. The violent initiative lies entirely with them. But what lies with us is decency. It is in the way we fight, the way we protect, the way we defeat our enemies with arms when we are attacked with arms. We fight with the truth when attacked with lies, and will do so always and forever — all Constitutions mandate it — with only victory in mind and refusing anything less. Compromise throws away the advantage gained in a fight for survival, giving the other side time and space to recover and rally. But the fight must always be fought with a decent regard for the civilized opinion of humankind.

The fact that the United Nations endures after nearly 75 years is an affirmation of the world’s abiding desire for peace in spite of its failures, which are broadcast, and the dispiriting silence that greets its many successes. With successes, continuing challenges and unceasing criticism, the United Nations has demonstrated its resilience and affirmed its continuing relevance, which cannot be doubted given the alternative: the terrible wars out of which the United Nations was born. Shifting political realities, successive power configurations and the increasing confused nature of global realities should not make the United Nations change its character and goals of peace and democracy, sustainable development, if possible, and climate action for our sake and our children’s. For God’s sake, they are already screaming at us. They see what is there while we refuse to — none so blind, indeed. Those grim realities teach no values, they only urge surrender by compromise. That is unacceptable to the community of civilized nations. There can be no world order other than the one established with the United Nations as its guardian.

As a sovereign country, the Philippines renews its commitment to the ideals of the United Nations — to end the scourge of war, to uphold justice and, yes, human rights, starting with the right of the many who are good, to be safe and protected from the bad, and to maintain peace and amity among the nations under this one roof — united.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Elmar Maharram oglu Mammadyarov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

**Mr. Mammadyarov** (Azerbaijan): First of all, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly and to wish him every success in discharging his important duties. Mr. Muhammad-Bande can count on full support of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the duration of his tenure. My delegation is also grateful to Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés for her tremendous work in presiding over the Assembly during its seventy-third session. We are also grateful to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, for his efforts to reform the Organization and make it more integrated, effective and efficient.

The threats and challenges facing the world today demand our joint efforts to strengthen the international legal order and rekindle faith in multilateralism and confidence in the United Nations. Preserving the values of multilateralism and international cooperation, which underpin the Charter of the United Nations, is fundamental to promoting and supporting the three pillars of our Organization, namely, peace and security, development and human rights. It is our common duty, therefore, to promote and support a reformed, reinvigorated and strengthened multilateral system. The objective of ensuring a peaceful, just and prosperous world is hardly achievable if the universally accepted fundamental values, norms and principles are overtly disregarded so as to whitewash aggression and other illegal actions.

In that connection, accountability and the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the principal organs of the United Nations — the Security Council and the General Assembly — acquire significant importance. Evident disregard for Security Council resolutions containing binding demands cannot be an accepted practice if the Council is to discharge its primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security.

The United Nations, which was established to prevent war and human suffering by binding all its Members through a common rules-based order, plays a central role in ensuring that all involved in addressing peace and security concerns uphold the uniform application of the purposes and principles of our Organization. Supporting that role of the United Nations is crucial to maintaining peace, stability and sustainable development.

One of the strongest advocates of multilateralism in the contemporary international relations system is the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. We look forward to hosting the next Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, which will be held in Baku next month, on 25 and 26 October. Throughout its history, the Non-Aligned Movement has played a fundamental role in strengthening international peace and security by promoting adherence to its Bandung Principles. Azerbaijan's chairmanship will provide additional impetus for advancing the founding principles of the Movement, the sixty-fifth anniversary of which will be celebrated in 2020.

As we move forward on the path to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we must regularly assess to what extent we are delivering on our commitments. Sustainable efforts backed by adequate resources are essential to secure a bright future for our people and ensure that no one is left behind. Yesterday, Azerbaijan became a member of the Group of 77 and stands ready to actively contribute to efforts to ensure sustainable development through the promotion of economic cooperation.

Azerbaijan has maintained its sustainable economic growth and made consistent efforts to improve the living standards of its citizens. Through the successful implementation of economic development programmes over the past 15 years, Azerbaijan's economy has developed at a record pace, with a gross domestic product (GDP) 3.3 times that of its initial GDP. Over the same period, industrial production has increased 2.6 times, exports 4.7 times and foreign exchange reserves 24 times, reaching up to \$45 billion.

The social sphere has always been in the spotlight. This year, the Government adopted a social package that covers more than 4 million people, in a country of 10 million people. Social investments over the past 15 years resulted in a poverty rate decrease from 49 per cent in 2004 to less than 5 per cent in 2019. Over the same period, the unemployment rate dropped from 10.6 per cent to less than 5 per cent.

The World Bank's *Doing Business 2019* report lists Azerbaijan among the top 10 leading reformers. Our favourable business climate attracted investments of about \$250 billion in the Azerbaijani economy over the past 15 years, half of which are foreign investments.

Azerbaijan contributes to regional development efforts by promoting connectivity, bringing together continents and creating platforms for mutually beneficial cooperation. Despite being a land-locked country, Azerbaijan has transformed into an important international transportation hub.

Azerbaijan attaches particular importance to the promotion of cultural diversity. All ethnic and religious groups live in Azerbaijan in peace and harmony. In recent years, we have hosted several major global events and launched a number of initiatives aimed at strengthening dialogue and mutual understanding. Among such initiatives is the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue, which has been recognized by the General Assembly

and the Secretary-General as a key global platform for promoting intercultural dialogue.

Having one of the youngest age distributions among the European countries, the Government places special emphasis on the full realization of the future generation's potential by offering quality education and decent job opportunities. A new employment strategy for Azerbaijan for the period 2019 to 2030 has set 13 targets for 2030. Those targets aim to reduce unemployment among young people, improve vocational education and training and increase employment in small and medium enterprises.

Azerbaijan continues to strive to ensure gender equality and empower women in their public and social lives. I am pleased to announce that we are currently developing a national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security.

As an emerging donor country, Azerbaijan continues to lend international humanitarian and development assistance to a number of countries through the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and the Azerbaijan International Development Agency. Particular attention is being paid to addressing the needs of developing and least developed countries.

The existential threat of climate change is becoming more real with every hurricane, wildfire and centimetre of sea-level rise. Azerbaijan is highly sensitive to the effects of climate change and is already facing negative impacts, such as floods, droughts and heat waves. My country is a party to major international agreements on climate action, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, its Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Our national policies and strategies have been adapted to be in line with those international instruments. The Government has taken important steps to minimize carbon dioxide emissions and has pledged to reduce them by 35 per cent by 2030.

It is well known that the Republic of Armenia's aggression against the Republic of Azerbaijan has resulted in the occupation of almost one fifth of my country's territory and the expulsion of more than 1 million Azerbaijanis from their homes and properties. The unresolved conflict continues to undermine international and regional peace and security. It is very important to note that, since last year's general

debate, no progress has been achieved in the political settlement of the conflict.

Despite direct contacts between the leaders of the two countries and meetings of Foreign Ministers over the past two years, the apparent lack of genuine interest by Armenia's leadership impedes the conflict resolution process. On the contrary, Yerevan, in words and deeds, has derailed the process and sabotaged the efforts for finding a peaceful settlement as soon as possible. The recent statements by the Prime Minister of Armenia and the members of his Government leave no doubt as to their annexationist intentions, in clear disregard of international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

In his statements delivered recently, including at the General Assembly here in New York, the Prime Minister of Armenia publicly disclosed his Government's strategy in negotiations — "to defend the outcomes of the war". In fact, what the leadership of Armenia intends to defend is the unacceptable status quo created through the unlawful use of force and the resulting occupation of the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan, accompanied by heinous crimes against humanity, war crimes and acts of genocide committed against the Azerbaijani civilian population and the total ethnic cleansing of all non-Armenians within the occupied territories.

In unanimously adopted resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), the Security Council condemned the use of force against Azerbaijan, the occupation of its territories, the attacks on civilians and the bombardment of inhabited areas. In addition, it reaffirmed respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, the inviolability of international borders and the inadmissibility of the use of force for the acquisition of territory. Through its resolutions and in response to territorial claims and forcible actions, the Council confirmed that the Nagorno Karabakh region is an integral part of Azerbaijan and demanded the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all the occupied territories. Relevant General Assembly resolutions and numerous decisions and documents adopted by other authoritative international organizations are framed along the same lines.

Nevertheless, key Security Council demands, unfortunately, remain unimplemented. Instead, despite early warnings and condemnation by the international



community, and against the background of ongoing efforts to reach a political settlement to the conflict, deliberate actions are being carried out in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan with a view to changing their demographic, cultural and physical character. Such actions include the implantation of settlers, the destruction and appropriation of historical and cultural heritage, and the exploitation and pillage of, and illicit trade in, assets, natural resources and other wealth in the occupied territories. Those actions constitute a clear violation of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and the 1977 Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions, amounting to war crimes and entailing State and individual criminal responsibility under international law.

It is abundantly clear that such policies and practices can in no way be reconciled with the objectives of achieving a peaceful resolution of the conflict, thereby necessitating the urgent action of the United Nations and the wider international community in order to defend the values, norms and principles of rules-based and civilized inter-State relations, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

The primary objective of the ongoing peace process is to eliminate the consequences of the war unleashed by Armenia, thereby ensuring the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan — as called for in the Security Council resolutions — the restoration of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognized borders and the return of the forcibly displaced persons to their homes and properties — again, as enshrined in the Council's resolutions. The achievement of that objective is a must and is not subject to compromise.

Azerbaijan remains committed to the earliest-possible political settlement of the conflict. At the same time, negotiations cannot last forever and imply a continuation and sustainment of the situation created as a result of the unlawful use of force, occupation and ethnic cleansing. Nor can they prejudice the realization of the inherent right of self-defence under the Charter and international law. Rather than wasting time on attempts to mislead the international community and its own people, Armenia must drop its losing attempts to prolong the unsustainable status quo and faithfully comply with its international obligations. The sooner Yerevan realizes the lack of any prospects for its

destructive political agenda, the sooner all peoples of the region will be able to benefit from peace, stability and cooperation and the better the chances for Armenia to overcome the serious political, economic and social burdens it is facing due to its aggressive and hostile policies in the region.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Kyaw Tint Swe, Union Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor of Myanmar.

**Mr. Kyaw Tint Swe** (Myanmar): I would like to congratulate Mr. Muhammad-Bande on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. We are confident that, under his able leadership, this session will be productive.

Myanmar considers this year's theme, "Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion", to be most timely. Those are among the most daunting challenges the world faces today. They can be overcome only through the coordinated efforts of the entire international community.

Eradicating poverty in all its forms is the greatest global challenge. In Myanmar we pursue a careful balance between economic and social development, on the one hand, and environmental protection and sustainability, on the other. The Government is resolute in its commitment to address poverty. To that end, we have developed a range of strategies that go beyond simply stimulating economic growth. Our efforts are bearing fruit — poverty in Myanmar has fallen from 48.2 per cent in 2005 to 24.8 per cent in 2017. Myanmar has also experienced rapid economic growth in recent years, becoming one of the region's fastest-growing economies, with an annual growth rate of 6.5 per cent for the period 2018 to 2019.

The adverse effects of climate change pose significant obstacles to poverty reduction and threaten hard-won progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Indeed, climate change could be considered the defining issue of our time. In that connection, I welcome the convening of the Climate Action Summit and wish to underscore the urgency of responding to climate change and the importance of implementing both the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The United Nations is at the heart of multilateralism, on which we place our hopes and aspirations. In fact, cooperating with the United Nations is the cornerstone of our foreign policy. Our world is facing the challenges of transition and geopolitical shifts. The United Nations and other multilateral institutions need to recognize the disconnect between the expectations of peoples and nations and the responses of institutions and policies. Such a disconnect creates mistrust in international systems and institutions and causes the growth of unilateralism.

Countries are coming to the realization that, in the new geopolitical order, it is getting harder to find a common thread that ties their members together. The United Nations should take a stern look at how it is evolving. It must avoid the mistake of allowing unwieldy mandates or unilaterally extending its powers with no corresponding due diligence. Multilateral institutions should never be used as a tool to target Member States. They should uphold the sovereignty of nations, working in concert for a greater good, ensure the equality of actions and scrupulously avoid double standards and exceptionalism. Left unchecked, the United Nations, as a beacon of peace and security, may end up with huge deficits of trust. That cannot be allowed to happen, as there are critical issues that can be addressed only through multilateral efforts. No nation should be made to feel that its value in the United Nations is decided by the degree of material wealth and political influence it can muster.

Myanmar is undergoing a process of democratization and, in doing so, has embraced the culture of political dialogue to solve internal conflicts by peaceful means. We regard the rule of law as a fundamental principle of democratic governance. The Government and the legislature are seeking to make our laws more transparent to ensure that each and every person is equal before the law.

To attain progress in those and many other areas, we need a constitution that can truly protect and advance the democratic rights of the people. In that regard, the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, our parliament, has taken a bold initiative towards the amendment of a number of provisions in the Constitution. Our democratic endeavours and associated reforms are continuous and vibrant.

The achievement of national reconciliation and peace is our Government's topmost priority. We have

convened three sessions of the Union Peace Conference and adopted a total of 51 basic principles to be included in the Union Peace Accord. A total of 10 ethnic armed organizations have already signed the nationwide ceasefire agreement. Despite the recent successes in broadening the agreement's coverage, there is still a long way to go before all remaining non-signatories are on board. Notwithstanding challenges, negotiations continue. We are determined to resolve differences through dialogue, negotiation and peaceful means, thereby building mutual trust and understanding.

Let me now touch upon recent developments in Rakhine state. Our democratic transition is still young and, as yet, incomplete. We must overcome a range of challenges, from an imperfect Constitution to continued conflicts. The situation in Rakhine state — an issue that has deep and historical roots — counts among those challenges. We fully share the concern of the international community over the violence that affects communities in Rakhine. In fact, the Government's efforts to bring about peace and stability predate the violent attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) terrorist group in 2016 and 2017, which triggered the current humanitarian crisis.

Since assuming office in 2016, the elected civilian Government has placed the highest priority on addressing the situation in Rakhine state. To find a lasting solution, we established the Central Committee for the Implementation of Peace, Stability and Development in Rakhine State, chaired by our State Counsellor, and, subsequently, the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, headed by Mr. Kofi Annan. Our aim was to find long-term, durable and practical solutions to the delicate and sensitive issues in Rakhine. Our priority now is to expedite repatriation and create a more conducive environment for verified returnees. To that end, we are cooperating with Bangladesh, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, as well as friends and well-wishers.

Myanmar is aware of the many obstacles that need to be addressed, including destructive movements in the camps aimed at preventing repatriation and exploiting the plight of displaced persons. Smooth and successful repatriation requires genuine political will and committed efforts, as well as strict adherence to the signed agreements — and I stress “signed agreements”. The displaced persons now in Cox's Bazar who had

been residents in Rakhine have a different legal status. We are willing to repatriate them in accordance with the bilateral agreement signed between Myanmar and Bangladesh. The agreement calls for the issuance of identity cards to the returnees. Those who qualify for citizenship under our citizenship law will be issued with citizenship cards. The rest will be issued with national verification cards, which are similar to the green cards much sought after by immigrants in the United States.

Myanmar strongly holds the view that issues between neighbours can and must be resolved bilaterally in an amicable and friendly manner. The current issue of displaced persons in Cox's Bazar can and must be resolved bilaterally, particularly as Myanmar and Bangladesh signed a bilateral agreement to address the issue in November 2017. Despite obstacles, including killings and threats by ARSA, some 300 people from camps in Cox's Bazar have returned under their own arrangements and of their own volition. They have resumed their lives in conditions of safety and dignity.

There have been persistent calls to put pressure on Myanmar. There have been calls to set up a so-called safe zone inside Myanmar. Such a demand is neither warranted nor workable. We call on Bangladesh to faithfully implement the bilateral agreement, which is the only feasible way to resolve the issue of displaced persons. We also call on Bangladesh to allow the speedy repatriation of those who have long expressed their desire to return, including some 400 people of Hindu faith. Grandstanding, introducing new elements or putting forward new conditionalities will be a futile exercise. The people of Myanmar are pragmatic and resilient. We value friendship with all nations, but we do not respond well to coercion that is removed from fairness and consideration due to a sovereign independent member of the family of nations.

Accordingly, on 15 September, Myanmar's Parliament, the Hluttaw, celebrated International Day of Democracy, during which politicians from various political parties made statements. I wish to highlight one of the statements made on Rakhine by a member of parliament from an ethnic minority. With regard to the external pressure exerted on Myanmar, he said:

“They are flouting our territorial integrity and national sovereignty. Only peoples of sovereign independent nations can enjoy the true essence of democracy.”

The Government of Myanmar sincerely sympathizes with all those who have been affected by the problems in Rakhine state. Myanmar is not opposed to accountability for any wrongdoing related to the large outflow of displaced persons to Bangladesh. We stand firmly for the principles that are the cornerstones of the international legal order.

On 30 July 2018, President Win Myint initiated a special investigation procedure, pursuant to which the Independent Commission of Enquiry is currently preparing a report with recommendations for further action. Like some other States Members of the United Nations, Myanmar has a military-justice system, which is provided for in our 2008 Constitution. A military investigation into Rakhine is currently being undertaken by the Office of the Judge Advocate General. A recent announcement suggests that there will soon be a court martial. The integrity of these independent investigations should not be compromised by international actors.

On 4 July, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) requested that a Pre-Trial Chamber authorize an investigation into the Rakhine allegations. Independent scholars have already identified the request as problematic in that it excludes allegations of crimes committed by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), deliberately omits the undisputed fact that ARSA's actions precipitated the current displacement, relies heavily on human rights reports that contain factual errors with regard to both international and Myanmar law, and mischaracterizes the criminal-justice system of Myanmar. This critique is all the more serious when we consider that Myanmar is not a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The Government's position remains very clear: the Court does not have jurisdiction over crimes alleged to have been committed in our country. We are both able and willing to do investigate and prosecute the allegations ourselves.

The ICC Prosecutor is focusing on the outflow from Rakhine to Bangladesh, but she is silent on the broader picture of the various reasons, immediate as well as long-standing, that brought about the displacement, as well as the various actors who were involved. Her silence widens the divide between the Court and the people of Myanmar, who have been made to feel that their concerns are of lesser import than the perceptions of influential nations and organizations acquainted but superficially with the true situation on the ground.

Myanmar was a British colony for nearly 100 years. During that period, the colonial Power transferred hundreds of thousands of civilians from British India to then-Burma to propel the rapidly expanding rice production and export sectors. In 1927 alone, there were more than 480,000 such transfers into occupied colonial Burma. The Burmese were reduced to a minority in their own capital city, Rangoon, which is now Yangon. Immigrants from Bengal, mainly from the Chittagong region moved en masse into the western townships of Arakan. As is the case with other colonized territories across the world, our local population had no say whatsoever with regard to the seismic demographic transformation of their lands. Nevertheless, Myanmar now accepts it as part of the chequered legacy for which we assumed responsibility when we regained our independence in 1948. It was only in 1949, with the adoption of the Fourth Geneva Convention, that international law expressly prohibited the transfer of civilians into occupied territories. But there was no recognition of the troublesome consequences of such transfer operations.

If the international community passes fundamentally different judgments on occurrences of one and the same practice, albeit at different times, perceptions that double standards are being applied will grow. If left unaddressed, such perceptions will undermine respect for international criminal justice and fuel the danger of extreme polarization.

We have objected to the formation of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar since its inception, because of our serious concern about the mission's composition and mandate, as well as its capacity for fairness and impartiality. Chair Marzuki Darusman's reports, without exception, have been biased and flawed, based not on facts but on narratives. Events have therefore proved that our concerns are justified. The latest reports are even worse. We cannot help but conclude that they were prompted more by hostility towards the democratically elected Government and the peace-loving people of Myanmar than by a genuine desire to resolve the challenges of Rakhine. We therefore also reject the establishment of the new Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, which was set up to bring Myanmar before such tribunals as the International Criminal Court, to which we strongly object. We are also disappointed by the report by former Guatemalan Foreign Affairs

Minister, Gert Rosenthal. The facts presented are inaccurate, distorted and lack professional objectivity.

We request the States Members of the United Nations to differentiate between the motives that are behind the actions of the General Assembly. Is there a genuine will to protect human rights or is the aim to hijack human rights issues for political purposes?

To address the delicate issue of Rakhine, we need truth, fairness and constructive support. Exertions of discriminatory scrutiny and political pressure with malicious intent will not contribute to our efforts to resolve the problems. In this regard, we, the Government and the people of Myanmar, truly appreciate the support offered by many friends and partners, as well as their constructive cooperation based on genuine goodwill. This support benefits not just the people of Myanmar, but people all over the world who value justice and fair play for all nations, both great and small.

*Mr. Ingunez (Malta), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

The people of Myanmar have waited decades for the emergence of democracy in our country. Transformation from authoritarianism to a democratic system is a daunting challenge, but it is a challenge that our Government and our people have taken on with faith and determination. Our peace process, based on an inclusive framework for political dialogue with all ethnic armed groups, will continue. We will use the platform of the Union Peace Conference — the 21st Century Panglong to create the democratic federal union to which our people aspire. We will strive to build a society that respects human rights and fundamental freedoms — a society where all citizens can attain peace, prosperity and freedom from fear.

We invite the international community to join hands with us, in a constructive way, to ensure that democracy takes firm root in Myanmar.

**The Acting President:** I now call on His Excellency Mr. Tsogtbaatar Damdin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia.

**Mr. Damdin (Mongolia):** The world in which we live today is indeed complex, sometimes chaotic, uncertain and unpredictable. It faces mounting challenges, including protracted conflicts, persistent poverty and hunger, terrorism and violent extremism and a rapidly changing climate. Although democracy is prevalent as never before, its strength is being challenged and tested.



Inequalities are deepening, global military spending and arms competition are increasing, and respect for international norms and institutions is weakening. Multilateralism is being challenged more than ever before. In short, sometimes it feels like we are living in the cold war era.

But that era is long over. Back then, diametrically opposed antagonistic ideologies led to existential standoffs. I want to repeat this: those standoffs were existential. Compared to that, in today's world, there is virtually no other existence-threatening enemy, except for terrorism and the climate emergency. If one looks at the foreign policy documents, constitutions and laws of the absolute majority of countries, it is clear that war and violence are prohibited. Today all countries generally pursue growth, progress and prosperity for their own people, within their own jurisdictions, through international cooperation.

This general situation, coupled with unprecedented levels of education and information saturation in the wider population, as well as science and technological progress, apparently makes us believe that our reason is unshakably strong and extremely unlikely to yield to irrational urges. As a result, when we delve today into provocative and adversarial territory in our international debates, we seem to have an underlying belief that they will not degenerate into violence or corrosive interactions. However, that may be mistaken overconfidence in our intellect, humanity and reason.

We should not forget that we remain at core social animals. Aggression and anger triggers counter-aggression and angry responses. In addition to that, more than ever before we are vulnerable to the anger and frustration of a few multiplying and exploding into mass frustration due to our interconnectedness through the social media. We should always be mindful of that unique and unchartered territory. We have yet to fully understand the social change that the information age is generating. On top of all the aforementioned realities that we do not yet understand, we should not forget that we have piles of nuclear weapons that can put an end to all our differences, once and for all, along with all the virtues that life has to offer.

That is not the way we want to settle our differences. Indeed, after living in the world for about 30 years without an enemy — in the full nuclear sense — we are used to taking global peace for granted. We therefore often do little to control our rhetoric, as far as its

potential to trigger animosity is concerned. However, in today's environment, we should not overestimate the strength of our reason and underestimate the threat posed by our animal instincts.

The world as we know it today is no masking its true nature through apparent political correctness. It is increasingly unveiling its rigidity and roughness with honesty, which reminds us to calm down and reassess the existing risks and dangers. In the light of the foregoing, we ought to realize that compared to the cold war era, our present world is a brotherhood of nations. If we accept to respect and understand each other before anything else, there are no differences today that we cannot overcome.

Over this past high-level week, the international community gathered to unite in its resolve to speed up the collective action towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and addressing the climate emergency. Mongolia strongly supports the pledge to make the coming decade one of action and delivery by supporting the most vulnerable and coming first to the aid of those who are the furthest behind.

I wish to applaud the leadership of Secretary-General António Guterres for hosting the Climate Action Summit earlier this week. The summit proved instrumental in building the momentum to turn the tide in the climate emergency, as 77 countries, along with over 100 cities, committed to net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. Seventy countries pledged to boost their nationally determined contributions by 2020, and a dozen Governments doubled their contributions to the Green Climate Fund.

Science tells us that any temperature increase greater than 1.5°C would lead to catastrophic and irreversible damage to the ecosystem that supports us. Like many other developing countries, Mongolia has contributed the least to global warming. Yet, in Mongolia, over the past 80 years, annual mean temperatures have increased by 2.26°C. As a result, 77 per cent of our territory has been affected by desertification and land degradation. Over the past 40 years, the permafrost area has shrunk less than half of what it was, and more than 800 lakes have dried up. Given the fact that over 80 per cent of rural people's livelihoods depend on nature, climate change is already having a devastating impact on our people, our lives and our economy.

For its part, Mongolia is faithfully fulfilling its nationally determined contribution to reduce its

greenhouse-gas emissions by 14 per cent. Furthermore, a more ambitious nationally determined contribution target, along with sound climate-change legislation and policies, is being developed. Mongolia has abundant solar and wind power resources and aims at increasing the share of renewable energy in its energy mix to 30 per cent, up from the current 3 per cent, by 2030. To this end, the Government has introduced feed-in tariffs for wind, solar and hydropower energy and is working to refine the relevant legislation in support of renewable energy. We are also working to set up a multilateral institution for electricity-grid interconnections to ensure energy security, job creation and the reduction of carbon-dioxide emissions in North-East Asia by tapping into its wind- and solar-energy potential.

Mongolia is willing to contribute not only to energy security, but also to peace and security in North-East Asia. Back in the early 1980s, Mongolia first proposed the idea of creating a regional-security dialogue mechanism. Later in 2000, we proposed to have an informal meeting of foreign ministers of the North-East Asian countries at the margins of the Ministerial meetings of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum to start discussing the least contentious issues. At that time, some countries were not ready to start engaging in such a format. Perhaps now is a time more conducive to exploring such opportunities, which is why I reiterated our proposal at the last ASEAN Regional Forum Ministerial meeting, held on 2 August, in Bangkok.

Mongolia is indeed the only country in North-East Asia that does not have any unresolved issues — territorial or political — with other countries in the region or any other country in the world. Our aim is to provide a neutral ground for constructive dialogue and engagement. I am pleased to note that the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asian Security, which Mongolia has hosted annually since 2014, is evolving into an open and inclusive mechanism for facilitating talks, promoting mutual understanding and confidence-building, and searching for room for compromise when necessary. Its agenda has also expanded to cover both traditional security issues and those related to energy, infrastructure, green growth, investment and humanitarian cooperation.

The overall security situation in North-East Asia remains complex. As a country whose nuclear-weapon-free status is well-recognized, Mongolia stands for a denuclearized Korean peninsula and welcomes

the series of recent high-level summits between the main stakeholders. I join others in underscoring the importance of a continued dialogue, the implementation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States joint statement and the relevant Security Council resolutions. In this context, I would also like to express my support for the idea proposed on 24 September by President Moon Jae-in of the Republic of Korea to transform the demilitarized zone into an international peace zone (see A/74/PV.3).

Achieving sustainable development for the people and the planet will not be smooth or easy. But we are all in this together. The heightened interdependence of the human family requires an effective global partnership to secure our common future. The full implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 needs to be closely aligned with the SDGs and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. We expect that its five-year review in December will come up with an ambitious road map for accelerating its implementation.

The landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) continue to face considerable challenges that are inherently linked to their geographical handicap. As a result, they remain largely marginalized in the context of global trade. Their combined share of global exports declined from 1.2 per cent in 2014 to 0.98 per cent in 2018, with commodities accounting for the bulk of their exports. Increased international assistance for export diversification, value addition, infrastructure development, institutional and productive capacity-building, and better market access remain essential for the LLDCs. Mongolia is proud to contribute to South-South cooperation by promoting the interests of LLDCs and through its participation in establishing the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries in 2006. Today this Ulaanbaatar-based think tank is actively engaging in global dialogues on related issues by providing evidence-based advisory services and organizing regional and international workshops. I wish to invite all States Members and development partners to support the work of this centre of excellence. For its part, the Government of Mongolia has been contributing \$100,000 annually to the institution over the past several years.

In these turbulent times, democracy has been tested in many corners of the world. Some countries are having a hard time managing a downward spiral, while

others have been able to withstand such a trajectory and strengthen the power of their people. In 1990, nearly three decades ago, Mongolia made the historic choice to adopt democracy and a market economy. Although the road leading to a multiparty system, parliamentary democracy, free elections, open markets, human rights and the rule of law has been bumpy and ridden with knolls and holes, we have been able to build our democracy and are proud of its solid achievements.

Today, our citizens enjoy human rights, fundamental freedoms, ownership of private property and freedom of expression and movement. Democracy has unleashed the inherent potential of individuals, and the private sector now accounts for over 80 per cent of our gross domestic product. Our access to information and right to assembly allow for greater transparency, online and offline social interaction, and freedom of speech. Moreover, in recent years, Mongolia has taken a host of measures aimed at strengthening merit-based professional civil service, cutting red tape, promoting the rule of law and fighting corruption head-on. Globally, Mongolia has been proud to chair such various representative international entities as the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, the Community of Democracies and the Freedom Online Coalition and share with others its lessons learned in democratic consolidation.

There is no doubt that democracy needs to be nurtured as we move forward with its consolidation. Accordingly, governance reform issues, including better checks and balances, securing the independence of the judiciary and greater authority for local and municipality levels, are being broadly discussed as our Parliament considers amendments to our 1992 Constitution. It is of paramount importance that we encourage the active involvement of all people in this exercise. The Parliament is set to decide on a national referendum on the constitutional amendments. I could not agree more with Secretary-General António Guterres when, in his message to the people and the Government of Mongolia on the International Day of Democracy — on the eve of the thirtieth anniversary of our democratic transition — he urged all Governments to respect the right to active, substantive and meaningful participation.

The world today is home to 1.8 billion young people — the largest generation of young people in history. Young people are a source of new ideas, innovation, energy and dynamism. The constructive

engagement of young generations in addressing global issues is critical. This point was vividly demonstrated last weekend when millions of young people marched in the global climate strike to demand climate justice, action and accountability. Their resolve helped to boost the momentum at the Climate Action Summit.

With a view to better utilizing social media to promoting a culture of peace, non-violence and tolerance among youth, in April in Ulaanbaatar, my Ministry organized a unique forum called the Peacebook Forum, in collaboration with Facebook. In addition, in June, my Ministry, together with the United Nations, hosted the first-ever North-East Asia workshop on youth, peace and security. The participants at the workshop highly appreciated our initiative to publish a completely digital peacebook journal of international relations. This journal would disseminate and publicize research works on global issues by scholars and peacebuilders from around the world. Young people would benefit from such a journal because it would promote a culture of peace, increase tolerance, encourage intercultural and interreligious dialogue and enhance the voice and participation of youth in decision-making in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Furthermore, in our efforts to encourage critical, analytical, scholarly and academic thinking on global peace and security issues among young people, we have also proposed the creation of a competitive award called the Peace, Progress, Prosperity Promise Award to spur scholarly research. As we advance all these initiatives, we will be working together with all of our interested partners, including the Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Youth.

As we near the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, Mongolia reaffirms its unwavering commitment to serving the Organization, which is the centre of multilateralism. My delegation highly commends the Secretary-General's bold reforms of the peace and security pillar, in repositioning of the United Nations development system and in undertaking management and gender parity initiatives — all of which are designed to make the United Nations fit to meet the current manifold challenges. Our collective efforts must be redoubled to uphold and strengthen the capacity for multilateralism to promote peace, security and sustainable development, while also ensuring that no one and no country is left behind.

**The Acting President:** I now call on His Excellency Mr. José Condungua António Pacheco, Minister for

Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Mozambique.

**Mr. Pacheco** (Mozambique) (*spoke in Portuguese; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): It is my distinct honour and privilege to take the floor during the general debate at the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique, who is unable to attend this august gathering owing to national imperatives and a complicated schedule.

I would like to take this opportunity to warmly congratulate His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his election as President of General Assembly at the current session. We offer him Mozambique's unequivocal support during his term. We also hail Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the Assembly at its seventy-third session, for her work and the progress achieved during her term, particularly in mobilizing the international community to fulfil international commitments and implement actions that enhance the United Nations as a more relevant space for multilateral coordination on multiple challenges and global commitments.

I would convey our warm gratitude to His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his selfless efforts aimed at strengthening the United Nations system by reforming the international peace and security architecture and repositioning the development system to better respond to the aspirations of Member States, with a particular emphasis on implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The seventy-fourth session takes place at a time when the world faces a surge in political, geostrategic and trade tensions, the devastating effects of climate change and an increase in inequality among States and in access to quality basic social services that are essential to sustaining a decent standard of living. Sub-Saharan Africa, where Mozambique is located, is an example of this reality, as we remain the region with the largest number of disadvantaged people facing such multidimensional deprivations as low income and reduced access to education, health, food, water and sanitation, as well as the inadequate provision of socioeconomic infrastructure that drives sustainable development.

In that context, the focus of this session's theme on eradicating poverty is timely, as the issue of poverty challenges all of us and drives agendas all over the world, particularly the 2030 Agenda. To this end, Mozambique reiterates the relevance of the principle of shared but differentiated responsibilities, the need to adhere to that principle and the importance of partners respecting the commitments undertaken under the framework of the internationally agreed development goals, including the predictability of aid flows from our partners in accordance with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

In an environment characterized by growing mistrust among nations, the world continues to be plagued by inequality, tensions and debilitating divisions that challenge the role of multilateralism as the preferred mechanism to debate ideas, coordinate and reach consensus. In keeping with the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, the Organization's central mission is to forge lasting solutions to put an end to prolonged insecurity caused by political instability and internal and external conflicts involving States and other actors, particularly in the African continent and the Middle East. The prevalence of acts linked to fundamentalism and violent extremism, as well as arms proliferation and trade, particularly in weapons of mass destruction, small arms and light weapons, threaten national, regional and global peace and security and are added causes of concern for our country.

In that regard, and under the framework of our peace policy, we support all global initiatives and partnerships, including actions focused on dialogue through international disarmament mechanisms and on combating fundamentalism and related activities, violent extremism and all forms of terrorist acts. Accordingly, Mozambique reiterates its full support for the Secretary-General in his efforts aimed at reforming the United Nations development system as well as his peace and security initiatives to promote dialogue as the fundamental tool in an agenda based on conflict prevention.

Mozambique considers Security Council reform to be a fundamental goal in the framework of the conflict-prevention and management architecture. We reaffirm our wish for the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform to move more quickly so that the Council can achieve greater credibility and legitimacy and better reflect reality in the twenty-first century through a wider membership and broader action.



In the light of international law and the United Nations Charter, Mozambique again joins other States in calling for adherence to the United Nations road map for the peaceful resolution of the dispute in Western Sahara through a referendum on the self-determination of the Sahrawi people.

We remain concerned about the prevailing situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. In this regard, we reiterate our appeal for a negotiated lasting solution to the Palestinian issue based on dialogue, through which the two States accept to live side-by-side as neighbours in keeping with the principles of peaceful coexistence and international law.

Mozambique reiterates its appeal for the normalization of the political, diplomatic, economic and financial relations between Cuba and the United States of America. The economic blockade against Cuba has no justification in a world that we wish to be more harmonious and committed to a global development agenda devoid of exclusion. We also call for the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations and dialogue to help the leaders of both States to find fertile ground and that the legacy of peace, harmony and coexistence be cultivated and transmitted to future generations.

In a similar vein, we join the Foreign Minister of Tanzania in his plea for lifting the sanctions against Zimbabwe (see A/74/PV.10). We believe that the people of that country should coexist successfully and harmoniously within the global village.

Mozambique has incorporated the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals into its national governance programme, which gives priority to agribusiness, economic and social infrastructure networks, the expansion of the electric grid's coverage and ecotourism, which, combined with other cross-cutting efforts in socioeconomic fields, will drive our eagerly desired sustainable development.

Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion is an appeal to our collective responsibility to leave no one behind. In this regard, the Government of Mozambique has adopted an approach focused on protecting and respecting human rights, promoting gender equality and equity, and building the capacity of women, young people and other vulnerable social groups, while keeping in mind the need for Mozambican society to secure a demographic dividend.

Due to its geographic location, Mozambique is considered by some scientists as the country in the world the second-most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The two extremely severe tropical cyclones — Cyclones Idai and Kenneth — which devastated vast regions of our country in March and April, attest to that assertion, with a toll of 689 deaths and the destruction of the economic and social fabric in the central and northern regions of our country, while the south continues to suffer from the effects in 2018 of drought and Cyclone Dineo.

We wish to take this opportunity to reiterate our gratitude to all bilateral and multilateral cooperation partners, the Secretary-General and the United Nations system of funds and specialized agencies for their multifaceted support during our emergencies and in the process of rebuilding infrastructure and the socioeconomic fabric affected by the cyclones. Aware that the effects of two cyclones was beyond our country's capacity to respond, we convened an international donor conference in the city of Beira in May, in coordination with cooperation partners, which resulted in commitments in the amount of \$1.2 billion, which is a portion of the \$3.2 billion required, according to the estimates of the post-disaster needs assessment.

The new Government continues to make efforts aimed at securing resources to fill the reconstruction-financing gap. I once again wish to express our profound gratitude for the pledges of support and solidarity and reiterate our continued readiness to work with our partners to accelerate the process for the disbursement of the pledged aid.

We are also committed to strengthening adaptation and resilience measures in line with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which we signed in June 2018, as we are aware that natural disasters driven by climate change have become recurrent phenomena. On behalf of our country, we take this opportunity to express our solidarity with and condolences to the families of the victims of Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas.

Actions to manage the effects of climate change on our country also include strengthening the early-warning system for natural phenomena and mapping vulnerable areas in order to prevent natural disasters and mitigate their consequences. Our actions also include the establishment of risk-response and management structures, the activation of the Mozambique Emergency Relief Fund and joining the risk pool of the

African Risk Capacity Insurance Company Limited, a specialized agency of the African Union for assisting participants in recovering from natural disasters.

In that regard, we thank the Secretary-General for his wise and timely decision to convene the Climate Action Summit this week so as to mobilize the international community in boosting its ambitions towards achieve the goal of reducing greenhouse-gas emissions, with a view to reversing the harmful consequences of global warming, which is a major threat to our planet and humankind.

With respect to integrated rural development and the sustainable management of biodiversity, ecosystems and natural resources, Mozambique has made efforts to preserve biodiversity by creating conservation areas covering approximately 25 per cent of the 800,000 square kilometres of its national territory. These actions have been reinforced by the continued increase in the use of cleaner and renewable sources of energy — natural gas, wind, solar and hydroelectric — so as to provide energy for all of our citizens by 2030.

On 6 August, in Maputo, we signed the Peace and National Reconciliation Agreement, which reflects the success of our internal dialogue and creates the conditions necessary to galvanize the Mozambican development agenda. With that positive step behind us, we express our utmost recognition to the international community, particularly the dialogue facilitators and the contact group, coordinated by the Swiss Ambassador with the support of the United States Ambassador in Maputo, for that historic accomplishment, which cements the consensus reached around the administrative decentralization and military affairs agenda. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process currently under way covers aspects related to the command structure and direction of our national defence and security forces in order to achieve that goal.

We recognize that the accomplishment of this important process requires a robust technical and financial capacity. For that reason, we take this opportunity to reiterate our appeal to the international community for continued support and assistance in implementing the agreement, particularly in maintaining dialogue as the key platform for resolving disagreements.

We wish to share our great happiness at having received, from 4 to 6 September, His Holiness Pope

Francis, the Head of the Catholic Church, whose visit, under the theme of “Hope, peace and reconciliation”, strengthened our conviction and hope in relation to the consolidation of national unity, peace, harmony and common well-being through continued dialogue among Mozambicans.

The full implementation of the agreement will allow our country to further strengthen democracy and hold presidential, legislative and provincial elections on 15 October, motivated by a spirit of peaceful democratic coexistence.

The successes we have achieved in our internal dialogues are a positive development in our agenda of achieving permanent peace. However, this positive development was marred by negative forces in the province of Cabo Delgado, in the north of Mozambique, who continue to be a source of concern as they sow death, destroy the socioeconomic fabric and create instability in areas of that region. The Government has vigorously carried out its constitutional duty to protect its citizens and their property as well as the economic and social infrastructure.

The restoration of peace in our country bolsters and consolidates our efforts to create an increasingly attractive and favourable environment for public and private investment, both domestic and international. The fiscal and monetary reforms under way in Mozambique have led to an effective recovery of our macroeconomic stability. It was in that context that the city of Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, became the African business capital when it welcomed the twelfth United States-Africa Business Summit, with the participation of African Heads of State and Government, senior representatives of the United States Government, and business leaders from the African continent and the United States of America. We would further highlight the convening of the international “Growing Blue” conference in Maputo, which focused on the sustainable use of the oceans and seas under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These and the other events that we have hosted are part of the economic diplomacy that we are pursuing, which we wish to make more active and intensify in order to bring tangible benefits to our country and the entire nation of Mozambique.

I will conclude my remarks by reaffirming Mozambique’s trust in the United Nations as a privileged platform for multilateral coordination in the quest for solutions to the common challenges facing humankind.

Let us demonstrate, today, tomorrow and always, our spirit of cohesion in the noble mission of globally promoting the triad of peace and security, development and human rights for the advancement and well-being of the peoples of our wonderful planet.

**The Acting President:** I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Karen Cummings, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.

**Ms. Cummings** (Guyana): I bring to President Tijjani Muhammad-Bande fraternal greetings on behalf of his Excellency David Arthur Granger, President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. I wish also to extend warm congratulations to him on behalf of the Government and the people of Guyana on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly, the importance of which is accentuated by the salience of the theme that he has chosen for our general debate. We assure him of the full support of Guyana in the discharge of the weighty responsibilities of his office.

Allow me also to record our gratitude to your predecessor, Her Excellency María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, for her prudent and pragmatic stewardship of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. At the same time, we commend Secretary-General António Guterres for his continued sterling leadership of the Organization, including the timely convening of the Climate Action Summit. We express our thanks for the report on the work of the Organization (A/74/1) before us, which offers intriguing insights into the achievements within the last year and equally of the significant undertakings still ahead.

In that context, we cannot but reflect on the increasingly challenging international situation, marked by diverse crises, shifting global power dynamics and reversals of long-standing commitments and obligations. Together these aspects require an intrepid interrogation concerning the extant global order, including many of the principles and understandings made sacrosanct by the harsh experiences and lessons of many generations, which have given meaning and purpose to the establishment of the United Nations.

Accordingly, it is evident that, while we have not succeeded sufficiently or satisfactorily in fully achieving the world envisaged at the birth of the United Nations in 1945, the centrality, vision and work of the United Nations have assumed increased, rather than diminished, importance in pursuit of the noble ideals enshrined in its Charter. Purposeful action must be

embraced at the national and global levels on a range of urgent imperatives to withstand scepticism and preserve faith in our United Nations.

Within that context, Guyana is pursuing transformative action to secure its advance as a modern, cohesive and prosperous State, including through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We have incorporated the 2030 Agenda into our national development strategy — the Green State Development Strategy: Vision 2040. This development strategy is Guyana's road map to becoming a green State. It emphasizes protecting our environment, enhancing prosperity and social cohesion and laying the foundation for the involvement of every citizen in sustaining a low-carbon trajectory of inclusive, diversified and climate-resilient growth.

As a low-lying coastal State, Guyana is particularly vulnerable to climate impacts. Indeed, Guyana understands well the risks posed by climate change, as we see daily evidence of damage to the coastal zone, frequency of flooding in the hinterland areas and extreme meteorological events. Guyana ranks high among the countries most vulnerable to natural disasters, which compels urgency on our part to institute adaptation and disaster-risk-reduction measures.

However, beyond merely responding as an affected country, Guyana has long committed itself to exercising leadership in pursuing actions to help mitigate anthropogenic climate change. Guyana has established the importance of global environment services provided both using our natural resources and under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We have taken ambitious national action, particularly in partnership with Norway, which we trust will continue to resonate positively and globally. These actions include the creation of a greenhouse-gas inventory, the integration of climate change into academic curricula, and the Green Towns initiative.

The science is clear, and the recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has reaffirmed that the agreed goals for carbon emissions set out in the Paris Agreement are not sufficient to slow the rate of global warming, and that additional reductions are now required to slow and reverse the impacts of climate change. I take this opportunity to underscore that the existential threat posed by climate change demands the urgent effort of all actors. We

therefore applaud the fruitful discussions and positive momentum generated by the Climate Action Summit held last Monday.

Our experience has shown that whether in combating climate impacts, expanding economic benefits or consolidating democratic norms, extreme vigilance is required to safeguard hard-earned and cherished gains. Indeed, they must be attended to with great care to avoid reversals. For instance, while Guyana's consistent economic growth has been among the highest in our region for several years, resulting in the nation now being classified as a high middle-income country, graduation has not caused many of the persistent difficulties to disappear.

In the face of greater constraints in access to concessional resources, our growth has instead reinforced the need for fiscal prudence and stability to achieve our core national objectives, including the continued reduction of the burden of poverty and the provision of increased and equitable access to all basic social services, particularly with respect to education and health for all our citizens. This reality constrains us to be very studied in our approaches, and we reiterate the call for vulnerability to be taken into account as a valid criterion in determining development progress.

In the political realm, Guyana's strong record of achievements at the national and international levels is compelling. Much progress has been made in consolidating democratic norms and the rule of law. The rights and freedoms of all citizens are respected. In this regard, it is also evident that considerable progress realized under the coalition Government cannot be taken for granted. Since coming to office, local and regional elections, which had been held in abeyance for more than two decades, have been held twice within four years.

Guyana has responded generously to the influx of men, women and children who have left our western neighbour, Venezuela, in recent times, as well as those from States of the Caribbean Community that have been affected by unprecedented natural disasters.

Last July, Guyana submitted its inaugural voluntary national review to the 2019 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council. We reported significant progress, particularly with respect to several goals and reaffirmed our commitment to enhanced emphasis on quality education as a key entry point to developing

synergies across the agenda as a whole, as well as the need for capacity support and partnership, especially in the area of data collection and management.

In addition, in response to the interplay of developments in the democratic exercise of the parliamentary and legislative arms of the Government, President David Arthur Granger has announced that national and regional elections will be held on 2 March 2020 to assure the democratic renewal of governance in Guyana.

Guyana is on the verge of becoming a new oil-producing nation, with its attendant significant opportunities and challenges. Extensive preparation is under way to guarantee the responsible management of the new resources. A future of considerable promise for all the peoples of Guyana therefore beckons, and it is they who will determine the course, outcome and legacy that we will bequeath to succeeding generations.

To that end, President Granger has declared a decade of development for all Guyanese that will focus on ensuring that all of us can enjoy the good life, especially through enhanced educational outcomes at all levels and the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, which includes addressing the challenge of domestic violence. Guyana's focus on education is rooted in the conviction that our people are our greatest asset, and as leaders we have an obligation to develop the capacity of our human resources in an inclusive manner. We should therefore urge greater collaboration among Member States to devise strategies to achieve quality education for all, and we simultaneously call upon developed countries, traditional and emerging donors and international financing mechanisms to increase funding for education and to support programmes according to the needs, priorities and circumstances of countries.

We are persuaded that the health of our peoples is just as important as education. Guyana has therefore welcomed the convening of the High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage, with the profound theme, "Moving together to build a healthier world". The importance of enhanced access to essential health services, including a skilled health workforce and access to safe, quality, effective and affordable medicines and vaccines is key to having a healthy world population, where all can enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. This is self-evident. In this regard, the political declaration of the high-level meeting



on universal health coverage (resolution 74/2) represents an important global consensus on accelerating efforts at all levels to improve health outcomes.

Guyana has introduced its integrated health-service delivery network, which enables a more holistic primary health-care delivery mechanism by addressing the social determinants of health, while promoting the health of the individual. It places priority on the availability of preventive measures and health-care services at the level of primary health care. The Government of Guyana is committed to ensuring that all Guyanese, regardless of their location, have access to health services, and the Government is implementing its plan to establish health outposts and centres in all communities to reduce the need to travel long distances to access health-care services.

As at the domestic level, the maintenance of international peace and security requires respect by all stakeholders for the effective operation of international law and the institutions that underpin the international peace and security architecture created by the Charter. Foremost among these institutions is the Security Council, on which the Charter confers primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

However, this year marks the seventy-fourth anniversary of the signing of the Charter in San Francisco, and the world has changed dramatically since 1945. The number of States Members of the United Nations has quadrupled with the emergence of new independent States in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. The institutions of our Organization must therefore evolve with the times in order to reflect a new global dispensation. The Security Council is no exception. Guyana therefore looks forward to the successful conclusion of the ongoing intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform undertaken to ensure greater effectiveness, representation and legitimacy.

On some cardinal principles, the United Nations are indeed united. The sovereign equality of all States, respect for the territorial integrity of every State, the peaceful resolution of disputes between all States, respect for international rule of law — these are among the most effective guarantees of a world at peace. Last year, from this rostrum, Guyana updated the world on the disregard for these principles that our neighbour, the

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, continued to show in its controversy with Guyana (see A/73/PV.12). We showed how six months earlier, in March of last year, Guyana had acted on the decision of the Secretary-General to refer the controversy between our States to the International Court of Justice pursuant to the Geneva Agreement of 1966, to which Venezuela is a party. His decision was binding on Venezuela, and we warned of Venezuela's unwillingness to participate in the proceedings. A year later, our warning has been fulfilled. As we heard yesterday, Venezuela's unwillingness to be involved in the judicial resolution of the controversy has hardened into a refusal to pursue the path of peace through respect for the rule of law (see A/74/PV.10). Guyana has placed its faith in the world's highest Court, and it will continue to do so.

In like manner, we wish to recall our disappointment at the limited progress towards a two-State solution to the generational conflict between the people of the State of Israel and the State of Palestine that would allow the people of Israel to live within secure and internationally recognized borders and the people of Palestine to live in dignity in their own State, free from the yoke of foreign occupation. Similarly, we deplore the events in Myanmar that have led to the displacement and suffering of the Rohingya people. The international community must take the necessary steps to ensure the safety of the affected populations and a minimum of respect for their human rights. We applaud the efforts of Bangladesh within its capacity to provide, with the assistance of international agencies, a place of safety for the refugee population pending their return.

In our own region, we again join the overwhelming majority of members of the international community in calling for the removal of the trade and economic embargo against our sister Caribbean nation of Cuba, which is a serious impediment to the legitimate aspirations of the Cuban people for improvement in their material well-being and to their achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

I take this opportunity to reaffirm Guyana's commitment to the disarmament agenda of the United Nations as central to the Organization's efforts to achieve a stable, secure and peaceful world order. In recent times, we have witnessed a worrying departure from commitments to disarmament objectives by some actors. In this regard, I wish to emphasize that no State can afford to shy away from the shared responsibility devolving upon us as States Members of the United

Nations. For its part, Guyana continues to be a principled actor on questions of disarmament and is a State party to the major legal instruments constituting the disarmament regime.

The landmark Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is among those instruments that Guyana has ratified, and we remain supportive of all efforts that would lead to its timely entry into force. To this end, and with a view to encouraging the embrace of this Treaty by other States, Guyana recently hosted the Caribbean Regional Forum on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

My Government believes that our development efforts can best be maximized in societies that are safe and secure. For this reason, we also support the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, another scourge that affects the Caribbean and Latin American region.

As is clear, Guyana undoubtedly remains a firm believer in the value of multilateralism, and, as a small, vulnerable developing State, we see the United Nations, in its ideals and practices, as its greatest expression. It is through multilateralism that we can collectively find lasting solutions to the multifaceted and complex global challenges of our world. It is through multilateral approaches that we can advance the development, human rights and security pillars of the United Nations. It is multilateralism that offers us the best hope of advancing the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the SDGs.

For that reason, I take this opportunity and occasion to reaffirm the unequivocal commitment of Guyana to doing its part to strengthen multilateralism as the best path towards achieving the purposes and principles of the United Nations. We commit to strong and principled national action on behalf of all our peoples. The challenges are many, but not insurmountable, in the face of our collective will and unremitting effort. A solemn obligation therefore devolves upon us all, as Member States, to do the best we can to ensure continued progress.

As I conclude, permit me to quote the words attributed to Mahatma Gandhi: “You may never know what results come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no result.” I therefore encourage all of us not only to find words but to take fruitful action, and I assure the Assembly that Guyana will

not be found wanting in this endeavour. In this regard, the very recent opening of a United Nations House, as the face of the United Nations in Guyana, and within the context of the reform and repositioning of the United Nations development system, embodies both rich symbolism and concrete evidence of the strong and evolving partnership between Guyana and the Organization for the development of our country.

**The Acting President:** I now call on His Excellency Mr. Denis Ronaldo Moncada Colindres, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Nicaragua.

**Mr. Moncada Colindres** (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to extend the fraternal message of peace and respect from the people of Nicaragua, the President of the Republic, Mr. Daniel Ortega Saavedra, and the First Lady and Vice-President, Mrs. Rosario Murillo Zambrana, to the General Assembly.

The theme of this session, “Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion”, coincides with our prioritized State policies that the Government of Nicaragua has successfully developed over the past decade. We reaffirm the commitment and political will of the Government of Reconciliation and National Unity of Nicaragua to continuing to develop and strengthen these inclusive economic and social policies aimed at the common good of Nicaraguans.

Nicaragua welcomes the efforts promoted by the Secretary-General at the Climate Action Summit held here in New York, as well as the commitments undertaken within this framework by a large number of States, aimed at overcoming the grave threat to the existence of humankind caused by climate change. Nicaragua and the countries of the Central American region are among the most vulnerable nations on the planet, and our people are suffering the extremely grave consequences of the destructive effects of climate change. It is urgent that the international community adopt measures that curb global warming to ensure the future of the Earth, the future of humankind and the life of present and future generations. Based on the principle of shared but differentiated responsibilities, our country is undertaking great economic, social and preventive efforts to address climate change, which have so far yielded internationally recognized positive results.

Nicaragua will continue contributing to regional stability, peace and security, and will persist in fighting

to maintain the important indicators of the inclusive economic, political, educational and social development achieved so far, attaining significant progress in the eradication of poverty. UNICEF recognizes that the Government of Nicaragua has achieved success in its economic and social policies. In addition, UNICEF recognizes that Nicaragua has a broad legal framework, as well as national and international instruments that protect the human rights of children and young people. It also recognizes that the Government of Nicaragua has managed to reduce general poverty rates by 17.6 per cent and extreme poverty by 7.7 per cent between 2009 and 2016, as well as having achieved a notable reduction in infant mortality. UNICEF also recognizes that Nicaragua has made significant strides in guaranteeing free access to education, as well as its extensive coverage and higher quality. UNICEF and Nicaragua have agreed a cooperation programme for the period 2019-2023.

We would reiterate that in order to comply with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, including eradicating poverty and providing quality education, unilateral coercive measures that violate international law and the human rights of our peoples must be avoided. Putting obstacles in place that prevent our people from reaching these goals is inhumane and criminal and must be denounced and condemned by all of humankind.

Once again, we raise the urgent call for a reinvention of the United Nations, as proposed by the Nicaraguan priest and Foreign Minister Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann in 2008, during his presidency of the General Assembly. The transformation of the United Nations is indispensable in order for it to effectively serve the interests of humankind.

The recent expulsion by the Government of the United States of two diplomatic representatives of the sister Republic of Cuba to the United Nations from the Organization's Headquarters in New York is another example of the need for the United Nations to undergo a profound transformation and change of Headquarters in order to meet the objectives for which it was created and so that it can become a multilateral forum that serves all countries of the world, without limitations or quarantines for States Members' representatives. We express our rejection and condemnation of this expulsion of the two Cuban diplomats, which was a clear violation of international law, in general, and of

the United Nations Headquarters Agreement between the Organization and the Government of the host country, in particular. Illegal occurrences such as these confirm the urgent need for the United Nations to be rebuilt on new foundations and for the Headquarters to be moved to a country where international law and the Charter of the United Nations are respected. This requires the urgent reinvention and democratization of our Organization.

We condemn once again the criminal blockade against the brotherly Republic of Cuba and all the extraterritorial measures and ramifications associated with it. Nicaragua rejects all coercive economic measures that seek to break the will and spirit of freedom and the sovereignty of the Governments and the peoples of the world. We reiterate our militant solidarity with the brotherly Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Bolivarian people and the legitimate and constitutional Government of President Nicolás Maduro Moros.

We reject and condemn any threat of military intervention and the invocation of the obsolete Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, which is nothing other than an instrument designed by the Government of the United States to use or threaten to use force, which it is promoting within the framework of the Organization of American States. We continue to support decolonization throughout the world and join in solidarity with the Palestinian and Saharawi peoples, Puerto Rico and the Malvinas Islands, which are part of Argentina.

In conclusion, it has been 74 years since the Charter of the United Nations was adopted. To some extent, its purposes and principles have contributed to the maintenance of international peace and security. However, new modalities incompatible with the purposes of the United Nations are being implemented by super Powers that seek to subjugate developing countries, while undermining their rights to self-determination and political independence.

In Nicaragua, we continue to follow the path of development with social justice, family advocacy, gender equality, support for young people and improving security, education, health, energy, water and sanitation services, highways and roads, bridges, housing, agriculture and livestock, nature conservation in the context of climate change, small- and medium-sized businesses, the creative economy and everything

represented by a culture based on identity, tradition and values, together with work, rights, well-being and the harmonious coexistence among Nicaraguans in peace, friendship, solidarity and cooperation with the States Members of the United Nations.

The Government and the people of Nicaragua are defenders of the principles of independence and sovereignty, as set out in the Charter of the United Nations. We therefore continue to demand that all policies of interference violating international law cease, including interventionist actions in Nicaragua and such brotherly nations of the Americas and the world as Cuba, Venezuela, Syria and Iran, inter alia.

We reaffirm that, in Nicaragua, we are lovers of peace. We are strengthening security and comprehensively promoting, defending and respecting human rights, despite media campaigns that, in their use of fake news, seek to project a negative image of our country and our Government. In the region, Nicaragua continues to be an important factor in promoting stability, peace and regional security, as illustrated by positive indicators in economic, political, and social development, poverty reduction, gender equality and State and citizen security. Nicaragua stands as a bulwark against international organized crime, gangs, terrorism and drug trafficking. Its related domestic policies and constructive international cooperation continue to be developed by the Government of President Daniel Ortega Saavedra.

In assuming the responsibility that we shoulder as a State, we are ensuring that Nicaragua takes the path leading towards successful poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and especially social inclusion, as the vocation of our Government is to stand up for the poor and those who have historically been marginalized and for peace, good governance, progress, international security and the peaceful coexistence among the brotherly countries that constitute the United Nations.

**The Acting President:** I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Abdullah Al-Hadhrami, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Yemen.

**Mr. Al-Hadhrami (Yemen)** (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of Yemen, I sincerely congratulate Nigeria and Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session and wish him every success. I also

thank his predecessor, Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, for her outstanding endeavours during the previous session.

I also wish to express my gratitude to Secretary-General António Guterres for sincerely striving to bring about peace for the benefit of all peoples. I particularly appreciate the great interest he has shown with regard to the people of Yemen and the security, stability, unity and territorial integrity of our country. I also thank his Special Envoy, Mr. Martin Griffiths, and his team for their efforts to advance peace in Yemen.

I stand heartbroken before the Assembly today because of the situation in my country, Yemen. My country, which is known for its generosity and deep-rooted history, is the symbol of Arab civilization, prosperity and pride. But it is now a country with deep wounds as the result of a war imposed on it by dogmatic armed militias — the Houthi militias, supported by Iran — that have been carrying out acts of torture, exclusion and killing as means of achieving their objectives.

Their sponsor, Iran, is the primary sponsor of terrorism throughout the world, exploiting the resources of its own people to support an Iranian expansionist agenda that involves providing foreign militias and proxies with arms, money and expertise in destruction. Since 2014, with Iran's support, the Houthi militias have destroyed all that is beautiful in Yemen. They conducted a coup d'état against the State and its institutions, using armed force. They have blown up houses and places of worship, bombed innocent people and looted their sustenance. They have confiscated freedoms and kidnapped activists, as well as all those who opposed them. They have planted all forms of internationally prohibited mines in Yemeni soil and waterways.

I can say that in just a few years the Houthi militias have destroyed the dream of all Yemeni people for freedom, equality and a dignified life. This dream had almost come to fruition, thanks to the initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference, leading to the adoption of a new Constitution for a unified Yemen, which sought to embrace all Yemenis in all their political, tribal and communal variety while preserving freedoms, equality and the fair distribution of power and wealth. Our steadfast people will not stand for anything less.



Fifty-seven years ago, through the 26 September revolution, Yemenis destroyed the myth of divine right. The Yemenis will also destroy a worse contemporary myth and block any attempt to tear apart the homeland of the glorious and eternal southern revolution of 14 October. The revolution was strengthened when, on 22 May, the Yemenis reached consensus on a new permanent federal Yemen, which is the path that we wish to take.

Despite all the difficulties and obstacles strewn across this path, the sacrifices made by the heroes of the Yemeni armed forces, together with the people's bold resistance, have enabled us to contain the madness of doctrinaire militias that continue to believe in their exclusive divine right to rule against all the values of democracy and human rights. This was also achieved with unprecedented support from our brothers in the coalition to support legitimacy, under the leadership of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

We appreciate the support we have received from our brothers in the Saudi-led coalition. The firmness and sincerity of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, as well as of Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, emphasize the honest brotherhood of the coalition to support legitimacy, which all Yemenis keep in their hearts. The Saudi support for Yemen came under the most difficult circumstances, in response to the solemn appeal of His Excellency the President of the Republic, Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi, in line with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, with a view to achieving the noble goals of confronting the Houthi militias, foiling Iran's expansionist plans and recovering the legitimate authority of the State, thereby safeguarding the security, stability, unity and territorial integrity of Yemen.

Following the liberation of Aden from the Houthis in 2015, and despite the difficult political and security conditions it encountered, the Yemeni Government has sought to improve the country's economic situation and resume the development process. It has taken all measures necessary to halt the collapse of the national Yemeni currency and implement a comprehensive economic vision, enabling us to adapt to the exceptional circumstances in the country. From Aden, the temporary capital of Yemen, the Government is doing everything in its power, within its limited capabilities, to alleviate the suffering of all Yemenis facing humanitarian disaster on a daily basis.

Even as our people resist the Imamite coup militias that dream of the return to the past, and as the coalition supports the legitimacy of the State, the so-called Southern Transitional Council, with financial, military and logistical support from the United Arab Emirates, has rebelled against the State, attacking and seizing the Government headquarters in the temporary capital Aden. This so-called Transitional Council, harbouring delusions of secession and power and imposing its decisions by armed force, is targeting the constitutional legitimacy and very identity of Yemen. Although the coalition to support legitimacy in Yemen has given fair warning, calling for the immediate withdrawal of the outlaw military groups from State institutions and barracks, these groups have nonetheless expanded into two additional governorates. Accordingly, our heroic national army has been compelled to confront the outlaws' aggression and restore the authority of the State and its institutions in Aden, the temporary capital of the country.

Unfortunately, however, our army has come under direct military attack from the United Arab Emirates Air Force in violation of international law. These attacks have deeply affected the stability of our homeland and constituted an outright deviation from the noble objectives of the coalition to support legitimacy in Yemen. We again thank and highly appreciate the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its efforts to put an end to the rebellion and stop the actions undertaken by the United Arab Emirates in the liberated areas, as the coalition's task has not been to fend off attacks, but simply to focus the efforts to end the Houthi-Iranian coup in Yemen.

From this rostrum, allow me to pay tribute to the heroes of the Yemeni armed forces, who have made immense sacrifices and shown tremendous determination to ensure that Yemen stays strong and that the Aiban and Shamsan mountain ranges will always be free.

The Republic of Yemen would like to thank our donor brothers and friends who have helped Yemen in dire circumstances to alleviate the humanitarian crisis by supporting the humanitarian response plans or by offering direct aid. We are particularly grateful to the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its generosity in responding to the humanitarian response plan, with a recent pledge of \$500 million in support of the 2019 plan. Saudi Arabia has also provided direct humanitarian aid to Yemenis throughout Yemen through the King Salman

Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre, and direct support to the State treasury so as to prevent the collapse of our national currency. The Kingdom has provided bank guarantees for food and other commodities and allocated the monthly sum of \$60 million in electricity and other fuel support, together with contributions from the Saudi Development and Reconstruction Programme for Yemen and the Comprehensive Humanitarian Operation Support Centre in Yemen.

Iran and its military arms in our Arab region, including the Houthis and Hizbullah, pose a serious threat to our national security. Iran is a rogue State that respects neither international law nor its obligations as a State Member of the United Nations. Iran has caused significant damage to Yemen and the Arabian peninsula. It has created, trained, armed and financed the Houthi militias that embrace the slogan of the Iranian revolution and adopt its approach based on repression, abuse and torture. The Houthi militias have even turned our territory into a platform for launching rockets, threatening the safety of neighbouring States and international navigation in the Red Sea. United Nations reports reveal and reaffirm the extent of Iran's support for Houthi militias.

The Houthi militias have not stopped there. Recently they claimed responsibility for the terrorist attacks on the Khurais and Abqaiq oil facilities of the Saudi Arabian oil company, ARAMCO. This reveals clear misguidance and explicit subordination of the Houthi militias to the rogue Iranian regime. We condemn this terrorist attack and reaffirm that it should be addressed and that the perpetrators must be held totally accountable for their actions. This was an attack not only on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, but also on the international economy and a serious threat to international peace and security.

We do not call for war and destruction. We call for peace and stability. To that end, and in order to uphold our full responsibility to all Yemeni people, we have supported the United Nations peace process and the efforts of the Special Envoy for Yemen. We have actively and flexibly participated in all peace initiatives, in line with the terms of reference on peace reflected in the initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcome of the comprehensive national dialogue and the relevant Security Council resolutions, specifically resolution 2216 (2015).

We went to Sweden last year to seize every opportunity for peace, but the Houthi militias were intransigent and have continuously refused to implement the agreement reached. We have therefore made no progress in the implementation of this agreement for more than 10 months. The solution is not to neglect our agreement or turn a blind eye to the unjustified Houthi intransigence, but to induce the militias to implement their agreements and honour their obligations to the world. The Houthis need to know that peace is not empty rhetoric and slogans. Peace needs requirements to be fulfilled. The Security Council must also assume its responsibility and oblige the Houthis to implement the provisions of the agreement, including the withdrawal from the city and ports of Al-Hudaydah, and the agreement to release prisoners — all prisoners — and lift the unfair blockade against the city of Taiz.

In that regard, I would like to share a very touching letter that I received two days ago from the Abductees' Mothers Association in Yemen. In the letter, those mothers ask me to convey to the whole world the tragedy of losing their sons in Houthi prisons and even their use as human shields. All I can say is that we will never forget the crimes of the Houthis and we will work very seriously for the release of all abductees. I ask the mother of Anas and all the mothers of those abducted to be patient — they will soon see the dawn.

The Republic of Yemen reiterates its steadfast position on the Palestinian question and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, foremost among which is the right to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital. We urge the international community to continue to support the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in order to enable it to provide assistance to Palestinian refugees. We also strongly condemn the continued pursuit of Israeli settlement policies on Palestinian lands, as well as daily abuses against the Palestinian people and Muslim places of worship. We condemn in particular statements made by the Prime Minister of Israel regarding his intent to annex lands in the occupied West Bank and to impose Israeli sovereignty on Jordan Valley and the northern Dead Sea region, in flagrant violation of international law, the Charter and relevant international resolutions.

In closing, I hope that the proceedings of this session will be successful and that when we meet next year peace will have prevailed in Yemen. Our cause is as strong as a rock and our determination remains

steadfast. We will never yield. We aspire to achieve lasting and inclusive peace based on national constants. We extend our mercy to all the free martyrs of Yemen. We pray for the recovery of the wounded and for the freedom of all prisoners and abductees.

**The Acting President:** I now call on His Excellency Mr. Bocchit Edmond, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Haiti.

**Mr. Edmond (Haiti)** (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to convey the warmest congratulations of the President of the Republic of Haiti, His Excellency Mr. Jovenel Moïse, to Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session and to assure him of the full support of my delegation in the conduct of our work. I would be remiss if I did not congratulate his predecessor, Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, for the excellent work done during the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

I also commend the outstanding work of Secretary-General António Guterres at the helm of our Organization, particularly in his undeniable efforts to focus the attention of all on the pressing need to arduously work to satisfy the needs and aspirations of all peoples of the planet. I strongly encourage him to continue to work for the mobilization of the financial resources necessary, within the framework of renewed and strengthened multilateralism, to avert the various threats to international peace and security and to promote the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The future of humankind depends on it. For if we do not respect the many commitments we have freely made in recent years, the world may not be the one that we, the United Nations, have called for since the adoption of the Charter.

On the eve of the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, I consider it essential that we reaffirm our collective responsibility. We must all remain mobilized in pursuing these aims, principles, pillars of action and objectives, bearing in mind that future generations will judge us on our sense of responsibility and solidarity.

I am pleased to note that this session's general debate has been strongly characterized by the hallmark of promoting multilateralism, as proven by the central theme of this session, "Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action

and inclusion". The theme reminds States Members of the United Nations and all stakeholders, should they need reminding, of the path they should follow in order to achieve sustainable development and world peace. I therefore note with great satisfaction that the high-level meetings convened by the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly form part of the process to promote the implementation of commitments made in the light of the Sustainable Development Goals, including ensuring universal health coverage, the imperative of finance for development and providing support for small island developing States. I hope that we all understand the need to make solemn declarations and implement concrete actions and initiatives that are commensurate with current and future challenges.

I would like to draw the Assembly's kind attention to the worrying increase in the number and magnitude of fires and forest fires in recent years. I wish to take this opportunity to renew my deep and sincere solidarity with the countries and populations most affected by those fires and offer my unconditional support for concerted initiatives aimed at preventing fires. That would be to the benefit of our general well-being and would contribute to the preservation of our planet.

Closer to home, on 1 and 2 September, Hurricane Dorian inflicted death, desolation and heavy destruction on the people of the Bahamas archipelago, particularly on the islands of Abaco and Grand Bahama, which are home to many migrants from my country. This brotherly country faces the most serious humanitarian emergency in its history. I wish to reiterate my full solidarity with the authorities and people of the Bahamas and call for greater support from the international community for the efforts being made by the Bahamians.

We would also mention the recent floods that struck the Haitian cities of Gonaïves and Petit-Gôave, leading to a considerable loss of life and property damage. The Haitian Government is doing its utmost to continue to provide necessary assistance to the victims and address the root causes of this phenomenon. In this context, special attention should be given to small island developing States, which do not have sufficient resources to combat natural disasters and preserve the environment. My country is eager to contribute to multilateral efforts with a view to combating this phenomenon.

It is no coincidence that the eradication of poverty in all its forms and all over the world represents

Sustainable Development Goal 1 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is unfortunate to note that the efforts being made at the global level to implement this core objective are far from keeping up with current needs. Still today, a large percentage of the world's population is suffering from poverty and hunger. We will not be able to reverse this sad trend without the extensive mobilization of financial resources. There is still a striking discrepancy between the commitments we have made and the actions being undertaken to eliminate poverty across the world. As a small island developing State, Haiti will spare no effort, despite its deficiencies and limited resources, in resolutely tackling the root causes of poverty and hunger.

Our debate also has the merit of focusing attention on the need for a greater commitment to quality education. My delegation believes that quality education accessible to all is essential for economic development and social progress. In our view, this is the main area in which the guiding principle of the 2030 Agenda — leaving no one behind — should apply the most. It is especially through education that we can concretely guarantee respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for everyone, as well as the economic and social progress of all peoples. We believe that public policies aimed at sustainable development should give urgent priority to education, development and employment for the benefit of young people, who are the true builders of the future.

We must pay greater attention to combating the various forms of inequality that are continuing to take root all over the world. These inequalities move us further and further away from the purposes and principles of our Organization. Promoting inclusion is without a doubt one of the fundamental requirements in the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Inclusion undoubtedly implies the participation of all peoples and stakeholders in making collective efforts to bring about a better world. With that in mind, the Republic of Haiti wishes to see greater consideration given to the repeated requests of the Republic of China, Taiwan, to participate in the activities of the United Nations system.

We are 11 years away from the deadline set for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Many countries have already made considerable progress in that direction. Others, in contrast, despite their efforts, are still lagging behind, which runs contrary to the “no one should be left behind” principle of the 2030 Agenda.

In Haiti, emergency needs, recovery and long-term development remain significant and require massive investment in various areas. Given the current circumstances of my country, pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals remains a major challenge. We must make enormous and sustained efforts in such priority areas as essential infrastructure, quality education, health coverage, the mobilization of foreign direct investment, reforestation, environmental protection, reviving agricultural production, supporting productive initiatives and gaining access to modern energy sources and loans.

In that connection, Haiti is proud to have hosted last May a delegation from the Overseas Private Investment Corporation to explore financing tools that would enable Haiti to diversify its economy and to help it meet its development needs through private-sector projects.

The government of the Republic of Haiti is fully aware of its responsibility to provide the conditions required for the security, stability and long-term development of the country. Unfortunately, my country has for several months now been grappling with a complex political crisis that is compounding an already tenuous, decades-old socioeconomic situation. The President of the Republic, aware of his heavy responsibilities, has therefore extended a hand to all of the nation's stakeholders with a view to safeguarding our democratic gains, enabling peace, stability and calm to be restored, and facilitating the broadest possible participation of our citizens in public life.

That was precisely the spirit of the message he delivered on Wednesday, 25 September, in which he called for a constructive and inclusive inter-Haitian dialogue intended to lead to the establishment of a national unity Government. By the same token, our Head of State is continuing to hold the necessary consultations with all national institutions in a position to facilitate dialogue among the executive branch and the political, economic and social sectors of our country, geared towards a political agreement leading to social peace, the holding of free, fair and democratic elections and the strengthening of democratic institutions and the political, economic and social stability of the country.

The President of the Republic intends to do everything in his power to find a way to mobilize the main national and international stakeholders around those efforts essential for placing the country irreversibly on the path towards stability and progress.



However, the Republic of Haiti cannot get back on its feet without substantial, sustainable, coherent, well-coordinated and effective support from the international community.

Several United Nations missions on the ground, especially those of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti, recently took stock of the enormous, multidimensional challenges facing the Republic of Haiti. That is the backdrop for the gradual withdrawal of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti and the transition towards the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti.

We take note of the mandate of this new mission, which essentially will consist of advising the Government of the Republic of Haiti on ways to promote and strengthen its political stability and good governance. It is our strong wish to see this new United Nations mission endowed with all the resources necessary for the full accomplishment of its main tasks. It is important that there be enhanced coordination among United Nations entities in Haiti and that all their efforts be deployed in accordance with the priorities established by the Government of Haiti. It is therefore essential that the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti keep a sustained focus on Haiti's economic, social and environmental public policies.

Stability in Haiti will require a genuine inter-Haitian dialogue, an improvement in the security situation and the promotion of private investment, democracy, justice, human rights, the rule of law and sustainable development. My delegation wishes to share with the peoples of the United Nations Haiti's aspirations to a better world, with peace, harmony, stability, progress and well-being for all.

The fact remains that there will be no ideal world without the adoption of a new paradigm for international cooperation that must absolutely involve an in-depth reform of the structures of the United Nations and the way in which it functions. Such reform must take into account the new realities of the contemporary world. Indeed, United Nations structures must be made more flexible, more open and more pragmatic, so that the Organization can be more proactive and more effective, both in its decision-making and in the implementation of the decisions it takes. We are a case in point; during the cholera epidemic in Haiti, which killed tens of thousands of people across the country, swift and responsible action by the United Nations would have

made it possible to limit the harm done and spare the affected populations a great deal of suffering.

It must be acknowledged, however, that encouraging progress has been made recently in the fight to rid Haiti of cholera thanks to the efforts made by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and all concerned stakeholders in Haiti. We call on the United Nations to redouble its efforts with a view to mobilizing sufficient and predictable financing for the effective implementation of a strategy to tackle cholera in Haiti.

In closing, on behalf of the President of the Republic of Haiti, His Excellency Mr. Jovenel Moïse, I would convey his most sincere gratitude to all partners and friends of Haiti that support our efforts to improve living conditions for all sectors of the Haitian population.

Peace is a universal good, and we must all strive for peace, so that our plans to promote the welfare of humankind do not remain simply a wish but become a reality.

**The Acting President:** I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jean-Claude Gakosso, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and of Congolese Living Abroad of the Republic of the Congo.

**Mr. Gakosso (Congo)** (*spoke in French*): The seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, as has been noted by most speakers from this rostrum, is being held amid an international context that is alarming in terms of peace, security and the protection of human rights. A number of developments are unfolding around the world before our very eyes: ill-founded ideologies that oppose humanism are emerging; intolerance is rising and people are increasingly espousing nationalist sentiments; sectarianism is intensifying and hate speech is becoming normalized; fanaticism and proselytism of all kinds are sweeping across the globe; national irredentism is resurging, and the arms race — a dismal part of our collective memory — is starting up again.

Those situations sometimes carry the real risk of armed confrontation between States. They give rise to legitimate fears and contribute to our naturally understandable uncertainties about the future of the world. We the peoples of the United Nations, represented here, can no longer continue to hide those fears and uncertainties. We the peoples of the United Nations, meeting here and deliberating honourably in this prestigious body, cannot countenance the seemingly

methodical dismantling of the multilateralism upon which our fathers and grandfathers patiently built the post-war world — the same multilateralism upon which our hope now rests that one day humankind will become less selfish and more brotherly.

Moving with the tides of history enables us to see clearly. And, for us, moving with the tides of history means having a willingness to respect the diversity of our world, achieve mutual understanding among nations, build peace and friendship between peoples, achieve mutual tolerance with regard to cultures and practices, achieve brotherly solidarity and world peace, and, above all, steer clear of narrow interests and extremism as well as contempt for and hatred and rejection of others. What I said during the previous session (see A/73/PV.15) bears repeating: we all belong, without exception, to one unique human race. This divine human race, which was placed on Earth by Providence, is the only group to which we will ever belong, together in a community of destiny.

Four years ago in the General Assembly, the international community adopted an ambitious development agenda (resolution 70/1) to be implemented by 2030 — the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — along with 17 Sustainable Development Goals. In my country, as part of our efforts to combat poverty, the Government implemented, following broad popular consultations, its national development plan 2018-2022. The plan places particular emphasis on universal access to health care, which is all the more important given the fact that two serious health dangers are now threatening to decimate entire populations on our continent and in our subregion.

The first is humanitarian assistance hemorrhagic fever caused by the Ebola virus, which has struck the Democratic Republic of the Congo and has been declared a public-health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organization. Given the severity of the daily devastation that this outbreak is causing, the international community should mobilize its efforts like never before. It should proactively mobilize to provide significant support to the authorities of the Democratic Republic of Congo in their courageous combat against this merciless outbreak. It should mobilize to provide the real financial and human resources that are critical to a robust and effective response.

The second threat to health to which our populations are exposed today concerns the unrestrained — amid widespread indifference — spread of counterfeit medicines. Mafia- and criminal-run dispensaries are responsible for orchestrating this phenomenon and selling counterfeit medicines to the poorest of the poor. Greedy, lawless networks are dumping their product onto the wretched of the Earth. These counterfeit medicines and the dispensaries that produce them must be clearly declared public enemies by all without exception here at the United Nations, as this phenomenon is tantamount to a vile mass-poisoning agenda. For its part, my Government fully supports the African-led initiative, spearheaded by the Brazzaville Foundation, to convene in Lomé, in partnership with the Government of the Togolese Republic, a summit of Heads of State devoted to that problem, which is affecting the foundations of life itself throughout the continent.

The Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which most of the speakers have mentioned, is in reality a lifeline for all of humankind. Notwithstanding the scepticism of some among us, we can never overstate the importance of all the vital forces of our era and all actors of goodwill in the world standing shoulder to shoulder in the combat that is under way against the threat of climate change. The truth is that we have little choice but to unite our efforts to try to stem the degradation of our natural environment and ward off the negative effects that it could have on the future of life on Earth and the survival of our own species. It is regrettable that this issue, of which every aspect is vital and which is affecting the future of humankind itself, is still the subject of perplexing differences of opinion, while the specific commitments made by Governments to the peoples of the world are not being met and continue to be plagued by a lack of funding.

I take this opportunity to recall the need, for the benefit of us all, to operationalize the Congo Basin Blue Fund, an initiative of President Denis Sassou Nguesso and his peers in Central Africa that aims to protect the world's second-largest "green lung", and which today constitutes a major complement to global policies on ecosystem conservation. Without an environment of peace, security and stability, it is futile to hope that we will achieve the Sustainable Development Goals that we have set here and which I just mentioned. Without those conditions and without peace, it is futile to hope to achieve the development of States, the prosperity of nations and the happiness of peoples.

That is why my country, which chairs the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and which has always shouldered its share of responsibility for peacebuilding in this geographical area, welcomes the positive developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the successful holding of elections, the establishment of a new Parliament and the formation of a new Government. All of that is unfolding in a context of peace, reinforced by a strong will for national reconciliation. In the Central African Republic, where peace is also on the agenda, we welcome the tireless efforts of President Faustin Archange Touadera to restore security in all the provinces of that country. The difficult negotiations held in Khartoum between the Government and 14 armed groups, under the auspices of the African Union and the United Nations, as well as the signing in Bangui of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, clearly reflect the determination of political actors to build peace and move towards genuine reconciliation.

The international community must without hesitation assist the Central African Republic in completing the difficult process of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation currently under way. The international community must support that country in rebuilding its army, which is not just the backbone of the State, but also a factor of national unity and social cohesion.

Concerning Libya, my country chairs the corresponding African Union High-level Committee, on the quest for peace in that country. We cannot but deplore the fact that fighting has resumed in Tripoli and that the situation is at an impasse, which shows that the efforts undertaken to date have not sufficed to bring about a lasting settlement of the crisis. We must therefore continue to take action without ever becoming discouraged. We must act in a collective, cohesive and coordinated way, with perseverance and our sole aim being to put an end to the fighting, to resume dialogue and initiate national reconciliation. Clearly, only a comprehensive ceasefire and a definitive cessation of hostilities can set the stage for inclusive dialogue ahead of general elections, with a view to the restoration of constitutional order.

That has been the sole agenda of the African Union High-Level Committee from the very outset. We consider it to be an agenda of common sense and reason. It is specifically this type of agenda, this frank and sincere approach, that made it possible to end

the crisis in neighbouring Sudan. That was a positive outcome, which we welcome here, and one that in a way was the result of the ancient African tradition of palaver — a process that, as everyone knows, is based on reflection and wisdom. Thirty years ago, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of communism, many of us dreamt of a world that would finally see an end to injustice related to the antagonisms and complex history of the post-war period. Just like Francis Fukuyama, an eminent thinker, we, too, had hoped that the end of the Cold War would equally mean an end to the absurd hatred among nations, especially those bold nations that together made the sacrifice of countless lives to defeat the Nazi scourge.

Thirty years after the end of Cold War, it is evident that the yoke of the embargo continues to weigh heavily on Cuba and its people, that generous people who are often considered to be a positive model for cultural mixing between the peoples of Africa, Europe and America. Just like the country currently hosting us, Cuba also is a harbinger of the sociological makeup and image of the world to come. On behalf of the Republic of the Congo, I urge those responsible to do away with this anachronism, demonstrate political courage and simply and definitively lift the embargo, in a spirit of reconciliation. This should be done in the name of peace and friendship among peoples and of the Charter of the United Nations.

It cannot be overstated that today more than ever the United Nations needs to be rejuvenated. Indeed, the structural changes and sociological transformations that have arisen in the world since the advent of the third millennium, the emergence of new forces on the international stage, the emancipation of mindsets and the shift in mentalities today require an intelligent, deft restructuring of our Organization so as to make of the United Nations a truly meaningful mechanism for the benefit of humankind in all of its diversity, a mechanism that is better tailored to reflect the requirements of our time. For that reason, the thorny question of reforming the United Nations and its Security Council remains vital to our future. We cannot indefinitely continue to ignore or sidestep this issue without ultimately betraying the magnanimous spirit of our Organization's founding fathers. It is a question of justice and equity, and it is our responsibility to history.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

Before giving the floor to speakers in exercise of the right of reply, may I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Castañeda Solares** (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to exercise the right of reply to make the following statement. Guatemala is saddened at and rejects the assertion made by the delegation of Belize, because neither Guatemala's citizens nor its armed forces are responsible for the behaviour ascribed to them. Respect for the States represented here, which have devoted time to addressing issues of great import to humankind, means that it is improper for Belize to think that we are here to tackle topics not within the purview of this Assembly. Guatemala recognizes and respects the definitive agenda of highly relevant matters that we have established and so firmly believes that matters of litigation already presented to the International Court of Justice should not be brought before the Assembly. For that reason, we call upon Belize to refrain from undermining the normal course of the proceedings of the Court.

**Mr. Sangadji** (Indonesia): I am taking the floor to exercise Indonesia's right of reply in response to the statement made by the representative of Vanuatu. Before continuing, however, allow me to introduce myself. I am from the eastern part of Indonesia, a neighbouring island of Papua, and I am also Melanesian by origin. As an Indonesian person with Melanesian roots, I can tell the Assembly that we do not like being clustered, categorized or, worst of all, divided by another faraway country. Papua is, has been and will forever be part of Indonesia. Vanuatu keeps questioning Papua and its place within Indonesia. But have they ever bothered to have a deeper look into the legal and historical facts on the status of Papua as an integral part of the unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia? If not, I suggest that they read all the historical files. If, however, the answer is yes, then I invite them to reread all the facts until they have a clear picture of the status of Papua. A correct and appropriate understanding of the legal and historical facts is crucial to ensuring that Vanuatu does not repeat the same mistakes over and over again.

Let me again remind our friend of a simple legal fact: Papua has since the very beginning — since the declaration of Indonesian independence — been part of the unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. It is

a done deal and one that was further affirmed by the General Assembly in 1969, through resolution 2504 (XXIV). We cannot but wonder how on earth, in this age of globalization, there can still be a country that devotes its foreign policy to instilling enmity and division in another country.

Allow me to stress several points. First, I would like to remind our friend that the Charter of the United Nations teaches us principles and values that must be respected by all countries without exception. It is the obligation of every country to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other countries. Indonesia fails to understand why there is one country that continues to show its support for a separatist group that has caused innocent civilians to lose their lives. I call such action State-sponsored separatism and would like to ask a very simple question: can that ever be justified under international law and particularly under the United Nations Charter? The answer is a big no. As for Indonesia, our foreign policy is clear: we will always respect the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of other countries and will not meddle in other countries' affairs.

Secondly, Indonesia is obliged to inform the States Members of the United Nations of the motives behind the statements and actions of Vanuatu. While that irresponsible country seeks to give the world the impression that it is concerned about human rights issues, its real and only motive is to support a separatist agenda. Vanuatu continues to carry out provocative measures, including the advocacy of baseless, unfounded promises of self-determination. What Vanuatu does not realize, however, is that its provocation has created empty hopes and even triggered conflicts. That is a very irresponsible act. Vanuatu's provocation has resulted in damage to infrastructure that belonged to everyday Indonesian people — hundreds of homes have been burned down and public facilities have been destroyed. Worst of all, innocent civilians have perished. No country has a perfect human rights record. But let me assure everybody once again that Indonesia, like other countries, is committed to promoting and protecting the human rights of all its people, including those in Papua. In a democratic country such as Indonesia, the Government's actions are always scrutinized by its people, including by its independent and credible national human rights institution.

Lastly, Indonesia is a pluralistic country, and we will remain pluralistic. We will respect all differences.



We will respect the customs and the local wisdom of each and every ethnic group in Indonesia. Those ethnicities make up one Indonesia. I am Melanesia; I am Indonesia.

**Mr. Knyazyan** (Armenia): We have requested the floor to exercise our right of reply to the remarks made earlier by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan. His statement did not come as a surprise to us. It contained the same well-known set of long-standing accusations and false political and legal narratives that serve two purposes: first, to justify Azerbaijan's non-compliance with its international commitments and its destructive position in regard to the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict; and, secondly, to hide behind Armenia so as to justify Azerbaijan's poor human rights record.

Regrettably, the hostile rhetoric that we have heard has nothing in common with the commitment to preparing our peoples for peace and contradicts the recent call from international mediators to minimize the use of inflammatory rhetoric. The language of war threats voiced in the General Assembly by Azerbaijan should serve as an early warning sign for the international community that, if not properly addressed, could encourage Azerbaijan to commit new war crimes, massacres and crimes against humanity.

The way in which Azerbaijan refers to certain territories and its complete disregard for the people living in their ancestral homeland provide yet more evidence that the people of Nagorno Karabakh continue to face an existential threat. Thirty years ago, the people of Nagorno Karabakh stood up in a renewed struggle against historical injustice and for self-determination, human dignity and freedom. The refusal to acknowledge their basic human rights and the use of force against their peaceful aspirations is the root cause of the conflict. The existential threat posed to the security and lives of the people of Nagorno Karabakh is the basic cause of the conflict.

For three decades, the people of Nagorno Karabakh have been resolute in building life and institutions with dignity, and in resisting the atrocities, coercion and aggression committed by Azerbaijan. The continuation of coercive policies and the use of force by Azerbaijan further delay the resolution of the conflict, thereby inflicting further suffering on all the peoples of the region. There is no alternative to a peaceful and negotiated settlement. Azerbaijan's

illusions of achieving military superiority and making gains are doomed to failure. Armenia will not allow yet another genocide of the Armenian people in its historical homeland.

When it comes to Security Council resolutions, we would like to state, time and again, that one cannot constantly insist on one's one-sided, manipulative interpretation of the wordings of international documents and refuse to refer to such documents in their entirety. The reference made to specific Security Council resolutions, and the very narrow interpretation of them, constitute a poor excuse for the failure to take forward the negotiations of the past 25 years, in which the questions of status and security have a distinct place. The primary objective of the resolutions was an immediate cessation of hostilities, which Azerbaijan failed to implement, instead continuing its attempts to impose a forceful solution to the conflict through the total annihilation of the people of Nagorno Karabakh.

The relevant Security Council resolutions themselves were not claimed to be the basis of a peace process; on the contrary, each and every resolution referred either to the Minsk process or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as a framework for the peace process. We would like to remind the Azerbaijani side that the OSCE Athens ministerial Declaration acknowledges that the principle of equal rights and self-determination stands as one of the core principles of the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. The determination of the final legal status of Nagorno Karabakh through a legally binding expression of will is at the core of the settlement. The elected authorities of Nagorno Karabakh should have a decisive voice in the peace process.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan made an unsuccessful attempt at portraying his country as an example of multiculturalism and tolerance. Tolerance is not measured by the number of window-dressing events but rather by the actual human rights situation in the country. I would like to refer in this regard to the report of the Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which noted a persistent public narrative surrounding the conflict over Nagorno Karabakh identifying Armenia or Armenians as the enemy and openly promulgating hate messages. Persons of Armenian origin, regardless of their citizenship, are not allowed to enter Azerbaijan. With severe restrictions on the

freedom of expression and freedom of the media, the Government's anti-Armenian propaganda has led to the radicalization of young people.

Tolerance, non-discrimination and human rights are interrelated and interlinked. It would be an erroneous assumption to expect tolerance in Azerbaijan, where human rights and fundamental freedoms are violated and free media and an independent civil society are non-existent.

**Mr. Zulqarnain** (Pakistan): My delegation is obliged to take the floor in exercise of the right of reply in response to the statement made by the representative of India yesterday (see A/74/PV.9).

True to their ideological progenitors, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), India's statement betrayed a sense of conceited self-righteousness that is symptomatic of the malady that has become the feature of the communal-driven face of India.

For an ideology steeped in hatred, the very mention of hate speech was outrageous, a crass attempt at self-glorification by those whose singular accomplishment has been to denude India of any pretence to its so-called secular credentials. As for a sketchy understanding of history, may I remind the Indian representative of what a certain M.S. Golwalker, one of the founding fathers of the RSS, the ideological fountainhead of the Bharatiya Janata Party, who has been hailed by Prime Minister Modi as revered Gururji, had to say about the place of non-Hindus in India. He said:

“Non-Hindus must either adopt the Hindu culture and language and learn to respect and revere the Hindu religion, or they must stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges”.

Today this ideal of Hindu supremacy is being put into place with a single-minded zealotry in India. With every act of repugnant assault by cow vigilantes, with every gruesome mob lynching, with every forced conversion, the supremacist RSS ideology is on display ever more brazenly. Far from being a so-called vibrant democracy, it is becoming a living hell for those perceived and treated as the other in saffron India. Tellingly, those who assassinated Mahatma Gandhi in 1948 are now busy killing the idea of a secular India that he espoused.

It is obvious that India wants neither to face up to the truth about its abominable policies and actions nor

for others to see it. When my Prime Minister spoke here yesterday (see A/74/PV.9), he shone a spotlight on what the Indian Government has been desperately trying to hide from the world, both in terms of its indefensible actions against the people of Kashmir and of its egregious treatment of minorities across the length and breadth of India. But what we heard in response was obfuscation, deception and an attempt to divert attention from the ugly realities on the ground. We are not surprised. This is the most familiar trick in the Indian playbook, and it was in full play last evening. It is strange that a country that has been engaged in State terrorism in occupied Jammu and Kashmir for more than 30 years can have the temerity to accuse others of terrorism.

In fact, may I remind the Indian delegation of the position of 120 members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries that the repression of people under occupation amounts to the gravest form of terrorism and should be denounced as such. It is also rather rich that a country whose serving naval officer Commander Kulbhushan Jadhav was caught red-handed carrying out acts of espionage, sabotage and terrorism has the nerve to call the victim a perpetrator, and that a country that is in the iron grip of the fascist RSS, which was thrice banned in India on terror-related charges, has the audacity to point fingers at others.

If at all, India should seek answers from the perpetrators of the Samjhauta terrorist attack, who were acquitted earlier this year. India should seek answers from the killers of Pehlu Khan, who was killed in cold blood for transporting cattle by a violent cow vigilante mob in 2017. India should seek answers from the masterminds of the Gujarat programme in 2002, whose political fortunes have bloomed while the innocent victims live in pain and misery.

The common thread behind these and countless other incidents is that the victims have had the misfortune of finding themselves pitted against the might of the all-encompassing Hindutva onslaught.

Yesterday, amid the Indian paean to its millennium-old heritage of diversity, pluralism and tolerance, if there was one virtue that failed to find a cursory mention, it was the plight of the people of occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The Indian representative deliberately did not mention the complete and full lockdown there, including a communications blackout in the occupied territory. Neither did she mention the plight of the

innocent Kashmiris, who for the last 53 days have been forced to live without food or essential supplies: 53 days without information about the well-being of family and friends, 53 days of total darkness and an abiding fear of the unknown, with no end in sight. We were instead treated to the fable that the illegal Indian annexation of the occupied territory was meant to remove hindrances to the development of the occupied territory, no doubt a novel model of development in which the relevant stakeholders are not mainstreamed but instead locked up, their voices muffled and their liberties taken away.

If indeed the actions undertaken are so well-meaning vis-à-vis the people of Jammu and Kashmir, I ask the Indian representative, why does the Indian State not allow the Kashmiri people to come out and express their feelings? Why is India so afraid? While Pakistan has nothing to hide, does India have the moral courage to respond to the findings of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reports on occupied Jammu and Kashmir, which documented a litany of instances of barbaric Indian repression in the occupied territory? If not, the creaking Indian defence is nothing but a self-perpetuating farce.

The central reality of all this is the dire human rights and humanitarian situation in occupied Jammu and Kashmir and the denial of the fundamental right to self-determination pledged to Kashmiris by India, Pakistan and the international community, as enshrined in the 11 relevant Security Council resolutions.

**Mrs. Alhefeiti** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of my country wishes to exercise its right to reply with regard to the content of the statement made by the representative of the Republic of Yemen. The United Arab Emirates regrets and rejects the allegations of Yemen's representative regarding disagreements and divisions of which we are not a part. The United Arab Emirates has voiced its great concern over the confrontations in southern Yemen. We have called for the de-escalation of the situation and urged both the Yemeni Government and the Southern Transitional Council to conduct a responsible and serious dialogue to overcome internal disagreements towards preserving peace and security in Yemen.

My country will continue to do its best to de-escalate the situation in southern Yemen, including by participating in the joint committee with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. We stress our full support

for the Jeddah talks under the aegis of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Despite the developments in southern Yemen, the objectives of the United Arab Emirates remain unchanged, namely, to support the legitimate Government in Yemen to confront the Houthis' aggression and fight terrorism by Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula as well as Da'esh, which seek to destabilize the situation both in Yemen and in the entire region.

I wish to reiterate the fact that the United Arab Emirates has the right to defend itself and to counter attacks against the Arab coalition forces. Terrorist groups have increased their attacks against the coalition forces and civilians, which constitutes a direct threat to those forces. Consequently, the terrorist militias have been targeted by specific air strikes in line with the rules of engagement of the Geneva Convention and international humanitarian law.

In that regard, we emphasize the fact that the United Arab Emirates will continue to take the necessary and appropriate measures to protect the Arab coalition forces from threats against them and to ensure that terrorist groups, including Da'esh and Al-Qaida, will not be able to resume their terrorist activities in Yemen.

**Mr. Musayev** (Azerbaijan): Over the years, at the regular sessions of the General Assembly and in all the international forums the delegation of Armenia has done its utmost to convince the world community that their country is an island of democracy. Based on the facts testifying to the contrary, Azerbaijan has consistently rejected such allegations.

Following the recent change of Government in Armenia, the new authorities themselves started to assiduously blame their predecessors for the authoritarian rule, systemic corruption, election rigging and suppression of democracy and human rights, thereby in fact affirming what Azerbaijan has said from the outset.

After plenty of time has been wasted in listening to the outrageous lies of the Armenian officials in the past, the natural question arises as to whether and on what grounds the new Government in Yerevan should be regarded differently. That the answer to this question should be negative is explained by a number of indicators, including in particular the discreditable legacy of persistent denial by Armenia of its responsibility for

the war unleashed against Azerbaijan, war crimes, crimes against humanity and acts of genocide. I would like to briefly focus on some key issues.

First, the Nagorno Karabakh region has always been, and will remain, an integral part of Azerbaijan, while the transfer of the Armenians into what the representative of Armenia groundlessly calls the ancestral homeland started only in the nineteenth century. To assert the opposite is tantamount to rejecting the truth against the background of the well-documented historical and legal evidence.

Secondly, Armenia's actions have never been peaceful in the past nor were they peaceful at the end of the 1980s, when Yerevan resorted to force and violence in an attempt to realize its groundless and illegal territorial claims. Those actions started with the attacks on its Azerbaijani population both in the Nagorno Karabakh region of Azerbaijan and in Armenia itself and culminated in the brutal killing of thousands of civilians and the expulsion of 1 million Azerbaijanis from their homes and property.

At the end of 1991 and the beginning of 1992, armed hostilities and attacks against populated areas within Azerbaijan intensified and escalated into a full-fledged inter-State war. As a result, a significant part of Azerbaijan's territory, including the Nagorno Karabakh region, the seven adjacent districts and some exclaves, was occupied by Armenia.

Thirdly, the speculations of the Armenian authorities with regard to human rights do not withstand criticism. It suffices to mention that, unlike Armenia, which has implemented a policy of total ethnic cleansing of both its own territory and the Nagorno Karabakh region and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan, my country has preserved its ethnic and cultural diversity to the present day.

The international community has repeatedly expressed its indignation at the undisguised promotion by the Armenian authorities of the odious ideas of racial superiority, ethnic and religious incompatibility and hatred towards Azerbaijan and other neighbouring nations. The relevant United Nations bodies and other international organizations have more than once expressed their serious concern about the spirit of intolerance prevailing in Armenia and the discriminatory policies and practices pursued in that country.

In its concluding observations on the periodic report of Armenia, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination therefore expressed its concern at reports of "racist hate speech and discriminatory statements in the public discourse, including by public and political figures and in the media, in particular on the Internet, mainly against religious minorities, asylum seekers and refugees ... discrimination in the granting of asylum status based on ethnicity, religion or national origin" and "the absence of legislation criminalizing racist organizations and participation in such organizations". In its report on Armenia, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance particularly noted intolerant statements against Azerbaijanis.

Fourthly, any attempt by Armenia to encourage, procure or sustain the unilateral secession of Nagorno Karabakh is simply unlawful in international law. In its relevant resolutions, the Security Council has condemned the use of force against Azerbaijan, the occupation of its territories and the attacks on civilians and reaffirmed respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of my country, the inviolability of international borders and the inadmissibility of the use of force for the acquisition of territory. In response to territorial claims and forcible actions, the Security Council reconfirmed in those resolutions that the Nagorno Karabakh region is an integral part of Azerbaijan and demanded the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all the occupied territories. The resolutions of the Security Council provide authoritative clarification as to the acts committed, the obligations violated and the duty to put an end to the illegal situation thus created. They qualified Armenia's actions as the unlawful use of force and invalidated its claims over the territories of Azerbaijan once and for all.

The subordinate regime that Armenia has set up in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan is entirely unrecognized as such. It is under the direction and control of Armenia, as confirmed by the European Court of Human Rights in its 16 June 2015 judgment in the case of *Chiragov and Others v. Armenia*. In other words, that regime is ultimately nothing other than the product of aggression, racial discrimination, ethnic cleansing and the unlawful use of force. Consequently, the illegality of that regime has been repeatedly confirmed at the international level.



It follows from this that Armenia's claims as to the so-called independent statehood of Nagorno Karabakh and its alleged self-determination are unsustainable under international law and are thus null and void ab initio. Needless to say, the whole foundation of the international legal order would collapse if such claims had succeeded.

Finally, the representative of Armenia referred to the peaceful resolution of the conflict and said that there is no alternative to such a solution. However, it is apparent that Armenia abuses the peace process by using it as a shield for pursuing its colonization and annexationist policies and practices. The comments just made by the representative of Armenia, in addition to many other public pronouncements by the Armenian authorities, testify to the fact that the policies of that Member State are based on falsification and misinterpretation, and demonstrate how Yerevan is far from engaging in a constructive quest for peace.

**Mr. Knyazyan (Armenia):** I apologize for taking the floor for the second time. I will briefly comment on some of the remarks made by the representative of Azerbaijan. In fact, we do not envy the delegation of Azerbaijan. It has been instructed to carry out an extremely difficult task: to whitewash the dire human rights situation in Azerbaijan and its destructive role in the region by using Armenia and the Armenians as an excuse.

First, we kindly discourage the delegation of Azerbaijan from drawing parallels between the human rights situation in their country and in Armenia, and between the democratic achievements of Armenia and of Azerbaijan. Any such comparison between Armenia and Azerbaijan is insulting. Drawing lessons from Armenian achievements in Nagorno Karabakh in the fields of democracy, human rights and the rule of law could be a wiser choice for Azerbaijan.

Secondly, the alternative history of the world that was just put forward by Azerbaijan denies the very right to life of the people of Nagorno Karabakh and their existence in their ancestral homeland — once again proving that Azerbaijan constitutes an existential threat to the people of Nagorno Karabakh. When it comes to tolerance, multiculturalism, and the protection of religious and ethnic groups, I would like to stress that it is not the number of national minorities that matters, but rather how States protect their human rights. Our national minorities, with which

we have experienced ages-old peaceful coexistence, are represented in Parliament, enjoy education in their own language, freely profess their religion and freely exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms, including their linguistic, social and cultural rights. The self-congratulatory remarks of the Azerbaijani side are in stark contrast to the reports of international organizations and the realities on the ground.

I would like to refer to the report of the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the Implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, issued in February. In the report, the Committee expressed its deep concern about the continued restrictions and problematic legal and political environment for non-governmental organizations and individuals promoting human rights in Azerbaijan, including those of persons belonging to national minorities. The report states that the members of national minorities are not aware of their rights and experience difficulties in accessing them. No steps have been taken to remove the existing obstacles to radio and TV broadcasting in minority languages. The Committee emphasized that although Azerbaijan is attempting to show a positive attitude towards diversity, that is in stark contrast with the persistent hostile narrative against neighbouring Armenia, which can hardly be distinguished from hate speech against Armenians as an ethnic group.

During the April 2016 large-scale offensive against the people of Nagorno Karabakh, the Azerbaijani armed forces in Talish village, on the border, and in other areas of Nagorno Karabakh carried out executions in the style of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant by mutilating bodies, parading around with severed heads and choosing their targets among vulnerable groups, such as elderly persons, children, women and members of the Yazidi religious minority. Photos of those crimes that were posted on the official web page of Baku State University received many likes by young students, which was particularly shocking and alarming.

Azerbaijan, while positioning itself as an example of tolerance, in reality has destroyed every trace of the civilizational presence of Armenia in territories currently under its jurisdiction, particularly in Nakhchivan, occupied parts of Nagorno Karabakh and other areas. We would like to pose a question to the Azerbaijani delegation — how many Armenians remain in the occupied Shahumyan district and the occupied parts of Martakert and Martuni districts of

Nagorno Karabakh? The only remaining part of the Armenian cultural heritage is in Baku — Saint Gregory the Illuminator Church, with the cross removed and which was desecrated and turned into a book depository. Probably the only reason the church was spared the fate of the other Armenian churches in Azerbaijan is its use in window-dressing exercises by the Azerbaijani Government and a facade of Azerbaijani multiculturalism.

**Mr. Musayev** (Azerbaijan): The successive Governments of Armenia have established a notorious pattern of complete disrespect for the generally accepted norms and principles of international law. Committing war crimes and crimes against humanity, sponsoring terrorism, adhering to dubious ethno-religious ideologies and raising territorial claims against its neighbours have become a sort of norm of conduct for that Member State. Allegations of the dissemination of hatred are beneath contempt. Suffice it to mention, as I said before and would like to point out again, that unlike Azerbaijan and other States in the region, Armenia

is a uniquely mono-ethnic country, having achieved such a situation by expelling all non-Armenians, including Azerbaijanis.

Armenia has applied the same policy and practice of creating ethnically homogeneous areas in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, from which all non-Armenians were expelled and where it has set up a subordinate racist minority regime. Against that backdrop, Armenia's accusations against Azerbaijan — of xenophobia, racism and hate speech — are illustrative of the aggressor's false sense of reality. Any statements by the Armenian authorities about democracy, human rights and the peaceful settlement of the conflict are preposterous and will remain mere words unless the aggression against Azerbaijan and the military occupation of our territories come to an end, and the return of forcibly displaced, Azerbaijani internally displaced persons to their homes and properties in those areas is ensured in safety and dignity.

*The meeting rose at 9.20 p.m.*