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President: Mr. Holkeri (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 50 (continued)

Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Report of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa (A/55/45)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/55/431)

Mr. Vermeulen (South Africa): The report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa remains a landmark in the way it showed the link between peace and development. It is in fact worth noting that this link became a recurring feature of most interventions at the recent Millennium Summit. The Working Group provided Member States with the unique opportunity to help shape the direction and nature of the response to this very important report. Under the capable chairmanship of the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, assisted by the Ambassadors of Singapore and Spain as his Vice-Chairmen, the Working Group produced a most impressive report in a short time.

We wish to thank the Secretary General, the President of the General Assembly and the two Vice-Chairmen for the focus they provided on this very

important issue and their guidance in the consideration of it.

Today, my delegation wishes to focus on the Working Group's proposals to facilitate the further implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary-General. These proposals complement the objectives we have defined for ourselves in the African renaissance. We thus commend the Working Group for the high priority placed on addressing the economic, environmental and social issues needed to ensure sustainable development. These are indeed the most important priorities for Africa. As long as Africa finds itself on the margins of the information superhighway, the mainstream of the world economy, the flow of foreign direct investment, the marketplace of new ideas and technologies and the central debate on our environment, it will always be difficult for the countries of Africa to address the issues of conflict and sustainable development.

As is so rightly pointed out in the report of the Working Group, the first priority needs to be poverty eradication — a priority also acknowledged in the Millennium Declaration in its reference to the special needs of Africa. The importance of education as a starting point in addressing poverty is also acknowledged. My delegation fully subscribes to the invitation to donors, in close collaboration with national Governments, to strengthen and promote human resource development on the continent.

The Working Group has stressed the need to address the untenable burden that external debt places

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on a number of African countries. My delegation recognizes the progress made by the enhancement of the initial Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative at the annual meetings of the Bretton Woods institutions last year. We also welcome the extra efforts made by those institutions to meet the target of having 20 countries reach decision point before the end of this year. While these actions may be laudable, the fact that we still have numerous countries on the African continent having to pay more in servicing external debt than for education, health services and housing demonstrates the crux of the problem that we face.

My delegation believes that we need a two-pronged approach. First, we would need to secure the necessary resources for the full implementation of the enhanced HIPC Initiative. We appeal to the donor community to address this issue as a matter of urgency. Secondly, we would have to consider ways in which to improve debt relief so that it would benefit more countries and to have deeper and faster debt relief. In this regard, we support the proposal of the Working Group and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to have an independent body make an assessment of the sustainability of African debt. This should form the basis of future considerations of the external debt overhang.

My delegation also supports the Working Group's emphasis on the importance of financing for development in promoting durable peace and sustainable development on the African continent. We would join the call to ensure that the special concerns of Africa be taken into account at the high-level event on financing for development next year. We add our voice to the appeal to donor countries to make a concerted effort to reach the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance to developing countries. Mr. Horst Köhler, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, reiterated only last week here at the United Nations that increased official development assistance, together with debt relief, are critical requirements if we are to achieve the 2015 development targets that we have set for ourselves.

I wish to also associate my delegation with the priority that the Working Group has placed on the need to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the scourges of malaria and tuberculosis. These diseases have a very

serious effect on the continent's ability to address the challenges of sustainable development.

The Working Group appropriately recognized the need to strengthen the Organization of African Unity Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. We wish to support the proposal that the General Assembly request the Economic and Social Council to establish ad hoc advisory groups on countries emerging from conflict. This could greatly enhance the efforts towards post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building and the prevention of recurring conflict. Africa's efforts to develop its capacity in conflict prevention, management and resolution should also be complemented by an effective United Nations in the field of peace and security. We therefore believe that the Brahimi report represents an important contribution to the ongoing efforts to strengthen the United Nations in this regard.

However, addressing all these issues will make little difference to sustainable development on the African continent unless we pay proper attention to the environment and to the effective integration of environmental protection, social development and economic growth into the implementation of sustainable development. We thus support the call on all Member States to ensure that environmental considerations be adequately integrated into all relevant aspects of the promotion of sustainable development on the continent.

In this regard, bringing the 2002 Earth Summit to the African continent will be a concrete demonstration to the people of Africa that the United Nations is serious about implementing the proposals of this Working Group. It would also provide the people of our continent with an opportunity to recommit ourselves to the principles of Agenda 21 and to the objectives and ideals of sustainable development.

My delegation associates itself fully with the proposals made by the Working Group on the need for follow-up. We would strongly endorse the extension of the Working Group's mandate. In fact, it is our view that this Working Group could play a very important role in ensuring a prolonged focus on the activities of the United Nations in Africa and assist in improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations system on our continent. The work of the Working Group could provide an important foundation to the implementation of part VII of the Millennium

Declaration, dealing with the special needs of Africa. We also support the proposal of the Working Group on the development of benchmarks.

The role of the Economic and Social Council in the follow-up to and implementation of the reports of the Secretary-General and of the Working Group is critical. The Council, with its ability to provide system-wide guidance and coordination, must play a major role in the implementation process. We look forward to the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in July 2001, which will be devoted to the role of the United Nations system in support of the efforts of African countries to achieve sustainable development. We further agree that this Working Group could make a very useful contribution to the preparations for the final review and appraisal of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. We would like to see this included in the mandate of the Working Group.

Finally, my delegation believes that the Working Group's review of the Secretary-General's report has already succeeded in sharpening the focus on the special needs of Africa. The Working Group should be encouraged in this very important endeavour and be given the mandate to continue with its work.

Mr. Patrício (Mozambique): I wish to express my profound appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. The report builds on the earlier reports of the Secretary-General on Africa, makes a candid analysis of the causes of conflict in Africa and offers approaches to confront conflict and achieve durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

I wish also to commend the report of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa. The Ad Hoc Working Group represents an important step towards the implementation of the Secretary-General's recommendations on the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

Africa is the region of the world most affected by conflicts, which bring untold suffering to the African people and impeding their efforts to achieve durable political, economic and social stability. In the Secretary-General's report, the causes of conflicts in Africa are rightly considered as being both internal and

external to Africa. Therefore, to reverse this situation and tackle the complex sources of conflict and achieve durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, political will is required primarily from us Africans, but also from our various external partners.

African countries in the past decade have been actively promoting democratic systems of government and strengthening the rule of law and the protection of human rights, as well as individual freedoms like freedom of speech and freedom of association. Furthermore, they are pursuing steady economic reforms which enable them to create better frameworks for business through structural adjustment programmes that encompass privatization, the adoption of sound investment codes and regulations, tight fiscal and monetary policies and appropriate macroeconomic policies. At the regional level, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has demonstrated its increased commitment to finding solutions to the conflicts in Africa through a specific Mechanism for their prevention, management and resolution. Similar efforts have also been made by subregional arrangements such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States.

These efforts, however, will bear substantive and durable results only if the international community also demonstrates its commitment by providing adequate resources, equipment and technical assistance for the prevention, management and resolution efforts. Without relieving the Security Council of its responsibility, African countries and organizations will continue to effectively contribute to the maintenance of global peace and security.

The Millennium Summit recognized in its Declaration that Africa has special needs that require the support and solidarity of all nations. To keep up the momentum of Africa's quest for durable peace and prosperity, the root causes of conflict, including poverty, external debt, improved access to the world market and increased official debt assistance (ODA), must be adequately addressed by the international community. Our continent is grappling with the scourge of poverty and underdevelopment. Out of 48 least developed countries (LDCs), 33 are in Africa. Moreover, pandemic diseases like HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis are taking their toll on Africans, having claimed millions of lives, while the regular occurrence of natural disasters causes extensive

devastation and misery. We believe that to promote durable peace and sustainable development, we need to tackle together these problems so that we will be able to have Africa as a strong partner in the current era of globalization and more interdependence between States.

Despite our different historical legacies we are bound to live in harmony and unity in Africa. Through peaceful dialogue our leaders and various regional organizations, in particular the OAU, are looking for different ways and means to bring lasting peace where conflicts still prevail. We Africans always welcome good offices for durable peace that come from various countries and international organizations, primarily from the United Nations. This assistance is more acutely urgent when a peace agreement is to be implemented. From adequate peacekeeping forces to assistance for resettlement of refugees, displaced persons and former combatants, from demining activities to reconstruction programmes, everything must be done in time with adequate means to sustain the peace agreed by the parties in conflict. The urgency that we are here highlighting needs to be adjusted to the reality of each situation in which we are asked to give assistance and share real human solidarity.

After many years of a war of aggression, we Mozambicans are committed every day to safeguarding lasting peace and to working hard for our sustainable development. With the dividend of peace we are strengthening our democracy and at the same time doing our best to accelerate and sustain economic growth that will allow us to eradicate absolute poverty in the medium term. This is part of the commitment of building a better future for all Mozambicans, particularly for our children in the new millennium.

What we are talking about here regarding Mozambique is indeed the general trend taking place in the SADC subregion as well as in the entire African continent. This trend demands that all of us apply the values and principles reaffirmed during the Millennium Summit regarding special solidarity and shared responsibility. Then we will be able to have a common front and implement a plan of action that will meet the special needs of Africa, as well described in the Millennium Declaration.

My delegation assesses this rich debate on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa as a

reaffirmation of our political will to move together to achieve, sooner rather than later, our objectives of peace, democracy and development in Africa. Indeed, it is our conviction that the United Nations family will be more effective in our common quest for lasting peace, security and development in Africa.

Mr. Dorda (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): We pay special attention to this topic. The United Nations continues to pay attention to it, as seen in the number of reports, volumes, meetings and speakers. However, from a practical point of view, the United Nations has not paid any tangible attention to the disputes and conflicts in Africa, nor has it paid attention to peace or development there, be it sustainable or non-sustainable. The reason is that some of us here are strong and powerful, and they prevent the taking of any serious action to end these conflicts or disputes. They hamper or preclude the establishment of any development, not only in Africa but also in the entire southern Hemisphere.

Wise people say that the correct analysis of a problem is half of its solution. Correct analysis of the causes of conflict in Africa was not undertaken frankly and clearly, neither here nor in the Security Council. The problems of Africa and the conflicts that it has been experiencing and is expected to experience in the future are due to external and internal factors. The external ones are as follows: Africa was and still is in many parts undergoing social formation. African nations are not yet complete, are not full-fledged States yet. The formation of nations is a long-standing historical maturation process that does not take place overnight and does not materialize through a decision or a resolution adopted here or there.

Some of us in Africa still live in a tribal, primitive age. When we start to settle down — because the formation of any nation must go through stabilizing stages — people will interact with one another; culture, traditions, customs and arts will materialize and people will be able to deal with their environs and will thus form a civilization. Culture and civilization will constitute the nature and tangible character of these nations.

In Africa before achieving such stability, we had to face so-called geographical discoveries that led to colonialism. Colonialism came to us with that tremendous invention, gun powder. We, Africans, clashed with the colonialists repeatedly because we

were afraid to suffer the same fate as that of the red Indians in North America.

We fled to forests and deserts and continued to live there with our animals and thus could not achieve any stability and the historical social maturation that would have transformed us into nations did not take place. Colonialists not only occupied our land, but more importantly distorted all aspects of our life. They gave us labels that we adopted so that Africans have been calling themselves John, Robert and other European names. They even gave us our names. They forced us to espouse their creeds and their religion. They divided our African countries among themselves. They charted our borders. There is no African State, including Libya, that managed to chart its own frontiers with its neighbours. Colonial Powers, in accordance with their interests, designed our geography. They divided each single clan into two, three or four so-called States.

We did not know our boundaries. Probably some representatives will not believe that the former King of Libya before 1969 was from Mustaghanem, Algeria. His family moved from Algeria to Niger then to Chad then to Libya. In Libya they formed a religious mystical sect and one of their grandchildren became the King of Libya. We did not know nationality or borders. Some representatives here may not know that the former President of Tunisia was from Libya, not from Tunisia. You certainly know that President Kaunda, who liberated Zambia, might not have been from Zambia. That was the situation in Africa.

They divided us and charted our borders. Some of the contemporary conflicts and problems result from those facts and from those colonialists. A land was divided into two or three countries. Some may not know that part of the family or clan of the President of Chad is in Chad and the other part is in the Sudan.

That is the situation that prevailed in Africa. Whoever charted our geography sowed the seeds of sedition and conflict in some parts of Africa.

Also, among the external reasons that affected us while we were in that primitive stage — the purpose of which was to transform us into nations and to establish a civil society in our countries — was colonialism, which went out the door but came back through the window to impose political terms and conditions on us. The colonialists said that we had to apply parliamentary democracy. That may be good for some

societies that have already reached civil society status, but not for our societies that are divided into clans, factions, tribes and so on. Hence, if any political party is established, it is relevant to politics only for slogans and proclamations.

I use the example of Sudan because my brothers there will not be angry and will not misunderstand. There is the Umma party. That is its name, but its members are of the Ansar faction. The other party is the Democratic Union. It is neither democratic nor a union. It is merely another faction called al-Khatmiyya. The traditional leader of the faction is from the same family. Both parties have the same leader. He becomes President if both parties elect him. Is this democracy? The same applies everywhere in Africa, regardless of the different nomenclatures and declarations. We can arrive at a truly democratic theory rooted in our heritage and traditions and that includes rotation and the rule of law, putting aside approaches that are not good for us.

The Prime Minister of Niger paid us a visit in Libya. At that time, Niger had granted the freedom to form political parties. The Prime Minister was the leader of the transitional Government that was overseeing the elections. I asked him "How many parties do you have?" He answered, "Around 60". Then I asked "How many tribes do you have?" He said "The same number, more or less." That meant that each one of those tribes constituted a party. Social conflicts would definitely take place. This is exactly what happened in Burundi, Niger, Rwanda, Somalia and all the countries that have adopted such approaches.

External forces want us to follow in their footsteps. One day we will be able to do that, but present social conditions and conditions of place and time are not receptive to this formula. If we adopt it, it will divide us and lead to war and conflict among us. A reason for underdevelopment in Africa is that the economic conditions imposed on us dictate that we adopt the market economy, and we have neither an economy nor a market. Some of us do not even understand that expression, unless we want to be mere imitators. After that they trapped us in debt, resulting in lack of progress. In this connection, I will quote from a recently published book. The author, an academic, is Canadian, but descended from an African family in Nigeria. Writing about the conditions once imposed on Nigeria by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), he described the IMF ironically, calling it

“Dr. IMF”. What is the description of this “Dr. IMF”, the International Monetary Fund? I regret having to read this in English, one of the colonial languages imposed on us Africans.

(spoke in English)

“Following are domestic policies: cut your budget by reducing your capital income; devalue your currency; cut your defence budget; go hungry and pay your foreign debt; export your raw materials at my price and expect the finished goods at my price; reduce your population growth and starve most of your people; instead of eating beef, send it to us and eat rat. You need a balanced budget, not a balanced diet. The Government should not borrow internally except from us [the names of the banks that should be dealt with]; freeze your wages; revoke Government regulations on private business; and when done, come back and see me.”

(spoke in Arabic)

This prescription has been applied not only to Africa, but, as the cartoon on the cover of the book indicates, to Asia and Latin America.

Thus, we are a skeleton strangled by debt and the IMF policy that represents the policies of the State that directs it. We face this situation and these economic and political evils. How can Africa get rid of its conflicts or internal disputes? How can it settle down to achieve sustainable and durable development? The Security Council was prevented from sending soldiers to Africa unless in full compliance with the interests of a super-Power that controls the Council — the United States. At the same time, when it wanted to achieve its goals in Kosovo, that super-Power sent its troops without the Council’s endorsement. It sees conflicts and people dying daily, but peacekeeping troops are prevented from going to the places in question.

The Council has been prevented from sending troops to Central Africa. It has only sent observers. It calls on the States concerned to ensure the security of observer personnel. If there were a central Government capable of maintaining security, it would then be able to provide security for its own people. The Council is at the mercy of America and serves its interests or it would not be able to adopt any resolutions. What kind of democracy is that when it asks others to implement

resolutions and itself prevents the Security Council from implementing such resolutions?

When American soldiers died in Somalia, the so-called international forces were withdrawn, and thousands of Somalis subsequently died. It did not help Africa. It impeded assistance to Africa. If we deal with African matters and want to help Africa settle down, first there should be debt cancellation. This would not be a favour, for the colonial European Powers built their nations on the raw materials, goods and services they usurped during the colonial period. They must repay so that colonialism will not return.

In 1975 or 1976, the former President of Sierra Leone, President Stevens, visited us and we discussed these very topics; we discussed the price of raw materials and manufactured goods and the rise and decline of prices. President Stevens told us that three years earlier they normally had to export one ton of cocoa in order to import one tractor. At the time I spoke to him, they had to export 12 tons of cocoa in order to import the same tractor. That meant that the price of manufactured goods had risen 1,200 per cent over the cost of raw materials.

There must be a reconsideration of such matters in order to establish new standards of cooperation on the basis of partnership, not on dependency. There should be parity in the future with regard to the sacrifices expected from each party. There should be a balance between the price of manufactured goods and the cost of raw materials. There must be an international plan of action to bring about industrialization in Africa. Such an approach would accelerate the transformation of Africa’s primitive societies and would bring them closer to becoming a civil society. Africa is rich in minerals and raw materials. A realistic programme has to be developed in order to achieve industrialization on that continent.

In addition, plans are also needed in the areas of agriculture, training and education. More important than that is non-interference in the affairs of the African Group, whether collectively or unilaterally. Africa cannot attain either peace or progress as long as it is being pulled in various directions by powerful parties, even as they claim to be serious in their determination to end conflicts and achieve peace and stability in Africa. Those parties must illustrate true cooperation by helping to set up the African Economic Community and by lending their assistance to its

economic institutions, which will be established next year.

Mr. Effah-Apenteng (Ghana): Ghana is pleased with the outcome of the work of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa. The sessions of the Working Group were open, transparent and quite extensive in their coverage, and offered a good opportunity to evaluate the implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary-General and the agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council on the subject. We are most grateful to the President of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, and to his two Vice-Chairmen, Ambassadors Kishore Mahbubani of Singapore and Inocencio Arias of Spain, for the exemplary leadership they provided the Working Group.

The value of the Working Group in monitoring the implementation of recommendations for the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa comes across clearly in the conclusions and recommendations of the report before us. Not only is there significant work left to be done in implementing the recommendations, there is also a need to measure performance and assess the impact of actions taken to fulfil those recommendations. The recommendations in the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the extension of its mandate and on the setting up of thematic groups have our strong support. We are convinced that the framework to be provided by the Working Group and the thematic groups will enable the General Assembly to ensure thematic coherence, the requisite political will, the incorporation of emerging issues and a timely resolution of the international dimensions of the African problem.

This Hall has heard bold words spoken to match the gravity of the development condition of Africa. We have had a period of focus on Africa; we have had initiatives, meetings and conferences on Africa; and we have had Africa's special development needs highlighted in all the outcomes of the major conferences and summits of the United Nations in the 1990s, as well as in multilateral initiatives such as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative. Africa's condition, however, continues to be precarious: a falling per capita gross domestic product (GDP), a decline in the level of industrialization in terms of manufacturing value added in GDP, an

increase in the number of people living below the poverty line and in the number of undernourished people, and mixed indicators for education, literacy and health. Conflicts fuelled by underlying poverty and deprivation are becoming a fixture on the continent just when Africa appears to be on the brink of a renaissance. It is obvious that the bold words have not been matched with the requisite deeds.

This has not been for want of commitment or action by African countries themselves. In meeting their primary responsibility for economic policy-making for development, many African countries have successfully pursued macroeconomic stabilization policies and have liberalized their economic activities in both domestic and external sectors. What has been missing is the supportive external economic environment that has been considered critical to ensure accelerated development in developing countries. This fact was recently highlighted by the Secretary-General, the President of the World Bank and the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund.

The failure to implement policies at the international level on trade, debt and international financial flows and official development assistance (ODA) has doomed the efforts and sacrifices of low-income African countries to eradicate poverty and build competitive, sustainable economies. On the basis of current projections, and with the unanticipated losses associated with the current oil price hikes, Africa will not attain and sustain in the coming years the average rate of 7 per cent GDP growth necessary to make a significant impact on poverty.

This has significant implications for the implementation of the recommendations on peace and sustainable development. It is clearly necessary not only that we identify the lessons of past performance, but also that we have the courage to design our strategy around those lessons. One such major lesson is that it is futile to address debt relief separately from the questions of market access, diversification and primary-commodity price declines. The implementation and follow-up of the recommendations must be consistent with the need for a concerted approach that will synchronize action on macroeconomic reform in African countries with action on debt, market access and the further reform and strengthening of the financial architecture, including the enhanced use of public-private partnerships to leverage private capital flows and foreign direct

investments to Africa. This requires that future sessions on follow-up to the recommendations would involve the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and other relevant bodies.

ODA constitutes another plank of the strategy to be implemented. The efforts of African countries to develop their management capacity and to ensure responsive governance will not yield the desired effects without an infusion of additional resources in the form of official development assistance. ODA, as countless reports have acknowledged, is a critical input in the reform process. Reversing its 20-year low levels and attaining the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product must be a major aspect of the General Assembly's monitoring process.

The role of United Nations agencies in development activities in Africa constitutes an important element for the implementation of the recommendations. The effectiveness of those agencies in Africa depends to a great extent on the capacity of programme countries. That capacity is weakened when it is confronted with the heavy burden of the myriad requirements and procedures for disbursement and implementation. The General Assembly must reinforce the agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council and request the United Nations Development Group and heads of specialized agencies to act with speed to harmonize programming procedures and joint programming at country level. The General Assembly must also use the opportunity of the final review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, which will take place in 2002, to consider the plethora of United Nations initiatives and schemes on Africa. A rationalization exercise would eliminate the tendency for those processes to be mistaken for effective action. More important, it would restore focus and accountability.

Mr. Lelong (Haiti), Vice-President, took the Chair.

It is worth pointing out in this regard the inadequate reflection of the linkage between security and development in the Ad Hoc Working Group's report. Follow-up must address in particular the need to reinforce the capacity of African countries to identify and integrate effective social responses to conditions which lead to conflict.

Finally, the success of our work in the United Nations has a major bearing on the implementation of

the recommendations on Africa. This will be true of the Third United Nations Conference for Least Developed Countries and of the process for financing for development, just as it is for the way we address the educational and digital divide and the other challenges identified by the leaders of the world in the Millennium Declaration. Ensuring the political will to meet those challenges, especially the need for resources for education and for health — to fight diseases such as malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, which are reversing the economic growth of African countries — requires a coalition of peoples the world over: civil society, the private sector, Governments and individuals. Unless we all work together to give true meaning to the expression “We the peoples”, our success in meeting the challenges of attaining durable peace and sustainable development in Africa will continue to be too little, too late.

Mr. Mamba (Swaziland): On behalf of my delegation, I am pleased to take part in today's debate on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. As we again discuss this topic, we are again full of hope and optimism that Africa will eventually rid itself of the unwanted scourge of conflict. I believe that all of us here wish for that time to come soon, for we now know that Africa has the capacity to do it. We also believe that efforts by the United Nations system to promote peace and security in Africa can be intensified, thus ensuring sustainable development. However, since a large number of the identified causes of conflict are global in character and pose challenges that must be addressed by collective efforts, the capacity of the United Nations to deal with such challenges is sometimes compromised. Hence the need to strengthen the Organization's role in addressing these challenges in line with its mandate as laid down in the Charter.

The report of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa, which was established by the General Assembly by its resolution 54/234 of 22 December 1999 to monitor the implementation of the recommendations made by the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, shows us that Africa still faces many challenges.

Whilst we welcome the fact that many parts of Africa are seen to be making progress in their

respective efforts to maintain peace and stability by putting in place and implementing political, economic and social policies that are people-centred, it is regrettable that HIV/AIDS has arisen as another form of disaster that threatens the lives and security of people in Africa and elsewhere. The convening in January 2000 of the Security Council's meeting on AIDS in Africa brought about recognition and realization of the present danger to world security posed by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. AIDS in Africa has become a threat to economic, social and political stability. Its impact is no less destructive than that of war. Statistics show that AIDS has on average killed about 10 times as many people in Africa as have armed conflicts, and that it has left many children orphaned. In countries already facing instability, such a disaster can bring about further insecurity and tension, resulting in conflict.

Furthermore, Africa remains the continent with the most people living in extreme poverty and struck by severe food shortages. Poverty is the major cause of the collapse of hope and expectations among people. Loss of hope can lead to the disintegration of a society and to desperation of people, and eventually to excessive protection of one group's interests over those of the others — this is worse still when that group personalizes the public resources it is entrusted to manage.

In many instances, antagonistic competition manifests itself in violent ethnic or religious conflict. It is therefore of paramount importance that all the international partners — the Bretton Woods institutions, the private sector and non-governmental organizations — work together with national Governments in their efforts to eradicate poverty in all its manifestations, including through the cancellation of external debt in accordance with the recommendations made by the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group.

Given the broad spectrum of causes of conflict in Africa and their complexity, we fully agree with many that the lack of commitment on the part of donor countries to provide sufficient resources, both financial and technical, does not help Africa solve its problems. The same sentiments were echoed clearly by the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Mr. Horst Köhler, in Washington, D.C., recently. Mr. Köhler said that Africa should be given “faster, stronger and better institutional support” by the

world community for it to realize fully its capacity to solve its problems.

The unabated illegal flow of arms is also a major challenge to the United Nations system. There is no question but that this state of affairs helps transform many tension areas into areas of armed confrontation. The Security Council must continue to urge all countries that are involved in such trade to stop, thus enhancing the effectiveness of the Council's arms embargoes. It is imperative that the illicit arms flow to and within Africa come to an end. We call upon the international community to make a coordinated, concerted effort to find a credible and effective solution to the flow of arms in our continent. We therefore look forward to the convening in 2001, of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, as a means of strengthening our resolve.

We note with appreciation the endeavour of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to assume its continental responsibility, especially in conflict-afflicted areas where, in a spirit of cooperation and solidarity, it has worked closely with and complemented the other continental bodies and subregional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States in West Africa and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in East Africa, as well as the Southern African Development Community in southern Africa. Such efforts offer real prospects for conflict prevention, containment and resolution. It is therefore apparent that, in order for these initiatives to be a success, support is needed from the entire international community.

Finally, I would like to pay particular tribute to the European ministers responsible for trade and the mining industry for resolutely deciding against diamond trading that helps finance warring parties in areas of conflict. We invite other international partners to make a meaningful and comprehensive contribution to our fight against insecurity in Africa.

Mr. Kobayashi (Japan): Over the years, a number of wars and conflicts have been fought in Africa, undermining its efforts to pursue stability and sustainable development. Recently, however, Africa has made substantial progress in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. In this context, the establishment of the Organization of

African Unity (OAU) Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution is a significant step forward. Efforts by the OAU and subregional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), need to be supported and consolidated to prevent a recurrence of conflicts and to initiate and strengthen the post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction of affected countries. Hence, my delegation welcomes the report of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa, which specifies actions to mitigate the potential for conflict.

The Working Group report revealed obstacles to the effective implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary-General, including lack of political will, poor governance, too many armed conflicts and insufficient financial and human resources. The report also indicates areas where special attention is needed in order for further action to be taken.

There are many suggestions in the report on ways to promote sustainable development and durable peace in Africa. Above all, my Government attaches special importance to the ownership by African countries of development in Africa. The Government of Japan has been following with keen interest the recent initiative called the "African Renaissance" programme, which was initiated by President Mbeki of South Africa and is based upon ownership by African countries. My delegation sincerely hopes that Africa's initiative will be widely discussed in the OAU and subregional organizations, with a view to strengthening Africa's ownership of the development process. Japan is ready to support Africa's reassuring movement towards greater ownership and to help construct a truly global partnership.

The Government of Japan is strongly committed to assisting African countries in achieving sustainable development and durable peace in Africa through ownership and global partnership, and the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) process provides a framework for doing so. To take further steps to carry the TICAD process forward, my Government has decided to hold a ministerial meeting on African development in the Japanese fiscal year 2001, while bearing in mind the possibility of hosting the Third Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD III) to build upon the tangible results of TICAD II.

We believe that the true outcome of many international conferences on African development should be evaluated in terms of the results they produce at the national and field levels in African countries. In this context, since TICAD II, Japan has announced several new assistance programmes for African countries through the TICAD process. One example is a 90 billion yen grant for projects relating to education, health and safe water supplies. It is anticipated that this aid will lead to the construction of school facilities for the education of an additional 2 million children throughout Africa, and help at least 15 million citizens to improve their living conditions. To cite an example in the field of human capacity-building in Africa, my Government, in collaboration with the Government of Kenya, established in Kenya, the African Institute for Capacity Development.

Within the TICAD process, Japan attaches special importance to South-South cooperation, especially Asia-Africa cooperation, to promote exchanges of experience and cooperation between Asian and African countries. It is for this reason that the Government of Japan, in collaboration with the Government of Malaysia, hosted the third Asia-Africa Forum in Kuala Lumpur in May this year. At that meeting, African and Asian countries discussed agricultural development and private sector development from the standpoint of capacity-building. Furthermore, my Government, again in collaboration with the Government of Malaysia, hosted the first Africa-Asia Business Forum in Kuala Lumpur last year to promote trade and investment between Asia and Africa. The forum produced business contracts amounting to more than \$24 million between Asian and African private companies. My Government, in collaboration with the Government of South Africa, is planning to hold the second Africa-Asia Business Forum in Durban, South Africa, next July.

Furthermore, last month, an Asian business mission was dispatched successfully to Uganda and Tanzania under the auspices of the Asia-Africa Investment and Technology Promotion Centre — the "Hippalos Centre" — which is another initiative of Japan within the TICAD process. The African Seminar on Health Development is also being held in Tokyo at the moment, and will run until tomorrow. Co-hosted by the Government of Japan and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), it is a forum for discussing South-South cooperation relating to HIV/AIDS. The seminar provides participants from

African, Asian, and Latin American countries with an opportunity to share their knowledge and experience on the deadly epidemic. For its part, Japan has made clear that it regards HIV/AIDS as one of the most important issues in its relationship with sub-Saharan Africa and that it intends to strengthen its policies to fight HIV/AIDS.

Finally, Africa presents many challenges, which the international community as a whole needs to take up today. Japan will give a great deal of attention to the issues facing Africa in the United Nations various forums, particularly over the next year, including the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the High-level Event on Financing for Development, and the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council. Japan will participate constructively in those conferences and meetings and is determined to live up to its commitment to Africa by implementing concrete programmes and projects in that continent.

Mr. Kamara (Sierra Leone): My delegation would like to express its heartfelt sympathy to the Governments of Singapore and Angola on the two tragedies that occurred yesterday, and to all those whose nationals lost their lives in those tragedies.

It is common knowledge in this Assembly that Sierra Leone has been saddled with an unprovoked conflict for the past nine years, a conflict that has brought untold suffering and destruction to human lives, property and infrastructure. It is also common knowledge that 90 per cent of the victims of this conflict are innocent, unarmed civilians, the majority of which are women and children.

It is also a conflict that is, unfortunately, fuelled by external forces, including the active participation of neighbouring States. It is not an ethnic, tribal or religious conflict, but one born of greed and the desire by a handful of unpatriotic elements to control the strategic mineral and natural resources of the country.

Today, 98 per cent of the 4 million Sierra Leoneans yearn for peace and development. That is why this item is of vital importance to my delegation. At this point, let me offer my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for today's debate on "Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa".

We believe that the monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report will provide Member States of this institution the opportunity to help devise proposals that, hopefully, will help to resolve the problems giving rise to conflicts in general. In this vein, therefore, my delegation wishes to commend the members of the Ad Hoc Working Group for a comprehensive and well-structured report.

Conflicts usually arise between and within States as a result of a combination of factors, such as border disputes, political differences, economic disparities, religious intolerance and socio-economic differences. The prescription of solutions, therefore, does not require only an understanding of the individual conflict but also the total cooperation of the international community, particularly the industrialized nations, in this era of political and socio-economic globalization.

As indicated in the Ad Hoc Working Group's report (A/55/45), the lack of political will is also evidenced in the failure of donor countries to provide timely and sufficient resources, both financial and technical, to address most of these problems. In Sierra Leone, for example, the inability to provide the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) — the region's peacekeeping force — with appropriate and adequate logistical support for its efforts to effectively deal with our rebel war is a case in point.

Today more than ever, developing countries in Africa are in dire need of a variety of economic considerations from their developed partners — considerations such as debt relief, the opening of markets without the imposition of strict and harsh tariffs, preferential economic treatment, and the transfer of adequate and appropriate technology. This, in my humble opinion, will go a long way, not only towards alleviating the general malaise of underdevelopment but also towards helping to provide solutions to the emergence of conflicts. At this juncture, my delegation wishes to register its appreciation to all our developed partners that have demonstrated interest in the alleviation of our economic woes.

Furthermore, appropriate assistance from the industrialized nations and the various United Nations bodies will help nations that are saddled with the problems created by conflict, such as the disarmament,

demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, especially child soldiers, into civil society.

Therefore, in addition to the concerns demonstrated by the Secretary-General on this issue, my delegation wishes to request that the General Assembly mandate the Economic and Social Council to consider creating an ad hoc advisory group on countries emerging from conflict, with a view to assessing their economic needs and elaborating a long-term programme of support.

Associated with conflict and post-conflict reconstruction is the question of refugees and internally displaced persons. Problems arising from conflicts are not limited only to conflict areas but also affect countries of asylum, whose economies also need the attention of the international community. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) ministerial meeting on African refugees, held in Khartoum in December 1998, put out a blueprint of recommendations for assistance to be given to countries hosting large numbers of refugees. My delegation believes that this blueprint contains legitimate recommendations, which, I submit, should be given the attention they deserve.

The international community should step up its efforts in the area of poverty alleviation, since the majority of conflicts in Africa are founded on ignorance and avarice. In spite of the fact that Africa contains enormous potential wealth, poverty remains the bedrock of conflict and instability on the continent. It is therefore evident that mass communication and literacy campaigns should now more than ever be effectively operationalized within the nation-States of Africa. They must focus on targeted groups as well as on vulnerable categories of persons, including the aged and the disabled.

Indeed, peace cannot remain durable in a situation of dire economic need or deprivation, nor can economic development endure in an atmosphere of war, conflict and instability. Africa, therefore, needs to develop a well-structured human resource base, devoid of illusions or pessimism, in order to enhance meaningful economic development.

My delegation would wish to request the Assembly to further examine all possible options available through the various United Nations bodies, especially the Economic and Social Council, for the maximum operationalization of mass literacy

campaigns in Africa, which would substantially address the problems of poverty and the promotion of durable sustainable growth and development.

My Government seeks the cooperation of its development partners to candidly ensure that the issue of mutual political will is substantially cultivated so as to nurture an underlying trust between our societies. In this vein, Sierra Leone subscribes to the integral development of democracy and good governance within Africa. It also subscribes to the development of a culture of transparency and accountability, respect for human rights and unconditional peaceful coexistence with its neighbours.

My delegation will support any resolution emanating from these discussions that seeks to address the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, because we believe that this Assembly must act now to facilitate the proper implementation of the Secretary-General's recommendations, as well as those contained in the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group.

If Africa is to bestow total global harmony on its posterity, logic dictates that we act expeditiously and that our developed partners must carry the globally proclaimed ideal of partnership for international development to its logical conclusion.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, my delegation wishes to offer its most sincere condolences to the permanent missions of Singapore, Russia and Angola for the air disasters that occurred yesterday and today. We would ask them to convey our deepest sympathy to the bereaved families.

Today, the General Assembly is considering an important document, A/55/45, entitled "Report of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa".

I wish first to express our great appreciation to Mr. Holkeri's predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, President of the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session. It must be said that it was thanks to his perspicacity and persistence that the Working Group — whose establishment we awaited throughout the fifty-third session — was ultimately created. Similarly, the meetings of the Working Group were marked by the personal involvement, activity, commitment, daring

and wisdom of Mr. Gurirab and his Vice-Chairmen, Mr. Kishore Mahbubani of Singapore and Mr. Inocencio Arias of Spain. Africa thanks them.

Cameroon has participated from the outset in the activities of the Working Group and welcomes the spirit of consensus, dialogue and true determination to succeed shared by all participants, aware as they are of the importance of Africa.

It is only right that the Millennium Declaration, in its part VII, should address the issue of meeting the special needs of Africa, on which international peace and security depend. In the report that he submitted to the Security Council and the General Assembly in 1998 on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, the Secretary-General made a certain number of recommendations. It is encouraging to note that the Millennium Summit endorsed his main recommendations and that the participants in the Summit shared the Secretary-General's opinion that, in order to achieve lasting peace and development, we need an integrated approach to security that takes into account the promotion of peace, poverty eradication, development and democracy.

We welcome the fact that several priority issues addressed in the Secretary-General's report were the subject of broad-based, deep and specific commitments undertaken in the Millennium Declaration. I refer to the need to increase official development assistance; to promote market access for the products of the developing countries; for international private investment; and to tackle the painful problem of HIV/AIDS.

The Secretary-General's recommendations clearly remain topical and must be seen henceforth as the indispensable basis for all action undertaken in the framework of the concerns expressed by the heads of State and Government in the Millennium Declaration. They also demonstrate the importance of the Working Group's report and of the current debate. Our job, indeed, is to chart the course ahead.

We established the Working Group at the fifty-fourth session and gave it the important mandate of following up the implementation of the Secretary-General's recommendations in order to ensure lasting peace and development in Africa. We are happy to note that the Working Group got down to work and held three sessions, presenting us with the important

document to which I have just referred. It is so exhaustive that in document A/55/431 the Secretary-General stated that he had not presented a report on this agenda item, because the report of the Working Group was sufficient in itself.

It is fortunate that in the performance of its task, the Working Group wanted to — so to speak — bring order into the house — by bringing together all the actors in Africa. During a memorable meeting, the different actors — the Secretariat, funds and programmes, agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions — explained what measures they were taking to comply with the Secretary-General's recommendations. They told us not only about the measures taken, but also about the obstacles they encountered. Hence, one can see the great usefulness of these Working Group meetings.

We recognized that a praiseworthy effort had been made within the framework of the implementation of the Secretary-General's recommendations. But, it is only natural that we recognized, and stressed, that much remains to be done, because the task is so tremendous. Taking the next step requires a great deal of political will, because it means an increase in official development assistance, measures to relieve the debt burden and a ruthless battle against HIV/AIDS.

A great deal of good will has been demonstrated in various quarters in implementing the recommendations of the Secretary-General. It should not be forgotten that our countries, aware that their development is their primary responsibility, are making tremendous sacrifices in order to establish a political and economic environment propitious to development. Unfortunately, the aid promised by the international community is a long time coming. The commonly agreed objective of devoting 0.7 per cent of donor countries' GNP to development assistance has been achieved by only a small number of countries; fewer than the fingers on one hand — only four countries — have reached or exceeded the figure of 0.7 per cent. We therefore welcome the fact that this objective was reaffirmed by the heads of State at the Millennium Summit. In the light of the unanimity demonstrated on that occasion, we hope that everything possible will be done by our partners to achieve this objective.

The other problem, which has been widely debated, is that of debt, to which no lasting solution has yet been found. The various methods and

approaches advocated do not take into account the many complex realities.

My country is grateful for having recently qualified for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative. We hope that the eligibility conditions will be made more flexible and that the Initiative's benefits will be expanded and extended to more countries. To achieve the desired results, the special Trust Fund for financing the Initiative must receive all the necessary contributions. We appeal to the donor countries to continue to demonstrate their commitment, political will and generosity to this end.

The Secretary-General has proposed the cancellation of all the debt of the least advanced countries in Africa and finding effective solutions for managing the debts of other categories of African countries. We hope that the Working Group will continue to explore ways of making a reality of this proposal.

On the question of HIV/AIDS, the Working Group called on the General Assembly to devote particular attention to the devastating effects of the pandemic. My delegation supports, as we stated a few days ago, the convening of a special session of the General Assembly to consider, with all partners and all actors, the various aspects of this scourge of the century, including proposals made by the Working Group.

I need hardly remind the Assembly that, despite the progress achieved by our countries in the area of good governance and democratization, poverty and other development problems will continue to be for some years the principal sources of conflict in Africa, if vigorous, sustained preventive action is not taken to stem the tide.

In the light of all the comments I have made, I venture to make some proposals. I am happy to associate myself with the very constructive proposals made this morning by the distinguished Ambassador of Togo in his capacity as representative of the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity. With the permission of the Assembly, I would like to stress some proposals that may contribute to the rationalization of the activities of our Working Group in the fulfilment of its mandate. The first is to extend its mandate, and the second is to establish within the Working Group terms of reference for measuring the progress achieved. This could be accomplished within

the framework of a sectoral or thematic evaluation instead of covering all the questions examined in the Secretary-General's report.

Thirdly, the Economic and Social Council could and should make a great contribution to this exercise. Within the framework of its mandate of monitoring and coordination, the Economic and Social Council could create ad hoc groups to follow up on specific aspects. Close cooperation with the Security Council, which has stated that poverty is a threat to international peace and security, and with the General Assembly would be particularly indicated.

Furthermore, the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in 2001, which will be devoted to the role of the United Nations in supporting Africa's efforts to bring about sustainable development, would be an opportunity to take concrete measures to this end. May I add that in 2001 it is expected that the Economic and Social Council will formulate the terms of the contract of solidarity to which we continue to aspire between Africa and the rest of the international community.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to present my deep condolences to the delegation, Government and people of Singapore for the demise of the victims of the recent air disaster. We wish them solace in their great loss.

The Sudanese delegation would like to commend and thank Mr. Kishore Mahbubani of Singapore and his colleague, Mr. Inocencio Arias of Spain, the two Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa, for their indefatigable efforts in conducting the work of the Working Group. We pay tribute to their ability and patience, which led to the Working Group's reaching consensus on many of the thorny and difficult problems.

My delegation would also like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General, who expressed clear interest in the problems and concerns of Africa and who followed closely the process of implementing the recommendations that were contained in his report submitted to both the Security Council and the General Assembly in April 1998, contained in document A/52/871.

The General Assembly took a wise decision by requesting, in its resolution A/52/234, the creation of a working group to discuss ways and means of implementing, and to monitor the implementation of, the recommendations of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. We believe that was a very important achievement and an important step towards determining the progress achieved in the implementation of many of the initiatives taken by the United Nations in order to deal with the problems of the African continent and to find solutions for them.

The creation of the Working Group gave Member countries an unprecedented chance to specify the form and content of the initiatives and the implementation of the Secretary-General's recommendations.

Here we would like to commend the Working Group for holding sessions with the representatives of United Nations agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions. This initiative represented an innovative and pioneering method of responding to this task and resulted in a qualitative improvement in the content of the recommendations reached by the Working Group, which are before the Assembly today.

In the three sessions that it held, the Working Group was greatly frustrated as a result of the scant progress achieved in the implementation of some of the recommendations submitted by the Secretary-General since April 1998. This can be seen in the disappointing conclusions reached by the Working Group as it tried to identify obstacles that impeded the implementation of the recommendations. It also revealed a lack of political will on the part of the international community, in the insufficient official development assistance financing, in the decrease of core resources of the United Nations Development Programme, in the limited access to technology, in the general deterioration of public health, in the weak private sector and economic structures, in the difficulties of coordinating the different initiatives on Africa, in the absence of effective machinery for follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of these initiatives, and in the lack of adequate solutions to help overcome the obstacles to adequate implementation.

In the light of these conclusions, the General Assembly's responsibility to continue to monitor the progress achieved in implementing the Secretary-General's recommendations is reconfirmed,

particularly since shortage of time did not allow the Working Group to cover all the thematic fields.

Therefore, the delegation of Sudan is fully confident that the Working Group can continue to carry out its tasks and play a pivotal role in encouraging the implementation of all the Secretary-General's recommendations. In this respect, we wish to endorse the proposal to renew the Working Group's mandate for another term. We also endorse the Economic and Social Council's continued role in coordinating, guiding and following up on the implementation of these recommendations and on identifying effective actions, particularly next year when the Council discusses the United Nations role in supporting African countries' efforts to achieve sustainable development.

In conclusion, I wish to remind Members that the lively discussions that have taken place over the last two years concerning the Secretary-General's recommendations on peace and sustainable development in Africa have consolidated the growing belief that peace and development are two sides of one coin and are indeed an indivisible whole. Therefore, the delegation of Sudan calls upon the Economic and Social Council to set up consultative groups, not only for countries that have just emerged from conflict situations, but also for countries that are at present experiencing conflicts, in order to identify their economic and developmental needs and create a long-term support programme for these countries based on the agreed concept of providing transition from relief work to rehabilitation, construction and development. In this context, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), was instructed by the Secretary-General to lead a group, with the support of nine other international organizations, as described in this report, aimed at rescuing the Horn of Africa region from the impending threat of starvation faced by more than 70 million people, who constitute half the population of the region.

It is very important to ensure Governments' participation in implementing the food security strategy developed by this study. The international community must fulfil its part, particularly through partners in development, by providing the necessary external support for such efforts and by addressing the symptoms and root causes of conflict and disputes, with a view to achieving economic and political stability in the Horn of Africa region, so that the people

of this region can enjoy development, peace and sustainable development.

Mr. Ben Mustapha (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to express to the delegations of Singapore and Angola our deep sorrow and condolences for the two airplane crashes in which many people lost their lives.

My delegation would also like to thank and commend the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa for the comprehensive and useful report now under consideration. That report assumes great importance for us Africans in view of the reality that many countries in the African continent are experiencing tension and conflict and in light of the level of the continent's development, which all agree is not up to the new international level, especially in the new millennium that we all hope will be one of harmony, international solidarity, security and stability.

If we realistically consider the situation of the African continent amid modern global transformations, we will easily detect that among the reasons for the continent's inability to catch up with the rest of the world in the economic, political and social fields are the intertwined accidental and substantive circumstances that have caused the continent great difficulties. It is extremely important at this historic juncture that the international community acknowledges that reality and supports the African continent, regardless of the responsibilities involved. Today, when we consider the globalization of international relations, it is difficult to leave the African continent marginalized, moving in a vicious circle fraught with difficulties that prevent it from catching up with the rest of the world and from achieving the objective of our Millennium Summit within the context of the new world reality and the means available to face new challenges.

If we examine the situation of the African continent, we will undoubtedly find that many efforts and sacrifices have been made by African countries to overcome their difficulties and to deal with the reality of the situation, as is happening in many parts of the world. But, at the same time, we should also be aware that, despite efforts and sacrifices made by the countries of the continent, it is extremely difficult for them alone to overcome their difficulties and to fulfil

the requirements of development, stability and peace. We therefore believe that the international community's responsibility towards the African continent is great and should be translated into multilateral support at the international level, particularly by international financial institutions. The role of the United Nations, which has a philosophy of inclusivity, universality and solidarity, should be in the forefront of efforts on the part of the various institutions to help the African continent overcome its difficulties in a manner that attests to its importance and priority at the international level.

Peace and security in the African continent are among the most important aspects of this issue, as they are intrinsically linked to economic improvement in many African countries. We therefore believe that the international community's responsibility is essential, particularly in the field of social and economic development, and in view of the fact that African countries have already demonstrated their willingness to make the necessary sacrifices and efforts to achieve their desired objectives.

We recognize that the prospects of the African continent for becoming a partner in globalized relations and world economy are basically the responsibility of the Africans themselves. However, that cannot be achieved without the international community's strong bilateral and multilateral commitments to help Africa effect the drastic transformation it needs in order to deal with the requirements of the new century. In our view, it is the collective responsibility of all — Africa and its international partners.

We note with satisfaction the progress achieved by the United Nations in implementing the Secretary-General's recommendations in the areas of peace-making, peacekeeping and the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Likewise, we note the progress made by the Organization with regard to improving the humanitarian condition of refugees and alleviating social and physical impacts during post-conflict peace-building. We are also gratified at the various measures put in place to increase financing for development, promote human rights and the rule of law and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, with emphasis on social development, food security, reduction of debts and opening of world markets. We are also pleased with positive developments on the African front, particularly with regard to the political area. Those developments include the establishment of

constitutional institutions in many African countries, which has led to a new way of developing relations conducive to a democratic atmosphere that fosters domestic political improvement and new prospects in the economic field.

Despite all these encouraging developments referred to by the Secretary-General in his report, we continue to believe that many difficulties persist. One such problem is the lack of resources and capacities to enable the utilization of new technologies for the purpose of development. No doubt, the current conflicts on the continent have prevented African nations from achieving development and from making progress in the political, economic, social and administrative spheres. We believe it is important to realize reforms in these areas, for they are closely linked to the very essence of stability.

As we have already stated, the African continent has been held back. Africa is home to the largest number of least developed countries and has the lowest per capita income in the world. Dealing with the various problems faced by Africa should continue to be of the utmost priority for the international community during this particularly critical period currently experienced by the continent. As I have already said, Africa — which hosts the largest number of conflicts on the planet — has the largest number of refugees and internally displaced people. War and tension have made the continent a fertile breeding ground for disease and other scourges recently experienced by mankind.

This reality should not make us pessimistic or lead us to desperation. Instead, it should act as a challenge to which all of us must rise with the firmest international commitment. Poverty and deprivation are not simply causes of underdevelopment, they are also responsible for domestic disputes and the proliferation of hotbeds of tension. Poverty and the tragedies it causes keep man from building a better future. These realities are, in our view, the causes of conflict on the African continent.

Our President, Mr. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, has on many occasions stressed the point that Africa is not the only continent threatened. He did so most recently at the Millennium Summit of the General Assembly and at the summit meeting of the Security Council. Accordingly, we have proceeded to propose the establishment of a global solidarity fund to alleviate poverty in Africa and help its societies to confront the

challenge of poverty and marginalization in a way that promotes social and economic stability and can bear fruit at the political level.

Conflict prevention remains a basic pillar of international action. It should therefore take into account the various dimensions of the problem, including the basic economic dimension. The international community has always tried to prevent conflicts and tensions on the African continent. Nevertheless, the strategy employed thus far has failed to produce results in the economic and social fields and has always lacked the necessary philosophy to strengthen stability after conflicts come to an end. I believe that bolstering that strategy would make the prospects for peace and security much better.

The Security Council remains for us the principal organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. Due to the sensitive nature and potential dangers of many African conflicts, strengthening the Organization of African Unity's (OAU) 1993 Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution is also a very important and urgent priority. We therefore welcome international initiatives in this regard, in particular those taken by friendly countries that are aimed at enhancing Africa's ability to establish and maintain peace. We also welcome the OAU's regional role, as well as the international legitimacy embodied in the Security Council.

I welcome the recommendations contained in the report of the Working Group. However, I believe that responsibility for the African continent is a collective one that requires the establishment of adequate mechanisms to deal with the causes of conflict on the continent in all their aspects. We would also like to stress that multilateral and bilateral strategies should be implemented with the requisite level of interest on the part of international financial institutions. The African continent adamantly and anxiously awaits the stability and security that will make it possible to regain its position in the world and achieve comprehensive sustainable development in the new millennium — a millennium we all agree should be one of peace, stability and development.

Mr. Menkerios (Eritrea): I should like at the outset to take this opportunity to convey our deepest condolences to the Government and the people of Singapore in connection with the tragic losses suffered

as a result of the aeroplane crash that occurred yesterday.

I wish to congratulate Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland on the able manner in which he has been conducting the ongoing deliberations of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. Also, allow me to reiterate once again my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his initiatives on Africa in general and for his efforts for the peace, stability and sustainable development of that continent in particular.

We would further like to pay tribute to the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa, which was established to monitor the implementation of the recommendations made by the Secretary-General on the subject under discussion. Over the past year, under the chairmanship of Namibia and the vice-chairmanship of Singapore and Spain, the Working Group engaged in study and initiated discussion on enhancing peace and development in Africa and proposed recommendations in that connection. We thank the Working Group also for the succinct report it has presented on the subject, which covers the broadest spectrum of the areas with which the Group dealt.

In past statements, we have indicated that Africa's problems, both political and economic, have external and internal causes. We have observed that the continent inherited a myriad of ills from the colonial past, which fundamentally affected the social, political and economic foundations of its society, thus constraining its present capacity for stability and development. Thus, reversing those ills, which took generations to effect, is not going to be easy or to be done in a short time. We feel that undoing the colonial legacy, whether or not we recognize or acknowledge it as such, is going to take more than just one generation.

But we would also emphasize that Africa's present problems are caused also by the shortcomings of Africans ourselves, and more so as time passes. Solutions to Africa's problems must thus come, as a matter of priority, from us Africans. It is, indeed, a blessing that the United Nations has provided the forum and that the Secretary-General has initiated the programme for boosting Africa's capacity to deal with its problems of instability and underdevelopment.

The report of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group (A/55/45) presents a synopsis of the progress

made in the implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary-General, and of obstacles to the effective implementation of those recommendations. It has also made recommendations for further action. We are basically in agreement with the content of the report and with the broad outline of the Working Group's recommendations. But we would like to comment briefly on efforts being made by African countries themselves towards peace, stability and development.

We have said that, although Africa's problems of underdevelopment may be attributed mainly to a host of inherited ills, Africa's continued incapacity to deal with those problems has been basically caused by internal shortcomings. It is, indeed, the greed, dictatorial rule and/or ineptitude of some of Africa's ruling elites that continue to pit the continent against itself, weakening its capacity to solve its problems of underdevelopment. That fact is recognized by an increasing number of Africans, and appropriate changes are being made throughout the continent, though slowly and in most places unnoticeably.

Although it is obvious that conflicts within and among several African countries have continued unabated, limiting the capacity of the continent to concentrate on development, it is true also that, as we have stated in past statements on this item, positive changes have, of course, begun to come about in many parts of Africa, especially during the past decade. Regimes committed to building democratic institutions, adopting sound development strategies based on their needs and capacities and, most important, strengthening regional cooperation for eventual integration have appeared. Despite the enormous problems being encountered on the way, the process started by those regimes can be expected to continue, for it is supported by a growing number of African people no longer prepared to accept being eliminated from participation in the economic, political and social life of their societies. African countries are also increasing their concerted effort, through the Organization of African Unity and through subregional organizations, to resolve conflict, enhance economic cooperation and address humanitarian issues.

Those efforts, along with the positive efforts made by individual countries, need to be well appraised and adequately supported if development in Africa is to be sustained. The continent is endowed with resources, both human and material. What it has lacked, and continues to lack, is the development of

those resources, especially human resources, and of appropriate institutions that will allow wider participation by Africa's peoples in the political and economic life of their countries.

Those are the areas in which Africa needs partnership from the international community. It is good to see that the United Nations is taking the lead in the direction of developing a framework for that partnership. We would like to emphasize in closing that such a partnership is required for the general mutual well-being of all nations in the world; it must not be viewed as a welfare donation for the benefit of Africa alone.

Mr. Akeju (Nigeria): I wish at this juncture to convey my delegation's heartfelt condolences to the Governments and the peoples of Angola and of Singapore in connection with the losses sustained in the recent aeroplane crashes.

The Nigerian delegation welcomes this opportunity for the General Assembly to focus once again on the situation of Africa, this time against the background of the report of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa (A/55/45). I thank the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts to ensure that Africa is helped out of its present difficulties. I also wish to use this occasion to express our deep appreciation to the President of the General Assembly, to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, and to the two Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group, the Permanent Representatives of Singapore and of Spain, for their commendable work.

The decision of the Security Council in 1997 to take a critical look at the African continent was, indeed, a most welcome one. There is no doubt that peace is a necessary condition for development. As the African experience has demonstrated, the absence of peace could be one of the major impediments to development. In 1998, there were 11 major conflicts, which affected 26 of the 48 sub-Saharan countries. Those conflicts have taken a great toll on the economies of the countries involved, which are already among the poorest in the world. The crisis of development has become endemic to most African countries. It arises from multidimensional sources, including the low level of education, social and economic deprivation and diseases such as HIV/AIDS

and malaria. Economically, the continent is being increasingly marginalized, as other parts of the world are moving into the era of the information and communications revolution.

It is against this background that the Nigerian delegation attaches a great deal of importance to the report of the Working Group and its various recommendations. Indeed, there is a dire need for new approaches and measures to address these issues, which have grave consequences for the peace and socio-economic development of the African continent and its peoples. In this regard, it is heartening to note that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has intensified efforts in the areas of security and humanitarian assistance aimed at ameliorating the plight of almost 8.1 million refugees — Africa's share of the 22 million refugees in the world. It is also crucial to acknowledge here the progress recorded in the field of human rights and the strengthening of the rule of law, as contained in the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Ministerial Conference on Human Rights in April 1999.

It is equally pertinent to recall the collaborative international efforts to find a solution to Africa's political and economic problems, which include the Africa-Europe Summit, held in April in Cairo, which focused, inter alia, on debt, trade and market access for African products; the Cotonou Agreement on the new cooperation framework between the African, Caribbean and Pacific States and the European Union; and the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act, which was passed by the United States Congress, seeking to promote further trade with Africa by lowering and eliminating tariffs and quotas for products from the region.

Furthermore, it is gratifying to note the increasing number of donors and financial institutions which are expressing genuine concern over the economic problems of Africa. In this regard, we welcome the efforts of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative, as well as the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility. According to the report, both programmes are aimed at providing faster, deeper and broader debt relief and poverty reduction and ensuring a growth-oriented policy. However, we in Nigeria believe that, whatever efforts are being made to ameliorate the problems of conflict and to ensure durable peace in Africa, they will be able

to achieve the desired results only if a genuine solution is found to the continent's external debt burden. This should go beyond the HIPC Debt Initiative to include total debt cancellation for African countries.

As the Secretary-General mentioned in his report, there are a number of obstacles militating against the implementation of initiatives aimed at reducing conflicts and promoting sustainable development in Africa. These range from problems on the part of African countries themselves to the international community's abdication of its commitments. The lack of political will, which is without doubt a major hindrance, is reflected mostly in the refusal of feuding parties in some troubled parts of Africa to implement peace accords. This is the main cause of the impasse in a number of conflicts in Africa, particularly in the Central African region. However, equally serious for the continent as a whole is the lack of financial resources for the implementation of recommendations at the level of official development assistance as well as for programmes funded by the United Nations.

Africa's human resource problems have certainly been aggravated by the HIV/AIDS crisis. According to the report, of the 34 million cases in the world, 24 million are in Africa. Africa has already lost 10 million people to the dreaded disease. The situation is similar with regard to malaria. Of the 400 million people in the world suffering from malaria, 300 million are in Africa — and 2 million die each year from this disease. Indeed, these are not only grave health problems, but also economic obstacles on which this Assembly, in its consideration of the report, needs to act with the utmost urgency.

In the search for solutions to African problems, it has always been recognized that Africa's destiny lies in its own hands. Thus, African countries themselves have borne, under severe constraints, the primary responsibility for undertaking various initiatives at the national, subregional and continental levels to confront the multifarious challenges to their development efforts, and most African countries have already started addressing these problems. This is reflected not only in the radical reform of their economies, but also in the increasing democratization process and various other initiatives, such as the Economic Community of West African States peacekeeping mechanism for coping with conflicts and wars. All these are worthy of note and support by the international community.

African countries' own efforts, under the aegis of the OAU, to strengthen the continent's capacity for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts is commendable. The African Ministerial Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA) process is a case in point. This is a bold initiative by African countries to meet the challenges of political stability and economic development. Under it, the resolution of interrelated problems of security, stability, development and cooperation in many African countries is conceived of, not in isolation, but as a process which will address the issues. We strongly recommend the African Ministers' Declaration, contained in the CSSDCA final document, for serious consideration in the future work of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group.

In conclusion, we recommend that the Working Group's mandate be extended to enable it to continue its good work on thematic issues, in particular, the implementation of the principles of the Millennium Declaration, with special emphasis on Part VII, "Meeting the special needs of Africa".

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation is very pleased to be able to point to the growing role of African States in world affairs. Without the fully fledged, active participation of African countries in the life of the world community, it is impossible to have development and fruitful cooperation at a global level or to create a complete and stable system of international security based on the United Nations Charter, oriented towards the twenty-first century.

At the same time, one of the gravest problems in the world today remains the incessant conflicts in Africa. The future of the continent will depend in large measure upon their speedy and effective settlement, particularly by political and diplomatic means. While preserving the Security Council's primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and with unswerving compliance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, priority must be given to close coordination of the work of the United Nations in this area with the efforts of African countries themselves, the Organization of African Unity and other African organizations.

It is important to support the efforts of Africa to develop its own peace-building potential, while laying

the foundations for collective security and preventing illicit trade in arms and ammunition. Ultimately, we might consider the creation of an effective pan-African system aimed at the prevention and settlement of conflicts and at the comprehensive task of post-conflict reconstruction. A key role in this area is being played, as it should, by the Organization of African Unity, which has the best potential to do so. We also highly appreciate the work of the Economic Community of West African States, the Southern African Development Community and the Inter-Government Authority on Development.

If a durable and long-term solution to conflicts in Africa is not found, it will be impossible to ensure the real emergence of the continent, help it set out on the path of stable and dynamic development and see it achieve its fully fledged integration into the world economy. On the other hand, poverty and the serious social and economic problems of many African countries not only hamper their development but also serve as sources of conflict.

Russia is therefore in favour of a comprehensive approach to the consideration and resolution of Africa's military, political, social, economic, humanitarian, ethnic and other problems. We must develop a culture of crisis prevention, deploy greater efforts of a preventive nature, and determine the deep-rooted causes of conflicts, including those of an economic and social nature. This should enjoy particular attention in the course of discussions on the Brahimi report, which have now begun in the context of improving crisis management in the United Nations. We welcome the consistent progress of States of the region towards economic and political reform and the strengthening of regional and subregional integration.

This kind of approach is particularly necessary in view of the sharply accelerated process of globalization, which brings with it not only qualitative and positive change in the lives of human beings but also considerable potential for risks and dangers. In overcoming the dangerous phenomena stemming from globalization, in particular divergent rates of economic growth, it is important to take measures to ensure that globalization works to the benefit of all countries and peoples, in the interests of social progress, the eradication of poverty and other modern-day evils. Particular attention in this regard should be paid to the needs of African countries.

Russia is determined to continue actively to cooperate in the settlement of conflicts and in the search for ways and means of resolving the social and economic problems of Africa. As was emphasized by President Putin at the Security Council summit meeting held on 7 September:

“If in the twentieth century Africa became free from colonialism, the twenty-first century should rid it of poverty and military confrontation.”
(S/PV.4194, p. 11)

The United Nations should do everything in its power to resolve this problem.

Mr. Urib (Namibia): Before I make my statement, allow me to join others in paying our heartfelt condolences to the Governments and people of Singapore and Angola on the tragic plane crashes that occurred yesterday. We would also like to convey our deepest sympathy to the families of those who perished in the tragic accident.

The Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa has provided us with a comprehensive report covering the entire scope of its monitoring responsibilities relating to the issues of peace and the creation of a favourable environment for sustained economic growth and sustainable development in Africa.

My delegation wishes to express its gratitude to the Permanent Representatives of Singapore and Spain, Ambassador Mahbubani and Ambassador Arias, Co-Vice Chairmen of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group, for their commitment to the cause of Africa and the outstanding leadership they have provided to the Working Group.

We would also like to reiterate our deepest appreciation to the President of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Information and Broadcasting of the Republic of Namibia, who was instrumental in the establishment of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group in terms of resolution 53/92 of 7 December 1998 and for providing overall direction to the work of the Group.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General, who has spared no effort in promoting the cause of peace and sustainable development in Africa.

Our gratitude also goes all the other bodies of the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions and other players for the invaluable contributions they have been making in our common effort to rid the African continent of endemic violent conflict and chronic underdevelopment.

The report of the Ad Hoc Working Group contained in document A/55/45 entails progress on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General, as well as coordination of follow-up by the United Nations system regarding initiatives on Africa.

Much has been said about the economic, social, political, security and environmental plight of the African continent. Both its old and new ills are now well documented. The nature and causes of conflicts and of underdevelopment on the continent, as well as the specifics of the alarming magnitude of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, are now well known. Yet the situation appears to be worsening daily. Although the United Nations and the international community are in possession of all the necessary information on the development needs of Africa, the continent appears to be irremediably drifting deeper into an economic abyss. While experts formulate and rehearse unworkable development strategies, development itself continues to elude African countries.

While we debate aid and trade in the sumptuous halls of the forums of international conferences, millions of Africans continue to suffer the daily assault and degradation caused by hunger, ignorance, disease and the oppression of underdevelopment. While we theorize on the risks and benefits of globalization, the marginalization of the African continent is becoming increasingly globalized.

It is against the backdrop of these observations that our debate on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa must take place. Today, many ordinary Africans are asking if the world really cares about the fate of Africa. This sentiment expressed by ordinary Africans is strengthened by the lukewarm suggestions we offer to Africa instead of workable and people-centred solutions. My delegation wishes to speak to these issues of conscience, ethics and politics today.

We agree with the assessment in the report of the Working Group that the effective implementation of

the recommendations of the Secretary-General requires strong political will on the part of African countries and the international community alike. But it appears to this delegation that this political will, instead of being demonstrated through concrete action, is being held hostage to language and other clichés. In the meantime, many more millions of African children are left hungry, sick, homeless, abused, uneducated, exploited and subjected to the horrors of violence and conflict. When the international community's efforts produce these unintended results, it is time to seriously rethink our strategies for Africa's development. My delegation calls for a change of course today.

The President returned to the Chair.

Namibia does not deny the significant achievements made over the years in the fight against poverty and under-development. My country is indeed grateful to the international community and all our development partners for the support that Africa has received to enhance its own development efforts. But Namibia is concerned about the obvious contradictions and mismatches evident in recent international development policy and practice. For example, at a time when most African countries have undertaken remarkable economic and political reforms, creating open economies and democratic systems of governance, development assistance and foreign direct investment flows into Africa are at the lowest level in history and are dwindling further. When Africa is most in need of hard cash, it is compelled to become a major exporter of capital. We have liberalized our economies and opened our markets to global competition, but our most competitive products and services are deliberately barred from entering the markets of industrialized countries. These are the facts of the situation. This must change if we want to see any significant improvement in our development policies, and, more important, if we want to see any change in the livelihood of the people of Africa.

The effective implementation of the recommendations in the Ad Hoc Working Group's report is indispensable to the realization of this objective. The Working Group should therefore be allowed to continue its work, and Namibia intends to support a draft resolution to that effect. But there is also a great need for the Working Group to be strengthened through active and effective participation, especially by the African delegations themselves. In the past year, the participation of African delegations in

the deliberations of the Working Group has been less than ideal. Yet all of us recognize that African development is primarily the responsibility of our Governments and the African peoples themselves.

The Namibian delegation holds the view that the eradication of poverty will go a long way in helping to solve conflicts on the African continent by giving ordinary people real choices and opportunities to improve their living standards. In this context, we reiterate our firm commitment to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration as a means to redress the problem of poverty and underdevelopment in Africa. In this respect, Africa views cancellation of the debt burden and increased official development assistance (ODA) as key elements that have to be considered.

Some delegations have referred to the problem of corruption in Africa. Corruption in and of itself is an anathema to social and economic development. Namibia has passed anti-corruption legislation to both prevent and fight corruption when it occurs. Both our executive and judicial branches of government have worked tirelessly over the 10 years of our independence to ensure that Namibia remains, by and large, a corruption-free nation. But we are aware that where corruption occurs in Africa the corrupters are generally those who have the financial and other means to corrupt Africans. Even more important, the wealth of Africa lost to corruption ends up in the financial institutions of the very nations that blame the Africans for corruption. In addition, when a legitimately elected African Government seeks to recover the billions of African dollars stashed away in these countries, their efforts are made excruciatingly difficult, if not outright impossible. This, too, is a fact of the situation. We believe that the problem of corruption has two sides to it, and we must all work together to address it once and for all.

Last but not least, this morning a representative of a friendly country inadvertently characterized my country, Namibia, as having had internal conflict in the last 25 years. I would like to correct that characterization. The truth of the matter is that for more than 25 years the Namibian people, under the leadership of the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), and with the support of the international community, including the General Assembly and the Security Council, waged a protracted struggle against colonialism and illegal apartheid occupation. In 1990 we attained our hard-won

independence and declared a policy of national reconciliation and nation-building. We are pleased to state that, with the international community's continued encouragement and support, we have been successful in this regard. Namibia is at peace with itself and with its neighbours.

In conclusion, Namibia would once again like to express its gratitude to all its development partners and friends of Africa for the noble work that they have been doing in the field. We will continue to support the efforts of the international community to assist African countries to overcome poverty, conflict, disease and underdevelopment.

Mr. Kuindwa (Kenya): I join others who have spoken before me today in expressing my delegation's condolences and sympathy to the people and Governments of Singapore, Angola and the Russian Federation following the aircraft tragedies. Our prayers are with them. We wish those in hospital a quick recovery and the families of those who lost their loved ones our heartfelt condolences.

My delegation congratulates the Open-Ended Ad Hoc Working Group on its commendable job in discussing the progress made in the implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

It is against this background that my delegation would like to make the following observations and comments.

Since peace is a prerequisite for development, it is imperative that the international community, including the national Governments of Africa, as well as the United Nations system, make every possible effort to find ways and means of ensuring lasting peace in Africa. In addition to the ongoing peacekeeping operations, every effort must be made to include all concerned parties in peace negotiations. Regional efforts should also be encouraged and fully supported.

Since the end of the cold war, it has become evident that conflicts in Africa have intensified, and instead of being inter-country they have become intra-country, which has restrained external intervention, as well as adversely affecting the process of development within and among African countries.

We firmly believe that the root causes of conflicts in Africa were systematically identified in the

Secretary-General's 1998 report (A/52/871) and should be addressed as recommended by the Working Group Assembly at the national, regional and international levels. In this context, we wish to see concrete actions being taken by all concerned in order to sustain and promote tangible, durable peace for sustained economic growth and development in Africa.

We wish to stress that the forthcoming preparations for the final review and appraisal of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s should streamline and enhance the promotion patterns of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

While progress has been made in a number of areas at the level of the United Nations system, it is still apparent that much more remains to be done at the national, regional and international levels to implement the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report. In this context, we call upon the international community, including the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, to provide new and additional financial resources required to address in a comprehensive manner the following socio-economic problems confronting the development process of African countries: the eradication of poverty and illiteracy, as well as of the diseases of HIV/AIDS and malaria; the cancellation of external debt to give developing countries a fresh start; the fulfilment of the agreed official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product (GNP) of donor countries to developing African countries and an additional 0.15% of GNP to least developed countries; the removal of all trade barriers to accommodate export products from the African countries; the provision of adequate financial assistance in investment for building the capacity and capability of the African countries in scientific and technical knowledge; and the provision of resources to contain environment degradation and natural disasters.

In conclusion, my delegation strongly recommends that the United Nations should, as a matter of priority, extend the mandate of the present Working Group to the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly to enable it to continue monitoring the implementation of all recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report. We also recommend that the Security Council pursue its consideration of the follow-up of these recommendations in the areas of peace and security

with a view to ensuring a comprehensive implementation of the reports of the Secretary-General and of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group of the General Assembly.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2 of 19 October 1994, I now call on the observer of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Ms. Pohjankukka (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): I am honoured to take the floor on this agenda item, particularly after the heads of States committed themselves in the historic Millennium Declaration to meeting the special needs of Africa and to fighting further for development.

The 176 Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies around the world know what it means to fight for the freedom from want. Our members and volunteers in the affected areas are a part of the poor; it is their own fight. They can also be the most effective weapon in the fight against poverty, if they are only given the possibility to take that responsibility and better tools to implement it.

The Secretary-General stated in his report entitled "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century" that

"[I]ack of access to basic health care is one of the main reasons poor people stay poor". (A/54/2000, para. 113)

He further noted that

"[i]n Africa, the high burden of disease not only requires families to stretch their meagre resources but also locks them into a high-fertility, high-mortality poverty trap". (*ibid.*)

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies shares the view of the Secretary-General. We strongly believe that public health is one of the key challenges facing Africa now and in the future. Most people who die in Africa die from preventable diseases, as the majority of people do not have access to basic public health care. The Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement has been involved in public health activities for decades, but we believe that more can be done and has to be done in order to save lives.

The Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and States parties to the Geneva Conventions committed themselves to doing just that, to achieve more. At the twenty-seventh International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, held in November 1999, the Plan of Action for the years 2000-2003 was adopted. By the Plan of Action, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and States declared their intention to work for strategic partnerships to improve the lives of vulnerable people. Ever greater cooperation is urgently needed between States, international organizations and Red Cross/Red Crescent National Societies to advocate and respond to priority public health problems. HIV/AIDS is clearly one area that requires a focused and concentrated collaboration from all partners.

The African Red Cross Red Crescent Health Initiative (ARCHI 2010) is an African response to the call of the twenty-seventh International Conference. It is also an integrated part of Strategy 2010 of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, which places health and care in the community as one of its core areas. ARCHI 2010 was launched in 1998. Since then, 53 African Red Cross/Red Crescent National Societies — in close partnership with their respective Governments, United Nations agencies and the African academic world — have reviewed and analysed basic health problems. This continent-wide process identified the following priorities for action: HIV/AIDS, malaria, vaccine-preventable diseases and malnutrition. All these problems can be addressed at the community level. That is why ARCHI 2010 builds on the strength of the Red Cross/Red Crescent, which is our long-time presence in every country of the continent, with more than 2 million volunteers.

The reason we started to develop ARCHI 2010 was that we asked the question: How can we serve better? The main answer was found to be that we can effectively increase our impact by clearly identifying priorities and taking large-scale action in the chosen areas. This requires thorough planning, strengthening the volunteer networks and building capacities at the national and local levels. We remain focused on doing what the Red Cross/Red Crescent does best: public education, using our great experience in dissemination; prevention, using our experience in first aid and primary health care; home care, using our experience in relief; and advocacy, using our framework of national and international connections.

The African Red Cross/Red Crescent National Societies are strongly committed to achieving all of this. Therefore, the African National Societies adopted the Ouagadougou Commitment, marking the close of the fifth Pan African Conference held in Burkina Faso from 21 to 25 September 2000. In the Ouagadougou Commitment, the African Red Cross/Red Crescent National Societies adopted the ARCHI 2010 Strategy and confirmed their commitment to scaling up the action against HIV/AIDS, as well as their determination to see that every African enjoy the right to food security.

I wish to take this opportunity to state our great appreciation to the African Governments, and particularly to the Burkina Faso delegation, for their support in endorsing the Ouagadougou Commitment and recognizing it within the United Nations system, where it is now registered under document A/55/480. We consider this a meaningful step in building our strategic partnerships. We look forward to continuing our cooperation with the national plans.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies welcomes the overwhelming willingness of the international community to reach out for sustainable development in Africa. However, we hope that the lessons learned will be kept in mind, to avoid the undesirable consequences of assistance replacing the community's own effort and individual initiatives. Therefore, we urgently offer the comparative advantage of our established presence. Red Cross/Red Crescent national societies are already a part of the national fabric of every country, creating the only continent-wide indigenous grassroots-level organization.

A prime example of community action is our fight against HIV/AIDS. The Red Cross/Red Crescent is involved in community projects across the continent, including home care support for persons living with HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe and South Africa, education campaigns in Mozambique and Namibia and peer group campaigns among the youth in Central and West Africa. Further, we believe that the key is in breaking the silence and recognizing that the disease is a long-term disaster that needs massive resources and immediate mass action. Therefore, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies welcomes the recent initiatives by the Security Council to recognize that HIV/AIDS has international dimensions and consequences for world peace and

security. We believe that the strong commitment of several States, declared during the Millennium Summit, to massively increase funds for supplies and service delivery improvements is essential. We, in turn, are ready to work together with our Red Cross/Red Crescent national societies to mobilize the over 2 million Red Cross/Red Crescent volunteers in Africa to create demand for these supplies and services and to make a difference. We therefore commit to continuing to mobilize the power of humanity to build a healthy future.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. A draft resolution on this item will be submitted at a later date.

Agenda item 19 (*continued*)

Admission of new Members to the United Nations

Application for admission (A/55/528)

Letter from the President of the Security Council (A/55/535)

Draft resolution (A/55/L.23)

The President: I should like to invite the General Assembly to consider the positive recommendation by the Security Council on the application for admission to membership in the United Nations of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The Security Council has recommended the admission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to membership in the United Nations, as stated in document A/55/535. In this connection, a draft resolution has been submitted, in document A/55/L.23.

I should now like to consult the Assembly with a view to considering immediately draft resolution A/55/L.23. In this connection, since document A/55/L.23 has only been circulated this morning, it would be necessary to waive the relevant provision of rule 78 of the rules of procedure, which reads as follows:

“As a general rule, no proposal shall be discussed or put to the vote at any meeting of the General Assembly unless copies of it have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting.”

Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the General Assembly agrees to consider draft resolution A/55/L.23.

It was so decided.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of France to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.23.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the European Union and the Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area — Liechtenstein, Iceland and Norway — which align themselves with this declaration, and on behalf of all the 70 sponsors, I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution proposing the admission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations.

On 24 September 2000, the Yugoslav people chose democracy. Their choice, made in especially difficult circumstances, earned them the international community's unanimous admiration. That choice will have positive effects for the entire region. In seeking the admission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations, President Kostunica confirmed his resolve to break with the dead-end policy in which the Milosevic regime had enmeshed itself. He confirmed his country's complete adherence to the principles and values of our Charter.

President Kostunica is making here today the steps we all expected. A hiatus of eight years is about to end. With legitimate pride, the Yugoslav people will take its rightful place in the concert of nations. This evening, the first words of our Charter, “We the peoples of the United Nations”, will have even greater meaning. Tonight also means an important step towards reconciliation, stability and peace in a region that has been marked by so many trials.

The countries of the European Union have been resolutely involved in today's historic event. They made that commitment because President Kostunica and the Yugoslav people took every risk so that democracy and respect for law could triumph and because the Yugoslav people, in bringing our shared

values to life, has cleared the way to its family — the European Union.

By adopting this draft resolution by consensus, the General Assembly would be sending a unanimous message of friendship and hope to the Yugoslav people and its new leaders. It would be sending a brotherly greeting and the warmest wishes for complete success from all the States in the Assembly.

To the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia we say welcome to the United Nations.

The President: Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that since its publication, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/55/L.23: Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Czech Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guinea, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Mauritius, Monaco, Myanmar, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, San Marino, Seychelles, the Sudan, Togo, Turkey, Uruguay and Yemen.

May I take it that the General Assembly accepts the recommendation of the Security Council and adopts draft resolution A/55/L.23 by acclamation?

Draft resolution A/55/L.23 was adopted by acclamation (resolution 55/12).

The President: I therefore declare the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia admitted to membership in the United Nations.

I request the Chief of Protocol to escort the delegation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to its place in the General Assembly Hall.

The delegation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was escorted to its place in the General Assembly Hall.

The President: It is a great pleasure on this historic occasion to welcome, on behalf of the General Assembly, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as a Member of the United Nations.

At the Millennium Summit we reaffirmed our commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter. The admission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia into the family of nations is of great

significance, as it strengthens the universality of the United Nations and thus enhances its legitimacy and effectiveness.

Equally, I am confident that it strengthens the efforts by the international community to bring stability to South-East Europe, efforts in which the United Nations plays the leading role in many ways.

The path leading to this moment has been long and troublesome. But today we should look into the future and welcome the admission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as a promising new beginning. Today also signals the strength of the United Nations itself and its decisions.

Less than a month ago, the whole world congratulated the newly elected President Kostunica and the people of his country on their success in ensuring a peaceful victory for democracy. We all held in high regard the people whose democratically expressed will prevailed over many obstacles. Their voices have been heard around the world, and the movement towards democracy has gained new strength.

Moreover, this change gave realistic hope for the solution of the remaining problems in the region of South-East Europe based on the principles of peace, democracy, rule of law and human rights.

The admission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations signifies a new era in cooperation between the new Member State and the other Members of the United Nations, including its neighbours and other successor States of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The resolutions of the General Assembly on the strengthening of cooperation in the region of South-East Europe will gain additional momentum. This will also give new vigour to a number of regional initiatives. Here we welcome the recent admission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia into the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. We can also envisage a new era in the fulfilment of many other goals of the United Nations Charter, including respect for human rights and this will contribute to the strengthening of regional stability and international peace and security.

The United Nations and its Member States should be prepared to strengthen their support to the region and to the Government of the Federal Republic of

Yugoslavia in addressing the many remaining problems that need to be solved.

Today, we must look to the future, while at the same time remembering that freedom carries with it responsibilities, including those relating to the pursuit of justice. Cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia is of paramount importance for all the countries concerned, including the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Finally, I wish the Government and the people of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia peace, prosperity and every success for the future.

I call on the representative of the United States of America, the host country.

Mr. Holbrooke (United States): As you said a moment ago, Mr. President, this is indeed an historic day for the United Nations and for the Balkans, for all Europeans and, indeed, for all of the world. We welcome Yugoslavia as the newest Member. We welcome Professor Svilanovic as he takes his seat in this great Hall and leads his nation into the United Nations as a full democracy committed to the rule of law. Yugoslavia has accepted the obligations of membership laid out in the United Nations Charter. It has entered the United Nations family on an equal basis with the other Republics of the former socialist Republic of Yugoslavia. An eight-year quarrel in this great institution is over. What was this quarrel about? It is gone without residue or a trace, as is the flag that has flown so wrongly over First Avenue for the last eight years.

We congratulate President Kostunica on his leadership in bringing peaceful and democratic change to Yugoslavia. We congratulate his colleagues in the brave democracy movement that brought the will of the people to power in Belgrade. When I met with President Kostunica last week in Skopje, I was deeply moved by his historic accomplishment and the bravery he and his supporters, including Professor Svilanovic, exhibited. We applaud him also for his public commitment to United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) concerning Kosovo and to the full implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords. Today, a sterile debate comes to an end. The flag of a nation that long ago ceased to exist will no longer fly at United Nations Headquarters here and elsewhere in the world.

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's admission to the United Nations is an historic moment. It opens up possibilities for the future for Yugoslavia, for the region, for all of Europe. When I travelled to the Balkans last week, I was struck by how often the conversation drifted back to events in the past, particularly 1912. It seemed no one wanted to speak yet about the earthquake of September 2000. But, my friends, this is a new century and President Kostunica's leadership creates an opportunity to look to the future, a future denied to the brave people of Yugoslavia for so long. Of course, there are still vestiges of the past, which Yugoslavia will want to address. Many political prisoners have been imprisoned by the former regime, including nearly 1,000 Kosovo Albanians still being held. All of these prisoners should be released and all of the missing on both sides should be accounted for. As part of its pledge to respect its obligations under the Charter, I hope that Yugoslavia will understand that it should cooperate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, and I was encouraged greatly on this issue by my talks with President Kostunica.

We all know that talks between Serbia and Montenegro are vitally important and are at a delicate stage. Both sides have expressed their disapproval of the illegal constitutional changes made by the previous regime in July this year. We welcome this and we welcome the fact that preliminary talks under the rule of law and in a spirit of conciliation have begun. I can say on behalf of my Government, and I am sure on behalf of everyone here, that the international community will accept any decision that is reached mutually and in accordance with democratic procedures.

In closing, let me reiterate on this happy and, as the President of the General Assembly has said, historic day, that my country is firmly committed to working with Yugoslavia and the United Nations, in the spirit of the historic friendship between us and between Americans and the Serbian people of many decades, to address the problems remaining in the Balkans and the global challenge of the future. On a personal note, this is a day that means a great deal to me and my colleagues in the United States Government, and we are proud to join the rest of the world community in welcoming Yugoslavia to its rightful place in the world Organization.

The President: I call on the representative of Mauritania, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Ould Deddach (Mauritania) (*spoke in French*): Before I make my statement, I wish, on behalf of African delegations, to extend our condolences to the sister delegations of Angola and Singapore in connection with the tragic plane accidents that claimed so many lives, and ask them to convey our condolences to the families of the victims.

I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your accession to the presidency of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. Your personal qualities and experience will ensure full success in our work. I also wish to pay a tribute and congratulate the famous son of Africa, your predecessor Theo-Ben Gurirab, for his excellent work carried out during the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

In my capacity as Chairman of the African Group, I wish to welcome the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on its admission today to the United Nations. However, all praise should particularly go to the great people of Yugoslavia, who have found once again the path of democracy and, we hope, peace. We extend our full friendship and cooperation to them, on behalf of the people of Africa. As for the Yugoslav delegation to the United Nations, whom we welcome once again and wish success, I wish to assure it that African delegations are open to contacts aimed at establishing continuous cooperation with Yugoslavia in order to realize the noble objectives of our Organization.

Now that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will fully enjoy its status as a Member of the United Nations, we, as the African Group, hope that the Yugoslav democratic authorities will carefully uphold the obligations incumbent on them under the Charter of the United Nations by cooperating effectively with the international community to establish a climate of peace, cooperation and, we hope, prosperity in the Balkans, which it so greatly needs.

The President: I call on the representative of Kyrgyzstan, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asian States.

Ms. Ibraimova (Kyrgyzstan): It is a great honour and privilege for me, acting in my capacity as the Chairman of the Asian Group for the month of

November 2000, to congratulate the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on its admission to the United Nations. We, the members of the Asian Group, would like to extend it our warmest welcome and express our support for the efforts of the new Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to rebuild the country and normalize relations with the world. We welcome the commitment of the President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Mr. Vojislav Kostunica, to uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to fulfil all the obligations contained therein.

On behalf of the Member States of the Asian Group, I would like to express our best wishes to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on this significant event, and to wish the Government and people of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia peace, prosperity, happiness and every success for the future. The Member States of the Asian Group look forward to working closely with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in strengthening international peace and security and pursuing the goals and objectives enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Slovenia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Petri (Slovenia): On behalf of the Group of Eastern European States and my own country, Slovenia, I have the honour and pleasure to congratulate the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on its admission today to membership of the United Nations. Each new Member of the Organization strengthens the universality of the United Nations, its legitimacy and its validity in today's world. We note with particular pleasure the presence of the Special Envoy of the President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, who has arrived to witness this historic event for his country — but also for us.

We would like to express our deep respect for President Kostunica personally and the democratic coalition for their commitment to political and social change in their country, their commitment to the rule of law and democratic values and their determination and courage, which brought about the democratic changes in their country.

Nobody knows better about the challenges they have to confront in the immediate future than the new democratic authorities in Belgrade. The international

community should do its utmost to help the new leadership of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to cope with the catastrophic state of affairs they inherited and to strengthen the country's democratic institutions. The country's humanitarian needs should be addressed urgently, and programmes for the recovery and revitalization of the economy should be speedily established. The United Nations and its Member States should make an important contribution to the efforts of the new leadership in that regard.

We note with great satisfaction the solemn commitment of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to fulfil all the obligations contained therein. This promises to be the beginning of a new relationship between the United Nations and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for the benefit of the people of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, for the benefit of our Organization, and for the benefit of the peoples of the world at large. It also represents an important step towards normalization of relations in the region of south-eastern Europe. It anticipates the promise of a speedy solution of all the remaining issues and the strengthening of relations of cooperation and good-neighbourliness, with the aim of providing a better future for all the peoples of the region.

The members of the Group of Eastern European States, to which the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia geographically belongs, want to extend to it our warm welcome to the Organization and to the Group. We look forward to working closely with the representatives of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in pursuing the goals and objectives of the United Nations Charter.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Brazil, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Baena Soares (Brazil): It is a great honour for me to speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States to congratulate the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on its admission as a member of the United Nations. The resolution just adopted crowns a process of remarkable democratic changes experienced by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and represents a landmark occasion for its people and for the history of the Organization.

The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States notes with satisfaction Yugoslavia's solemn

commitment to accept the obligations contained in the Charter of the United Nations and to fulfil them. Our Group looks forward to cooperating with the delegation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. We are sure that the participation of the Yugoslav delegation in the United Nations will be of benefit not only to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, but also to the efforts of all Member States to advance the purposes and principles of the Charter, in particular the equality of Member States and the promotion of peace, justice, human rights and prosperity.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Germany, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Schumacher (Germany): On behalf of the Group of Western European and other States, I would like to congratulate the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on its admission to the United Nations. The Group is delighted to see the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia finally take its place within the family of nations, and warmly welcomes it.

We commend President Kostunica for having acted so swiftly to end the isolation imposed on the country by his predecessor, and we note with great satisfaction his assurances that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will act in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and comply with all its international obligations.

Our Organization is meant to be universal. Today universality has been brought an important step closer towards being fully accomplished. We wish the new Member every success, and we look forward to fruitfully cooperating with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for the benefit of peace and stability in Europe and the world.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa, who will speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): On behalf of the members of the Non-Aligned Movement, we welcome the admission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as a Member of the United Nations. We extend our support to the efforts of the people of Yugoslavia and their new Government as they rebuild their country and normalize relations with their neighbours and with the rest of the world. The application by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for membership of the United

Nations and its solemn commitment to accept and fulfil the obligations set out in its Charter constitute a most welcome development.

We are grateful that the principle of equality among the successor States to the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has been accepted by all the parties. We trust that this, along with the democratic changes taking place in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and with similar developments in the rest of the region, is a signal that at long last the people of the Balkans are ready to turn their collective attention to the challenges of reconstruction, reconciliation and sustainable peace and development.

For many years the members of the Non-Aligned Movement have been deeply distressed by the painful dissolution of the former Yugoslavia, a founding member of our movement, and by the ensuing turmoil and division among its former republics. For the people of the former Yugoslavia, the past decade has been characterized by conflict and unimaginable horror. The wider region has in turn suffered from the effects of socio-economic instability, destruction and lost opportunities.

We hope that today, in stark contrast to the past and despite the many difficult challenges remaining, the Balkans now stand at the crossroads of peace and stability. This is an opportunity that we hope will not be lost again.

The President: I call on the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Ordzhonikidze (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation warmly congratulates the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on its admission to membership of the United Nations. We welcome the solemn commitment entered into by Yugoslavia, reflected in the letter from President Kostunica, that it will uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter and fulfil all obligations set out therein.

It is important that the General Assembly is taking this decision today, on the basis of the application from the democratically elected leadership of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and on the basis of the will of the Yugoslav people. We welcome democratic Yugoslavia as a full-fledged member of the world community. It is symbolic that this should be taking place at the Millennium Assembly, during which

representatives of all States at the highest level have confirmed the crucial importance of the United Nations in the world affairs of the twenty-first century.

We are convinced that Yugoslavia's membership of the United Nations is important not only for Yugoslavia itself but also for the universality and viability of the Organization as a whole. Active and full participation by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in United Nations activities will certainly enable us to make more effective use of the potential of the United Nations to promote the establishment of peace, harmony, mutual trust, stability and good-neighbourliness in South-East Europe, on the basis of generally recognized norms and principles of international law.

In Russia's view, one important factor in stabilizing the situation in the Balkans is the full and unwavering implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). For our part, we shall cooperate closely with Yugoslavia in the United Nations and in other international organizations and multilateral forums to consolidate general peace and security.

Once again: we sincerely congratulate the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The President: I call on the representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Čalovski (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia): My delegation has the honour to address the Assembly in its capacity as Chairman of the South-East European Cooperation Process, whose members are Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Romania, Turkey, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Macedonia, as well as on behalf of the Republic of Macedonia itself.

I congratulate His Excellency Mr. Goran Svilanovic, Special Envoy of the President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, His Excellency Mr. Vojislav Kostunica, and his delegation on the admission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to membership of the United Nations, and I wish them success as a Member of the Organization.

The Republic of Macedonia and the South-East European Cooperation Process welcome the admission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to membership of the United Nations. This event is of special

importance. It signals a new democratic period for our region and for future relations between the Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It also constitutes an important development towards the integration of our entire region into developed Europe.

The membership of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the United Nations will have a positive influence on the speedy resolution of the succession of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on the basis of the equality of all five successor States and on the resolution of the demarcation of the borderline between our two countries.

Yesterday, on a proposal by the Republic of Macedonia, the First Committee adopted a draft resolution (A/C.1/55/L.47/Rev.1) by which the General Assembly would for the first time welcome the democratic changes in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and their positive effects on the peace, stability and development of South-Eastern Europe. The same was done at a meeting of the leaders of South-East European countries held in the capital of my country, Skopje, on 25 October 2000, which was attended by President Kostunica.

With that in mind, and on this special and historic occasion, we wish the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia all the best for successful participation in the work of the Organization.

The President: I call on the representative of Albania.

Mr. Nesho (Albania): I should like to welcome the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations. The Serbian people and the new democratic leadership have expressed the will to join the family of the United Nations and to respect the basic principles of the United Nations Charter.

This admission is the result of understanding and accepting the new historic realities in the Balkans on the part of the democratic leadership in Serbia, which includes recognizing the right of the people to freedom and self-determination, creating a free, democratic society that respects human rights and dismantling a nationalistic policy that caused the Balkans so much bloodshed and suffering for more than 10 years.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank, in particular, the international community, the United Nations and the regional and international organizations, such as the North Atlantic Treaty

Organization (NATO) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), for their great and excellent contribution to South-Eastern Europe in maintaining peace and stability in the region and integrating the troubled Balkans into a united Europe.

We share the view that this membership is an expression of the confidence of the international community in the Serbian people and of its outstanding support for them through the provision of unconditional assistance to enable them to share in the prosperity of the European countries and create conditions for their integration with the other Balkan countries, based on a common philosophy and respect for the principles of the modern world.

Albania believes that the new spirit of cooperation among nations, clearly expressed at the Millennium Summit, will be supported by all the Balkan countries, including the newly admitted Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. This will create conditions for solid cooperation through the Stability Pact, enhance peace in the region, overcome past divisions and old hostilities among the Balkan nations and encourage them to look forward to their future.

We hope that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and its new leadership will be able to move away from the dictatorial legacy of the Milosevic regime, release the Kosovar political prisoners as a gesture of goodwill and reconciliation, work for peace and stability in South-Eastern Europe and respect the universal right of the people to self-government and self-determination. Albania hopes that the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will fully cooperate with the international community to respect Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and accept the new reality in Kosovo.

The President: I call on the representative of Croatia.

Mr. Šimonovi (Croatia): There are turning points in the history of countries and regions, after which nothing remains the same. In the hope that President Kostunica's application for membership in the United Nations reflects such a turning point for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and for the whole of South-East Europe, we welcome the admission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations as its newest Member.

We congratulate the head of the delegation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Mr. Svilanovic. By applying to the United Nations, just as the other four successor States did previously, the new authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have confirmed that they accept the principle of the equality of all the States that emerged after the dissolution of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

This step is a good start for the new authorities, and is cause for optimism that they will depart from other failed policies of the Milosevic regime by respecting the borders and territorial integrity of neighbouring States, protecting human and minority rights, consistent with international standards, and cooperating with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, as well as by respecting the legal equality of the five successor States in negotiations on all succession issues. By doing so, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will make a valuable contribution to good-neighbourly relations, peace and lasting stability in South-East Europe.

Today, people in Croatia are observing All Saints' Day; it is a time for remembering loved ones who have died. Nobody can bring back the victims of the hostilities in South-East Europe. However, it is our legal, political and moral duty to cooperate in prosecuting war crimes, resolving the issue of missing persons and preventing a repetition of the tragedy. It is by accepting responsibility for the events of the past that we can lay sound foundations for the future. There are prospects for a brighter future in South-East Europe — a future of political stability and democratic and economic development. By accepting the principle of equality, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has opted to cooperate with its neighbours in order to achieve these noble ends. In this spirit, Croatia joined in sponsoring this resolution and looks forward to future cooperation with the new authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The President: I call on the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Sacirbey (Bosnia and Herzegovina): We would like to join all the other speakers in welcoming the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the family of the United Nations. Much has already been said about the new responsibilities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in joining this institution and about the goodwill that has been expressed today. With the

reconfirmation of these responsibilities and the resurgent feelings of goodwill also come new opportunities. The greater our commitment to our mutual responsibilities, the closer and more realizable the opportunities will be. I believe that our future is full of these as yet unrealized opportunities, and in this context we also welcome the vision and words of the Permanent Representative of France, Ambassador Levitte, with regard to our common destiny — membership in the European Union. We welcome Mr. Svilanovic and his entire delegation.

The President: I now have the pleasure to invite the Special Envoy of the President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Mr. Goran Svilanovic, to address the Assembly.

Mr. Svilanovic (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia): I wish to convey the greetings of Mr. Vojislav Kostunica, the President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and those of its Government and people.

This is a very special moment for me, which I would like to share with all present. The Assembly has decided unanimously to admit my country. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is now a fully-fledged Member of this world Organization, which makes it possible for it to take its rightful place in the family of nations.

The President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Mr. Kostunica, and I are deeply grateful to Secretary-General Kofi Annan and to the members of the Security Council, and its permanent members in particular, for their support and for their decision to recommend our country for admission into the fold of the United Nations speedily and expeditiously.

We understand the resolution just adopted as expressing recognition of, and support for, the profound democratic changes that have taken place in Yugoslavia. After 10 long years of conflict, my country is faced with many difficulties and many problems, internal and external alike. Most, but not all, of them have already been mentioned in the statements made here.

I take this opportunity to offer some assurances to the members of the Assembly, and in particular to our neighbours and their respective Governments. Yugoslavia is aware of these problems and is ready and willing to work with its neighbours and with the entire international community to overcome them. To that end, Yugoslavia will be a trustworthy neighbour and a

conscientious member of the international community and will invest its best efforts to promote peace and stability in the region as well as worldwide.

This policy reflects the vital interests of the Yugoslav people and is the result of the profound democratic changes that have taken place in my country. Against tremendous odds, the people of Yugoslavia exercised their right to vote and rejected overwhelmingly authoritarianism and the repressive regime, choosing democracy instead. The people of my country demonstrated courage and perseverance in defending their vote and stood up to threats of violence and terror. They were brave and proud, and the new Government will make sure that it does not betray their expectations.

Yes, the people of my country won their battle through their own courage and resolve, but that battle would certainly have been much more difficult to win if it had not been for the helping hand extended so generously and selflessly by the international community. I thank all of our numerous friends and allies who have always believed in us and helped us in our hard, arduous and often uphill battle, every step of the way.

My presence here is also a final recognition of the victory of the people of my country — the victory of ordinary Yugoslav men and women — in their struggle for a better future.

To break free from the past, political change alone will not suffice. Economic change, growth and development will be needed as well. In order to achieve them, the goal of the new Government will be to join economic projects of the region and to be integrated in the world economy as a whole. Just a few days ago, my country was admitted to the Stability Pact for South-east Europe, and I can say that this is just the beginning.

Democratic Yugoslavia, ruled by a Government elected by the people, is committed to the pursuit by the people of the policy of friendship and cooperation with all countries, and it will strive for peace, promote

goodwill and uphold stability. In addition to promoting relations with the countries of the region, Yugoslavia will have as a priority cooperation with Europe. It will remain open and willing to maintain close relations of cooperation with all other countries of the world and with international organizations. In doing so, it will always proceed from the principles of the equality of, and respect for, all nations, large and small, and peace and prosperity. Yugoslavia will also respect the noble goals and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

In closing, I would like to assure the Assembly that democratic Yugoslavia, its Government and its people will never waver in their resolve to keep this promise.

The President: I should like to inform Member States that the flag of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will be raised at the ceremony that will take place in front of the delegates' entrance immediately after the adjournment of this meeting. I invite all representatives to attend.

Programme of work

The President: I should like to announce the following additions to the programme of work of the General Assembly.

On Tuesday morning, 7 November 2000, the General Assembly will take up as its fourth item agenda item 36, entitled "Bethlehem 2000", which was originally scheduled for 16 October 2000.

On Wednesday morning, 15 November 2000, the Assembly will take up as its first item agenda item 105, entitled "Crime prevention and criminal justice", for the sole purpose of taking action on the draft United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the protocols thereto.

On Monday morning, 20 November 2000, the Assembly will take up as its third item agenda item 175, entitled "The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict".

The meeting rose at 7.10 p.m.