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Official Records

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 39 (continued)

New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support

(a) New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support

Report of the Secretary-General (A/58/254)

Note by the Secretary-General on proposed revisions to programme 8 of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005: United Nations support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (A/58/83)

Report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (A/58/16, chapter III, section B, programme 8; chapter IV, section B)

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

Report of the Secretary-General (A/58/352)

Mr. Kamanzi (Rwanda): In my capacity as Chairman of the African Group, I would like to express warm congratulations to you, Mr. President. The African Group commends your invaluable input in guiding the deliberations of this session. In the same

vein, we warmly congratulate all the members of the Bureau for their election and reaffirm our support to them. Let me also express my full subscription to the statement made yesterday by The Honourable Leonardo Santos Simão, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Mozambique, on behalf of the Chairman of the African Union, as well as to the statement made by Mr. Mohammed Bennouna on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Africa welcomes the decision of the General Assembly to hold a debate on Africa's development. This is particularly important given the rapidly changing situation in the world, globalization and regional conflicts, and their impact on development in developing countries.

The African continent today is confronted with an urgent need to find enduring solutions to the diverse development problems facing it, of which conflict is an integral part. Africa welcomes the interest of the international community in the development of Africa, as expressed in its acceptance of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the initiatives on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and development in Africa. In this connection, we welcome the report of the Secretary-General (A/58/254) on the New Partnership and the progress report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

We have noted the progress in and the constraints on the implementation of both programmes. We commend the efforts of the international community

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with regard to certain initiatives and actions that have been taken with regard to both programmes. Those efforts could lead to significant development and conflict prevention on the continent in the future if they are adequately consolidated. We have noted, however, the prevalence of some constraints that should be eliminated in a timely manner in order to ensure that the goals of both programmes are attained.

I would like here to emphasize again that African countries are committed to the effective implementation of NEPAD. That commitment was demonstrated in their Declaration on the implementation of the programme at the July 2003 Maputo Summit of Heads of State or Government, which, among other things, called on the international community to continue its support and on the Implementation Committee of the heads of State or Government to further intensify its efforts to engage development partners for cooperation. African Governments have taken major actions on the implementation of NEPAD, and in this respect we welcome the support of the Group of Eight and other partnership structures, including the Third Tokyo International Conference on African Development, held two weeks ago in Japan.

Furthermore, given the relevance of peace and security to sustainable economic growth and development, the Assembly of the African Union, in decision Assembly/AU/Dec.16 (II) on the operationalization of the Protocol relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council — the conflict prevention, management and resolution body — called on all countries that have not yet done so to speed up the process of signing and ratifying that Protocol.

We would like to acknowledge the significant support that Africa has received from its development partners in the past in its conflict prevention, management and resolution efforts. We call on the international community to continue its support, especially for those countries emerging from conflict, in order to put those countries on the path of sustainable economic growth and development.

As we gather here today, however, it is well known that Africa's progress in its development efforts remains far below the normal threshold. This was illustrated in the recent World Bank appraisal of the global implementation of the Millennium Development

Goals. African countries have embarked upon a process of promoting and strengthening democracy. They have acknowledged the need for a peer review mechanism as useful barometer for political and economic performance and the rejuvenation of development. They have embraced the values of the market economy and are engaged in the consolidation of sound macroeconomic policies for sustainable economic growth and development. But, it has been noted that the critical constraints in the implementation of NEPAD are largely to be found in the international environment. This is the time for a supportive international environment for projects on health, education, infrastructure and agriculture, which are fundamental to development and poverty alleviation.

The successful implementation of NEPAD will, in our view, depend on further positive changes in attitude on the part of our development partners with regard to the flow of official development assistance. We welcome the slight improvement in official development assistance to Africa in the past two years. Most of the official development assistance flows are currently being directed to the areas of health and education, where assistance is urgently needed.

That increase, however, still falls far short of the official development assistance that African countries require if they are to effectively resolve the fundamental problems associated with sustainable development and poverty eradication. There is a need for those countries that have not done so to fulfil their obligations to contribute 0.7 per cent of their gross national product as official development assistance to developing countries.

Ultimately, the capacity of African countries to implement projects in NEPAD will depend on their ability to earn more foreign exchange through the expansion of foreign trade. The outcome of the Cancún Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization was disappointing for African countries. There is a need for genuine cooperation on the part of our development partners with regard to the removal of the huge subsidies and tariff barriers on export products of African countries seeking to enter the markets of developed countries.

Furthermore, there is concern with regard to the instability of commodity prices, which affects the earnings of African countries. The cooperation of development partners on these issues is critical to the

stabilization of economic growth and development processes in African countries.

In spite of the efforts of African countries to improve the investment environment through the promotion of democracy and good governance and the implementation of sound macroeconomic policies, they have failed to attract foreign direct investment. I would like to reiterate here that the challenges of development are enormous in the areas of infrastructure, industrialization and agricultural development in Africa. The current limited savings of African countries can only result in limited investment and slow growth. We therefore call on our development partners to strengthen their political will and encourage their private sectors to adequately complement national efforts with regard to investment.

Progress on the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative remains unsatisfactory, given the fact that many heavily indebted countries are slow to secure the desired relief. There are problems in the areas of conditionalities and the prompt redemption of pledges to the Trust Fund. Furthermore, some countries are experiencing difficulties in the preparation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. We urge our development partners to resolve those problems so that resources for development in African countries can be released.

We have noted with appreciation the rapid integration of NEPAD into the programmes of the various agencies, programmes, funds and organizations of the United Nations. We also welcome their growing collaboration on this matter and encourage greater coherence and coordination so as to ensure that available resources produce optimum results in development in Africa.

Mr. Savua (Fiji): Fiji thanks the Secretary-General's for his consolidated report and endorses its recommendations on the United Nations Declaration on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). While it is still in its early days, we commend and welcome the new actions, initiatives and modalities that the African countries are using in pursuit of the high ideals that underpin NEPAD.

It is an accepted fact that sound and sustainable development is attainable only with durable peace, conflict prevention and conflict mitigation. As this international family grows in wisdom and experience some 50 years since it was born, violence and conflict

continue to keep abreast of its development. We watch with keen interest the progress of NEPAD, fully confident that it will find a way out of the quagmire of wars and development rollbacks that have beleaguered Africa and will arrive at a methodology to make NEPAD a success. It is our hope that the emerging lessons can be applied and replicated in other regions.

Structural and institutional strengthening, evidenced in the establishment of the African Union and its various regional economic communities, are positive responses by Africa to this United Nations development partnership arrangement.

We also welcome the establishment of the new office of the Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa, who is entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating and guiding the preparation of Africa-related reports and to coordinate the interdepartmental task force on Africa. This, we hope, will provide the necessary impetus to ensure that coherence occurs on all African-related developments.

NEPAD is of particular significance to developing countries in the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP), such as my own country, Fiji. Our sights are fixed on the development agenda using development concepts that can realize the Millennium Development Goals, which ultimately can improve the livelihood of our people. Our goals are based on the common vision that inspired the inception of the ACP three decades ago, which are the collective aspirations for socio-economic advancement, principally in partnership with the European Union. With market access as its substantive objective, the current preferential arrangement under the 2000 Cotonou Agreement continues this form of development assistance to the ACP countries until 2007. Clearly, more economic and development partnerships are needed today to match the changing landscape. Geopolitical, economic and development imbalances, due primarily to the forces of globalization and trade liberalization, have served to entrench global disparities, contrary to their good intentions.

NEPAD offers Africa a new opportunity to respond to these challenges and to deliver a carefully targeted set of actions. The policy framework and aspirations of NEPAD have to be liberating and self-sustaining. The United Nations must continue to be the catalyst in the implementation of NEPAD, so that Africa will control and feed its own development and

growth mechanism, assisted by international organizations and institutions, the private sector and other international and regional mechanisms.

Strengthening South-South cooperation will also nurture the linkages that NEPAD successes can trigger in other development- and resource-poor regions and subregions.

We applaud those initiatives that the Secretary-General has listed that African countries are spearheading. We expect that the Peer Review Mechanism will be fully embraced by the continent. We are witnessing the rejuvenation through the Africa Union of efforts to construct conflict prevention and mitigation mechanisms. Fiji can testify to the relevance of having regional-based conflict mitigation and preventative approaches as more ideal, if they can be assisted by the international community.

The failure at Cancún can be turned into a potent force in addressing the current deepening shortcomings in international trade, if we can bring to fruition issues that were close to settlement in that meeting of the World Trade Organization. This would invariably yield substantial benefits to developing countries.

It is widely recognized today that progress is slow, particularly on the part of the developed countries, in meeting the commitments they made at various United Nations conferences — especially at Monterrey, Doha and the Millennium Summit at Headquarters — to place the interests of developing countries at the centre of multilateral trade negotiations. The failure of the Cancún Conference and the cotton scandal reflect this trend of inconsistency, both in the multilateral trade system and through other multilateral institutions. In addition, more donor assistance from developed countries is needed in external debt relief and management to make huge and significant differences and to match the efforts of the United Nations system to align its activities with NEPAD.

It is said that Cancun means snake pit. We hope that it will not live up to its name, but, rather, that we will recognize and settle the differences and move progressively ahead. Our development programmes rely inextricably on trade for their sustainability. It is our fond hope that our international collective visions can become clearer and allow transparency to be the byword and give NEPAD the support it justly deserves.

Mr. Mustafa (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his detailed report on the progress made in the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and for international support for it. I also wish to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mozambique, Chairman of the Executive Council of the African Union, for his statement made yesterday morning. We associate ourselves with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and with previous speakers who underscored the importance of the NEPAD initiative, as the framework endorsed by the African continent and endorsed by the United Nations and donor countries to meet development challenges in Africa.

In its capacity as Chairman of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the Common Market for Southern and Eastern Africa, Sudan has been adopting policies and measures that strengthen and promote cooperation between the countries of those bodies. Those policies are also in keeping with the NEPAD goals of achieving peace, development and well-being for the people of the continent as a whole. To that end, we have held several specialized conferences in the areas of economic cooperation, disarmament, fighting terrorism and in addressing the issues of displaced persons and refugees. We believe that they have all contributed to achieving the NEPAD goals.

The gravity of the situation in the African continent and the determination of the Africans to emerge from the abyss of war and disease into the arenas of progress and development are reflected in NEPAD through its objectives and attempts to achieve self-reliance, beginning with its serious work of facing Africa's problems, identifying their root causes and developing informed specific plans to address them. Hence, the determination of the international community and the United Nations to support this initiative, in order to push it forward and implement it. The serious steps and measures taken by the African Union and by a number of African countries in such a short period, and the various degrees of progress achieved by NEPAD in its priority fields, is something that calls for optimism, indeed.

Despite the great difficulties and the suffering of many African countries from repeated food crises, starvation and poverty, the involvement of regional

economic groups to set up a plan for comprehensive agricultural development in Africa will enable us to pinpoint the sources of risk and the main difficulties that give rise to many other problems.

The challenges facing NEPAD impede the efforts made by African countries towards its implementation. The first requirement that will contribute to intensified efforts by the African countries, and the provision of a higher level of resources and capabilities towards the implementation of NEPAD, involves expanding the processes of debt cancellation, either at the bilateral or multilateral level. This is in addition to the fact that fulfilment by the developed countries of their pledges made during the various United Nations conferences and summits, especially the Millennium Summit and the Monterrey Conference, and their offers of technical assistance and transfer of technology, are among the most important elements for achieving further gains for Africa and for all developing countries.

Mr. Rastam (Malaysia): My delegation commends the Secretary-General for the two comprehensive reports which are before us, namely on progress in implementation and international support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and on causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. Malaysia broadly supports the conclusions and recommendations made in both reports.

Malaysia associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Morocco, as Chairman of the Group of 77 and China.

Malaysia recognizes and welcomes the very important steps that have been taken by African leaders in the recent past. The establishment of NEPAD, an initiative owned and led by Africans based on the principles of responsibility, solidarity and partnership, is particularly welcomed by Malaysia. We applaud the shared determination of African leaders to wrest control of Africa's future, to assume responsibility over their people's development, as well as to fight hunger, poverty and disease and to ensure sustainable economic and social development on the continent.

The African countries have now taken action in key areas, including health, education, food security and infrastructure, that are identified in NEPAD as crucial to the development of the continent. We also welcome the establishment of national focal points for NEPAD in several African countries which would

promote cohesiveness, coherence and improved coordination in the implementation of the policies and programmes under NEPAD.

In recognition of those steps, Malaysia joined other Non-Aligned Movement member countries at the thirteenth Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement in Kuala Lumpur last February to commend the establishment of NEPAD and sincerely support its full implementation. The Movement also commended the determination and commitment of African leaders towards resolving conflicts on the continent and welcomed the transition of the Organization of African Unity to the African Union two years ago. The transition clearly demonstrates to the world the common vision among Africans for a united and strong Africa that would enable the continent to take up the multifaceted challenges confronting its peoples. At the same time the Non-Aligned Movement called on the United Nations and the international community to support those efforts.

Malaysia supports initiatives to establish appropriate mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts at both the regional and subregional levels in Africa, including the establishment of the African Peer Review Mechanism. We acknowledge the important contributions and roles of the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the Southern African Development Community in the promotion of peace, security and development in different parts of Africa, including in the areas of preventive diplomacy and peaceful settlement of disputes. Malaysia and the other Non-Aligned Movement countries have reaffirmed the existence of an intrinsic link between peace and development, which demands an integrated approach to conflict prevention, resolution and management. The efforts undertaken by the countries of Africa in this regard should continue to be supported by the international community.

We note that the Secretary-General has continued his practice of appointing special envoys and representatives to prevent, mediate, contain and resolve conflicts in Africa. We welcome, in particular, the establishment of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, at the level of Under-Secretary-General. We applaud the efforts of the able and well-qualified

Professor Ibrahim Gambari. This notwithstanding, we believe that our brothers in Africa can do more in the area of conflict resolution.

We support the Secretary-General's call for political will and resolve among African leaders, including to develop an adequate African capacity for conflict resolution in order to achieve a durable solution to the numerous conflicts besieging the continent. Political stability and good governance are crucial in ensuring the success of NEPAD. Malaysia will do its utmost to assist as a friend of Africa as well as in its capacity as current Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The challenges facing Africa are numerous and multifaceted and must be boldly confronted in a concerted, comprehensive and coordinated manner. The challenges of eradicating poverty and hunger, ensuring food security, reversing the vicious cycle of debt, tackling underdevelopment and eliminating the threat of communicable diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, require an enormous effort, not only on the part of Africans but also the international community as a whole. The increasingly heavier burden of unsustainable debt payments, insufficient and sluggish flow of foreign direct investment and official development aid, as well as the lack of humanitarian assistance, continue to hamper the accomplishment of the desired long-term development goals of the majority of African countries. The wanton loss of life and destruction of infrastructure, and the consequent displacement of millions of people from their homes following the numerous conflicts and wars on the continent, also require urgent attention and adequate means in order to be resolved.

I join other speakers before me in calling on the international community, in particular the developed countries and the international financial institutions, to increase their official development assistance contributions and other forms of assistance to Africa in support of the continent's efforts towards consolidating peace, pursuing sustainable development, promoting good governance and human rights, reducing poverty and hunger and fighting disease.

The increase in official development assistance to Africa from \$17.73 billion in 2001 to \$18.62 billion in 2002 is a slightly positive development. That can surely be increased substantially in years to come. The efforts undertaken by a few countries to address the

problem of the external indebtedness of the heavily indebted poor countries in Africa, including debt cancellation and other bilateral and multilateral arrangements, are recognized and commended.

We note that Africa will require average annual economic growth of 7 per cent if it is to reduce by half the number of people living in poverty in the continent by 2015. That can be achieved only with the assistance of the developed countries, in terms of both financial resources and an increase in foreign investments. In that regard, Malaysia will continue to support all initiatives aimed at securing sustainable development in Africa. Malaysia participated as an observer at the recent Third Tokyo International Conference on African Development. This reflects our long-standing commitment to that objective.

Malaysia remains fully committed to the promotion of increased cooperation among developing countries. In that spirit, we have extended our cooperation and assistance to, and shared our experience, expertise and know-how with, developing countries through the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme. A total of 46 African countries have benefited from the Programme since its inception. As of June 2003, approximately 2,000 participants from Africa have attended Programme training courses in Malaysia in the fields of agriculture, human resources management, information and communication technology and public administration. In addition, the Malaysian South-South Corporation, a private sector entity devoted to promoting South-South cooperation in the private sector, has also established a Malaysian business centre in Kampala, Uganda, to further enhance and promote dialogue and linkages between the corporate and private sector in Africa and Malaysia. The Asia-Africa Investment and Technology Promotion Centre has also been set up in Malaysia, with the assistance of the Government of Japan, to facilitate trade and investment between Asia and Africa.

Malaysia continues to look into various ways of promoting cooperation with Africa. In that regard, we continue to engage our African partners on ways and means to enhance cooperation and partnership at both the governmental and private sector levels through the annual Langkawi International Dialogue and the Southern Africa International Dialogue convened under the auspices of the Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Malaysia's commitment to cooperating with African countries in their collective efforts towards achieving peace and sustainable development. We value our traditional close and friendly ties with Africa.

Mr. Mercado (Philippines): Allow me at the outset to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive update on the progress made in the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). My delegation associates itself with the statement of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The Philippine delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's report (A/58/254) stressing the decisions and follow-up actions at the national and the regional levels to achieve development for Africa under the rubric of NEPAD — a comprehensive framework for the economic and political development of the African continent in cooperation with Africa's partners.

It has often been emphasized that Africa's development is crucial for global economic growth and sustainable development. Thus, the international community's support for the development of Africa is tantamount to assistance for all development-loving nations.

I say this because the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, for instance, hinges on how far and how successfully we can cooperate together to address lingering problems such as ensuring peace and security in the region and resolving poverty and sustainable development concerns including HIV/AIDS, malnutrition and others. Tackling those enormous problems in that big continent would help contribute to the attainment of internationally agreed development objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals.

The Millennium Development Goals call for reducing the poverty rate by half by 2015. However, instead of pursuing economic growth and sustainable development, many countries are becoming poorer in both relative and absolute terms. The Human Development Report 2003 of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) indicates, for instance, that 54 countries are poorer now than they were in 1990 and that almost half of those countries are found in Africa. Moreover, it would take some 50 years for other countries to meet the Millennium

Development Goals. That calls for renewed partnership and action to help Africa and the rest of the developing countries. It behoves all of us to join together and extend our helping hands for the benefit of Africa.

Governance is an important tool for development. Along this line, my delegation welcomes the African Peer Review Mechanism that has been put in place for assessing Africa's political and economic performance. The fact that African leaders have agreed to submit themselves to a review mechanism involving their peers signifies their resolve, commitment and determination to ensure progress in their own development. We congratulate Africa on undertaking this important and bold step, especially those countries that will start submitting to the Mechanism by the end of 2003.

We also welcome Africa's initiatives to consolidate and strengthen the regional mechanisms for conflict prevention, resolution and management, as well as initiatives at the subregional level in the field of infrastructure, agriculture, health and education, among others. We also laud the establishment of the Pan-African Parliament and of national focal points for NEPAD. The creation of the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Africa augurs well for the future of NEPAD.

But the biggest problem confronting Africa is the lack of sufficient resources. Indeed, the Secretary-General's report emphasizes that the big challenge for African countries in implementing NEPAD is the lack of financial resources. The mobilization of resources well above existing levels, accompanied by appropriate policies conducive to growth, is vital to ensuring adequate financing for economic and social development programmes in Africa.

We therefore call upon the international community, especially the developed countries, to honour the commitments made at major United Nations summits and conferences, primarily with regard to providing adequate contributions in the form of official development assistance, resolving debt problems and opening markets, in order to facilitate investment, sustain economic growth and attain the Millennium Development Goals for Africa.

Relations with Africa have always been a Philippine foreign policy priority. In the past, the Philippines actively participated in the international community's fight against apartheid in Africa. We also

join the rest of the world in the fight against the modern-day apartheid in the region, the fight against poverty and the maintenance of peace and security.

As my President, Mrs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, said in her address before the Assembly two weeks ago (see A/58/PV.13), the Philippines has actively contributed military and police personnel to United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa and other parts of the world over the past half century. This reflects President Arroyo's conviction that peace is an indispensable condition for economic development, just as development is an essential component of peace, and that nothing will do more to lift us out of poverty than peace itself. In line with that, we are now preparing to contribute Filipino soldiers to the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

Moreover, the Philippines stands ready to provide technical assistance to Africa, especially in field of capacity-building. We reiterate our readiness to share our experiences, including our positive and progressive record of government partnerships with vital stakeholders, including the business sector and civil society.

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

I mentioned earlier that assistance to Africa would spark economic growth and development in many parts of the globe. In light of increasing globalization and interdependence, the burden is on us. It bears repeating, therefore, that the support of the international community for the development of Africa would benefit most countries in other parts of the world. In the end, a prosperous Africa will lead to a prosperous world.

Mr. Tidjani (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to express my delegation's gratitude for holding this debate on agenda item 39 (a), entitled New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in the implementation and international support, and agenda item 39 (b), entitled Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. We are all the more satisfied because holding this debate will help streamline our work and highlight the links that exist between peace and development.

Peace indeed is vital for development. In that regard, in preparing NEPAD, the heads of State of

Africa were mindful that poverty reduction and sustainable development stem from peace, democracy and the rule of law and that durable economic growth depends on the implementation of better educational and health policies and the development of infrastructure of the rural sector, a solid private sector and an environment favourable to foreign and international investment. They were also of the view that international partnership, particularly through official development assistance, debt reduction and access to capital markets, are all vital for Africa's development.

These concerns are in keeping with the Secretary-General's recommendations contained in his report on the causes of conflict, issued in 1998, an evaluation of which has been submitted to the current session.

We have before us two progress reports — A/58/254 and A/58/352, which highlight the efforts made by the African countries to ensure the success of NEPAD and the implementation of the Secretary-General's recommendations on the causes of conflict, and which review the support of the international community for these initiatives.

In the area of peace and security, the creation of the Peer Review Mechanism attests to the commitment of African States to strengthen the foundations of democracy and respect for the rule of law. That commitment has been confirmed by the current plan for the creation in the African Union of a Peace and Security Council, which will help reinforce the continent's capacities for peacekeeping and security.

Programmes of action in the strategic sectors of agriculture, infrastructure and the environment, at the national, subregional and international levels, have been addressed, within the context of NEPAD, for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, which have also been taken into account by NEPAD.

However, the mobilized means to achieve those goals, however significant they are, remain inadequate. A vigorous partnership and greater international solidarity are also still required to achieve the NEPAD objectives in particular and the Millennium Development Goals in general. Within that context, the commitments and appeals made at various international meetings must be fulfilled and reaffirmed, particularly with regard to official development assistance, trade, debt reduction and infrastructure development.

On the subject of official development assistance, despite the slight increase, in constant terms it has remained below its 1990 levels. In that context, we welcome the generosity of our partners in the area of official development assistance. We support particularly the lifting of various trade barriers that impede the export of African products. Such a measure would lead to better development of African trade, which would support revitalized economic activity.

We also support the elimination of agricultural subsidies that hamper the development efforts of African countries. Moreover, we welcome the efforts made thus far to resolve Africa's debt problem. We note that it is still an unbearable burden for our countries, including those that have already benefited from the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. For those reasons, my delegation maintains that the convening of an international conference on Africa's debt will be an unparalleled opportunity for the international community to address this issue in a specific and positive way.

Infrastructure remains the key to Africa's development. It requires significant financial investment, whose amount far exceeds the budgetary capacity of most African countries. In that regard and in order to tackle this important challenge, the efforts of our partners to increase foreign direct investment would be greatly appreciated.

As the reports emphasize, greater commitment on the part of Africa and its partners is required to achieve NEPAD's development objectives and the Millennium Development Goals. Cameroon, as a member of the NEPAD steering committee, is involved in the Peer Review Mechanism and is fully prepared to work actively in achieving its goals and objectives. In order to do that, a member of the Government has been specifically designated as a focal point for the follow-up to NEPAD issues.

Let me conclude by thanking the Secretary-General for the excellent quality of the reports before us on this issue. My delegation also welcomes the establishment of an Office of the Special Advisor on Africa and hopes that it will be provided the financial and indispensable human resources to enable it to carry out its task.

Mr. Djangone-Bi (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): The Ivorian delegation congratulates Mr. Julian Hunte on the organization of this debate on

the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). We would also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General. In addition, my delegation associates itself with the statement made earlier by Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Africa, which has taken charge of its own development through NEPAD, relies on the international community's support for implementation of that instrument. In that regard, Côte d'Ivoire has welcomed the commitments undertaken by the developed countries. The outcomes of major international conferences — including the Monterrey Consensus reached at the International Conference on Financing for Development; the World Summit on Sustainable Development; and the Doha Round — perfectly illustrate the will of the international community to help Africa to decisively join the process of sustainable development.

At this stage, it will be necessary to assess progress made in implementing commitments with regard to NEPAD by seeking ways to reduce every obstacle to fulfilment of those commitments. The first report of the Secretary-General on progress in implementation of NEPAD and on international support (A/58/254) details the progress achieved.

At the national level, NEPAD's priorities are at the heart of development policies. Anti-poverty strategies have been formulated throughout Africa. At the subregional level, economic cooperation is increasingly becoming a reality. Political leaders and economic actors are working together to attain the major objective of economic integration. In West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, for its part, continues to play its role within subregional development bodies. At the continental level, NEPAD truly addresses the aspiration to build a major bloc that is economically viable and capable of influencing international, political and economic relations.

Today, thanks to NEPAD, Africa — a continent bursting with potential — has truly taken charge of its destiny in order to begin its sustainable development for the well-being of its peoples. From that perspective, the international community has shown solidarity by indicating its total support for NEPAD. It has also taken a number of positive actions in the areas of official development assistance and debt alleviation or cancellation. The firm promises to eliminate subsidies

for basic commodities also demonstrate the will of rich countries to make international trade fair and more competitive.

In the light of that progress, Côte d'Ivoire, while congratulating our development partners, urges them to undertake greater efforts to help African countries break out of the vicious circle of poverty. Fair compensation for the work of their farmers must be combined with increased official development assistance — which should reach 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of industrialized countries — and total debt forgiveness, so as to generate financial resources that can be devoted to health, education and other vital sectors of the economy. We must also consider in depth the failure of Cancún and take effective measures to promote trade, the true engine of development. However, the noble objectives of development can flourish only if financial flows are created within a framework of good governance, peace and security. It is at that level that the donor countries expect action from African countries, which must shoulder their responsibilities in order to earn the trust of their development partners.

Scarcity of financial resources and institutional and structural inadequacy are certainly serious handicaps to Africa's development, but it is the conflicts in Africa that could reduce to naught the foundations of African economies. Those scourges therefore require special attention from the international community — as does terrorism, which unfortunately continues to claim victims.

Moreover, the General Assembly has rightly called for implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/58/352). Indeed, one must agree that peace and sustainable development are intimately connected. Development without peace is a fantasy, and my country — which is experiencing an unprecedented crisis characterized at present by a situation of neither war nor peace — knows something about that. Conflicts with diverse causes have harmful repercussions on economic and social development.

Côte d'Ivoire encourages all peace initiatives based on dialogue. It fully endorses the plan to formulate and adopt, within the framework of the Economic Community of West African States, a

general stabilization plan for the subregion that would contribute to the restoration of lasting peace and stability in West Africa. Côte d'Ivoire believes that preventive action for peace must be carried out at several levels — diplomatic, socio-economic and cultural — because it is always better to prevent than to cure.

In Africa today, there are at least five United Nations peacekeeping missions: the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire, the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea and the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara. That is far too many for a continent whose peoples ask for nothing except to live in security and peace. Ultimately, the fight against poverty can be conducted effectively only if internal and external conditions are absolutely right. Therefore, Côte d'Ivoire calls for respect for the principles of good governance and responsibility, as well as for solidarity concerning effective implementation of the outcomes of the major international conferences, on which the success of the New Partnership for Africa's Development will largely depend.

Ms. Knowles (Australia): Australia continues to strongly support the articulation, through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), of an African vision for a new African future. By acknowledging that the primary responsibility for lifting Africa out of poverty lies with Africa itself, NEPAD is qualitatively different from past initiatives designed to foster development in Africa. Australia believes that NEPAD's focus on good political and economic governance, democracy, stability and market-led economic growth will bear the fruit of sustainable development.

It is vital that those laudable principles be realized through a real commitment by African countries to their implementation and through support by the rest of the international community for this endeavour. We strongly commend the 16 countries that have volunteered to be reviewed under the African Peer Review Mechanism. In addition to the useful national evaluations, the experiences and lessons learned in that process will assist other African countries facing the same challenges.

NEPAD's focus on securing and reaping the benefits of further trade liberalization is clear-sighted, necessary and welcome. Trade liberalization represents one of the single most important steps that can be taken to help eradicate poverty and encourage sustainable development. Australia is a leading advocate of trade liberalization, particularly in the field of agriculture, a sector of special importance to African countries. We have long advocated ending farm subsidies in developed countries. Not only are those subsidies hugely expensive — more is spent on them than Africa's combined economic output — they are also highly damaging to Africa's development prospects. Despite the setback at Cancún, Australia will continue to work with developing country partners to create a fair international trading system in agricultural products, including in the Doha development round of negotiations.

Australia will continue to support capacity building for trade negotiators in Africa through targeted interventions through the Africa Governance Fund, and will increase funding for African regional trade initiatives, especially in agriculture.

Australia recognizes the importance of development assistance programmes and will continue to play a constructive role in Africa. HIV/AIDS is a serious threat to development and will remain a major focus of Australia's development assistance programme for Africa. Australia's other priorities — promoting good governance and education, including through the African Virtual University in Nairobi and efforts to bridge the digital divide — are also relevant to NEPAD priorities.

Basic health and humanitarian support underpins all development. Since March 2002, Australia has provided \$A 43.5 million in food aid to people at risk of starvation in Africa. Mostly recently, on 8 October 2003, Australia announced an additional \$A 7.5 million to drought affected countries in Southern Africa.

NEPAD's goals have been set, and we have seen progress over the last year. The challenge now for Africans, and for the international community, is to remain focused and continue along that promising and practical path.

Mr. Jingree (Mauritius): We thank the Secretary-General for his first consolidated report (A/58/254) on progress in the implementation and international support for the New Partnership for Africa's

Development (NEPAD). The report clearly outlines the progress in the implementation of NEPAD, as well as the challenges and constraints in doing so. We have taken note of the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report.

We welcome the fact that this year the Assembly is considering both the issue of NEPAD and the causes of conflict in a joint debate. Indeed, NEPAD is a programme of development of Africa that is closely linked to peace and security on the continent.

My delegation would like to focus on a few aspects of NEPAD.

It has now been acknowledged that NEPAD is a vision of Africa encompassing all African countries, mainland and well as island countries. The island countries of Africa have their own specificities and constraints, including their vulnerabilities. We feel that the vulnerability of the small island States of Africa have been well documented. The NEPAD initiative should also address issues related to small island developing States, especially in the sectors of information and communication technologies, trade and the environment.

Besides economic development issues, African countries have also emphasized governance in NEPAD. The governance process in Africa is reflective of the current democratic wave sweeping across the continent. The key element of governance in Africa is obviously the extent to which the process is effectively and sufficiently institutionalized. That includes the involvement not only of Governments but also of civil society agencies and the private sector. The role of the private sector is fundamental, given its importance in facilitating the dynamic process of NEPAD. The African Peer Review Mechanism, which was institutionalized this year, will provide a model to facilitate the governance process in Africa.

As a member of the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee, Mauritius is putting in place national structures to implement and follow up the plan. In the same spirit, the private sector in Mauritius has just adopted a code of conduct on corporate governance.

Since the conception of the NEPAD plan, the Group of Eight (G-8) has shown much interest in helping to eradicate poverty in Africa and to put African continents on the path towards sustainable

growth and development, both individually and collectively. Such interest was demonstrated at the G-8 Summit held in Kananaskis in 2002, where the G-8 unveiled its African Action Plan to achieve NEPAD's objectives. However, we note that the extent of commitment to the initiative lessened at the Evian Summit this year, focusing instead on other issues that the G-8 considered more pressing. Now more than ever, the help and support of the G-8 is required for the NEPAD initiative, lest there be a crisis in expectations for the NEPAD plan.

On a more positive note, the third Tokyo International Conference on African Development, which was held from 29 September to 1 October, did reaffirm the importance of Africa to some countries. Indeed, Japan's announcement of an increase in its grant aid to Africa — from the \$800 million spent during the past five years to \$1 billion for the upcoming five-year period — is in line with the overall NEPAD plan. Japan's grant aid will provide assistance for the fight against HIV/AIDS and contribute to addressing other pressing development issues, including the problem of African countries' debt.

We call upon the international community to renew its commitment and support for the implementation of NEPAD.

For its part, the United Nations has an important role to play in implementing NEPAD. In that regard, we welcome the establishment of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa. We would also like to express our appreciation and support to Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa, as well as to his Office, for coordinating global advocacy in support of NEPAD.

With respect to conflict situations in Africa, we are confident that NEPAD will help to resolve and prevent conflicts. With the strong determination of our leaders to help resolve conflicts, we are pleased to see that progress has been made in several parts of the continent. Peace and stability are slowly returning to the Great Lakes region. The Economic Community of West African States responded swiftly to the crisis in the West Africa subregion. The same determination prevailed in other subregions to resolve conflicts. Africa's efforts to grapple with the conflicts on the continent will require the support of the international community. We believe that the Security Council, as well as its Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict

Prevention and Resolution in Africa, could still play a more significant role in helping Africa to resolve its conflicts. We also believe that there need to be more coordinated efforts between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council with respect to initiatives for countries emerging from conflicts.

In conclusion, a peaceful and prosperous Africa is not only in the interests of the continent itself, but also in the wider interests of the international community.

Mr. Al-Awadi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to underscore the fact that the Government and people of Kuwait will never forget the support they received from Africa during very difficult circumstances experienced by my country in the past.

We take pride in participating alongside our African brothers in the debate on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and on causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. Kuwait has always devoted top priority and importance to these two questions because they are related to the interests and concerns of our brothers in Africa, with whom we have close historical ties, based on mutual respect and mutual support on issues of common interest in various fields.

Kuwait would like to express its thanks and appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who gave impetus to international support for the priorities of the African continent following the submission of his report (A/58/352) on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. He made this and other questions concerning the African countries a central priority of the Millennium Declaration, followed by positive developments that strengthened the role of the United Nations in addressing African questions. The latest of these developments was the General Assembly's welcoming of NEPAD in resolution 57/2.

Given Kuwait's close relations, including economic relations, with the African countries, we consider NEPAD an embodiment of a principle that we have always believed in — that there is a close relationship between development, political stability and peace. In that context, we would like to pay tribute to the African Union for its efforts in integrating the priorities of NEPAD into national policies and development planning and for its work towards establishing a new and sound institution for good

governance, peace and security in order to guarantee NEPAD's success.

Important elements of NEPAD are the Peer Review Mechanism and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, the latter of which was approved during the first regular session of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union at its July 2002 Durban summit. Another important element is the mechanism for conflict management and resolution, which is aimed at ending bloody conflicts raging in many African countries.

Kuwait views with satisfaction the two reports of the Secretary-General, the headway made in the international community's support for NEPAD and the efforts to settle conflicts in Africa. The report of the Secretary-General on NEPAD (A/58/254) notes that seven African countries have reached the completion point for the cancellation of debts. Other heavily indebted African countries have benefited from the cancellation of debts announced by many donor countries. That is viewed positively by Kuwait, which was, even before the creation of NEPAD, an early proponent of debt relief for African countries. Those countries were the beneficiaries of the initiative of His Highness the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who in his speech before the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, announced the decision to cancel all interest on the debts of the poorest countries of Africa. In addition to moral and political support, we offered great economic assistance to development projects in African countries, whether through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development or through charities and civil society organizations.

Kuwait is at the forefront of States giving development assistance to other countries, especially African countries. The assistance in some cases amounted to 8.3 per cent of the Kuwaiti gross national product, which reflects our concern to help developing countries raise their standards of living, especially our brothers in the African continent. During the period 2001-2002, the Kuwaiti Fund for Economic Development provided assistance and loans amounting to \$5.9 million to many countries, including 10 African States, which received 18 per cent of all the assistance offered by Kuwait. For the period 2001-2002, the Kuwaiti Fund offered development assistance amounting to \$10 million to support development projects in the agriculture, water, energy and

transportation sectors. Forty African countries benefited from that development assistance. By mid-2002, the Kuwaiti Fund for Economic Development had provided technical assistance worth \$200 million; 10 per cent of that amount went to Africa. Many African economic and financial institutions benefited from Kuwait's development assistance. The African Development Fund received assistance totalling \$136 million.

African countries and the specialized agencies in the African Union should promote this initiative all over the world and not limit their efforts to certain donor countries or to a single continent. The African Union's public relations efforts should be enhanced to promote this initiative and to raise awareness in all countries interested in helping Africa. This should be done with the assistance of the United Nations.

The African countries have made noticeable efforts to meet the formal request of the international community: Africa should have the principal role in achieving stability in the African continent in order to encourage the donor countries and the private sector to give those countries the required technical and economic assistance. It is time for the international community to take further steps towards encouraging the African countries and to support their efforts through an increase in technical assistance, in appreciation of the great efforts made by African countries to create the peaceful environment required for technical and economic assistance.

In conclusion, my delegation calls upon the United Nations to continue to address the various problems of the African continent. In that context, we would like to express our support for the efforts of Under-Secretary-General and his Special Adviser on Africa, Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, to create a cross-agency mechanism to deal with Africa's problems, in particular within the framework of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. Ekuu Avomo (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first time that I take the floor during this session, I would like, first of all, on behalf of the delegation of Equatorial Guinea, to congratulate the President on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. We would also like to convey our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his first in-depth report (A/58/254) on

progress in implementation and international support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

As a development strategy, NEPAD encompasses almost all aspects of society's economic and political structures, including, among other things, development planning, sound economic management, human rights, good governance, democracy, peace and security, as well as the agriculture, health and education sectors — all of which are key aspects to achieving progress.

Although NEPAD is an African initiative, it nevertheless requires necessary international assistance from both developed countries and the United Nations system. NEPAD provides an important basis to achieve development for the African continent. However, that will not be possible without the contribution of each and every African country's domestic efforts and strategies. NEPAD is, first and foremost, an African issue. It should be up to us, as Africans, to primarily ensure its full success.

The United Nations — because of what it represents and because of its broad experience — and developed countries — because of their technology and the means at their disposal — should play a crucial and decisive role to support Africa in resolving its many problems. In that regard, developed countries should assist Africa to fulfil the commitments undertaken at the Monterrey and Johannesburg meetings, organized under the auspices the United Nations, to overcome the problem of external debt and secure open markets for African exports; in a word, to achieve the goals of the Millennium Declaration, among other things.

We must all strive not to fall into the habit of meeting routinely without achieving any specific objectives, as happened at the recent meeting of the World Trade Organization at Cancún, where there was no understanding between the countries of the third world and developed countries. Such a situation is clearly damaging to the weakest.

The gaps between developed and third world countries are growing. Whereas some are concerned about daily survival, others have a comfortable existence assured them for many decades. Given those circumstances, it is difficult to talk about a globalized world. The political and economic situation in the world today — which is more occupied by other issues — relegates Africa to an unequal position. Despite the great efforts being made, war, hunger,

poverty, HIV/AIDS and other questions continue to significantly hinder the achievement of sustainable development in African societies. The statistics contained in the United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report 2003* speak for themselves. In sub-Saharan Africa over 30 million people are infected with HIV/AIDS, over 33 per cent of the population suffers from malnutrition and 117 of every 1,000 children die before the age of 5.

My country, Equatorial Guinea, is experiencing great changes in its economic life. We are increasing our contacts with countries from which we may be able to receive beneficial cooperation in such sensitive areas as health and sanitation, education and the status of women, among others. As a peace-loving country, Equatorial Guinea has been actively engaged in the efforts of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community to resolve conflicts in the subregion by, among other things, sending troops to the sisterly Central African Republic and organizing at Malabo the twentieth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, which will be held from 27 to 31 October 2003.

On the bilateral front, Equatorial Guinea has entered into a number of agreements with neighbouring countries, and is in the process of negotiating others, on issues of mutual concern.

Ultimately, it can be said that there is strength in unity. The countries, Governments and peoples of Africa must join their efforts to attempt to resolve the great problems and challenges they face by expanding their trade and economic relations, strengthening regional and subregional organizations and enhancing the effectiveness of African mechanisms for conflict resolution, just as we have seen in various areas in Central, West and East Africa.

Mr. Sharma (Nepal): Nepal aligns itself with the statement made by Chairman of the Group of 77 and China regarding the sub-item on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). We also thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on that sub-item (A/58/254) and on the sub-item on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/58/352).

The African continent, the birthplace of humanity and the cradle of human civilization, is indeed troubled. The continent bears the old scars of

colonialism and the fresh wounds of neglect. Most African countries are grappling with poverty, illiteracy and disease, and a number of them are in the grips of conflict and instability. The African people have now risen to change that. NEPAD embodies their aspiration to take control of their destiny through continent-wide cooperation and collaboration in political and economic spheres. NEPAD is an African programme designed to uplift Africans. It is a grand vision never tried on such a scale elsewhere, and it must be given a chance.

Nepal has long worked in solidarity with African States in their struggle for political independence and freedom. We congratulate our African friends for the NEPAD initiative, and we are delighted to support their pursuit for emancipation from poverty and underdevelopment. No doubt, NEPAD is an ambitious undertaking, but it is within striking distance. Africa has shown the will to harness its energy and ingenuity to translate that vision into reality. The international community should come forward with increased support and assistance to help Africa help itself to stand on its feet as a proud continent of peaceful societies and prosperous peoples.

The President returned to the Chair.

Africa holds extraordinary promise. Most African societies are tolerant and open-minded, with hard-working and innovative people who are prepared to embrace change. The continent is also a vast repository of natural resources. Conflict and political uncertainty have devastated much of Africa and thwarted its promise. From Somalia to Liberia, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Burundi, Africa has suffered the pain of violence and the bloodshed of war.

Some countries are emerging from strife and, still fragile, are trying to find their feet in the domain of peace and normalcy. To make matters worse, much of Africa is desperately poor. Poverty in many countries is profound and pervasive, and prevents ordinary Africans from leading a decent life and raising their families in dignity. The lack of education impedes their progress, and deadly diseases sap their vitality and cut their lives short.

HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis have had a dramatic impact, decimating sub-Saharan Africa and taking a heavy toll in terms of youth and children. The untenable greed of some has transformed natural

resources — a huge boon for the African nations — into a source of conflict. The rate at which natural resources are being depleted is frightening. Land fertility is declining, and conflict and frequent famines are creating a huge caseload of refugees and displaced persons.

Nepal applauds the idea of setting up a conflict resolution mechanism under NEPAD. As the mechanism becomes operational, the global community should offer its assistance to complement African efforts to prevent disputes and resolve conflict. Such assistance should be aimed at capacity-building, arms control and mutual confidence, so that durable peace can reign in Africa.

Poverty often offers a constituency for rebellion and conflict. A lasting peace will continue to elude Africa unless a heavy investment is made to lift up the common people from the mire of poverty, illiteracy and disease.

The world community must substantially increase the amount and improve the quality of its assistance to African countries in order to implement NEPAD and to build African institutions and the capacity for development. Indeed, in the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Programme of Implementation, the world community committed itself to helping Africa and other developing countries. Moreover, it pledged to help NEPAD in the 2002 Declaration adopted by the General Assembly. These commitments should be met as quickly as possible on a steady basis.

As a result of pervasive poverty and a limited resource base, most African countries are not in a position to raise enough funds to finance their own development. They need increased official development assistance with which to reduce poverty, fight HIV/AIDS and other diseases, and build infrastructure. Nepal welcomes the trend, since 2002, of increasing official development assistance, and encourages development partners to sustain that trend.

In order to release resources for investment from debt-service obligations, poor African nations need accelerated debt relief. Nepal is deeply concerned about the slow pace at which the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative is being implemented, at a time when heavily indebted poor nations in Africa and elsewhere are reeling under the pain of unsustainable debt overhang.

Market access, which African countries urgently require, has proved to be the most difficult nut to crack. It is critical that the rich countries remove the tariff and non-tariff barriers that wall off the products of poor countries. Huge farm subsidies in rich countries that deprive poor African farmers of their livelihoods have no place in free trade. The failure of the Cancún trade talks came as a rude shock to us, and should challenge the international community to resume trade negotiations without delay.

Market opening will surely stimulate investment in African countries, as well as attract foreign investment. Measures to address the problems of market volatility, investment law and connectivity will add further momentum to investment and progress in those countries.

The development of the least developed countries on the continent should receive special attention so that such countries can catch up with the rest.

The African Peer Review Mechanism is one of the most remarkable features of NEPAD, and the boldest experiment ever for collective self-assessment. It will not be easy, but Nepal is confident that African leaders will display the political will and courage to tell the truth and take the necessary steps to rectify any aberrations as and when they occur. We are happy to note that four countries will introduce the Mechanism by the end of this year.

Nepal supports the accelerated implementation of NEPAD and calls on the international community to join forces to help Africa help itself. It is time to begin to heal the wounds of neglect that Africa has suffered for so long.

The President: In accordance with the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 32nd plenary meeting on 15 October 2003, I now call on the Observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Migliore (Holy See): A year ago, the General Assembly unanimously welcomed the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as the institutional response of the African Union to meet the special needs of Africa. My delegation is confident that the international community will not fail in assisting the efforts of this new alliance of African countries in responding to the challenges facing their continent. The call to, as well as the need for, solidarity among all peoples increase with the passing of each day.

In the current world order, the African nations seem to be among the most disadvantaged. In the face of the current marginalization of Africa, we have a duty in solidarity to maintain the commitments we have collectively made to move forward with a new pattern of solidarity and cooperation between the wealthier nations and the peoples of Africa. This requires a rapid and definitive solution to the external debt overhang of African countries. Partial solutions have shown themselves in the past to have been inadequate. It is time to move forward with a courageous and generous solution, which at the same time involves ownership by both the Governments of Africa and broad sectors of civil society.

The sum total of African external debt is small by global standards. Hence, not only in terms of justice, but also of effective economic possibilities, the burden of external debt necessitates a comprehensive and expeditious solution through the enhanced Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative and other debt relief measures, as agreed upon in the Programme of Action of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. This relief process should not drag on for long under the yoke of technical and bureaucratic requirements. Moreover, such process should neither be subject to excessive conditionalities nor become an obstacle to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

For external trade to become an essential factor of African development, the international community should uphold and apply aptly the true values of trade by eliminating all types of unfair competition against African countries. Establishing trade barriers to protect the economic advantages of the producers of rich countries, particularly in those sectors in which Africa can be competitive, is inconsistent with all those solemn economic international commitments. In conformity with the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, the objective of granting duty-free and quota-free market access to those countries should remain as a peremptory obligation. In the aftermath of the Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization at Cancún, my delegation hopes that the international community will consider providing a coherent response to the trade claims of African countries, especially in relation to the leading case involving cotton.

In this regard, my delegation wishes to note that Africa needs to develop a family-based diversified agrarian economy, capable of responding to multiple challenges such as excessive urban migration, lack of food security, the welfare of the family and rural communities, protection of the environment and greater economic growth. Furthermore, it is not possible to achieve economic and social development without providing appropriate technology and know-how. However, such technology should be specifically designed for the economic, ecological and social realities of Africa and not imposed scientific and technological programmes that are alien to the African reality.

Without peace in Africa, it is impossible to think of just structures of economic and social development. The prevention and resolution of regional and internal conflicts, as well as peace negotiations, correspond to the role of the African Union and to the rest of the regional and subregional organizations, in conjunction with the interested Governments. Nevertheless, the United Nations and the rest of the international community have, an important role to play by sustaining and supporting regional initiatives and eventually, at a subsidiary level, by supplementing local efforts where necessary.

The African ownership of NEPAD should not be an end in itself. Its implementation process and its ultimate responsibility will become fully African only if it is manifested in an effective and profound manner through the ennoblement of African values, especially respect for the family. An acute sense of solidarity and community life — which in African societies is a true reflection of the extended family — is deeply rooted within the family, the fundamental unit of society. NEPAD should become the maximum political expression of this extended African family.

It is therefore the hope of my delegation that NEPAD's pursuit of political, social and economic progress will also help in the advancement of the authentic values of Africa. The Holy See is confident that Africa will always preserve this priceless cultural heritage and never succumb to the temptation of individualism, which is so foreign to its best traditions.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 2011 (XX) of 11 October 1965 and decision 56/475 of 15 August 2002, I now call on the Observer for the African Union.

Mr. Kébé (African Union) (*spoke in French*): After yesterday's statement by the Foreign Minister of Mozambique on behalf of the current Chairman of the African Union, I wish to make the present statement on behalf of the Commission of the African Union.

I would like to take this opportunity to convey my warmest congratulations, sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. My delegation will spare no effort in assisting you in carrying out your important mission successfully. Allow me also to thank the Secretary-General for the two reports before us, on progress in implementation and international support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and on implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

I would particularly like to commend the Secretary-General for the good quality of these reports, and I welcome this opportunity to share with the Assembly certain of my remarks and comments. Before doing so I wish to pay tribute to Professor Ibrahim Gambari and the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa for the unparalleled energy with which they have addressed African economic issues within the Secretariat.

Allow me to recall for the record that it was at Lusaka, during the thirty-seventh regular session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity in July 2001, that the strategic policy framework and the new vision for the renewal and development of Africa, known as NEPAD, was adopted. That decision was an act of faith and the renewal of a commitment to the principles and purposes articulated in the Constitutive Act of the African Union. More than anything, it was the reaffirmation of a common belief that peace, security, democracy, good governance, political and social stability and efficient economic policies are the essential conditions in sustainable socio-economic development on the continent.

The second regular session of the Summit of the African Union took place in Maputo from 10 to 12 July 2003. Its theme was the guaranteeing of the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, which brings us to the very heart of our discussion here today.

We are pleased by the commitment undertaken by African States and the international community for the implementation of NEPAD. This innovative programme is grounded in a clear-cut partnership between Governments and the private sector in Africa on the one hand, and between African States and development partners on the other. Our commitment no longer needs to be demonstrated. We are aware that we must get the movement started if we want to convince others to follow us.

All over Africa, measures have been initiated at the national, subregional and continent-wide levels to incorporate NEPAD's objectives into all major political, economic and social undertakings on the continent. Many countries have established a national coordinating body for NEPAD. The regional economic communities have begun to restructure their activities so as to reflect NEPAD's priorities in their work programmes. Those communities will play a leading role in carrying out infrastructure projects and in the context of the integrated agricultural development programme.

A number of other priority programmes have already been drafted in the areas of health, education, environment, tourism, industry and so on. Implementation has already begun at the national and subregional levels.

At the continental level, we have established the African Peer Review Mechanism, which 16 countries have already joined; we intend to get the reviews started before the end of 2003. This is a unique kind of instrument, based as it is on voluntary commitments and reciprocal monitoring, evaluation and information-sharing. Each country reviewed will be a textbook case for the others in the specific areas of political and economic governance and business management.

Of course, we have to maintain the momentum thus achieved and step it up as necessary. We must increase both vertical and horizontal coordination; buttress national and subregional institutional capacities; and ensure that NEPAD is supported at the grass-roots level in Africa. We will achieve this with the backing and support of the international community, which, convinced by our determination, has committed itself, standing shoulder to shoulder with us, to a number of measures designed to facilitate NEPAD's implementation.

These measures involve, inter alia, official development assistance; the problem of Africa's external debt; opening the markets of the developed countries to African exports; elimination of agricultural subsidies, which render African products non-competitive; encouraging private enterprises to invest in Africa; and channelling financial, technical and other resources to NEPAD's priority sectors.

To that end, at Kananaskis the Group of Eight adopted an Africa Action Plan. The United States has created the Millennium Account, and countries such as Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Norway, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland are already devoting 25 per cent or more of their official development assistance to Africa. We must maintain the pace thus set and ensure that each step taken and each advance achieved becomes irreversible in our battle for Africa's political, economic and social development.

All our endeavours, and those of our partners, in the area of economic and social development will come to nought unless we first create the conditions for lasting peace, security and stability in Africa.

We in the African Union are aware that peace, security and stability constitute the foundation upon which economic and social development will be built. In this connection, we have undertaken to deal with all the conflicts that have broken out on the continent in cooperation with existing subregional mechanisms and with the ongoing support of the United Nations. Real progress has been made in Angola, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Ethiopia and Eritrea, and in Liberia. These crises, which only a few years ago were in full conflagration, are now on the way to being extinguished thanks to the combined action of subregional mechanisms, the African Union, the United Nations and our partners.

The first lesson that we can draw from these events is that we can indeed find a solution to the most difficult situations if we pool our efforts and our energies in a dynamic partnership for peace. The second lesson is that it is not enough to induce the warring parties to sign a ceasefire agreement in order to establish peace. Yes, peace is a process that begins with the ceasefire agreement, but that process must be supported for a good while, since the political, economic and social fabric of a country in that situation is very fragile, if not completely devastated.

The examples of Guinea-Bissau and the Central African Republic in this regard are indicative of the risks that a country faces of sliding back once again into the grip of conflict.

Despite the advances achieved, we still have a great deal to do in Africa, particularly to complete the peace negotiations that are under way on the Sudan; to finalize the peace process between Ethiopia and Eritrea; to consolidate the peace process in Burundi; and to get the process of reconciliation in Somalia on track.

I wish in particular to highlight the case of Burundi, where ceasefire agreements were concluded between the Transitional Government and three armed groups. Those agreements provide for the deployment of an African mission whose purposes and mandate were defined on 2 April 2003 by the Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in Africa.

Although one of the warring parties, the Palipehutu-FNL, has not signed the agreement, the African Union believes that it is worth striving to support the embryonic peace thus achieved. The bulk of the forces of the African Union mission in Burundi have already been deployed. That mission is an investment in peace and in the future. As such, it must be supported by the United Nations and by the international community as a whole.

The Security Council must endorse it, since it has responsibility for everything that relates to international peace and security. We need the assistance of the United Nations Secretariat on the ground to help us in planning the mission and carrying it out successfully. We need all our development partners to respond positively at the pledging conference that the African Union is organizing in South Africa on 2 and 3 December 2003 in order to garner the necessary funds to finance the mission, whose budget amounts to close to \$120 million a year.

The African Union's programme goes beyond the daily management of conflicts. Its conceptual basis is the principle of prevention — that is to say, acting at an early stage on the underlying causes of conflict before they break out. In this connection, the African Union has established a Peace and Security Council, whose Protocol, adopted at the first African Union Summit, held at Durban, will come into force very shortly.

More specifically, we need to root out on our continent the seeds of ethnic, religious and regionalistic division. We need to make institutions and political systems more democratic; promote grass-roots participation and transparency in the management of the State patrimony; promote respect for human rights in all their aspects; combat impunity and corruption; and safeguard the equality of all before the law.

Once we have instilled in everyone this culture of democracy, and once our institutions offer everyone, on an equal footing, recourse whereby they can ensure that their voices are heard and that their rights are taken into account, we will have fewer armed conflicts to manage. It is my conviction and that of the African Union that the new partnership that we have just put in place within the context of our new Union will greatly assist us in achieving these objectives.

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

Mr. Gospodinov (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are people's organizations. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) represents 53 African members, of 178 members worldwide. In Africa alone, 2 million of our active volunteers support the people affected by severe poverty, to whom we usually refer as the most vulnerable. So we speak to you today with a voice and experience from the grass roots.

We strongly support the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) because the vulnerable in Africa need it, and for us they are more than just the vulnerable, they are human beings, our brothers and sisters.

Millions of people die every year from malnutrition in slow agonizing deaths due to poverty. In a world searching for security, it has become apparent that human security — in this context, the right of each of us to have basic necessities — is the only secure foundation on which to build. NEPAD commits to eradicating poverty and has outlined a reliable plan for action. It therefore deserves to be supported.

The IFRC warmly commends the efforts of the Japanese Government in organizing the Tokyo

International Conference on African Development. Our delegation has participated in the Conference itself, and in many of the preparatory stages. We have done so in the spirit of NEPAD, working through our African national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies.

Africans have dreamed of democracy and good governance for a long time. They want their Governments to be transparent and accountable to them, responding to their needs promptly. They want their Governments to listen to them, to respond quickly to disasters affecting them, to fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic and to provide them with basic health care. NEPAD promotes democracy and good governance and commits to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. This has long been a focus of African Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, open and transparent governance enabling strong implementation of their development efforts.

NEPAD and IFRC member societies have worked on similar challenges independently, with little communication between them so far. This is not surprising. Both are guided by the needs of the people. Our volunteers are part of the people. They work within their respective communities. In addition, as auxiliary to public authorities, national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies closely associate themselves with Government policies that match our fundamental principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence.

To illustrate what we mean I will take a few quotations from the NEPAD web site, and put them in the context of this debate.

First, "Africa becomes more effective in conflict prevention and the establishment of enduring peace on the continent." In pursuing the promotion of our fundamental principles, some national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in Africa train youth leaders in peer education about resolution of differences through discussion. Mother clubs are encouraged to discuss the importance of peace and peaceful settlement of differences at home to influence children from early childhood. Dissemination sessions of our fundamental principles speak to the subject of peace. During difficult times, when all other organizations may have departed, national Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers have protected children using our emblems, at the risk of their own lives.

Secondly, "Africa adopts and implements principles of democracy and good political, economic

and corporate governance ...". In addition to the global requirements of donor accountability, the IFRC quite successfully promotes the principles of integrity, transparency and internal accountability in national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, governance being accountable to members and volunteers; and management accountable to governance through a set of rules. Regular general assemblies are held with elections of officers for limited terms. Annual plans and budgets are adhered to and annual external audits are performed. I am pleased to inform you that today, 75 to 80 per cent of our Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in Africa exercise democracy in every practical sense. This gives NEPAD experienced allies in civil society, working consistently to promote democracy and good governance.

The third element is effective poverty eradication and genuine partnerships based on mutual respect and accountability. Our organizations from all African countries met in Ouagadougou in September 2000 and committed to two important priorities that would contribute to eradicating poverty.

The first priority, responding to the HIV/AIDS pandemic as an unprecedented humanitarian and development disaster in Africa, involved massively scaling up their response in terms of advocacy, prevention, care and mitigation. They called for a comprehensive and coordinated strategy from communities, Governments, national and international organizations and the private sector for continent-wide support for awareness and prevention campaigns and access to treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS.

The second priority, making food security of strategic importance for this decade, recognizes that food insecurity is directly linked to a number of root causes, including poverty, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the worsening debt crisis and armed conflict. National Red Cross societies from the developed world, attending the same meeting as observers, made their own parallel commitment to respect and support the priorities established by the Africans themselves and to work in partnership to fight the pandemic and food insecurity. This, in some senses, is a precursor to NEPAD.

As action followed, I am happy to report to you today that good progress has been recorded in implementing NEPAD priorities. Our network reached 1 million Africans in its HIV/AIDS programmes in 2002. The forecasts suggest that it will reach 3 million

Africans by the end of this year, without estimating the possible multiplier effect in families and communities.

In related programmes, our volunteers distributed insecticide-treated nets for malaria and carried out social mobilization campaigns to help vaccinate over 12 million children for measles and polio in partnership with the World Health Organization and African Governments.

The road to development has never been easy throughout history. Capital formation or accumulation of wealth requires restructuring the economy, which involves a lot of sacrifices from the people. These sacrifices could last indefinitely if the wealth so accumulated does not quickly regenerate the economy and create employment to mitigate the suffering. With HIV/AIDS, the spread of killer diseases such as malaria, the known cyclical disasters and the alarming level of poverty, Africans can sacrifice no more without serious consequences. A strong Government partnership with civil society is essential if we are to stave off the sacrifices of development.

The IFRC and its members exist in partnership with Governments. It is a partnership based on the Geneva Conventions, respect for the Red Cross and Red Crescent emblems and the fundamental principles of our movement. It is also based on mutual cooperation and trust, consistent with the position of our member national societies as auxiliaries to public authorities at all levels in their respective countries. That aspect of the relationship, which includes a mutual commitment to dialogue and consultations on humanitarian affairs, will again be at centre stage in December this year, when Governments and all our leaders meet together at the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. At that meeting, which will also be attended by key African regional organizations along with the United Nations, the participants will agree upon overarching policies and directions to guide the work of the wider international community and our movement on the modern humanitarian agenda.

In that spirit, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies calls on African Governments and other partners to renew and consolidate their partnerships with their national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, in order to meet the following goals. The first is to ensure that health care and social welfare systems are enabled to meet the

needs of the vulnerable. The second goal is to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS and to enable people living with HIV/AIDS to have access to the use of the drugs they need. The third goal is to minimize the effects of disasters by adopting and implementing appropriate policies to invest in long-term food security strategies that reduce vulnerability.

In conclusion, the Secretary General's report on the implementation of Millennium Declaration and the 2003 report of the Commission on Human Security both underscored the fact that Africa still faces serious problems. All indicators continue to show that Africa is a continent where human security remains at an unacceptably low level. We trust that Governments will take the opportunity offered by the forthcoming International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in Geneva in December to make their own commitments to a better future for Africa. It is not enough to keep Africa in our hearts and minds. We must do more for Africa, and we must do it now.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 33/18, of 10 November 1978, and decision 53/453, of 18 December 1998, I now call on the observer for the International Organization of la Francophonie.

Mr. Bouabid (International Organization of la Francophonie) (*spoke in French*): Africa has made, and continues to make, notable progress in the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts, in the establishment and strengthening of democracy, in supporting the rule of law and in promoting human rights. The International Organization of la Francophonie, whose charter identifies those areas as priorities in its work, is quite proud to have been a partner of numerous African countries in making such decisive progress. I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm that our support and assistance in all those fields continue to be available to our African member countries.

In that context, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) unquestionably represents both a break and a beginning. It is a break towards an innovative approach, and the beginning of an enduring African renaissance. With this African initiative, we in la Francophonie fully realize that we are living at a major moment in the history of the African continent — a moment that is both unprecedented and

highly symbolic of Africa's new face, the hopes it nurtures and the ambitions it has for its peoples.

We now have before us a new programme of action that is based on a new strategic vision, a programme for Africa that has been thought out, conceived, developed and managed by Africa itself and that takes into account all the realities in the continent. That programme is also one in which African leaders recognize their primary responsibility for the development of their continent and formally commit themselves to do everything possible to launch Africa into the orbit of growth and development and to integrate it decisively into the world economy.

Foremost among African initiatives because of its political status, its continent-wide scope, the breadth of its goals and the originality of its approach, the NEPAD project today cannot be disregarded, either by the donors and international organizations involved in Africa or by the international community as a whole. The international community must lend its support through at least an equivalent commitment, especially in dealing with problems in which Africa unfortunately does not have much leverage. I am thinking in particular of the problems of finance, indebtedness, access to markets and the transfer of technologies and experience. In that regard, it is essential that we meet the goals adopted at the Millennium Summit, the Monterrey Conference and the Johannesburg Summit.

Having affirmed the interdependence between peace, democracy and development and having recognized that stability, good governance and the rule of law are essential elements in development, NEPAD deserves our respect and support. In that regard, we welcome the establishment of the African Peer Review Mechanism, which is designed to ensure that the policies and practices of States parties conform to universally recognized values enshrined in the Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance. As a truly institutional innovation in inter-African relations, we believe that the Mechanism is a resounding illustration of Africa's will to resolutely enter an era of good governance, as well as a key tool in the effective implementation of NEPAD.

The International Organization of la Francophonie counts 29 African States among its 56 members. From the beginning, la Francophonie welcomed the NEPAD initiative and decided to extend

its full support to it, while calling on NEPAD to take into account and respect various elements that we believe are essential to ensuring NEPAD's full success.

The first of those is the participation of all actors, both in considering and implementing this comprehensive project, as well as ownership of NEPAD by citizens themselves. That clearly requires an ongoing information process to raise awareness and to mobilize the citizenry. The second element is the need to take immediate steps in the medium- and long-term implementation of the programme of action to foster the well-being of people in order to soothe the impatience, and even disillusionment, that followed the great hopes that were engendered by the wave of democratization of the 1990s. Lastly, the third element is to strengthen democratic culture and peace, as well as the notion of effort and responsibility. That should be done by both example and through education, utilizing a multifaceted approach aimed at all social groups.

The International Organization of la Francophonie put forth proposals in that regard at the summit of African heads of State on financing NEPAD, which was held in Dakar in April 2002. Those proposals emerged from the convergence between NEPAD's priorities, on the one hand, and the priorities of la Francophonie's work, on the other hand, in particular those suggested by la Francophonie's Intergovernmental Agency, its main operational body. Those proposals deal principally with the following areas.

The first area involves peace, security and good governance. We have made our advocacy and programmes available to NEPAD, especially those that came out of the Bamako declaration adopted by francophone countries in November 2000. We also place special emphasis on strengthening institutional capacity by relying on the professional networks and instruments already in place. Along with our partners in NEPAD, our delegation for human rights and democracy began to think about concrete ways of involving la Francophonie in this fundamental aspect of NEPAD at two specific meetings. It is in that context that we made our contribution to the establishment of a network of African mediators at Ouagadougou in March 2000, as well as the inter-African network to regulate communications, which was established at Johannesburg in September of the same year.

In cooperation with the World Bank, our human rights and democracy delegation also greatly contributed to the preparation and convening of the Abuja Pan-African Conference on law, justice and development. We are currently preparing the follow-up Conference, to be held in Algiers in February 2004, again in cooperation with the World Bank.

I also wish to refer to the establishment of a standing committee in Dakar entrusted with helping to implement la Francophonie's support for the international initiative for democracy and human rights in Africa. We are also planning, together with the United Nations Department of Political Affairs, a seminar on early warning and conflict prevention, to be held in the first quarter of 2004. Many African entities will be associated with that seminar, the objective of which will be to improve the capacity of participating institutions in preventing, managing and settling conflicts.

In the field of new information and communication technologies, in addition to the programmes already being carried out by the Institut francophone des nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la formation — which are of great benefit to many African members and whose objectives are shared by NEPAD — a francophone ministerial conference on the information society was held last month in Rabat in preparation for the World Summit on the Information Society. The work undertaken at the conference has given la Francophonie's action an even stronger dynamic of support for NEPAD.

Energy and the environment are two sectors that are broadly covered by the activities of la Francophonie, through its Institut de l'énergie et de l'environnement in Quebec, in the context of the follow-up to the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. La Francophonie's framework of action in that context, which will guide our programming in this field over the next decade, has been largely inspired by the concerns and orientations formulated in NEPAD. Africa enjoys confirmed priority therein. NEPAD's energy and environmental facet will be supported by la Francophonie as an approach based on regional action and as a basis of our programming for sustainable development in Africa. La Francophonie's framework of action thus embraces the priorities and scope of NEPAD in its deployment.

Education and culture are two fields in which la Francophonie has acknowledged experience. Its programmes for Africa are conceived and deployed in close cooperation with ministers of education, especially Africans. It goes without saying that they are fully in line with NEPAD's priorities.

In conclusion, I note that the solidarity of the French-speaking countries with Africa will enjoy pride of place on the agenda of the summit of heads of State and Government of the French-speaking countries, to be held in Ouagadougou in the autumn of 2004. NEPAD will be at the centre of the discussions at the summit, the theme of which will be cooperation for sustainable development.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 39 and its sub-items (a) and (b).

Our joint debate on item 39, "New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support", and its sub-items (a) and (b) has been both interesting and wide-ranging. The 63 representatives participating in the debate underlined the progress achieved since the special session of the General Assembly on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which met one year ago, as well as obstacles that have been encountered in implementing this African Union-led, owned and managed initiative.

African leaders have taken many steps to accelerate economic growth, promote sustainable development, reduce poverty and improve the living standards of the peoples of Africa. Efforts have also been made in both conflict prevention and in creating a better framework for development. The creation, in addition to the Commission of the African Union, of three fundamental institutions — the Peace and Security Council, the Pan-African Parliament and the Economic, Social and Cultural Council — will definitely facilitate the process of conflict prevention and ensure the participation of the African peoples in the development and economic integration of their continent. The inclusion of civil society in the African Union's affairs will also be facilitated.

Many delegations from donor and developing countries applauded the establishment of the African Peer Review Mechanism and encouraged its implementation by the end of this year. Despite the progress achieved, much remains to be done in moving

forward with the implementation of NEPAD. Bold actions are required on the part of all stakeholders to address the various challenges and constraints that have been identified. The increase of official development assistance and debt relief will allow the African countries to ensure sustainable development and achieve the NEPAD objectives, as well as those of the Millennium Declaration. I was pleased to hear about new commitments from developed countries that were sounded during many recent international gatherings and we call on them to substantially enhance the flow of resources to the African continent.

The importance of trade in national development cannot be overstated. We all agree that the international community should make more concerted efforts to expand market access to African products. The current system does not work, especially for the least developed countries. Many delegations highlighted the fact that some developed countries have begun to demonstrate flexibility on agricultural subsidies and other issues. The recent World Trade Organization agreement to allow developing countries to import inexpensive generic drugs was widely welcomed, especially in Africa, where HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis are pervasive. The failure at Cancún, however, has dampened hopes for further progress in these areas.

As the report of the Secretary-General underlines, certain countries observed a degradation of their debt indicators because of the decrease in export incomes and the volatility of commodity prices. The result has been low investment and economic growth, insufficient job creation for the poor and too few resources for health and education. During this debate, a number of ideas were put forward on the handling of external debt, which has sapped the energy of many developing countries. By further exploring such options as debt restructuring and debt relief, many believe that these will contribute to the sustained economic growth of the highly indebted poor countries in Africa. I invite all members to continue the discussion of these and other alternatives and actively to participate in the open-ended panel of the plenary on commodities that I will convene on the afternoon of 27 October 2003.

The debate of the plenary was also devoted to the promotion of lasting peace in Africa. Actually, this is the major goal of NEPAD, which rightly links development and stability. Delegations underlined important developments in this area. Still, the main

focus continues to be on the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts and many representatives proposed that it should be done also through the strengthening of African capacities, including support for regional and subregional organizations.

At the same time, the role of the United Nations system cannot be overestimated. Past experience proves expeditiously that when United Nations and African countries act in a coherent and consistent manner, they can have a significant impact on peace, development and security. Many delegations commented on the high quality of the reports on Africa. They welcomed the creation of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and congratulated the Office for the efforts it has made thus far in addressing the challenges of African development. They called for adequate resources to be made available to it to enable it to perform the functions assigned to it.

The forthcoming high-level dialogue on financing for development, so critical to socio-economic development, especially in Africa, can become another driving force for action-oriented solutions in this area. We all agree that during this session the General Assembly must advance the work and take action on many pressing development issues, and, as I promised from the very beginning of my term, we will pursue many of these issues through interactive dialogue.

The Assembly has been the guiding light behind a decade of summits and conferences, the objectives of which were to assist Member States, especially those in Africa, to meet their development goals. Now is the time to mobilize all our efforts for their timely implementation.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 39 and its sub-items (a) and (b).

Agenda item 56 (continued)

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Mr. Chaimongkol (Thailand): Thailand is pleased that, once again, these two related items — namely, “Report of the Security Council and “Question of the equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters”, including the report of the Open-ended

Working Group, are being considered in tandem as part of our efforts to rationalize the work of the General Assembly.

These two items are indeed important, not least because, first, we appreciate the symbolism inherent in the Council's reporting to this body, which represents the general membership of the United Nations; and secondly, Thailand's former Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Chuchai Kasemsarn, had served as one of the Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform.

But I cannot but wonder whether there is a larger issue here — one that transcends the report of the Security Council or the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform, and perhaps one that both the report and the Working Group, unfortunately, have been unable to address.

The issue is the one raised by the Secretary-General himself in his report to the General Assembly on 23 September. Are the available rules and instruments that underpin multilateralism, particularly the Security Council, adequate and effective enough to meet the current challenges to international peace and security? And, if not, what are we, the Member States, going to do about it?

Following the end of the cold war, hopes were high that the Security Council, entrusted by the general membership of the United Nations with overseeing the important question of international peace and security, would regain its unity and be able effectively and consistently to fulfil its mandate.

Indeed, the Security Council has had many notable achievements. It has, *inter alia*, mandated peacekeeping operations and assistance missions worldwide — from Sierra Leone to Timor-Leste to Afghanistan — and galvanized the international community to combat international terrorism through the Counter-Terrorism Committee.

But it is also fair to say that, in view of recent experiences, there is a growing perception that the Security Council has been unable to meet fully the high expectations placed on it by the general United Nations membership and that, for some States, there is even a sense of frustration.

Part of this is because of the perceived erosion of unity in the Council. That situation does not help sway

public opinion towards the Council as being the guarantor of international peace and security. In addition, recent practices regarding the formulation of decisions within the Council, where even the elected members of the Council — the representatives of all five regional groups here at the United Nations — are not always fully consulted, raises the question of transparency even within the Council itself. On occasion, the Council has simply been unable to act.

The time is thus indeed ripe for the members of the international community to look at the issue as posed by the Secretary-General with an open mind, a sense of urgency and clarity of purpose. For we are indeed, as the Secretary-General put it, at a fork in the road, where the choices appear to be between, first, making the existing multilateral system more effective — a generally preferred option — or, secondly, resorting to other alternatives, the consequences of which, for most, are unknown at best and unthinkable at worst.

If we are in agreement that there are no better alternatives to the multilateral system, we should seriously consider making the existing multilateral system, and indeed, the Security Council more effective. That is where reform of the Security Council comes into play.

The problem that we all face in this regard, however, is that the forum mandated by the General Assembly to examine the question of Security Council reform — namely, the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform — has not been able to achieve any substantial progress since it was established by General Assembly resolution 48/26 in 1993. The Working Group remains as deadlocked as ever and unable to offer concrete recommendations on Council reform.

Moreover, while all of us speak of the need for reform, there appears to be a trend of declining interest in the work of the Open-ended Working Group, which just has not been able to compete with other United Nations bodies for the attention of Member States. During the previous session, for example, meetings of the Working Group had to be cancelled in order to accommodate requests by Member States to follow the proceedings on the issue of the day in the Security Council. But those frustrating developments should not distract us from trying to make some progress on Security Council reform, as difficult as it may be. In

that connection, I wish to pay tribute to Mr. Jan Kavan, the former President of the General Assembly, for his firm leadership and determination, in the face of adversity, to continue to push forward the issue of Council reform as Chairman of the Working Group.

It is fair to say that there has been some progress made in the past year. At the initiative of the Working Group's bureau, we were able to significantly streamline the proposals for reform that had accumulated throughout the years relating to both cluster 1 and cluster 2 issues. The Working Group now has before it a more concise menu of proposals as a basis for its work when it reconvenes early next year.

As for Thailand, we continue to call for discussions on both cluster 1 and cluster 2 issues in tandem, with a view to creating a single comprehensive package of proposals for reform. But we would also support constructive ideas to improve the working methods of the Working Group, including the use of informal meetings to facilitate consultations.

Thailand continues to call for a gradual approach to resolving the issue of the veto, beginning with curtailment of the veto and leading to its eventual abolition. We continue to support expansion of Council membership in both the permanent and non-permanent categories on the basis of equitable geographical representation and the ability to share responsibility and to make financial and political contributions to the United Nations. On that basis, we see Japan as a worthy candidate to be a new permanent member of the Council. Furthermore, any solution with respect to Council expansion should be subject to periodic review.

But substantive Security Council reform will not happen if Member States do not have the political will to make it happen. If Security Council reform does not materialize, then the existing multilateral framework and the institutions that help oversee international peace and security may not be able to meet effectively the new and old challenges facing humanity.

Thailand therefore supports the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a high-level panel of eminent persons to, among other things, examine current challenges to peace and security and recommend ways to strengthen the United Nations through the reform of its institutions and processes. We look forward to fruitful and productive interaction between that panel, when it is established, and the

Open-ended Working Group on Security Council Reform.

I would like to make one last point on the report of the Security Council. We appreciate all the efforts undertaken to prepare the report, which follows the improved format begun last year. The report provides a useful summary of what the Council has undertaken during the preceding 12-month period. But we hope that future reports will be more analytical, and that they will incorporate the monthly assessments of the Council's work made by Council Presidents. The report should be made as up-to-date as possible, otherwise it will be of limited use and of even more limited relevance.

Thailand will continue to engage constructively in the process of Security Council reform as part of the global cooperative effort to make multilateralism even more effective in addressing the challenges of our times.

Mr. Paolillo (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Ten years after the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council, not only have we failed to find a satisfactory formula to reform the membership of the Council in a way that adequately reflects modern international realities, we must now also resolve the issue of how to proceed in the future to pursue our goal of reform. It hardly needs to be pointed out that we cannot continue to belabour the old reform proposals, made over a decade ago; nor can we continue to resort to the same mechanisms and procedures we have employed thus far. That would simply protract our consultations, perhaps making them as unproductive as they have been to date.

In order to make progress it is essential that we change our approach, thinking and procedures. I believe that, at this stage, it is abundantly clear that reform based on a simultaneous increase in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of membership has thus far not won widespread acceptance in the international community. No doubt, the purpose of enhancing the representative, democratic and transparent character of the Council can be achieved through another sort of reform that would not entail expanding the right of the veto — an

anti-democratic institution par excellence — to a small group of States.

We also believe that we should stop addressing the question of the reform of the Security Council as a comprehensive package whose every aspect hinges upon another. That has led to the paradox that Uruguay has repeatedly pointed out, namely, that despite the fact that there is widespread agreement on certain reforms — such as increasing the number of non-permanent members, which no country opposes — those reforms cannot be adopted or implemented until some improbable agreement is reached with regard to other reforms whose potential for being accepted is extremely remote. That approach is every year depriving the members of the General Assembly of the possibility of being represented in the Security Council.

I wish to say once again what we have repeatedly said in the past. Had we decided 10 years ago to increase the number of non-permanent members — for instance, by increasing that number to 15, which is to say, only five additional non-permanent members — 50 additional countries could have held seats in the Security Council in that time. It continues to be an irony that while we proclaim the goal of expanding the Council's representative nature, we are proceeding in a manner that perpetuates restricted representation. An increase in non-permanent members could be effected only without prejudice to continued study of the possibility of expanding the permanent membership.

We are convinced that we can continue our endeavour and achieve more effective results if we work on new proposals that will even satisfy the aspirations of some States that are prepared to shoulder greater responsibilities by increasing their presence and participation in the Council without thereby affecting the body's democratic nature or the principle of the sovereign equality of States. For example, we could consider the possibility of the limited re-election of a certain number of non-permanent members, or the establishment of permanent observers, or indeed the proposal made by Italy in 1993 aimed at ensuring more frequent participation by certain countries in the work of the Council. However, we must bear in mind that an expansion of the Security Council cannot exceed certain limits. Inefficiency and sluggishness could become serious threats in a Security Council comprising more than 25 members.

At the same time, we must establish rules and procedures that ensure participation on the part of all Council members — permanent and non-permanent — at all stages of consultation and negotiation. Let us not forget that the Security Council acts on behalf of all Members of the Organization, and that, in that capacity, all its activities must be carried out with the greatest possible transparency and be open to all its members. For the same reason, we must improve the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly to bridge the gap that exists between those two bodies.

The Secretary-General has informed us that he proposes to create a high-level panel of eminent personalities to consider, among other matters, the functioning of United Nations organs and the relations among them. It is to be hoped that the panel will analyse the debates on that issue that have taken place in the Assembly and in the Open-ended Working Group. Reference to the yearly reports that the Working Group has been submitting to the Assembly may be of great interest to the panel, because they provide a complete picture of current trends of thought and of the kinds of reform that have the potential to be generally accepted.

We hope that the results of the panel's work will make a useful contribution to our ongoing efforts to improve the Security Council's efficiency. Without prejudice to that, we understand that it would not be advisable to suspend our work within the Organization in expectation of the panel's pronouncements. At a time when the United Nations needs, more than ever before, to foster the spirit of renewal and change, we must continue our exercise in the hope of soon finding a satisfactory response to this important problem.

Mr. Ryan (Ireland): We thought the initiative last year to consider the report of the Security Council and the matter of reform of the Council together was a good one and made for a more coherent debate. Therefore, I should like to cover both subjects today.

The restructuring of the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly on the Council's activities — also initiated last year — certainly helps to make it more accessible. The grouping of statistical detail in annexes also contributes to a more manageable report. We still think, however, that the Council could be more adventurous. While the introduction is well drafted and takes a comprehensive

look at the issues before the Council in the period August 2002 to July 2003, we continue to believe that it could have a greater analytical component, even allowing for the constraints of which we are all aware.

I would recall that Ireland was a member of the Council during part of the period covered by the report. During our membership of the Council, we were associated with a number of practical improvements in the Council's working methods. Among these were the increased frequency and modified format of open meetings of the Council and the arrangements for closer and more systematic consultations with troop-contributing countries. Because of them, we have better access to information and greater opportunities to participate in Council deliberations as a non-member than was possible in 2001, when we joined the Council. We welcome the continued progress being made in the Council's working methods. I believe that verifiable steps were taken in the past couple of years which could usefully be recorded and developed as we move forward.

The Security Council has had a very challenging, even traumatic, year since its last report. That reflects the many threats and challenges to international peace and security — and to the Organization itself — starkly identified by the Secretary-General in his statement to the General Assembly at the opening of the current session (see A/58/PV.7): terrorism; the escalation of violence in many parts of the world; extreme poverty; and the threat of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear proliferation.

The situation in Iraq predominated during the past year and is likely to absorb much of the Council's energy in the coming phase. The problem of conflict in Africa was again a particular focus, with crises in a number of areas, particularly in West Africa. The Council had to address conflicts in Côte d'Ivoire and in Liberia. In Central Africa, the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is one of mixed results; agreement has been reached on the process for building a transitional national Government, but serious violence has continued on the ground, particularly in the east. Some real progress has been achieved, including the successful conclusion of the United Nations Mission in Angola in February 2003 and the consolidation of the peace and reconstruction process there. We are disappointed, however, that the report is largely silent on the issue of greater cooperation between the Security Council and other

organs of the United Nations, in particular the Economic and Social Council.

I now wish to turn to the second topic of our joint debate: that of reform of the Security Council. As the Irish Prime Minister, Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, said in his address to the General Assembly a little over two weeks ago (see A/58/PV.11), our present world needs a viable system of global governance that can ensure international peace and security. He went on to add that, to be viable, such a system must possess two essential qualities: effectiveness and legitimacy. To be effective, it requires the unambiguous support of the entire community of nations; to retain legitimacy, it must be seen to work in the interests of the entire international community. He was speaking of the United Nations as a whole, but his point is also directly applicable to the Security Council.

We all know what is at stake. The Secretary-General put it starkly — and rightly so — to the Assembly some weeks ago when he said that there is an urgent need for the Security Council to regain the confidence of States and of world public opinion by demonstrating its ability to deal effectively with the most difficult issues, but also by becoming more broadly representative of the international community as a whole as well as of the geopolitical realities of today's world. After nearly a decade of debate, the parameters of that debate are wearisomely familiar. It is as if, collectively, we have become connoisseurs of agendas of evasion, driven in some quarters by narrower self-interests. But, as Mr. Ahern also stated squarely in his address to this year's Assembly, we have balked, collectively, at taking the hard decisions.

My Government is convinced that we must now realize — and, crucially, translate into action — that the point has come for us, together, to get to grips with those hard decisions. If we want the Council's decisions to command greater respect, we must all address the issue of the Council's composition with creative urgency. This is the Secretary-General's challenge to us: to make multilateralism, the United Nations system, directly relevant to the common threats we face in the real world, in real time.

Ireland takes our Secretary-General's call to action very seriously. We do not call into question the dedication of representatives in the Open-Ended Working Group and we appreciate that valuable work has been done — also in the past year — to try to

narrow the differences between positions. Frankly, however, this is no longer sufficient.

We need to look at the issue more creatively if we are to break out of the current impasse on Council reform. We need to work more consciously and deliberately towards a solution that is comprehensive and will give us a Council which is strengthened, because it enjoys reinforced legitimacy, and is also efficient and effective, because it is more responsive to new challenges in a world vastly different from that which existed in 1945 and, regrettably, also very different from that which existed at the start of this new century or even two months ago. We need, above all, to be guided first and foremost by what is best for the international community and for the safeguarding and strengthening of the multilateral system to which we are and must continue to be passionately attached.

2005 is increasingly being seen as a natural point — five years after the Millennium Summit — at which to assess what will have been achieved by then under the programme of action set out in the Millennium Declaration. Reform of the United Nations — and therefore also reform of the Council — is a critical element of that programme of action. While

there is an objective need for reform that transcends timetables, we might also draw inspiration from this deadline.

We welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General to establish a high-level panel of eminent personalities to look at the challenges facing the United Nations, including reform, but it is vital that work be done to prepare the ground for the report of the group. Its findings will not be implemented in a vacuum or its work assisted by postponing action until it completes its work.

In conclusion, you have our pledge, Sir, that the Irish delegation will contribute actively and constructively on the issue of Security Council reform. We stand ready, as an active member of the Open-Ended Working Group, to discuss with you and with interested delegations how we might take our work forward. We are willing to look at any and all creative suggestions, but we must all do more than simply tinker with the way we work. We must address, together, those hard decisions I spoke about earlier.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.