



General Assembly

Sixty-sixth session

92nd plenary meeting
Friday, 23 December 2011, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Al-Nasser. (Qatar)

The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

Agenda item 15 (continued)

Culture of peace

Draft resolution (A/66/L.32)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Members will recall that the Assembly held a debate on agenda item 15 at its 34th and 35th plenary meetings, on 17 October, and adopted resolution 66/116 at its 83rd plenary meeting, on 12 December.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Philippines to introduce draft resolution A/66/L.32.

Mr. Cabactulan (Philippines): I am extremely pleased and honoured today to introduce, jointly with the delegation of Pakistan, draft resolution A/66/L.32, which builds upon our collective efforts to achieve just and lasting peace throughout the world.

It was in 2004 when the Philippines first introduced in the General Assembly a draft resolution on the promotion of interreligious dialogue. We did so in the firm belief — shared with many partners in the United Nations — that one of the ways of achieving global peace would be by drawing the human family closer through greater understanding and respect for its diversity. We did not see it as an easy task. But we knew it could be done, and therefore took on the responsibility. We knew we could tear down artificial walls built to separate members of humankind from each other. That, we knew, could be done through interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

Seven years since the landmark resolution 59/23 was unanimously adopted, we have steadily fortified the foundations of that initiative and resolutely worked to broaden the participation of, and ownership by, key stakeholders. Seven years hence, we have seen deeper appreciation for interreligious and intercultural dialogue in the context of the holistic and comprehensive efforts of the United Nations to achieve peace. Seven years hence, we have seen growing and deepening recognition of the value of efforts in many parts of the world to foster dialogue between religions, cultures and civilizations. We are very pleased to note that, since 2004, resolutions on this subject matter have been unanimously adopted in the General Assembly.

This year's draft resolution was finalized following four informal rounds of consultations. Throughout the process, we strived to be open and to consider the many comments and input from a wide range of participants. With dialogue as our overriding theme for the draft resolution, it was fitting that dialogue would likewise be the hallmark of our process.

In that regard, I wish to thank all of the delegations that participated actively in the discussions. The constructive approach and flexibility demonstrated by all delegations contributed greatly to the positive atmosphere that characterized the consultations. I must say that every effort was made by all delegations concerned to articulate their concerns and, more important, to listen to the concerns of others. That is the dialogue we strive to achieve, and is the basis for the document before us today.

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

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Draft resolution A/66/L.32 builds on the developments resulting from last session's resolution that highlighted the link between interfaith dialogue, peace, development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It contains, among other things, the following key elements.

The draft resolution contains technical updates on resolution 65/138, on the same subject, particularly with regard to the latest developments from UNESCO, including the adoption, during its thirty-sixth session, of a resolution proclaiming an international decade for the rapprochement of cultures and the adoption of its new programme of action on a culture of peace and non-violence. It also contains a paragraph welcoming the establishment of the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in Vienna.

The draft resolution contains a paragraph recognizing the contributions of the media and new information and communications technology to changing peoples' perception of different cultures and religions, including through the promotion of dialogue. It also contains a paragraph elucidating the importance of sustaining the process of engaging all stakeholders, including young men and women, as relevant actors in interreligious and intercultural dialogue within the framework of appropriate initiatives at various levels, which aims to challenge preconceived ideas and improve mutual understanding.

The draft resolution contains a paragraph welcoming efforts to use information and communications technology, including the Internet, to promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue and, in that regard, acknowledging with appreciation the establishment by the Non-Aligned Movement of the Interfaith Dialogue e-Portal pursuant to the commitments made during the Special Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace and Development, held in Manila.

The draft resolution contains a paragraph recognizing the efforts by relevant stakeholders to foster peaceful and harmonious coexistence within societies by promoting respect for religious and cultural diversity, including by engendering sustained and robust interaction among various segments of society. It also contains a paragraph acknowledging the important role of civil society, including academia,

in fostering interreligious and intercultural dialogue and encouraging support for practical measures that mobilize civil society, including building capacities, promoting opportunities and developing frameworks for cooperation.

Just as in the resolution we sponsored at last year's session, the draft resolution before us today is the product of both intense effort and love. The Philippines wishes again to thank all the delegations that actively participated in the process. With ears, hearts and minds wide open, we held genuine dialogue marked by both candour and cooperation. Indeed, the informal consultations showed how far we have come in the understanding of interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

We are grateful to Pakistan, our fellow main sponsor, and the core group of other sponsors, for the hard work in coordinating our efforts and for their flexibility, which ensured a balanced outcome document.

In addition to the sponsors listed in document A/66/L.32, namely, Australia, Bangladesh, Belarus, Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Libya, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Seychelles, Trinidad and Tobago and Viet Nam, many new sponsors have joined in support of the draft resolution: Algeria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, Cambodia, China, Eritrea, Honduras, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Panama, Peru, the Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, the Sudan, Suriname, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Turkey and Turkmenistan.

I would also draw the Assembly's attention to a landmark event in my region. South-East Asia is known for its religious and cultural diversity. This year, for the first time, all the member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have sponsored the draft resolution. That demonstration of solidarity speaks volumes about the value of interreligious and intercultural dialogue by Governments and peoples. We urge all those who have yet to sign up as sponsors to do so at the Secretariat table.

We are likewise grateful for the technical assistance provided by UNESCO and by the Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. We also express our thanks to the General Assembly Affairs

Branch of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, for the technical assistance it has provided.

Interreligious and intercultural dialogue continues to be a vital component of our comprehensive efforts to achieve lasting peace in our world — peace that is both a precondition for development and an end unto itself. In submitting this draft resolution for action today, the Philippines expresses its wholehearted faith that we will build on what we have already achieved and move forward together towards our shared goal through dialogue that draws all of us together as one human family.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan to introduce draft resolution A/66/L.32.

Mr. Raza Bashir Tarar (Pakistan): In our capacity as one of the two main sponsors of the draft resolution under discussion, it is my proud privilege to join the Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Philippines in introducing the text contained in document A/66/L.32, entitled “Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace”.

The Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Philippines has ably expounded the importance of this important initiative that our two countries have led over some time. The initiative has gained the gradual support of a wide range of Member States, which reflects its importance and the need to pursue it meaningfully at various levels.

The draft resolution was discussed thoroughly for two weeks at the expert level in informal consultations. Held in a collegial atmosphere, the discussions enabled us to enrich the draft resolution’s contents. The sponsors would like to convey their gratitude for the constructive contributions from all our partners to streamlining and strengthening this important draft resolution. We are equally grateful to delegations for their flexibility and cooperation in the effort to achieve a balanced text that reflects the concerns of all partners. We accordingly hope that the text will be adopted by consensus.

Today’s world is afflicted with divisive ideologies, mutual suspicion and mistrust. Each passing day reminds us of the need to engage closely with one another to overcome the unfounded but deeply entrenched mutual fears that are based on a lack of understanding of

different religions, cultures and others’ perspectives. The situation needs to be thoroughly addressed by promoting dialogue, respect and tolerance. The draft resolution seeks to achieve exactly that end by promoting dialogue between different cultures and religions. Only through dialogue can we understand each other better and promote a culture of peace. Interfaith and intercultural dialogue must be pursued in an organized manner at all levels, including, but not limited to, religious leaders, institutions, local and national Governments, regional and international organizations, civil society and media.

Theological differences notwithstanding, religions have a lot in common that can unite us. We need to build on those commonalities for promoting religious and cultural harmony within and among societies. Pakistan believes that religious and cultural diversity are positive driving forces that can meaningfully contribute to the socio-economic development of multicultural societies. We greatly appreciate all relevant steps and initiatives being taken by various Governments and organizations at different levels. We also acknowledge the important role being played by civil society in that regard, and encourage its members to continue their valuable efforts for the common good of humankind.

In Pakistan, we have established interfaith harmony committees throughout the country, in which religious leaders of all faiths participate, in order, through joint meetings and dialogue, to enhance understanding, address misperceptions and promote harmony. Pakistan also co-sponsored the seventh Asia-Europe Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue, held in Manila in October, which renewed the commitment to the furtherance of interfaith and intercultural dialogue.

We urge all Member States to support the draft resolution with a view to fostering greater understanding and cooperation between cultures and faiths through dialogue at various levels, which would contribute to the achievement of a global culture of peace.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/66/L.32, entitled “Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to

announce that, in addition to those countries listed in document A/66/L.32 or previously mentioned during the introduction of the draft resolution, the following Member States have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/66/L.32: Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Fiji.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/66/L.32?

Draft resolution A/66/L.32 was adopted (resolution 66/226).

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Poland, who wishes to speak in explanation of position following the adoption of the resolution.

Ms. Grabianowska (Poland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) on resolution 66/226, entitled "Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace". The European Union would like to extend its thanks to the delegations of the Philippines and Pakistan for the constructive spirit in which they led the consultation process.

The European Union appreciates the efforts of the main sponsors to take into account in this year's resolution some of the concerns raised in previous years. In that regard, we appreciate the addition of a reference in paragraph 11 to the importance of civil society in the context of the dialogue that the resolution addresses. Furthermore, the EU's concern regarding a decade on interreligious and intercultural dialogue has been addressed constructively through a reference in the preambular section to the UNESCO resolution on an international decade for the rapprochement of cultures.

The EU is convinced that intercultural dialogue can make a significant contribution to mutual understanding among persons with different cultural, religious and other identities, deepening understanding and tolerance, and promoting and improving overall relations at local, national and international levels. We attach great importance to the work done by UNESCO, which is the lead United Nations agency in the promotion of intercultural dialogue, as well as other initiatives for enhancing dialogue and mutual understanding, such as the Alliance of Civilizations.

Nevertheless, we continue to have reservations regarding some elements of the resolution just adopted. The EU regrets that intra-religious dialogue is not

mentioned as one of the efforts that could be made for greater understanding and collaboration. Furthermore, the EU emphasizes that intercultural, interreligious and intra-religious dialogue are processes that comprise an open and respectful exchange, especially within societies, between individuals or representatives of groups, organizations or communities with different backgrounds.

The United Nations system and Member States can play important encouraging, supporting and facilitating roles in that respect. Religion should therefore not be institutionalized in the framework of the United Nations. In addition, States should respect the prerogative of religious leaders, religious communities and individuals in matters of religion and belief, and not try to interfere with those prerogatives. Accordingly, the EU reads paragraph 11 not as an endorsement of Governments to assess or value religious convictions or norms. States must judge any action or comportment only on the basis of national law consistent with international human rights standards.

Moreover, contrary to the image presented by the resolution, we do not believe that individuals can be categorized exclusively on the basis of their religion or belief. Religion may indeed constitute part of the multiple identities of an individual, but it is important that the diversity of identities be reflected in global dialogue efforts as a whole. Inter- and intra-religious dialogues are, in this sense, two of the various dimensions of dialogue. Accordingly, the image of monolithic religious blocks should be avoided, as the religious diversity within societies and the multiple identities of the individuals that make up those societies should be respected at all times.

We regret that the main sponsors of the resolution were not prepared to explicitly integrate those basic elements for genuine dialogue in the text of the resolution. The member States of the European Union have joined the consensus on the resolution with the understanding that they are implied. We hope that elements that take those concerns into account will be included in future resolutions.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): We have heard the only speaker in explanation of position.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 15.

Agenda item 70 (continued)**Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance****(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations****Draft resolution (A/66/L.33)**

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Members will recall that the Assembly held a debate on agenda item 70 and its sub-items (a) to (c) jointly with agenda item 71, entitled “Assistance to survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, particularly orphans, widows and victims of sexual violence”, at its 85th and 86th plenary meetings, on 14 and 15 December 2011.

Members will also recall that, under sub-item (a) of agenda item 70, the Assembly adopted resolution 66/9 at its 58th plenary meeting, on 11 November 2011, and resolution 66/119 at its 86th plenary meeting, on 15 December 2011.

I give the floor to the representative of Argentina, to introduce draft resolution A/66/L.33.

Mr. Cesa (Argentina): I am honoured to address the Assembly on behalf of the Group of 77 and China to introduce the draft resolution entitled “International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development”, contained in document A/66/L.33. I am further honoured to thank the delegations of Australia, Croatia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine for having joined as sponsors of the draft resolution.

The Group of 77 and China believes that the transition from relief to development is an important juncture at which disaster can be transformed into opportunities for sustainable development. The draft resolution is therefore aimed at mainstreaming a comprehensive approach to humanitarian assistance that promotes a better articulation of humanitarian and development efforts in the fields of disaster risk reduction and disaster recovery.

This year, through four rounds of intense negotiations, we agreed to enhance the draft resolution by improving the language on the impact of global challenges and climate change, and to bring into the text new elements, as reflected in the new language

on the civilian character of humanitarian assistance, on the guiding principles on internal displacement, on early action on early warning information, on the application of a multi-hazard approach to preparedness, on the potential of new technologies to improve the effectiveness and accountability of humanitarian response, and on the participation of development actors in the strategic planning of efforts in disaster preparedness, resilience-building and recovery.

In closing, I want to thank all delegations for their constructive engagement in the negotiations, as well as Mr. John Mosoti of Kenya for his skilful coordination of the draft resolution on behalf of the Group. As in past years, the Group of 77 and China looks forward to the adoption of the draft resolution by consensus.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/66/L.33, entitled “International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development”. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/66/L.33?

Draft resolution A/66/L.33 was adopted (resolution 66/227).

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 70.

Agenda item 71 (continued)**Assistance to survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, particularly orphans, widows and victims of sexual violence****Draft resolution (A/66/L.31)**

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Members will recall that the Assembly held a debate on agenda item 71, jointly with agenda item 70, “Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance”, at its 85th and 86th plenary meetings, on 14 and 15 December 2011.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/66/L.31.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft

resolution and in addition to those countries listed in document A/66/L.33, the following Member States have also become sponsors of A/66/L.31: Australia, Canada, Croatia, Finland, France, Israel, Japan, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Slovenia and the United States of America.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/66/L.31?

Draft resolution A/66/L.31 was adopted (resolution 66/228).

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 71?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 115 (continued)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(g) Appointment of members of the Joint Inspection Unit

Note by the President of the General Assembly (A/66/621)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Members have before them a note by the President of the General Assembly contained in document A/66/621. As indicated in that document, as a result of the resignation of Mr. Enrique Román-Morey (Peru), the General Assembly is required, during its current session, to appoint a person to serve as a member of the Joint Inspection Unit for a full term of office beginning on 1 January 2012 and expiring on 31 December 2016.

In accordance with the procedures described in article 3, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, and having consulted the regional group concerned, I have requested Honduras to propose a candidate to replace Mr. Román-Morey. In accordance with resolution 59/267 of 23 December 2004, the candidate should have experience in at least one of the fields as follows: oversight, audit, inspection, investigation, evaluation, finance, project evaluation, programme evaluation, human resources management, management, public administration, monitoring and/or programme performance, as well as knowledge of the United Nations system and its role in international relations.

As also indicated in document A/66/621, as a result of the consultations held in accordance with article 3, paragraph 2, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, including consultations with the President of the Economic and Social Council and with the Secretary-General in his capacity as Chairman of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, I submit to the Assembly the candidature of Mr. Jorge Flores Callejas (Honduras) for appointment as a member of the Joint Inspection Unit for a five-year term of office beginning 1 January 2012 and expiring 31 December 2016.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to appoint the candidate?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (g) of agenda item 115.

Statement by the President

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The main part of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly now draws to a close. At this important moment, as I speak, the members of the Fifth Committee are working diligently and tirelessly, engaged in negotiations on issues of critical importance to the Organization, including the budget for the biennium 2012-2013. The negotiations process on the biennium budget has been particularly challenging this year in the wake of global financial challenges. I wish to commend the constructive efforts of all delegations and the wise stewardship of the Chair of the Fifth Committee and his Bureau.

Having just met with the Chair of the Fifth Committee, I am fully confident that the Committee will reach consensus on the entirety of its agenda, including the biennium budget, by this evening at the latest. Before the General Assembly ends the main part of its work for the sixty-sixth session, I would like to take this opportunity to share with Member States a few observations on the achievements we have made in our work so far.

Permit me, at the outset, to express my sincere gratitude to all delegations. Their constructive spirit, dedication and hard work have been invaluable to the success we have achieved. By the same token, I would like to thank the Vice-Presidents who have assisted me throughout this session. I am also grateful to the Chairs

of the Main Committees and other subsidiary bodies, and their Bureaux, for their leadership and commitment.

We should not forget that I have appointed a number of facilitators to support the implementation of various General Assembly mandates in the course of this session. I would remind delegations that the facilitators are from among their ranks — the facilitators are their peers — and I encourage delegations to lend the facilitators their support and extend flexibility to them.

As always, our work would not have been possible without the excellent support we receive from the Secretariat, led by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his Under-Secretaries-General, in particular Mr. Shaaban Shaaban. I also wish to thank the Secretariat staff, including the interpretation services staff and their directors, for the attention, professionalism and long hours they have put into making this session run smoothly and seamlessly.

For my part, I began this session in September by stating that the world is facing unprecedented challenges, be they environmental, economic, social or political. The demands of people around the world for good governance and prosperity are stronger and louder than ever before.

I also remarked that our actions today will define our place in this decisive moment in history. I called upon each and every participant to work together to build a truly united global partnership, so that we could move the Assembly's agenda forward this year. I firmly believe that members have risen to the challenge, showing their full capabilities. The Assembly has acted in concert and harmony on many of the major issues of our time and so far has adopted around 300 resolutions and decisions.

With regard to Libya, the Assembly restored the legitimate representation of the Libyan people, and the international community is now responding to the aspirations of a new, free Libya. As members are well aware, I myself made a joint visit to Libya with the Secretary-General on 2 November to demonstrate the strong support of the United Nations for the Libyans as they embark on their critical journey of reconciliation, democracy and reconstruction.

On Syria, the General Assembly expressed its concern over the ongoing developments in that country. On 22 November, the Third Committee adopted a resolution condemning the systematic human rights

violations committed by the Syrian authorities and calling upon them to implement the League of Arab States Plan of Action in its entirety. To keep the entire membership informed, I immediately transmitted from the President of the Human Rights Council to the Assembly the report of the independent international commission of inquiry, as well as the report of the Human Rights Council from its special session of 2 December. I hope that the killing and violence in Syria will come to an immediate end in response to the calls of the international community.

The issue of Palestine has been particularly central at this session. We witnessed here in New York a historic development when the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, transmitted Palestine's application for membership of the United Nations to the Secretary-General on 23 September.

On 29 November, numerous Member States and I myself reaffirmed our solidarity with the Palestinian people. A number of important resolutions on Palestine were examined by several Committees and adopted once again this year. It is my conviction that the General Assembly should continue to work collectively for the attainment of a just and comprehensive negotiated peace settlement in the Middle East. In addition, I would also note that the Israeli construction of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory and the occupied Syrian Golan is of particular concern. I urge the Government of Israel to freeze all settlement activity, which contravenes international law and the Road Map.

In keeping with the four pillars that I outlined for our focus at this session, I have made enormous efforts and progress is still under way. In this connection, I would like to highlight some particularly notable achievements.

The first pillar, "The peaceful settlement of disputes", reflects my firm belief in the role of mediation to resolve conflicts. Encouraged by the growing need for mediation, I suggested the theme of "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes" for the general debate of the Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. I am grateful to world leaders for addressing this subject by sharing their perspectives and experiences and by making specific suggestions.

To assist in moving that issue forward, on 9 November I organized a fruitful dialogue under the theme "United Nations mediation: experiences and

reflections from the field”. I invite all Member States and partners to consider the summary of the proceedings of this event and to benefit from the valuable lessons shared there. That event was a first step, to be followed by others.

In a related context, I addressed the fourth Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations on 11 December and reiterated the need for youth participation in efforts to advance cross-cultural understanding and sustainable development. As a follow-up to the Doha forum, I will organize in March 2012 an interactive debate on fostering cross-cultural understanding for building peaceful and inclusive societies. Special attention will be paid to the role of youth.

Reaffirming its commitment to the follow-up on the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, the General Assembly adopted by consensus resolution 66/116, emphasizing the need for their full and effective implementation. I call on Governments, the Secretary-General and civil society to actively implement those two important instruments, thereby demonstrating international commitment to the promotion of tolerance and non-violence.

With regard to my second pillar, “United Nations reform and revitalization”, the formal debate on revitalizing the work of the General Assembly was held on 1 December (see A/66/PV.70). At that debate, the membership reflected its desire for and commitment to a strengthened, responsive and effective General Assembly.

In the same context, Member States considered the related question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters on 8 November (see A/66/PV.51 and A/66/PV.52). On 14 November, I addressed a workshop on the reform of the Security Council in Tokyo. The workshop was followed on 28 November by the first meeting in the eighth round of the intergovernmental negotiations conducted under my auspices.

I encourage Member States to continue to actively participate in those negotiations. That, I hope, will help pave the way forward, based on the collective will of the Member States. In maintaining my attention to this subject, I am organizing a retreat on Security Council reform, which is scheduled for early next year and is intended to consolidate as much as possible the various positions on this important issue.

Under my third pillar, “Improving humanitarian prevention and response”, there is no doubt that a consolidation of efforts is required to address more frequent and severe natural disasters, such as we have recently seen, for example, in Haiti, Pakistan, Japan, Turkey, Thailand, and, just this past weekend, in the Philippines. In that respect, I plan to organize a thematic debate on disaster prevention and response in the spring of 2012.

The painful situation in Somalia is, of course, at the forefront of our minds and hearts. Urgent support is needed in Somalia to protect starving populations who are facing indescribable humanitarian disaster. As members are aware, I undertook a joint visit to Somalia with the Secretary-General on 9 December. The visit reaffirmed that the United Nations and the international community stand steadfastly behind the people of Somalia in the tremendous challenges they face. I reiterated in my meeting with Somali Government officials that the implementation of the road map adopted in September is the way forward.

Great strides have been made under my fourth pillar, “Sustainable development and global prosperity”. In September, the first ever High-level Meeting on desertification was held. It was followed in October, in the Republic of Korea, by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, which I addressed and where I presented the summary of the High-level Meeting. At both events, world leaders stressed that desertification is harming not only people but also development and our future, and that addressing it is an issue of high priority.

In the lead-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in Rio next June, much work has been done by the Second Committee and the Preparatory Committee. On 17 and 18 December, I convened a retreat on paving the way for a successful Rio+20 to encourage broader agreement on the Conference’s outcome. We have also held a number of meetings and briefings on sustainable development. In Durban, Member States agreed to work towards a new global treaty. Member States also participated in the second dialogue between the General Assembly and the Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Global Sustainability, in the briefing on sustainable energy for all, and in an informal interactive briefing in preparation for consideration of the Secretary-General’s annual

report on accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals post-2015.

Turning to macroeconomic issues, given the General Assembly's pre-eminence as the legitimate centre of global decision-making, I convened pre- and post-Group of Twenty summit briefings. I encouraged all major groups to cooperate in addressing the challenges of the international economic and financial system. The Assembly also held its fifth High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development. At the Global South-South Development Expo in Rome, I reiterated my conviction that South-South and triangular cooperation, backed by adequate funding, are key tools for tackling the development challenges of our time.

In addition to work under those four pillars, significant progress was made in other areas as well. Disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament, remains a top priority on this session's agenda. The revitalization of the disarmament machinery, including the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, remains one of the key requirements for advancing that goal. At this session, First Committee delegations had a very intensive and constructive exchange on those topics. Accordingly, I intend to visit and address the Conference on Disarmament in January, with a strong supportive message promoting positive action aimed at revitalizing the Conference.

The political will expressed at the High-level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases in September was a major breakthrough by the international community in protecting the world's most vulnerable populations. I call on all partners to work closely with the World Health Organization to ensure the implementation of the Political Declaration (resolution 66/2), and I stand ready to support the membership in any way I can.

At the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the Political Declaration (resolution 66/144), adopted by consensus, reaffirmed our collective commitment to preventing, combating and eradicating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. In adopting resolution 66/10, we welcomed the recent establishment of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre at United Nations Headquarters. I encourage all Member States to collaborate with the Centre in contributing to the

implementation of its activities in support of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

We also marked an historic milestone in human development — we are now 7 billion people strong. Furthermore, at this session, in the context of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers on 5 December, we celebrated the contribution of millions of men and women who selflessly dedicate their time, knowledge and energy to support the goals of the United Nations and to promote a better world.

The United Nations family has suffered tragic losses in the recent past. During our memorial service on 21 November, we gathered at Headquarters to pay tribute to and honour the memory of 197 brave and beloved friends and colleagues. I underscore again that the safety and security of United Nations personnel, civilian and uniformed, must be a top priority for us all.

As I have said from the beginning, I believe strongly in the value of partnership. In keeping with my commitment to expanding and strengthening our global partnership, in October I held an interactive dialogue and lively discussion with members of civil society and the private sector. Going forward, much work remains to be done. I will soon communicate directly to the missions the informal activities I intend to organize in 2012. I will also work closely with Member States in preparation for the high-level meetings of the sixty-seventh session, including the high-level event on the rule of law, and any other events that may arise. In carrying out those endeavours, I look forward to working with all delegations and to making even greater strides next year.

As members of the chief deliberative and policymaking organ of the United Nations — not to mention of the most representative and universal body in the world, as well as the birthplace of international law — we have a shared responsibility to make peace and prosperity a reality for all.

I thank members for their cooperation and extend to them my best wishes for a happy, healthy and peaceful New Year.

The Fifth Committee has not yet completed its work. The General Assembly will reconvene once the Committee has done so.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.