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Sixty-ninth session

Official Records

**18**<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting  
Monday, 29 September 2014, 3 p.m.  
New York

*President:* Mr. Kutesa ..... (Uganda)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

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

## Agenda item 8 (continued)

### General debate

**The Acting President:** I now call on His Excellency Mr. Djibrill Ypènè Bassolé, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Burkina Faso.

**Mr. Bassolé (Burkina Faso)** (*spoke in French*): Every year, the General Assembly gives us the opportunity to get together to discuss our concerns in the various parts of the world. Here we are, meeting again to evaluate what has been accomplished and to consider new solutions to the many challenges confronting our shared responsibility. And Burkina Faso is committed, as always, to participating in this important get-together, the symbol of international solidarity.

I would like to express our gratitude to President Kutesa's predecessor, Ambassador John Ashe, for his positive record during his tenure. I also heartily congratulate the President on his election, and I am confident that his wealth of experience with international and development issues will enable him to effectively guide our work on the post-2015 development agenda, in order to formulate an ambitious new framework for development aimed at bringing our peoples growth, fairness and a better life.

I would also like to pay tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his thoughtful focus on peace and social and economic development around the world, especially in Africa. In that regard, I welcome his initiative in holding last week's Climate Summit in New York, aimed at persuading Heads of State and Government and representatives of local authorities, the private sector and civil society of the urgent and compelling need for them to declare their contributions to the fight against climate change in firm and concrete terms.

Burkina Faso also reiterates its commendation of the joint visit to the Sahel by the Secretary-General, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the President of the World Bank, the President of the African Development Bank and the European Commissioner for Development within the framework of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, which aims to promote security, good governance, development and human rights as factors of peace and stability.

Lastly, Burkina Faso welcomes the Assembly's adoption of the Secretary-General's Ebola initiative (resolution 69/1) and welcomes his appointment of Mr. David Nabarro as Senior United Nations System Coordinator for Ebola Virus Disease and Mr. Anthony Banbury as his Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Mission on Ebola Emergency Response. These steps will certainly help the West African subregion to strengthen its public-health systems in order to eradicate the epidemic, whose spread could permanently compromise the area's social cohesion, development and economic integration. Burkina Faso

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would like to express its sympathy and solidarity with the affected countries, and it reiterates its commitment to participating in the quest for a collective solution that can ensure effective protection for the people and for health personnel, as well as the free movement of people and goods within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Today we can celebrate the progress made in efforts to achieve and maintain peace, as well as to achieve our development goals, despite the fact that there is still work to be done to speed up improvement of our people's living conditions. In Burkina Faso, notwithstanding our unfavourable geographical and climatic conditions and a difficult international economic environment, we are committed, with determination and realism, to building development. In the last few decades, therefore, we have established and implemented strategic development programmes and plans designed to put our country firmly on the road to emergence. Poverty reduction, the empowerment of women and full employment for young people are some of our main objectives. For several years consecutively those efforts have enabled Burkina Faso to record average annual growth rates of around 5 per cent and achieve significant investments in a number of areas that include health, education, agriculture, and water, road and energy infrastructures.

Clearly, development efforts cannot thrive without a stable, peaceful environment. To that end, our President, Mr. Blaise Compaoré, and the Government of Burkina Faso continue to work to entrench a culture of tolerance and peaceful coexistence that seeks to establish, through dialogue and consultations, the essential elements of social cohesion, a strengthened democratic process and respect for individual and collective liberties.

As a member of the Human Rights Council, Burkina Faso continues to set a good example by making the promotion and defence of human rights a major focus of its Government policy on improving the people's welfare. That has been the context for the work of Mrs. Chantal Compaoré, a goodwill ambassador for the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children, whose commitment to dealing with the issue of female genital mutilation is an important contribution to global efforts to protect the rights of women and girls. Burkina Faso welcomes the Human Rights Council's recent adoption of a draft resolution on "Intensifying global efforts and sharing good practices to effectively eliminate female

genital mutilation", submitted by the African Group at Burkina Faso's initiative.

We are following with concern the crises and conflicts that unfortunately continue to plague parts of the world, particularly the African continent. However, under the auspices of ECOWAS, we welcome the significant progress made over recent months in restoring peace and democracy in West Africa, especially in Guinea-Bissau and Mali.

With respect to Mali, ECOWAS mediation brought about the restoration of constitutional order and the holding of free and fair elections throughout the national territory. For the continuation of the peace process in Mali, Burkina Faso welcomes and supports the efforts of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria in the search for a lasting peace solution in accordance with the Preliminary Agreement signed in Ouagadougou on 18 June 2013. That Agreement's ultimate goal is to restore peace, the territorial integrity of Mali and of the ECOWAS region, and cohesion among all Malian communities, in order to achieve the objectives of harmonious development and subregional integration.

In Mali, as elsewhere in the Sahel subregion, armed conflicts are becoming more complex and more radicalized because of the emergence of violent extremism and terrorism closely associated with the criminal economy, which is characterized, inter alia, by trafficking in drugs, weapons and human beings. Those evils challenge us in our shared responsibility in the fight to eradicate them. It is more urgent than ever to work together by focusing on preventive measures and addressing their root causes, namely such predisposing factors as extreme poverty, youth unemployment, and the denial of rights and justice.

Similarly, it is important to strengthen the rapid-response capabilities of our States and international cooperation in the exchange of information, in order to allow our defence forces and security to fight effectively against terrorist threats. In that regard, Burkina Faso expresses its deep gratitude to all partner countries, especially France and the United States of America, whose contribution to the efforts to secure the Sahel is priceless. We would now like to reiterate our total solidarity with and full support for the people and Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which continue to face the unprecedented rise of terrorism and religious intolerance.

Other African countries are also experiencing crisis situations. We are thinking in particular of Somalia, Libya, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Sudan. With respect to the Central African Republic, Burkina Faso salutes the efforts of the international mediator, President Sassou Nguesso, and welcomes the Brazzaville Forum, which concluded with an agreement on the cessation of hostilities. My country supports the Transitional Government, welcomes the effective establishment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and reiterates its readiness to contribute to efforts to restore and keep peace in Central Africa.

In the light of all these crises, Burkina Faso would emphasize the urgent need to restore and maintain an environment of peace and stability in the countries concerned, without which our development and integration efforts will be in vain. In that context, no effort should be spared to protect peacekeepers who risk their lives working to provide security and comfort to civilians. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our strong condemnation of intentional attacks against all United Nations troops in theatres of peacekeeping.

As it always has, Burkina Faso will continue to participate in the collective action of peacekeeping in countries in difficulty, in particular Darfur, Mali, Guinea-Bissau, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Haiti. We express our deep appreciation to partner countries for their various forms of support in terms of training and equipment, which allow Burkinabé troops to accomplish their tasks efficiently wherever they are sent.

With respect to conflict resolution, Burkina Faso advocates dialogue and consultation, which is the basis for Burkina Faso's consistent action when the President of our country is sought after as a mediator or facilitator. Accordingly, I welcome the adoption on 31 July by the Assembly of resolution 68/303 on "Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution". In that regard, my country, a member of the Group of Friends of Mediation, encourages the actions taken under the leadership of Finland and Turkey.

With regard to Western Sahara, Burkina Faso welcomes the Moroccan initiative for advanced autonomy status in Western Sahara, which is a credible

and realistic option for achieving a final solution acceptable to all.

In the Middle East, we condemn the recent escalation of violence which has led to many casualties among civilian populations. Priority should be given to dialogue, and we hope that the unrestricted ceasefire that was signed between Palestinians and Israelis on 26 August 2014, under the auspices of the Arab Republic of Egypt, will lead to the establishment of a definitive peace between the two parties to the conflict. Accordingly, Burkina Faso welcomes the efforts of the international community aimed at creating a Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace, security and mutual respect.

The establishment of international peace and security will be but hollow words as long as the issue of disarmament remains unresolved. Therefore, no sacrifice is too great if together we can achieve a world free of nuclear weapons, a reduction in the risk of the proliferation of conventional weapons, and the entry into force and universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty.

To establish a permanent basis for peace, security and freedom, it is also necessary to create the conditions for sustainable and equitable development for all peoples. That is why my country reaffirms its strong commitment to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. We therefore have a deep interest in the development process under way for the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda, and we urge that special attention be given to vital sectors such as agriculture, renewable energy, industrialization and infrastructure.

Burkina Faso reaffirms its commitment to the ideals of the United Nations based on the principles of peaceful coexistence, dialogue and peaceful settlement of disputes. It is with conviction that we welcome and strongly encourage the rapprochement of views between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China on Taiwan and the dialogue that forms the basis for such an approach. We favour the wider participation of the Republic of China on Taiwan in the specialized agencies of the United Nations.

We salute the spirit of understanding displayed by the international community in allowing the involvement of that country in international organizations in order to enable it to play a broader role on the world stage through its contribution to the achievement of development

goals, particularly in countries like Burkina Faso. Readmitting the Republic of China on Taiwan to our Organization is worth considering. With 23 million inhabitants and a large economy, the Republic of China on Taiwan has established itself as a key player in the international arena in terms of promoting peace and contributing to development efforts.

With regard to Cuba, Burkina Faso reiterates its position in favour of lifting the embargo in order to allow the Cuban people to fit harmoniously into the concert of nations.

Convinced of the irreplaceable role of the United Nations in promoting multilateralism, my country supports the reforms under consideration, in particular those of the Security Council and the General Assembly. Given the nature of the new factors in the threats to international peace and security, it is necessary and equitable that other continents have permanent seats on the Security Council. That is why Burkina Faso endorses the African Common Position in favour of expanding the number of permanent members of the Security Council to take into account the expectations of the African continent.

With everyone's help and moved by a spirit of solidarity and sharing, we can strengthen the role of the United Nations as a genuine instrument of cooperation for peace, security, justice and development.

**The Acting President:** I now call on His Excellency Mr. Hor Namhong, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

**Mr. Hor Namhong (Cambodia):** At the outset, allow me to warmly congratulate Mr. Sam Kutesa of the Republic of Uganda on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I have full confidence that, under his guidance, the sixty-ninth session will proceed to a successful conclusion. I would also like to take the opportunity to extend my great appreciation to Mr. John William Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda for his wise leadership and relentless efforts as President of the sixty-eighth session in guiding us to many outstanding achievements.

In many ways, the world in which we are living is at a critical juncture, and the current picture is rather bleak. The international community remains seriously concerned over recent geopolitical security developments in many parts of the world. The self-declared Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and its

horrendous crimes are menacing peace, security and stability in those countries, which have already been seriously hit by armed conflicts and acts of violence. In Syria, the continued armed hostilities have not only caused the deaths of thousands of innocent people and children, but have also led to millions of refugees. In Africa, some countries have also suffered armed conflicts and violence, which have placed peace and stability at risk in that part of the world. All those armed conflicts and crimes are threatening peace, stability and human security, not only in those regions, but also in the world at large.

To contribute to the peace process in the Middle East and Africa, Cambodia has participated actively in United Nations peacekeeping operations. We have dispatched more than 2,000 peacekeepers to Lebanon, Mali and South Sudan. In November, Cambodia will deploy another detachment of 216 peacekeepers to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic.

While extremism is threatening the world's peace and security, the spread of the Ebola epidemic in Africa has also become one of the worst threats to the world today. It is of critical importance that the international community make concerted efforts to address that global challenge in an effective and timely manner.

With regard to the hostilities between Palestine and Israel, despite the fragile ceasefire recently concluded, the situation remains a serious concern. We call on all parties to make efforts to resume meaningful peace talks in order to reach a viable political solution of two States living peacefully side by side. Cambodia believes that that is the only way to definitively put an end to that long-lasting conflict.

The situation in the eastern part of Europe, in spite of the delicate ceasefire, remains worrisome and its implications could presage a return to the Cold War.

In Asia, the launching of missiles by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has aroused international concern and aggravated the situation in the region. The Six-Party Talks should be resumed in order to explore a possible avenue for peaceful dialogue to bring about a peaceful denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

Climate change is currently an obvious global challenge, as well as a human security issue. The rapid pace of climate change is having devastating effects for both developed and developing countries. The developing countries, dependent mostly on agriculture,

suffer more from the various negative effects of climate change, such as frequent typhoons, storms, floods and droughts. For instance, in 2013, heavy monsoon rains caused extensive flooding across Cambodia, claimed 168 lives, caused \$1 billion in damages and affected 1.8 million people. Even this year, 12 out of the 25 provinces and various cities of Cambodia have suffered on account of floods, killing 45 people and afflicting almost 100,000 families.

According to a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the global warming caused by the increase in greenhouse gases is generated by humankind's use of fossil fuels. There is no doubt that the industrialized countries, which consume most of the world's fossil fuels, emit the largest amount of greenhouse gas, while the developing countries, which produce only small amounts of such gases, are the main victims of climate change. It is therefore imperative that the international community provide further impetus to revitalize and prioritize actions to address climate change based on the United Nations principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

With that concept in mind and while applauding the fruitful outcome of the recent United Nations Climate Summit, held on 23 September in New York, Cambodia hopes that the twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Paris in December 2015, will bring about concrete measures to reach a new global agreement with legal force applicable to all parties under the Framework Convention.

In line with the United Nations principles for sustainable development and in order to mitigate the threat of climate change, Cambodia has adopted its national strategic plan on green development for 2013-2030, which aims at achieving economic and social development in a sustainable manner, while at the same time protecting the environment, through the efficient use of raw materials and natural resources, clean development and green preservation. Cambodia has also adopted several legal instruments for green growth development, including the memorandum of understanding on green growth cooperation between Cambodia and South Korea's Global Green Growth Institute and the National Council on Green Growth.

South-East Asia, which is highly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change, established the Climate Change Initiative of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2009 as a

consultative body to further increase the region's capacity in both mitigation and adaptation efforts. As a member of ASEAN, Cambodia is fully engaged in the implementation of that ASEAN initiative through the ASEAN Working Group on Climate Change and the ASEAN Action Plan on Joint Response to Climate Change, with the goal of enhancing closer and deeper regional and international cooperation on climate change.

Next year marks the deadline of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). While some MDG targets have been achieved, we have to acknowledge that much more effort is needed to reach the set goals of the MDGs, as progress has been uneven and insufficient. Many developing countries have not attained their MDG targets, primarily owing to unfulfilled commitments, lack of resources, insufficient dedication, and food insecurity. The situation was further aggravated by the financial uncertainty in the developed countries, which has had an impact on their commitment to official development assistance. Therefore, bolder and more focused global efforts are needed as we approach the final year to realize the MDGs.

With the aim of realizing the MDGs, Cambodia has adopted its own development targets, known as the Cambodia MDGs, which have been incorporated comprehensively into our National Strategic Development Plan 2014-2018. As a result, substantial progress has been achieved, positioning Cambodia to meet some goals of the MDGs by the end of 2015. Cambodia's target in reducing the poverty rate to 19.5 per cent by 2015 has already been achieved ahead of schedule, as the nation's poverty rate had already fallen to 19 per cent in 2013. As a result, Cambodia received a United Nations Award for cutting hunger in half before the deadline.

In combating HIV/AIDS, Cambodia has made great strides by progressively reducing HIV prevalence to 0.6 per cent in 2013. In order to achieve that indicator, the Cambodian Government has further adopted a getting-to-zero policy, aiming to realize zero new infections, zero AIDS-related deaths and zero discrimination by 2020.

In addition to tracking the Cambodia MDGs achievements, the Royal Government of Cambodia has put forth a Cambodia MDGs acceleration framework with an approach aimed at accelerating progress in achieving the MDGs and other human development goals. The framework could provide the essential

input for the implementation of our National Strategic Development Plan 2014-2018 aimed at completing the remaining MDGs, as well as at setting the stage for the preparation of the post-2015 development agenda.

Cambodia shares the view expressed in the report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, entitled *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development*, to be adopted during the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, that

“a new development agenda should carry forward the spirit of the Millennium Declaration and the best of the MDGs, with a practical focus on things like poverty, hunger, water, sanitation, education and health care”.

Cambodia is of the view that the post-2015 development agenda should be realistic and built upon the lessons learned from the difficulties in the realization of the MDGs; in particular, it should ensure that any process towards a broader development objective is truly balanced and comprehensive.

Next year, 2015, is a crucial year as the United Nations celebrates the seventieth anniversary of its creation and the tenth anniversary of the 2005 World Summit, where world leaders agreed to reform the United Nations to meet the needs of today's geopolitical and global challenges (resolution 60/1). To that end, the General Assembly should be further empowered so that it can play a leading role in strengthening the wider United Nations system. The Security Council, as a body mandated with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, should represent the world's realities today. In sum, we think that more equitable representation in the United Nations organs would assist the Organization in coping with the urgent global challenges.

**The Acting President:** I now call on His Excellency Mr. Murray McCully, Minister for Foreign Affairs of New Zealand.

**Mr. McCully (New Zealand):** It is an honour to address the General Assembly today on behalf of the Prime Minister and Government of New Zealand. Our general election took place in the past week. Our Prime Minister, the Right Honourable John Key, is engaged in forming a Government, and that is why he is unable to be in New York today.

I want to begin by acknowledging the success of the recent third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in Samoa. The success of the Conference was the result of the extraordinary work Samoa put into preparing for the Conference and the ownership of the agenda that was demonstrated by the small island developing States (SIDS). While it is undoubtedly true that small island developing States have placed great value on the opportunity to talk, it is also true that there was an undertone of frustration, born of the fact that too often in the past talk has not been followed by action. I strongly identify with that view. The multilateral world is awash with talk of plans and strategies and funds, while out there in the real world of small island developing States, not enough is happening on the ground. My country, New Zealand, is intent on avoiding that shortcoming, especially in our own region, the Pacific.

Renewable energy featured strongly in the SIDS Conference agenda, as it had at the Secretary-General's 2014 Climate Summit in the past week. Pacific nations spend 10 per cent of their gross domestic product and up to 30 per cent of their entire import bills on importing diesel fuel for electricity generation. Sustainable economic development therefore simply cannot happen in our region without renewable energy.

Significant progress is being achieved, especially since the Pacific Energy Summit 2013 that we co-hosted with the European Union in Auckland in March 2013, at which \$635 million in funding was committed for over 50 projects. The Tokelau Islands have moved from 100 per cent dependence on fossil fuels to 93 per cent renewable. During the SIDS Conference itself, we opened a 2.2-megawatt plant, a solar array in Samoa. A year earlier we opened a 1.2-megawatt plant in Tonga. Next month, we will open a 1-megawatt array in Rarotonga. And in the next 12 months, all of the outer islands of Tuvalu and all but one of the outer Cook Islands will be close to 100 per cent renewable.

We are making real progress towards converting our Pacific neighbourhood to renewable energy, bringing significant environmental benefits and greatly enhancing prospects for sustainable economic development. My country has committed over \$100 million to that process. We are not waiting for a new multilateral agreement or a new green fund. We are simply getting ahead with robust partnerships and making it happen.

Another key topic at the SIDS Conference was sustainable fisheries. For our region, that is critically important. The biggest economic asset in the Pacific is its fisheries. In the past year, over \$3.3 billion worth of tuna was harvested from Pacific waters, yet only 14 per cent of that value, about \$460 million, made its way back to Pacific nations. New Zealand has committed over \$70 million over the next five years to advance a comprehensive approach that includes enhanced surveillance, training of monitors, training in commercial fishing practices, research and science initiatives and improving management practices. Our objective is to see the owners of the Pacific tuna resource receive a significantly greater share of the value of that resource, and to ensure that it is sustainably managed for the future.

A key message from the SIDS Conference is the need to share experiences and skills among the SIDS regions. That is starting to happen. Fisheries management is a prime candidate for greater cooperation. We have also commenced a process of interregional cooperation in renewable energy by supporting the development of geothermal energy in the Caribbean and Africa.

While small island developing States are showing real leadership in addressing climate change and shifting to renewable energy, those issues require action on a global scale. We therefore commend the Secretary-General for convening the Climate Summit here in New York last week. We are participating actively in those negotiations and hope they will pave the way for a successful conclusion in Paris next year. We have made an initial commitment to the Green Climate Fund to show our support for the global effort, but we will unashamedly continue to prioritize making real progress with real projects in our own region, which will continue to consume the bulk of our resources.

The other major event that has recently taken place in the Pacific is the election in Fiji. We congratulate the Prime Minister, his party and the people of Fiji on their successful return to democratic rule. Fiji's successful elections are hugely important for the region. I am delighted that following the preliminary report of the multinational observers group, both the Pacific Islands Forum and the Commonwealth have commenced the process of lifting Fiji's suspension. We look forward to rebuilding and strengthening the connections between us. Neither New Zealand nor Fiji can contemplate a future that does not entail close and continuing links with the other. We also welcomed the safe return of the

Fiji peacekeepers who were held hostage in the Golan Heights. That incident again underlined the great challenges and the dangers faced by United Nations peacekeepers and the responsibilities we all have to ensure the safety and security of peacekeeping and other United Nations personnel.

It is as well that we are able to note some bright spots for our region, because the situation in other parts of the world does look bleak.

What happened over the past few months in Gaza was an affront to humanity. No good was done for the cause of Palestine by Hamas firing rockets indiscriminately into Israel. No good was done for peace in the Middle East by Israel pounding Gaza with such intensity and at such cost of civilian lives. We welcome the ceasefire that was agreed after so many false starts and are thankful that so far it endures. We call on all sides not only to keep the guns and rockets silent but to refrain from actions that may destabilize what can only be described as an uneasy peace. In that connection, we express our profound regret at Israel's appropriation of 400 hectares of privately owned Palestinian land near Bethlehem for settlements. That act itself is profoundly unhelpful.

The problems of the Middle East are deep and difficult. They go back to the earliest days of the Organization and beyond. But what happened over the past months in and in relation to Gaza was a modern failure — a failure of leadership, of purpose and of vision. We urge the leaders of Israel and of Palestine, both West Bank and Gaza, to live up to their responsibilities to their peoples and to their positions.

In Syria and Iraq, we see the truly frightening consequences when leadership, both internally and in the Security Council, has failed. Syria has been a weeping sore for over three years. Thousands of Syrians have died, millions have become refugees and all Syrian people have suffered terribly from the multiple conflicts engulfing the country. And now the tragedy of Syria has spilled over into Iraq, which was already wrestling with its own deep-seated problems. Many actors, in both the recent past and over a longer time frame, have had a hand in contributing to the situation we now confront, but now it is time for action.

We need to find a way to contain the madness that is the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, to address the humanitarian tragedy and to help the people of Syria and Iraq craft a better future. By any objective standard,

that is a situation that cries out for Security Council attention, and that is true of both sides of the border. We need the Council members and the Governments concerned to move past the ideological stalemate that has kept the Council largely impotent for the past three years. The challenge we all face in Syria and Iraq is unlike any the United Nations has faced before. The political circumstances in which it is being played out are about as bad as they get. Yet somehow we must find a way of coming together to defeat that shared problem.

Paralysis has also prevailed in the Security Council over Ukraine. The Council has been essentially a bystander as one of its permanent members has undermined the integrity of another Member State. We recognize the difficulties of managing ethnic tensions that straddle borders and the risks of local fires being stoked into wider national and international crises. But with the strong shared histories of cooperation and achievement between Russia and Ukraine, there is no excuse for leaders allowing matters to unravel as they have, to the point where international peace and security may be at risk. Already hundreds of innocent civilians on Flight MH-17 lost their lives through an associated mistake and miscalculation. We welcome the ceasefire agreed earlier this month, which has held, for the most part. We call on all involved to step back, think about what is at stake and start rebuilding the trust essential to finding a lasting solution.

Events in the Middle East and Ukraine have dominated the headlines in recent months and have diverted attention from the serious situations that continue to play out in Africa, particularly in Libya, Mali, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The United Nations is directly involved in those crises, and they continue to challenge the capacity of the Organization and of the African Union to respond to the sheer scale of human suffering and to the continuing need for external assistance to restore and keep the peace, keep civilian populations safe and deliver humanitarian assistance. Those issues, no less than those in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, will continue to require constant attention from the Security Council and the coordinated efforts of the broader United Nations family. They show that for all its failings and structural inequalities, the Council still has a vital role to play in maintaining international peace and security.

But there is one lesson that we must learn from all those recent crises — the United Nations must fundamentally improve its performance in preventing conflict. Once fighting is in full spate, the options for peace disappear. Prevention is critical, not just in new conflicts, but also in the cases on the agenda where conflict has been frozen or where peacebuilding has not really taken hold.

We are deeply troubled by the unprecedented scale of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. We recognize the huge challenges it poses to the economies and the political and security cohesion in the region. We have contributed and will continue to contribute to the humanitarian work under way, and on the formation of a new Government, we will look at further practical steps to support the international effort.

In 18 days' time, the United Nations membership will decide who will be on the Security Council for the next two-year term. New Zealand has been a candidate for that position since 2004. It has been 20 years since we were last on the Council. It has been a long and demanding campaign, and it will continue right up to the elections on 16 October. With tough competitors, such as our good friends Spain and Turkey, that has to be the case. The campaign has been a great opportunity for us to engage with nations around the world. We greatly value the new relationships we have forged and the enhanced character of existing relationships. Whatever the outcome, we are determined to maintain them.

In the past, New Zealand has demonstrated that as a member of the Council it acts strongly, effectively and independently. It champions the rights of small States and for the voices of all to be heard. In short, as my Prime Minister said from this rostrum last year, there is no point in joining the Council simply to make up the numbers. Sometimes one has to speak up and shine a light on what is going on, or not going on, even when it is embarrassing or inconvenient to others to do so.

Above all, I can assure the Assembly that if we are elected, New Zealand will be a credible, positive influence on the Security Council. At our core, New Zealand is an optimistic country and New Zealanders are an optimistic people. We believe that things can be better than they are and are prepared, as a people, to work hard to achieve that. Despite the many challenges on the international agenda, my hope is that the membership of the United Nations will give us an

opportunity to prove that by serving on the Security Council from next year.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. K. Shanmugam, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore.

**Mr. Shanmugam (Singapore):** I wish to convey our congratulations to Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. We wish him success in the coming year.

We are not living in the worst of times, but they are not the best of times either. Standards of living are far higher for more of the human race than ever before. But we face global crises of several types: internal and cross-border conflicts, epidemics, disasters both natural and man-made, climate change and international crime. We are facing grave threats from terrorism and extremism. The latest manifestation is the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS). It is brutal and cruel and a travesty of all that religion stands for. Its unspeakable acts of cruelty, including abductions and brutal murders of civilians, constitute crimes against humanity. Singapore condemns those terrorist actions in the strongest possible terms. ISIS will continue to target those who do not conform to its extremist agenda.

The threat of such terrorism and radical ideology is not confined to the Middle East. It affects the whole world. An estimated 15,000 foreigners from at least 80 countries, including from South-East Asia, have travelled to Syria and Iraq to fight. That fact that ISIS can attract so many foreign fighters highlights the need for a comprehensive strategy to counter them. In addition to military and intelligence efforts, we must also combat the radical ideology used to recruit foreign fighters, which fuels their extremist agenda.

Singapore firmly supports all international and regional cooperation efforts. We welcome the strong leadership of the United States, in particular in the formation of the international coalition to combat the ISIS threat. We also welcome the Jeddah Declaration by Arab countries to stand united against ISIS. Security Council resolution 2178 (2014), on foreign terrorist fighters, which Singapore co-sponsored, is an important step to combat global terrorism and will be critical to cutting off financial and material support for ISIS and preventing the movement of foreign terrorist fighters. No country can insulate itself from those problems. We need to combat them at all levels. Fair economic

development, good governance and political and social stability will be critical in increasing a country's resilience against those threats.

The President's choice of the theme "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda" for this year's session and his emphasis on a comprehensive, action-oriented post-2015 development agenda are particularly timely. Singapore commends the work of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and looks forward to the Secretary-General's report of its recommendations.

We also welcome the contributions of major forums, such as the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS), recently held in Samoa. Singapore had the privilege of co-chairing the preparatory committee for that forum with New Zealand. It is important that the views and concerns of small States be properly factored into the post-2015 development agenda. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were successful due to the pragmatic, outcome-based and quantifiable approach to the Targets. We hope that same approach will be taken in respect of the post-2015 development agenda. Those MDGs that were not fully achieved should be included as an intrinsic part of the post-2015 agenda.

Regarding the principles for sustainable development, Singapore is participating actively in the discussions for the post-2015 period, focusing on those areas where we can contribute — key principles that were critical to our development path and might be relevant to other developing countries.

First is the principle of honest and competent government. Corruption is a drag on development and an intrinsic source of social instability. Fighting it needs political will, strong leadership and unceasing vigilance from the whole society.

Secondly, rule of law is integral to sustainable development. Governments need sound and effective institutions. Those institutions, including the civil service, the judiciary and law enforcement agencies, must be built on core principles of equal justice and meritocracy, regardless of ethnicity, religion or gender. Social capital — the trust that people have in one another, their leaders and the system — is as necessary to sustainable development as financial capital.

The third principle is that economic and social policy must be pragmatic, not dogmatic. Singapore does not advocate any standard model of government

or economic structure. The only model is to work with what you have within the context of a country's culture and resources, prudently and for the benefit of the people. Policies have to be judged by their outcomes, not according to ideological content. Both consistent attention and responsive implementation are necessary to achieve long-term goals. We will put those ideas forward during the discussion.

Since the urban centres of small States tend to have disproportionately large social, political and economic weight in the country, a dysfunctional urban centre can have a much greater negative effect on a small country than on a big one. Today, slightly more than half of the world's population live in cities. By 2050, that will go up to 70 per cent. Most of that growth will take place in Africa, Asia and Latin America. As noted on page 17 of the report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, cities are where the battle for sustainable development will be won or lost. Mismanaged urbanization can intensify inequalities. Asia is already home to 61 per cent of the world's slum dwellers, and Africa is home to about 26 per cent. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has predicted that by 2030, 2 billion people could live in urban poverty. They will be at risk from overcrowding, epidemics, crime and pollution.

Yet, urbanization has in fact been significant in the progress towards achievement of the MDGs, especially in reducing poverty. Successful cities bring up their rural hinterlands. Today, cities account for over 80 per cent of global gross domestic product. The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288, annex) itself recognizes that well-planned cities promote economically, socially and environmentally sustainable societies. They are engines for growth and are more resource-efficient than rural societies.

*Mr. Gata Mavita wa Lufuta (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

The challenge is therefore really to manage urbanization well. Singapore has been contributing to the discussions on sustainable urbanization as co-chair of the Group of Friends on Sustainable Cities. Singapore's Centre for Liveable Cities was established in 2008 to distil, create and share knowledge on sustainable cities. It has developed a Liveability Framework as a tool to analyse what a sustainable city would actually entail

and help countries define the policies they need to achieve that goal. To us, a sustainable city means having a competitive economy, environmental sustainability and a high quality of life for all inhabitants, rich and poor alike. We hope that the Liveability Framework can be incorporated as part of discussions for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development — Habitat III — in 2016.

In the area of water and sanitation, last year Singapore submitted resolution 67/291 to the General Assembly to designate 19 November as World Toilet Day in the context of Sanitation for All. This year, we will observe that Day together with relevant United Nations agencies and civil society organizations by focusing on the serious problems faced by women and girls who lack basic sanitation access. That issue needs greater attention than it has received so far.

What is the way forward? Once the post-2015 development agenda has been agreed, countries will need to consider implementation. South-South, North-South and triangular cooperation in capacity-building and sharing experiences are important parts of the way forward. In our early years, Singapore benefited from the expert advice of specialized agencies, international organizations and developed countries. In 1992, we set up the Singapore Cooperation Programme to share our development experience, the successes and the failures alike, with other developing countries. The Programme is designed to build capacity in fields that could be of interest to countries, in the hope that that will smooth their developmental path. Recently, at the third Small Island Developing States Conference in Samoa, Singapore launched a dedicated package for SIDS.

Singapore supports the universal and inclusive approach to the post-2015 development agenda. Each society must draw its own lessons from its own experiences and find solutions according to its national circumstances. Naturally, there will be differences of opinion, but we must not lose sight of the ultimate goal of ending extreme poverty in our lifetimes. With the MDGs, we managed to halve the number of people living below the poverty line, and there is real hope that we can do even better.

Let us all work together to ensure that by the seventieth anniversary of the inception of the United Nations, in 2015, we can unite around a clear vision of how to provide our future generations the future we want.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Charles Flanagan, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland.

**Mr. Flanagan** (Ireland): It is my great honour to represent Ireland today at the General Assembly. Regrettably, this gathering comes at a dangerous time in global history. Delegates here represent a world facing many challenges, but they are challenges that can be tackled with unity of purpose and surmounted through strong leadership, especially from this Organization, the United Nations. Indeed, the United Nations must be at the vanguard of efforts to eradicate terrorism where it flourishes, to preserve the sovereignty of States where it is threatened and to promote and protect peace and human rights where those essential components of human dignity and human happiness are lacking.

In my address this afternoon, I will focus on the conflicts that beset the Middle East and Eastern Europe, and I will do so in a way that reflects the foreign policy tenets of my country: first, dialogue and compromise as the solution to intractable conflicts between peoples; secondly, respect for the rule of law and solidarity within the international community when a democratic State is threatened; thirdly, a strong commitment to peacekeeping while preserving Irish military neutrality; fourthly, the critical importance of development; and last but not least, the promotion of human rights, in particular the rights of minorities and of women and girls in this troubled world.

I will begin by outlining some thoughts on the importance of reform of the United Nations and its Security Council. We see a world beset by warfare and terror on many fronts. Heart-rending reports of escalating casualty and refugee numbers, the slaughter of innocents, the suffering of children and vulnerable adults in Iraq, Syria, Gaza, Ukraine and many other conflicts dominate the news on our airwaves and television news and on the Internet. The people we represent in the Assembly rightly expect the United Nations to be a source of action. Regrettably, too often, they see an institution that seems hamstrung and stymied in situations where it needs to be both decisive and strong.

It is not that we lack the necessary instruments; the many achievements of this great Organization amply demonstrate its capacity to act decisively and effectively when the necessary political will is forthcoming. For the United Nations to meet the manifold, complex and grave challenges that are dominating this year's

session of the Assembly, the Organization must review its working methods and priorities. Resources must be directed to the areas of greatest need and used with the utmost efficiency.

In particular, we must see new approaches to the work of the Security Council — something Ireland and its partners in the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group have been actively promoting. While Ireland would like to see the veto power in the Council ultimately abolished, we strongly welcome the initiative of France, supported by Mexico, to better regulate the use of that power by the Council's permanent members. Moreover, Ireland supports an increase in the membership of the Security Council to more closely reflect regional balances as well as the current realities of population and economic weight in the world.

The challenge of achieving peace in the Middle East remains as great as ever. As Member States, we must do more to assist the United Nations in its vital life-saving efforts in Syria and the many other humanitarian challenges confronting the broader region. I want to pay particular tribute here to the heroic role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and its brave and dedicated staff in Gaza, 11 of whom tragically lost their lives during the recent horrific conflict. We are all indebted to Pierre Krähenbühl and his colleagues for providing an indispensable lifeline to the people of Gaza over many years.

Our goal must be to ensure that there is no return to the recurrent cycles of violence that we have witnessed in Gaza and southern Israel on three occasions now, most devastatingly during July and August. Each cycle of violence appears to harden attitudes on both sides of the conflict, and yet, ultimately, no one can want peace more than those most directly affected by its absence.

It is widely acknowledged that the achievement of a lasting peace requires that the underlying issues that gave rise to the most recent bout of violence must be definitively addressed. The closures and restrictions that have applied to Gaza for seven long years now must be brought to an end. Equally, there must be assurances for all Israelis and Palestinians that they will not be subjected to indiscriminate violence, whether that violence comes in the form of rocket attacks targeting Israel or retaliatory strikes with devastating consequences for Gaza and its people.

It is also now long past time for the attainment of a comprehensive peace between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. None of us is under any illusions about the difficult and painful compromises that will be involved. In essence, however, I believe that most Israelis and Palestinians recognize that the only true basis for peace and security between them lies in the realization of a just, negotiated two-State solution. It remains vital that all actions or policies that impede that prospect be avoided.

While there is at least a clear vision of the difficult compromises necessary to achieve a lasting peace between the peoples of Israel and Palestine, the situation in neighbouring Syria appears at the moment to present an even greater challenge. Over the past three and a half years, almost 200,000 people have lost their lives at the hands of the State and militant groups in that vicious conflict. Ultimately, the solution to Syria's civil war is not a military one. I strenuously urge all in the international community to fully support Special Envoy De Mistura in his efforts to promote a political settlement based on the principles of the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012. The flagrant violation of international law by all sides in the Syrian conflict must be confronted and referred to the International Criminal Court. All sides, particularly the Al-Assad regime, must comply with their obligations under Security Council resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2139 (2014), and put an end to their obstruction of vital humanitarian efforts and to obscenities such as besieging communities and attempting to starve them into submission.

The growth of the extremism we are now witnessing across the region is a cause for significant concern and one that I know is shared by everyone in the Assembly. The bloodlust and inhumanity that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) is displaying in those countries has shocked and appalled all civilized people. The destruction and displacement of the ancient Christian communities of northern Iraq has been harrowing to witness. The gratuitous and almost casual approach to that most gruesome form of murder, beheading; the barbaric sexual violence perpetrated against women and girls; the base corruptness of putting military weapons in the hands of children; the scapegoating of people based on their ethnicity or religion, whether Christian, Yazidi, Kurdish, Sunni, Shia or Jewish — all of that, taken together, harks back to a mentality and a culture we thought had long been consigned to the dustbin of history. The rise of ISIS, the continued activities of Al-Qaida and the growing strength of Boko Haram

make it clear that there is no room for complacency in the international community when it comes to the growth of extremism. We must unite and mobilize to confront this threat, and we must do so with a real sense of urgency.

Ukraine is the most dangerous political crisis to occur in Europe for several decades. The situation there has profound implications for the viability and future of an international system that upholds the rule of law. The actions of the Russian Federation, first in Crimea and then in eastern Ukraine, clearly contravene a wide range of international agreements. We should remember first and foremost the deplorable violence that has been inflicted on innocent civilians in Ukraine over many months and the serious humanitarian crisis that has ensued. There can be no military solution to this crisis. We firmly support the path of diplomatic dialogue and welcome President Poroshenko's peace plan. We were encouraged by the Minsk agreement reached earlier this month within the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group. A sustainable political solution must be based on the principle of respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and with clear guarantees on border security, the disarmament of all illegal groups and the withdrawal of foreign forces.

Ireland has a proud tradition of involvement in United Nations peacekeeping missions all over the world, beginning in 1958. Our troops have made an important contribution to international peace and stability; 82 of them have made the ultimate sacrifice. I take this opportunity to recall and salute all those who have fallen in United Nations peacekeeping operations since we met for the general debate a year ago. Today, some 370 Irish men and women are serving on United Nations peacekeeping missions, the majority in the Middle East. The environment in which they serve has become increasingly complex and challenging. As it is for the Department for Peacekeeping Operations, the safety and security of our personnel is a very high priority for us, and I warmly welcome the Secretary-General's announcement that there will be a review of United Nations peacekeeping. That should ensure that the Organization retains the capacity to promote peace and stability internationally.

The Assembly can rest assured that Irish men and women will continue to wear the blue beret with pride in service of the United Nations and in pursuit of a better world. Last week, at the high-level meeting on peacekeeping hosted by the Secretary-General and

Vice-President Biden of the United States, I was pleased to announce an initiative by my Government to deliver a new programme for training African peacekeepers that will include a specific focus on areas such as the protection of civilians, gender sensitivity, human rights, leadership training and logistics.

The full and equal participation of women is another essential component in building peaceful, stable societies. Women are key agents of change and must be full protagonists in our ongoing global story. Political will is a crucial element in driving women's empowerment and gender equality going forward. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) was a milestone in recognizing that reality, and subsequent resolutions, most recently resolution 2122 (2013), demonstrate our resolve to pursue the goal of women's full and empowered participation in the political process. The current agenda of the United Nations includes a welcome and necessary increase in the focus on tackling the scourge of sexual violence in armed conflict.

But we must translate our global commitment into concrete action. Achieving real gender equality requires a commitment from all of us here, men and women. It is a commitment that Ireland is proud to have made, and next January we launch our second national action plan on women, peace and security. It is just part of our ongoing commitment to ensuring that women and girls can reach their full potential, live a life free from fear and fully take their place at the decision-making table.

The global threat posed by the spread of Ebola in West Africa is a reminder that not all the challenges we face are man-made. Ireland is active in addressing this epidemic in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Security Council resolution 2177 (2014), sponsored by 130 Member States, indicates the seriousness with which the world regards the problem and the need for urgent action on the part of the United Nations.

Next year, 2015, will be a critical one in the fight to end extreme poverty and hunger. We have 15 months to maximize progress under the Millennium Development Goals and a mere 12 in which to negotiate a new framework for international development. That framework must mark an important shift to sustainable development, with clear and ambitious targets that can help to end extreme poverty, hunger and malnutrition in a single generation. Ireland continues to play its part at the United Nations and with our partners on the ground. We have focused sharply on the continuing scandals of

hunger, child stunting and maternal mortality in a world of plenty. I am pleased that last week the Human Rights Council adopted a draft resolution, led by Ireland, on the preventable mortality and morbidity of children under 5. It is indeed deplorable that some 6.6 million children under the age of 5 die annually, mainly from preventable and treatable causes.

Ireland is working with its partners in Africa on the devastating impact of climate change, especially on smallholder agriculture. Last week we joined the Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture. On Thursday, I co-hosted a meeting here at the United Nations in support of the Secretary-General's Zero Hunger Challenge. And days earlier, in Dublin, UNICEF Ireland brought to me the voices of Ireland's young people, calling on us to strengthen our efforts and reminding me, in their words, that "It's about us". Ireland's commitment to a more equal, inclusive and sustainable future for the world's children is demonstrated in practice through our development programme and our work with our partners in sub-Saharan Africa. Despite the extremely difficult economic circumstances of recent years, we are proud that we have stabilized funding for our aid programme. The fight to end poverty and hunger will remain a central tenet of our foreign policy.

Recent events worldwide have demonstrated that human rights and fundamental freedoms continue to be violated and threatened, particularly in times of conflict. In many parts of the world today, brave women and men seek to highlight and address abuses of human rights, and to stand up for those who are oppressed or without a voice. I salute the courage of those human rights defenders and pledge that we in Ireland will continue to work for decisive action, whether in the United Nations or the European Union, in order to support them. As a member of the Human Rights Council, Ireland has sought to highlight the important contribution of civil society to advancing human rights and building democratic societies.

Last week, the Council adopted by consensus the significant resolution 2178 (2014), led by Ireland, calling on States to create and maintain a safe and enabling environment in which civil society can operate. We strongly condemn all forms of persecution and discrimination based on religion or belief. The persecution of Christians and other minorities in the Middle East, and the recent rise of anti-Semitic attacks, particularly in a number of European countries, are causes of grave concern for me. Too often throughout

history, the world has looked the other way when vulnerable minorities were being targeted, often as a prelude to a more serious conflict.

On a more positive note, as a former Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in Ireland, I felt particularly honoured last week to ratify the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, reaffirming the commitment of my Government to the protection and promotion of the rights of children in Ireland.

In conclusion, I believe that at its most effective this great Organization, the United Nations, is a force for good in the world and has much untapped potential. The undoubted achievements in areas, such as peacekeeping, conflict resolution, development and humanitarian action, to which Ireland is proud to contribute, should renew our faith in our collective ability and inspire us to meet the challenges that confront us now and many of those that will lie ahead in the future.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Luis Almagro, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay.

**Mr. Almagro** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Ours is a harsh and difficult world — a complex, sometimes disgraceful world where 6 million children die each year before their fifth birthday, many from problems related to malnutrition; where violence has taken on a new dimension of terror and horror, with hundreds of thousands of deaths in Libya, Syria and Iraq; and where human rights violations and crimes against humanity occur more frequently and with greater ferocity and are the daily reality in those countries.

It is a world where more than 8 million people die every year from tobacco consumption — an incredible genocidal activity that cannot be stopped and is promoted by markets that are increasingly more open, free, less regulated, and licensed to operate in contravention of people's rights to life and health. It is a world where military bombs strike and kill those in schools, ethnic or religious minorities, or those who may adhere to different political beliefs. It is a world where natural disasters devastate countries one year and again the following year and the next, as they have in the brotherly countries of the Caribbean. In this world, those who act as global police have bequeathed social and political disasters wherever they have gone. Global governance has been inspired not by rights, but by interests. Those narrow interests were paid for with people's lives, human rights violations and migration,

in which people have had to leave their homes, cities and countries, vulnerable and facing anguish, violence and death again and again.

The United Nations has been unable to build a system to find solutions, and it has failed fundamentally in its ethical dimension. There has been no dearth of work, documents or meetings, but there has been a lack of solutions for people. Our shared ethics should be based on the people. Our shared ethical structure in this case must be capable of incorporating our diversity, to free us with democracy and participation. We need to grow and develop multilateralism, which is the only path and basic instrument to promote that shared ethical structure, ensuring ever more rights for ever more people. We need to grow and develop in freedom.

The political and financial crises of this world are linked to common values and ethical standards. Today's world is one of sheer confusion in which humanitarian crises follow upon political crises, which in turn follow upon financial, economic and social crises. Here in this building we have our own microclimate; we wear elegant suits, eat in expensive restaurants and drive large, modern cars. What happens to people who are not insiders but who suffer in refugee camps where their families are killed, their villages are destroyed and they are tortured, or where their environments are destroyed by the effects of climate change? No one who has gained a right should lose it the next day; we need to protect that right. We need to offer better opportunities.

The Millennium Development Goals have served as a useful tool to foster and channel efforts for specific purposes, but we should not leave countries alone in those efforts. Within that framework, we should step up our efforts every year and seek to define more clearly the sustainable development goals that will make up the post-2015 sustainable development agenda in a balanced, transparent and consensual way that envisions integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development: social, economic and environmental.

We should eliminate poverty from the perspective of human rights and the recognition of those rights. The wealth that comes into the world causes an increase in the gross domestic product and exports and creates more dynamic investment, all of which must be accompanied by a logical recognition of rights. We are more developed and richer when we have more rights to exercise, when those rights are protected, and when we have more guarantees against the growing inequalities in the world. Poverty is experienced at many levels,

and each country is responsible for granting ever more rights to help its people overcome poverty, improve conditions and eliminate discrimination.

All efforts are valuable in every one of our countries, and as is every non-governmental organization that charts the way or denounces an abuse of human rights or seeks to improve opportunities for women, children, youths, retired people and migrants in different areas, such as health care, education, social protection, decent work, social and economic opportunities, whether they are employed as rural or domestic workers. In every individual there is an enormous potential that needs to be protected and fostered.

The gender perspective that we need to promote should also be aligned with key rights for every individual who may suffer from even a little bit of discrimination in this world. The women's agenda is one of the most powerful vectors for development that we can design. Any type of discrimination involves some form of underdevelopment, because discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation or migratory status is contrary to what our societies need.

Our societies must be more inclusive. Our societies should incorporate every single one of those rights into our political system and legal protections, whether they relate to the right of same-sex marriage, the right of those who cohabit, or the rights of those with HIV. It is essential to fight for equality and to eliminate discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. All rights are part of the best social structure — love. Love is the essential factor that eliminates inequality and discrimination, that makes us all equal and that allows us to identify with our fellow human beings.

The comprehensive human rights agenda must be based on an increasing number of rights for an increasing number of people so that everyone is able to grow in freedom and equality. We need to continue to make definitive progress on social topics such as communicable and non-communicable diseases. That includes those related to tobacco consumption, from which, as I mentioned, over 8 million people die every year. It is expected that that figure will continue to rise. It is therefore crucial that we have national policies that focus on healthy lifestyles.

In 2013, Uruguay legalized the sale of cannabis, choosing an alternative regulatory model to combat drug

trafficking and its disastrous consequences in society. We do not claim to be an example or a trailblazer, but we do, obviously, want to redesign the kinds of policies that have categorically failed to date and that have not produced the expected results.

The critical situation in the world today with respect to food security is a structural problem. It is the result of bad global policies. One of every eight people, many of them children, suffer from chronic malnutrition. Humankind wastes more than a third of all the food we produce, which would be enough to resolve the problem of hunger. It is estimated that 30 to 50 per cent of the food produced every year is never consumed by people, and the situation is worsening due to soil erosion, growing water scarcity, climate change and the improper use of toxic substances in the food production chain.

Combating climate change is a top priority. The need to implement policies today and not put them off until tomorrow is the moral imperative of every single individual in this Hall, so that we can give concrete content to the sustainable development goals and continue to grow. It is also important to continue to develop civil and political society, which we must support. The principle of the legal equality of States is essential. That is why my country rejects, for example, any coercive, unilateral or extraterritorial measures that contravene the norms of international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The clearest example of that is the unjust blockade imposed against Cuba. We would like to once again express our strongest rejection of it. Uruguay would like to unequivocally demand that Cuba be stricken from the list of countries who harbour terrorists.

In the same vein, Uruguay would like to call for an end to be put to financial speculation by vulture funds. It is important that countries be able to restructure their sovereign debt in predictable, unchanging and just conditions without impacting development and, thus, the well-being of their people.

Global peace and security are essential. The eradication of any form of violence in this world is a crucial issue. It is essential to have negotiated solutions that parties agree on, and contributions by peacekeeping missions are essential to providing maximal guarantees in the world.

Human rights should be fully respected. They should be fully monitored, and guarantees should

be provided in that regard to every individual. The authorities should ensure that human rights are fully monitored to ensure that their people enjoy the broadest possible freedoms.

Uruguay deplores violence in all its forms. The substance of violence is bad at its core. There is no justification for violence to continue to spread in the world today. Every time one right is undermined, it is our responsibility, as those who govern, to lead the fight for its restoration. Every time justice is not rendered, it must be our mission, as leaders, to demand accountability. Every time we recognize a new right, it is our obligation to remember those who still cannot exercise that right and to work tirelessly for their benefit.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. José Badia, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Principality of Monaco.

**Mr. Badia** (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): The lofty aspirations of the Millennium Development Goals guided our first steps into the era of the second millennium and enabled us to realize, in part, the priorities that we hold so dear. With this shared experience, which is extraordinary in terms of what it has made concrete, and aware of the new challenges that have been imposed on us over the past 15 years, we now have clear lessons on which to build the future we want. We now know that peace and development are inseparable.

The future to which we all aspire can be understood on three levels, based on the three pillars of sustainable development that command our attention equally. The work we have started on defining the post-2015 era, by its very nature and given the challenges it poses, merits committed efforts by the entire international community, which have already been undertaken. Indeed, it requires a contribution by all States and all parts of society, including the private sector, academia, philanthropy and, obviously, non-governmental organizations. It also must be, as a matter of ethics but also to ensure its viability, inclusive, participatory and based on good governance.

Those are therefore the bases for defining the post-2015 era, despite the glaring paradoxes and the many obstacles we unfortunately face. At a time when the world is highly interdependent, its communications technology performing as never before and its riches abundant, inequalities continue to grow, and too many

of us remain marginalized and live in unacceptable conditions.

Inevitable climate change, which is recognized as the greatest challenge of our time, will decide the fate of our planet and darkens our future prospects by already threatening our present. Conflicts persist, while others are born, and terrorist acts lead to a range of problems that challenge traditional defence strategies. This past year, existing and new conflicts have escalated towards an unacceptable level. The Monegasque authorities can only reiterate their commitment to the values of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and join the efforts of those who seek a peaceful and political settlement of the crisis in Ukraine.

The use of chemical weapons in Syria and the assault on civilian targets in Syria, Iraq, the Gaza Strip, South Sudan, Mali, the Central African Republic and Nigeria have spread horror and are barbarous practices. They are intolerable. That is why the Government of Monaco condemned acts of abject violence by supporting the adoption of Security Council resolution 2178 (2014) last week, which establishes a new legislative and policy framework to coordinate international efforts to fight against the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters.

The Principality shares the grief of the French, British and American peoples following the heinous killings of their nationals who were held hostage. In memory of those victims, His Serene Highness Prince Albert II asked that flags at administrative buildings and Monegasque public institutions be flown at half-mast. Those who commit such heinous crimes in the name of a religion they blaspheme annihilate the foundation of our society by violating the rule of law and respect for the standards that we have developed together. They use communications networks and social networks, which we might think would be used to spread harmony and unity, to spread hatred and chaos. We have reason to wonder about their motivations and the reasons that make their appeal so convincing.

The response is obviously rooted in exclusion and the marginalization of people who have not yet benefited from what we call progress. It often involves young people without prospects for the future. Therefore, it is our responsibility to design inclusive social integration policies, promoting education and youth employment. Young people have never formed such a large proportion of the world population — particularly in developing countries. They must be an integral part

of the decision-making process in order to allow them to realize their human potential.

We welcome, in that respect, the “Rights Up Front” initiative of the Secretary-General, launched in November 2013, whose primary objective is to make sure that human rights violations do not become mass crimes and to enable the Organization to act more quickly by placing people at the heart of its strategies and operational activities.

On the eve of the tenth anniversary of the 2005 Summit, and especially as memories of sinister genocides come to mind, we must do a better job of promoting the responsibility to protect. That is the primary responsibility of every State, as we know, but we also need to be able to help States for which capacity-building is difficult. Prevention remains a fundamental aspect of our Organization’s work. In that regard, the involvement of regional and subregional organizations is essential to the effective implementation of the protection of populations from genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The promotion and protection of human rights must be at the heart of our policies. Prince Al-Hussein has our full confidence. With his experience and his unwavering commitment to peace and the rule of law, he can be the right United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for our times.

Another aspect also deserves emphasis — the delivery of humanitarian assistance in conflict zones. It must not depend on the political context. The politicization of humanitarian assistance should be a priority item for discussion at the global summit in 2016.

In the light of the increasing number and persistence of crisis areas, caused both by conflicts and by natural disasters, whose frequency we now associate with the rate of climate change, we must take into consideration the needs of over 50 million people. The magnitude of those needs justifies the new partnerships that have been formed around organizations, local partners and the private sector and individuals.

The unprecedented threat of the Ebola virus in West Africa is testing our ability to respond in an effective and coordinated manner. We support the establishment by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response to counter the large-scale threat Ebola poses to international peace and security. In that regard, I wish to acknowledge the

commitment of the Principality of Monaco, which is effectively contributing to that unprecedented struggle, together with the World Health Organization and the International Committee of the Red Cross. We share in the grief of the victims and that of their families. We are aware that the families’ tragedies are compounded and their pain is made unbearable by the fact that they are unable to take care of their loved ones or provide proper funerals for those who die.

In these difficult times, we need to establish a new post-2015 sustainable development paradigm. Universal, inclusive, ambitious and concrete, it must accommodate the pressures of a growing global population and the urbanization that comes with it. It requires us to adapt our methods of production, consumption and transport and to opt for clean technologies. We need to define the nature of the world we want to live in, with and for our children. As I mentioned earlier, it is vital that the needs of the most vulnerable be duly taken into consideration and that economic independence for women and young people be ensured. It is time for women to realize the transformation that the Secretary-General announced by breaking through the glass ceiling that for too long has kept them from achieving their potential. Without the full contribution of those who constitute 50 per cent of humankind, sustainable development will not be achieved.

The year 2015 will also mark the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women, peace and security. We reiterate our call to end impunity for crimes related to sexual and gender-based violence against women, as well as all the abuse women suffer.

The undeniable success of the Climate Summit should be measured not only by the commitments announced, but also by the broad participation of the private sector, foundations and civil society and by the sense of ownership expressed by all the stakeholders concerned. The Summit therefore succeeded in catalysing society as a whole, thus ensuring that the political momentum will be maintained in Lima and Paris. As the issue of climate change cannot be separated from the question of the oceans, the Prince’s Government will continue to defend an objective of sustainable development dedicated to healthy and productive oceans for all. The Assembly may rest assured that Monaco will engage in discussions, which will begin in January, and we will continue, in both national and international policies, to act as a responsible and unifying partner.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Samura Kamara, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Sierra Leone.

**Mr. Kamara** (Sierra Leone): I bring to the Assembly fraternal greetings and best wishes from Mr. Ernest Bai Koroma, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, and his beleaguered people. President Koroma deeply regrets that, for obvious reasons, he is unable to participate in the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly. He has, however, instructed me to deliver to the Assembly this message from him:

“I congratulate the President on being elected to conduct the affairs of the sixty-ninth session of the Assembly and assure him of the support and cooperation of my country, Sierra Leone, during his tenure. To his predecessor, Ambassador John Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda, let me, on behalf of my Government and people, express our appreciation for his astute leadership and skill in smoothly directing the work of the past session of the General Assembly.

“My sincere thanks and appreciation go to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his constructive and dynamic leadership of the Organization. Sierra Leone deeply appreciates his forward-looking and laudable initiatives on the issues of sustainable energy and climate change, among others. In particular, I appreciate his robust response to the Ebola epidemic that is causing so much havoc in our lives and threatening our dignity and our very existence. We will continue to support those highly ambitious and commendable initiatives for a better and safer world.

“Sierra Leone commends the President on the choice, appropriateness and sense of urgency of the theme of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, and we join him in calling for a structured dialogue, strengthened global partnership and enhanced cooperation for its achievement. Sierra Leone wishes to reiterate the need to generate the required global political will to address unfinished business in the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by focusing on implementation gaps and new and emerging challenges. As Chair of the small Group of Seven Plus States, Sierra Leone reaffirms the call of this group of fragile and post-conflict States for the support of goal 16 of the outcome document

of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 16 is one of 17 priorities of the post-2015 development agenda and envisages promoting peaceful and inclusive institutions as a stand-alone aim.

“My country is battling one of the biggest life-or-death challenges facing the global community. As I stated in my address to the Secretary-General’s high-level meeting on response to the Ebola virus disease outbreak, Ebola is unlike previous threats, not because something similar has never occurred before, but because the Ebola outbreak has mutated into a phenomenon for which my country, my region and the global community were grossly ill-prepared. Isolated communities are becoming less frequent in our globalized world. Mutating viral diseases like Ebola can no longer be neatly isolated simply by sealing off a country in a corner of the world. The Ebola outbreak in our region provides the first challenge to infrastructure, human capital and public health and surveillance systems that are too weak to deal with the faster occurrences of animal-to-human, and human-to-human transmissions of highly contagious diseases that have been made possible by quicker transportation, increasing urbanization and dense networks of people moving between rural and urban areas and across borders.

“We have been slow to meet this new challenge because no one recognized that this confluence of trends could emerge with such virulence in West Africa. Our international partners were slow to recognize the threat for what it was, and when recognition did come, it was accompanied by a spontaneous reaction of fear and panic that led to the closure of borders and the imposition of travel restrictions to and from Sierra Leone and our subregion.

“This is the very first time Ebola has come to our region and to my country, Sierra Leone. We did not bring it on ourselves. We are rebuilding our infrastructure, implementing policies that were increasing our growth rates, improving our health-care and literacy indicators, enhancing our peace, and strengthening our democracy. We are contributing troops to the United Nations peacekeeping operations in other lands, as our share of the peace dividend. The world was lauding us for doing so many things right, for being a symbol of

fast-paced recovery from a decade-long devastating civil conflict, for promoting and protecting human rights, and for advancing along an impressive path of socioeconomic reconstruction. We were gearing up our health-care system to fight the known ailments of our land, such as malaria, maternal and infant mortality, Lassa fever, tuberculosis and typhoid, when Ebola struck. Based on the knowledge we had, based on the advice we were given by our international partners, we mobilized to meet this unfamiliar threat. But the staff, equipment, medicines and systems we had were inadequate, and this slowed our effective response.

“Several months down the road, the international community has finally come around to the view that the Ebola outbreak is a challenge for everyone, and that, while Sierra Leone and its sister republics are at the front line of this fight, the heavy aerial and ground support of the world are required to defeat the outbreak, for Ebola is in many ways worse than terrorism. As a country, we have taken extraordinary measures, including declaring a state of emergency and shutting down the country for three days to get health educators into every household in the country. Today, most of our people know that Ebola may present with the same signs as malaria, typhoid, diarrhoea and other infectious diseases, but that it is far more deadly, and that there is a need to modify behaviour in order to counter its transmission.

“Socioeconomic disruptions are already being felt. We are no longer able to engage in our cultural practices, such as shaking hands when we gladly receive each other, or hold religious and communal burial ceremonies. Our people live in fear and cannot understand the nature of a disease that claims lives and prevents family members from burying their loved ones.

“The indeterminate suspension of several ongoing development projects, and the disruption to farming, mining, manufacturing, construction, tourism, trading and public transportation, following the outbreak of Ebola, are now undermining the growth and human development prospects of the country. The International Monetary Fund has estimated that our gross domestic product will drop by 3.3 per cent in 2014 from 11.3 per cent to 8 per cent. Ebola has placed a stranglehold on the socioeconomic prospects of the country, and, in

addition, we risk reversing the hard gains achieved in peacebuilding.

“We salute the great efforts of countries, as well as international and national organizations, that have committed resources to our common fight. We welcome the adoption of the landmark Security Council resolution 2177 (2014) and its General Assembly counterpart, resolution 69/1, both of which recognize the Ebola outbreak as a threat to international peace and security. We also salute the Secretary-General for his initiative in establishing the first-ever United Nations emergency health mission, the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response, to lead a concerted and coordinated effort to contain and defeat this scourge within the subregion.

“We know that to defeat the disease and prevent future outbreaks anywhere in the world, we must improve our capacities for quicker response. In Sierra Leone, this calls for faster deployment of staff, medicines and equipment at the global and national levels. Globally, a faster response means quickening the pace of resource mobilization and disbursements, as well as the development of vaccines and curative medicines. Nationally, our effort must rapidly translate into effective urban and rural community response initiatives. Any break in this chain of fast response makes the challenge more difficult to meet, and not meeting the challenge means more deaths in our country and the increased possibility that the virus will mutate and spread to areas from which it is currently absent.

“The world needs a faster global response infrastructure to deal with this new trend that is today manifesting itself in the West African nations of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, but to which no country can be immune. Ebola is winning the race against us. To make an impactful start in reversing this trend, we must have more treatment beds than there are Ebola cases. Only when the number of available beds surpasses the number of cases can we say that Ebola has been brought under control. This is a fight for all of us. We must prove that humankind is equal to overcoming this new challenge to our collective existence.

“We also believe that it is high time for this Assembly to make its voice heard regarding the flight bans and cancellations that have accompanied

the deadly Ebola outbreak. The World Health Organization and many others have advised against imposing blanket flight bans. We therefore urge Member States to re-examine their policies of isolating and stigmatizing Ebola-affected countries and their respective citizens. The world is too globalized for policies that shun engagement with a democratic nation. The United Nations was founded on a mandate to confront human insecurity, not shun it. Moreover, this Organization was founded on the principle of doing better than before. We strongly urge loyalty to the founding ideals of our global Organization.

“Despite the daunting challenge facing us as a nation and subregion, Sierra Leone will remain a trusted and strategic partner in the global effort to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable peace, stability and development. My Government is committed to forging closer bonds with all countries, especially within the context of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States.

“As Coordinator of the African Union Committee of Ten Heads of State on the Reform of the United Nations, we will continue to advance the African Common Position on the reform process of the United Nations by reaching out and engaging with other interest groups in a bid to reach a common understanding of how to obtain a strong, inclusive, united, transparent and accountable Security Council. While the world now acknowledges the historical injustice represented by the fact that Africa is the only continent not represented in the permanent category of Council membership and, at the same time, is underrepresented in the non-permanent category, it is about time for this Organization to take the necessary bold steps to put into practice our reaffirmation of the equal rights of nations, large and small. Indeed, as we gear up to celebrate 70 memorable years of the existence of the United Nations, it is an appropriate time for the Organization to promote the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members and to ensure for all the rights and benefits resulting from membership.

“We are encouraged by the progress made in strengthening peace and democracy within member countries of the Mano River Union, and we shall continue to support initiatives for the sustenance and growth of democratic order, peace and security

in the subregion. We will continue to adhere to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) protocols for peace, democracy and stability and will sustain our support for the building of the ECOWAS logistical depot in Sierra Leone. We firmly support the African Union rapid intervention initiative for peacekeeping and peace-support operations. We have also ratified the Arms Trade Treaty and the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto. We are currently working to incorporate them into our domestic law.

“My Government will continue to contribute troops and support international peacekeeping operations for international peace and security, and we will accordingly seek capacity-building and other support in such laudable ventures. We are, however, dismayed by the current trend of events in South Sudan, the Central African Republic, the Gaza Strip, Syria, Ukraine, Iraq and other parts of the world that are still in conflict. We will commit Sierra Leone to the global search for common agreement on the root causes of those conflicts and encourage dialogue to work out resolutions that are peaceful and sustainable. We support the two independent States solution in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“Sierra Leone condemns any act of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations in the world in general and in Africa in particular. Terrorism is a common enemy to international peace and security. Sierra Leone prides itself on its high level of religious tolerance, and we believe that people of all religions and ethnic backgrounds must be able to coexist in peace and harmony everywhere in the world. We likewise view acts of drug trafficking, human trafficking, smuggling of migrants, marine piracy, cybercrime, abductions and all other organized or unorganized transnational criminal activities as serious threats to global peace, stability and development. My Government will strengthen national capacities and contribute through international cooperation to preventing and combating those crimes.

“As a post-conflict country, we are aware that sexual violence in conflict is one of the greatest and most persistent injustices in the world today. We are therefore supportive of the United Kingdom’s Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative

and the subsequent Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. We support the work of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We also fully support the United Kingdom Government's leadership in promoting global advocacy against the use of children in armed conflicts.

"We are following the unfolding developments at the International Criminal Court and are supportive of the efforts to ensure judicial accountability in ways that are respectful of Africa's concerns for the ability of its statesmen and stateswomen to steer the countries of the continent towards greater security, reconciliation, peace and development.

"My Government will continue to support the work of the Human Rights Council. We are committed to the moratorium on the death penalty and have gone a step further in the process of commuting capital offences to life imprisonment in our statute books.

"In conclusion, while applauding the international community for supporting our aspirations, we wish to remind the world that fighting the Ebola virus disease in West Africa is a matter of life and death for the whole of humankind. The World Health Organization finally got it right when it declared the outbreak as a global health emergency, but an emergency requires a response faster than what is currently obtaining. We can defeat Ebola and, as already noted by experts, future outbreaks of diseases of that nature anywhere in the world can also be defeated by quickening the pace of response. Our understanding of that unprecedented outbreak is better now than at the beginning, and our response has improved accordingly. While our capacities are getting better coordinated, there is still room for strengthening those capacities to ensure effective national ownership and leadership of all response mechanisms. Undoubtedly, we can do better than what obtained at the beginning of the outbreak, and we must do all we can to end such a grave threat to our collective survival. We will also continue our engagement with all stakeholders to build our public health system beyond Ebola.

"On the occasion of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, let me reiterate our deepest condolences to the families and relatives of all our

brave men, women and children who have lost their lives to the Ebola virus disease. May the Father most high receive their souls and the souls of all faithful departed into his merciful hands."

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Augustine Kpehe Ngafuan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Liberia.

**Mr. Ngafuan** (Liberia): I bring the Assembly greetings from Her Excellency Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, who should have been here today to address the Assembly but chose to remain on the front lines in Liberia to lead our fight against the deadly Ebola virus disease.

Liberia congratulates the President of the Assembly on his assumption of his high office and acknowledges the astute statesmanship and wisdom that he brings to that important assignment, which inspire confidence for a successful sixty-ninth session of the Assembly. We assure him of Liberia's full cooperation and support. We pay a special tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his able and visionary stewardship of the affairs of this global institution.

With just one year until the expiration date of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the theme of this sixty-ninth general debate, "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda", could not have been more appropriate. Liberia was put on the pedestal of global honour when President Johnson-Sirleaf was selected as one of three co-chairs of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, formed by the Secretary-General in 2012 to advise him on the contours of an ambitious but realistic post-2015 global development agenda and to define the critical steps required to reinvigorate and sustain global partnership. The Panel's report, *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development*, contained a clarion call to leave no one behind, which has been embraced as a motivating theme by many.

At the continental level, our President chairs a 10-member high-level committee of African Heads of State, under whose leadership a African Common Position has been developed and endorsed by the membership of the African Union (AU). That Position is based on six pillars that represent Africa's vision of the prerequisites for eradicating poverty on the continent and for ensuring its future and development.

We are encouraged that the concepts and strategies defined under each of the pillars have been significantly incorporated into the proposed 17 sustainable development goals. That makes us optimistic that the substance of our pillars will form an integral part of the post-2015 development agenda. As we await the Secretary-General's synthesizing report, I can assure the Assembly of Liberia's continued active participation in the negotiations that lie ahead.

As we survey the regional and international political landscape, we are increasingly concerned about the spread of extremist ideologies and terrorist activities around the world, especially in Africa. Whether we are speaking of Al-Shabaab in Somalia and Kenya, Al-Qaida in the Maghreb or Boko Haram in Nigeria, the African continent has not been spared the deadly and destructive consequences of extremism. Additionally, over the past year, while peace processes were being consolidated in many African countries, we have been sad witnesses to the eruption or exacerbation of conflicts on the continent, notably in South Sudan and the Central African Republic. We laud the efforts of the AU and the United Nations to resolve those conflicts, and join in the call for sustained international action to bring about a more secure and peaceful world.

Liberia commends the Secretary-General for his convening, last week, of the high-level Climate Summit, which elicited concrete commitments from the global community on reducing greenhouse emissions and other measures aimed at achieving sustainable development. As a small country and one that is still endowed with 43 per cent of the remaining Guinea forests, we are proud that we too have concluded partnership agreements and made concrete commitments aimed at supporting the goals of sustainable, climate-sensitive development. Small countries like Liberia contribute less to greenhouse emissions but suffer disproportionately from the adverse impact of climate change. To right that anomaly and in the united spirit of saving our one world, all countries, big and small, should make proportionate commitments to saving our planet and take concrete action to make such commitments a reality.

A year ago, when President Johnson-Sirleaf addressed the Assembly (see A/68/PV.6), it was with a more positive message from a President reporting significant achievements and lofty aspirations for the future. President Johnson-Sirleaf, full of gratitude, informed the world that Liberia had just celebrated 10 years of peace in August 2013, and that, despite some

challenges, was still registering remarkable progress on the path of socioeconomic development. The country had transitioned from an emphasis on stabilization to a focus on transformation within the framework of a long-term development agenda, Vision 2030. The President also informed the Assembly that the countries of the Mano River Basin Union — Liberia, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone — were at peace and were pursuing regional integration through initiatives that would facilitate connectivity within their power and transport systems, thereby enhancing the cross-border trade in which our market women are mostly engaged. She even reported on how a small contingent of Liberian peacekeepers, who are still in Mali today, had contributed to the laudable United Nations peacekeeping efforts there, creating an environment conducive to stability and democratic transition in that country.

One year later, as I address the Assembly, I am the purveyor of a different kind of story, and a sad one. Over the past six months, a dark cloud has been hanging over the Liberian landscape, such that instead of reporting economic growth, we are constrained to report economic decline. The implementation of virtually all the pillars of our Agenda for Transformation has been placed on hold, and gains are perhaps already being reversed. Instead of devoting attention to regional integration through the facilitation of power and transport projects, we are talking about regional cooperation in dealing with a deadly enemy. The market women who traded goods and services across borders a year ago are now constrained to remain within those borders and suffer the consequences of economic inactivity.

The deadly enemy that has visited so much harm and misery on my country and our neighbours is the Ebola virus disease, which began wreaking havoc in Liberia in March. Since the outbreak, the Government of Liberia has taken a host of measures. We have declared a state of emergency and suspended schools, and, with the constructive involvement of all stakeholders, including pastors, imams, chiefs, elders, young people, Government officials and opposition politicians, we have stepped up awareness and prevention campaigns to address the rigid denial and deeply rooted traditional and cultural practices that create fertile ground for the spread of the disease. We have also committed and will continue to commit significant portions of our own paltry resources to the fight.

In spite of such efforts, which have been buttressed by those of our partners, Ebola has confounded all of us and has sprinted faster than our collective efforts, snuffing out the life candle of more than 1,800 of our compatriots, with a total of nearly 3,500 infected. Cumulatively, women, as the majority among our health workforce and the main caregivers in our deeply traditional society, have been disproportionately affected. Sadly, as Ebola widens its deadly circumference, it is creating a trail of traumatized orphans across the country, which includes a 10-year-old child from Barkedu, Lofa county, who is the last person standing from a family of 12. Our already limited pool of health workers has been further reduced, because 89 of them have fallen victim to the virus, out of a total of 182 infected.

The resulting panic that has arisen in health workers who see their colleagues die from Ebola has precipitated the closure of many health facilities across the country. As we and our many international partners struggle to douse the wildfire caused by Ebola, we are left with inadequate resources, time and personnel to attend to routine illnesses such as malaria, typhoid fever and measles, thereby causing many more, tangential deaths. An increasing number of pregnant women are dying in the process of bringing forth life. In short, our public health system, which totally collapsed during our years of conflict and was being gradually rebuilt, has collapsed again under the weight of the deadly virus.

Ebola is not just a health crisis; it is a total crisis. It is an economic crisis, a social crisis and a potential political and security crisis. Indeed, its deleterious impact has been very wide and very deep. On the economic front, it has occasioned a 3.4 per cent downward slide in economic growth in Liberia, and some experts have predicted that, if not contained quickly, it could cause a 12 per cent decline in our economy in 2015. As a result of the slowdown in economic activities, our revenue generation capacity has been seriously undermined, thereby constricting our ability to provide basic social services and to continue to fund key development projects. The suspension of flights as well as the travel and other restrictions and sanctions imposed on Liberia and other affected countries despite expert advice to the contrary from the World Health Organization and others, have not only undermined the humanitarian efforts aimed at quickly containing the disease, but have also aggravated the adverse economic effects of the Ebola crisis.

As destructive as the Liberian civil conflict was, at least our people knew the warring factions and the front lines. With Ebola, the enemy is more insidious, and there are no clear-cut front lines, because someone's child, someone's husband or someone's workmate could actually be the enemy and in the front line at the same time. That difficult feature of the disease, coupled with a host of other challenges, has occasioned its rapid spread. We are heartened that, as a result of separate and joint appeals of the heads of State of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea to the Secretary-General and leaders of friendly countries and institutions, the international community is showing a better appreciation of the unprecedented scope and magnitude of the Ebola outbreak in our countries. There is a chorus of leaders advocating and committing to support more robust, scaled up and urgent assistance to the affected countries.

Thanks to the Secretary-General and other world leaders, the past few weeks have witnessed a host of positive developments that constitute a major heightening of focus and scaling up of the international response. Those developments include the following.

First, we welcome the announcement by President Barak Obama of the United States of his Government's decision to scale up assistance to the region, including the deployment of 3,000 military and medical personnel to help us with the fight.

Secondly, the Security Council meeting held on 18 September 2014 (see S/PV.7268), under the leadership and Council presidency of the United States, adopted resolution 2177 (2014), which recognizes the Ebola crisis as a threat to international peace and security, necessitating a strong and concerted international response through firm commitments of support. The resolution also called on Member States to lift travel and other restrictions imposed on affected countries.

Thirdly, the Secretary-General announced on 18 September his intention to establish the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response, which was formally endorsed by Assembly resolution 69/1, submitted by the President and adopted on 19 September.

Fourthly, we have seen the start of the deployment by the African Union of contingents of medical and relevant personnel drawn from across Africa to Liberia and other worst-affected countries.

Fifthly, the high-level meeting on response to the Ebola virus disease outbreak, convened at Headquarters

by the Secretary-General on 25 September, witnessed announcements of substantial commitments of assistance by many countries.

Those concrete demonstrations of solidarity have taken many forms, and we are deeply grateful for all of them. They should, however, not lead us towards complacency, because we definitely have not yet achieved the 20-fold increase in response recommended by the experts to contain the disease. Additionally, while we struggle with the first war, which involves actually disrupting the transmission of Ebola, we must begin to prepare for the second war of tackling the long-term socioeconomic impacts of the Ebola crisis, including building and creating the capacity for a new health system that can robustly deal with any future health challenge, and raising the resources needed to address a legion of socioeconomic, political, security and other challenges made more acute by the presence of Ebola.

We are also cognizant of the positive contributions of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), which has helped us enjoy 10 years of peace. The presence of UNMIL in Liberia, especially at a time when we were experiencing isolation, has helped to reassure our people and create a security climate conducive to tackling some of the multifaceted challenges of the Ebola crisis. Therefore, the continued engagement of UNMIL in Liberia will be critical to enabling Liberia's transition from the Ebola crisis to resume the implementation of strategies for the achievement of our long-term development agenda.

Ebola is a difficult enemy that has frustrated and bypassed our collective efforts in the past, causing some experts to project that, in a worst case scenario, about 1.4 million precious lives could be lost in our countries by January 2015. In spite of the gloom of today — and as Liberians ponder the question: “Will I, my wife, my husband, my child, my friend or my workmate be one of those to populate the 1.4 million doomsday statistics?” — we should not sink into defeatism. Instead, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and the resilient Liberian people feel that Ebola has presented us with a one-option, multiple-choice test, and that option is to fight back. And we are fighting back.

As President Johnson-Sirleaf aptly put it in her 17 September update to the people of Liberia on the Ebola crisis:

“I believe in the Liberian people. I believe that we are stronger than the greatest threat with which we are currently faced. And I believe we will prevail. The war did not defeat us, a completely destroyed economy — the greatest collapse since World War II — did not defeat us. Ebola will not defeat us”.

We know that the road ahead may be long, curvy and hilly. But with bigger, bolder, timely and sustained efforts on our part, buttressed by the international community, we are sure that dawn will soon break on this long, dark night occasioned by the Ebola virus.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellence Mr. Nickolas Steele, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Business of Grenada.

**Mr. Steele** (Grenada): I would like, first of all, to thank the outgoing President, Mr. John Ashe, for his sterling efforts in presiding over the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly in a year that was dedicated to island States around the world. Let me also congratulate Mr. Sam Kutesa and welcome him as the incoming President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. He can count on Grenada's support to contribute to the deliberations in a positive and meaningful way.

As we gather here in New York yet again, we can celebrate the remarkable history of our institution in this beautifully refurbished United Nations Headquarters. I wish to put on record Grenada's appreciation to the donors who contributed and to the Secretary-General for his leadership on this project. With its large open spaces and glass façade, the building's design speaks to our ideals of transparency, openness and dialogue. The building's mid-twentieth-century features recall the spirit of an age when space was the new frontier.

The space age has given way to a new and exciting information age. Today, a young girl armed with a smartphone in Gujarat, India, can Google the same satellite images of our planet as a child in Great Britain. Exposed to the right ideas on the Internet, children — whether in Greensboro in the United States, or Grenoble in France, or Grenada in the Caribbean — can have the same seeds of hope, the same aspirations for happiness and personal growth, and the same sense of duty towards neighbourhood and planet. For aspiring young people everywhere, coming of age is symbolized by ownership, not of a car, but of

a mobile phone or a computer tablet. Those are today's vehicles on the information highway for the world's youth seeking ideas, identity and connectedness.

We come to the United Nations today to feel that sense of connectedness amid the chaos of today's challenges. We come to these refurbished Headquarters to renew our commitment to peace and security and to revitalize our mission, not to the stars, but to work for a safer planet with shared prosperity for all. Today, in this iconic Hall, it is too soon to say "mission accomplished", but for the most part, our original mission for dialogue and the rule of law among abiding nations has been accomplished.

Sitting here among ourselves, we are, for the most part, preaching to the converted. The long-standing conflict between Israel and Palestine has given way to a realization that the only viable solution is the two-State solution. Moreover, sworn enemies in this Hall now confer on how to tackle much more sinister enemies of peace.

Those new enemies have no flags fluttering proudly outside, nor electronic nameplates inside. They are not here in our space-age Hall; they are out there in cyberspace, a place where violence and hate in isolated corners can spread like wildfire across the globe. Captured on mobile phones and uploaded to the Internet, gruesome images from a remote backstreet can inflict fear in the hearts of ordinary citizens on Main Street everywhere.

The shocking beheadings we see in the media are the weeping ooze from the cancerous underbelly of our world today. They are the symptoms of an insidious and pervasive unease eating away at the very foundations on which this great institution was built. And with each new escalation of violence, we feel a sense of horror not only at the acts themselves but perhaps more at our inability to act.

War and insecurity in the information age have mutated so much that neither our resolutions, our agencies nor our armies are enough to break the fever of this viral menace of transnational actors. And so, looking beyond our Capital Master Plan that reimagines our twentieth-century beginnings, let us build a new Information Master Plan fit for the twenty-first century with electronic highways that will one day connect this Hall to every child in every village.

The information age is a new season in the arc of our institution's history — a new season in which everyone

has a voice, be they the youths of the Arab Spring or the Occupiers of Wall Street's winter of discontent. Today's information age brings a new transparency between the haves and the have-nots — between the 1 per cent and the 99 per cent. Whether segmented by class, race, religion or political affiliation, inequality is the disease of our times, contributing to the political eruptions all over the world.

We now have — for the first time — documented evidence of the root causes of the growing inequalities in society. A new economic treatise, entitled *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, by Thomas Piketty, analyses over a century of economic data and concludes that the rich are getting richer, faster than everyone else. But there are two things that reduce income inequality. The first is the distribution of knowledge that promotes growth. The second is war, which destroys capital. The first option is a rising tide that lifts all ships; the second is a sinking stone that drowns all hope — the very antithesis of this Organization.

We must focus more of our global policy on proactive interventions that promote sustainable growth. We must encourage economic growth by distributing knowledge through education, information and communication technology, as well as through skills and technology transfers. We do indeed need an Information Master Plan if we are to proactively confront threats in the twenty-first century.

The *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security and Development*, published by the World Bank, acknowledges that development agencies have not yet fully adapted to the needs of the twenty-first century and that they do not yet have the capacity to adequately help fragile States. It finds that unemployment is the number-one reason for youths to join criminal gangs and contending armies. It reminds us that investing in citizen security, justice and jobs is essential to reducing violence. We know that once mass violence takes root in a society, it can take a generation or more to recover.

As we look around at the violence in the world today, I ask the question: can our twentieth-century institutions cope with twenty-first-century shocks? Do we have the courage to be proactive in fostering jobs and growth, or will we wait until violence erupts? This year's *World Development Report 2014* is all about managing opportunity and managing risk, from the level of the household to the level of the international community. The essence of the report is that the

benefits of proactive preparation can outweigh the costs of responding retroactively.

The risks from climate shocks are among the most terrifying for Grenada and for islands around the world. Grenada places on record its appreciation for the Secretary-General's leadership in calling for a Climate Summit. In the last four years alone, we have seen floods raging across the world. With the hottest temperatures on record in recent years, forest fires have raged across almost all continents, devouring millions of acres of forest land, causing damages in the tens of billions of dollars. Glacial retreats from the Andes to the Himalayas and from Greenland to Antarctica are moving at record speeds. We are seeing hurricanes and cyclones as never before.

Two years ago, right here in New York, Hurricane Sandy struck and disabled the economic engine of the United States. It caused \$68 billion worth of damage. But this represents less than 1 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the United States in contrast with the island States, where damages of between 10 per cent and 50 per cent of GDP are common, and, in the case of Grenada, where damages occurred totalling 200 per cent of GDP from Hurricane Ivan alone. Even as we speak, this week Grenada was plagued with unseasonably high rains that have caused numerous landslides. The value of the damage is yet to be determined. Like our neighbours Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in 2013, we are forced to dedicate already scarce financial resources to repair and mitigate this.

There is a link between these events and the high indebtedness of small Caribbean islands. To paraphrase the World Bank's country assistance strategy for the Eastern Caribbean, the years when fiscal policy failed to explain increases in debt-to-GDP ratios were the same years when natural disasters occurred. Given these risks, island States need concessionary financing. This is critical to ensuring growth, jobs and economic development. For small island developing States (SIDS), a robust economy, combined with risk-management policies and instruments, is the best combination for resilience.

When our current Administration was elected 16 months ago, the indebtedness of our country was unsustainable. But the Grenadian people came together under the leadership of Prime Minister Mitchell. Unions, churches, non-governmental organizations, political parties and businesses all rallied to form a

social compact to put Grenada on a firm fiscal footing. We tightened our belts and asked the Grenadian people to contribute more as we undertook our home-grown fiscal reform. The indebtedness of the SIDS must be counted among the many challenges of our time. The annual cry of the small island States to make concessionary funding available is the early-warning system for the international community. Let us settle the least developed countries graduation issue in favour of the SIDS, rather than use it as a parallel climate-negotiation tool against the SIDS.

One country that is singled out for its stellar management of disasters is Cuba. We all have much to learn from Cuba on areas as diverse as disaster risk management and public-health management. Cuba sends its engineers, teachers and doctors around the world to improve the lives of others. Is it not time to fully recognize the contributions of Cuba to the international community — and if not now, then when? Is it not time to end the Cold War attitudes to Cuba — and if not now, then when? Is it not time to end the embargo against Cuba — and if not now, then when?

The explosion of violence that we see in today's trouble spots is driven by the flawed principle of disrespect for international law and the territorial integrity of Member States. There comes a time when old enemies must turn swords into ploughshares and look to a future with dignity and with hope.

Just as climate change is the challenge of our time, it can also be said that climate change is possibly one of the greatest opportunities for wealth creation and shared prosperity that this generation has seen. Today, the renewable energy market is estimated to be in the order of \$16 trillion, including \$12 billion in the Caribbean alone. In 2012, there were some 6 million jobs in renewable energy and the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) expects 17 million jobs by 2030. Today, pension funds with collective assets exceeding \$12 trillion are focusing on climate risk, renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Island States like Grenada are seized not only of climate challenge, but also with climate solutions. For us, a robust economy, combined with sound disaster risk-management policies and instruments, is the most sustainable form of adaptation to climate change. But in Grenada, we cannot educate our people if our schoolchildren have no access to electricity. Due to the high import costs of fossil fuels, electricity in Grenada costs four to five times higher than it does in

developed countries. But countries with low electricity prices have to subsidize renewables; not so in the islands. Islands like Grenada come to the climate table, not like hapless victims cap-in-hand, but offering the international community 100 per cent renewables that can be introduced with zero subsidies.

If we are to limit global carbon dioxide concentrations to 450 parts per million, then, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's fifth assessment report, our electricity sector needs a total transformation. While island States are the least of the emitters, they are the most cost-effective places for renewables. I congratulate the Small Island Developing States Sustainable Energy Initiative (SIDS DOCK), IRENA and Sustainable Energy For All for acting on this.

Grenada is working to transform its electricity sector. Solving the energy challenge for islands like Grenada will remove a drag on our economies and better position us to withstand environmental shocks. This is adaptation with prospects for jobs, growth and shared prosperity for all. I am delighted to announce that, in addition to working with Germany, the World Bank, SIDS DOCK and IRENA, Grenada has signed a groundbreaking memorandum of understanding with the United States to assist us in transforming our energy mix, as we announced in Samoa. We have also signed an memorandum of understanding with New Zealand to help us better understand our geothermal resources. Grenada will serve as the pilot country for the regional energy initiative of the United States and will work with New Zealand on geothermal energy. We welcome others to join this partnership and this unfolding success story that is Green Grenada.

As we have said before, we wish to recommend the following actions. Let us operationalize the Green Climate Fund with a window for islands. Let us implement 100 per cent renewable energy in island States. Let us put a price on carbon and stop subsidizing fossil fuels. Let us decarbonize food security. Agriculture, forestry and other land use contribute 25 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions. Let us have greater support for climate-smart agriculture that can deliver a triple win of increasing productivity and incomes, increasing resilience to climate change, and reducing or removing carbon emissions. Grenada is pleased to be working with the Government of the Netherlands on a climate-smart agricultural alliance and on Global Blue Growth and Food Security Initiative.

Blue growth is vital for the economies of island States around the world, and our tri-island State of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique sees itself as an Ocean State, given that our exclusive economic zone in the sea is over 70 times larger than our land mass. Our tri-island State is pleased to host the secretariat of the Caribbean Challenge Initiative (CCI), which is supported by Germany and others. The CCI promotes an enhanced marine environment, and Grenada is committed to conserving its near-shore marine environment. Through reports like the *Sunken Billions*, the World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organization have shown that conservation efforts are critical to ensuring maximum economic yield in fisheries.

In the past 30 years, we have lost 30 per cent of our corals and mangroves. This is why Grenada welcomes efforts such as the Global Blue Growth Initiative and the Global Partnership for Oceans, and the efforts of *The Economist* and United States Secretary of State John Kerry to bring renewed attention to the oceans. We look forward to welcoming our partners to Grenada in January 2015 for the launch of the Global Blue Growth and Food Security initiatives.

In closing, Grenada acknowledges the successes of the 2014 Third International Conference on Small Island Development States, held in Samoa, and, building on the momentum of Samoa, we look forward to the successful conclusion to the sustainable development goals process leading into the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris next year.

As we move forward, let us remember that a number of the Millennium Development Goals have not been achieved. We have a duty, therefore, to re-examine our approach to peace, security and shared prosperity. We need collective action on a global consensus. We need to act now before it is too late. We must shed the old ways and adopt twenty-first-century approaches for this millennium generation if we are to bequeath to them and future generations the bounty we inherited and the bounty that they deserve.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Camillo Gonsalves, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, Consumer Affairs and Information Technology of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

**Mr. Gonsalves** (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): We gather this week to reaffirm our commitment to peace, justice and development. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines proudly recognizes Mr. John Ashe, son of our Caribbean soil and President of the General Assembly at the sixty-eighth session, and commends him for his invaluable contribution in advancing the international agenda during his superlative tenure. We joyously welcome the current President as our new standard-bearer. As part of the African diaspora, we celebrate with the continent of Africa in claiming him as one of our own, and in investing the same faith and confidence in him in this role as do the people of his native Uganda.

Fifteen years into the twenty-first century, the challenges of our times have caused some nations to question the value or role of sovereignty in an increasingly borderless world. Globalization and modernity have unleashed a number of forces that operate independently of national Governments or borders. They include the ills of climate change; communicable diseases such as Ebola; and economic contagion that spreads like wildfire as external shocks that pose serious developmental and existential threats beyond the scope of individual States to address. Groups have emerged — from terrorists to drug cartels to certain rapacious multinationals — that span the globe and exploit systemic weaknesses to further their own nefarious self-interest.

The pressures of keeping pace in an interconnected world have prompted suggestions that we can no longer rely on a traditional rulebook that does not specifically contemplate our modern challenges. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines emphatically rejects this suggestion. The rulebook that governs our international cooperation is the Charter of the United Nations, and its principal golden rule is that of respect for the sovereign equality of all States.

To be sure, certain administrative aspects of our rulebook — for example, the composition and working methods of our fossilized and increasingly irrelevant Security Council — are clearly long overdue for meaningful reform. However, the principles that inform our Charter and undergird the Assembly are timeless. Any attempt to deviate from the Charter in word, deed or spirit would constitute an assault on sovereignty, a departure from diplomacy, and the improvisation of international law on the fly.

The loss of sovereignty has never benefited the weak or powerless. The erosion of sovereignty has never restrained the interests of the powerful. The list of nations whose sovereignty has been violated in the interest of great Power convenience grows inexorably longer, while the tally of those whose populations are demonstrably better off for such violations remains tragically short. Accordingly, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines rejects the choice between modern interconnectivity and traditional sovereignty as false and intended to accelerate a global slide into lawless unilateralism.

As upholders of and adherents to international law, we continue to struggle in search of common themes to help us understand which coup d'état is legal and which is not; which foreign intervention is just and which is criminal; which particular sovereignty or territorial integrity is worth fighting for, and which should be conveniently disregarded and swept under the rug of endless, impotent debate; which national border constitutes a barrier, and which represents an invitation; which World Trade Organization decision will be enforced to the detriment of the weak, and which, as in the case of our Caribbean Community (CARICOM) neighbour Antigua and Barbuda, will be ignored by the guilty but powerful party. As a small, open, vulnerable State, we cannot accept the suggestion that our existence rests on the whim, generosity or benign neglect of powerful States. International law and sovereign equality are the bulwarks against the type of naked aggression and unilateralism that have too often led our nations to the precipice of war.

The cancer of terrorism continues to spread. The world has witnessed the celebration of savagery and the multiplication of misery by those who sow death and hatred in the name of religion. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, like every other civilized nation, is outraged at the global rise of militant groups that commit unspeakable acts of mass violence in their quest to enforce a brutal and indefensible social order.

However, the fact that terrorists disregard national borders and sovereignty is no excuse for us to do the same. We must not stoop to their level by neglecting the bedrock principles of the peaceful coexistence of nations. Nor must we ever repeat the mistake of believing that terrorism is a force that can be harnessed or supported to further some greater political objective. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines cannot accept that the difference between noble rebel and evil terrorist

can hinge on something as arbitrary as on which side of a border they decide to perform their rapes, beheadings and bombings. We unequivocally support genuine efforts targeted at eliminating this scourge, and we call for global solidarity and international cooperation in this urgent cause. Politics may make for strange bedfellows, but in a civilized world, humanity must always trump ideology in the fight against murderous barbarism.

The political manipulation of the term “terrorist” threatens our shared resolve to eliminate its growing menace. Nowhere is this manipulation more glaringly objectionable than in the false designation by the United States of the Republic of Cuba as a State sponsor of terrorism. Cuba has been a victim of State terrorism, a condemner of State terrorism and a collaborator in the fight against State terrorism. Meanwhile, other actors nakedly support and lavishly fund the most despicable terrorist groups, without so much as a hint of public reproach. It is hard to imagine why the United States, a firm, honourable and unquestioned global leader in the fight against terrorism, and the target of the most heinous attacks, would want to distract itself, or its allies, from the fight at hand by maintaining its unfounded characterization of Cuba.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reiterates the call of the overwhelming majority of States for an immediate end to the illegal economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. The external projection of political self-interest is not a sovereign exercise, but a retrograde and anachronistic attack on the very principles that undergird the Organization. The United States is a far greater nation than this petty, punitive and illegal embargo suggests. We encourage it to demonstrate the courage to cast aside this Cold War relic.

We are one month removed from the disastrous consequences of yet another violent conflict between combatants in Israel and the State of Palestine. Thousands are dead and thousands more were wounded — the overwhelming majority of whom were Palestinian civilians. Whatever the motivations for that particular conflict, no one can doubt that the underlying problem remains unaddressed and unresolved. At its root is the invasion, occupation and economic strangulation of Palestine, and the steady, illegal erosion of its internationally established borders.

Despite regrettable actions on both sides of this dispute, no amount of political relativism can apportion

blame equally between occupier and occupied. The unquestionable right of Israel to exist in peace and defend itself does not and cannot give it unfettered licence to occupy, oppress and suppress the sovereign rights of the Palestinian people. Israel is a powerful, accomplished, democratic nation with powerful friends. It diminishes itself and the status of its allies by its unchallenged actions in Palestine. Once again, the absence of borders and the disregard of sovereignty threaten to make the concept of a two-State solution nothing more than feel-good rhetoric with limited applicability on the ground.

A great Caribbean artist, Peter Tosh, once lamented in song that while “everyone is crying out for peace, none are crying out for justice”. Peace cannot be assumed in the absence of war, nor can it be established in the absence of justice. This Assembly owes the people of Palestine its attention and action in the long-overdue quest for real peace and statehood.

Climate change does not respect national borders — a fact known all too well in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Despite a tiny carbon footprint and minuscule emissions, our country has nonetheless been repeatedly victimized by weather anomalies partially caused by the historical and continued environmental abuse of major emitters. In the past four years, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has experienced a hurricane, a drought and two floods. The loss and damage caused by each of those events has resulted in annual double-digit hits to our gross domestic product (GDP). Last December, in a mere three hours of unseasonal rainfall, 17 per cent of our GDP was washed away in flash flooding. Our sister islands of Grenada and Dominica were similarly affected. Lives and livelihoods were lost, homes and infrastructure were destroyed, and a developmental hole was dug from which it will take years to emerge.

Yet, despite the gathering and intensifying global threat of climate change, with its real and ruinous present-day impacts, historical and major emitters continue to act as if the planet had time on its side. The excuses offered for continued inaction, whether political, historical, scientific or economic, grow increasingly indefensible. The prospects of genuine progress against climate change become increasingly remote with each passing day of diplomatic dithering, buck-passing and finger-pointing.

Last week, the Secretary-General convened a high-level Climate Summit here at United Nations

Headquarters in an admirable attempt to galvanize political will for an ambitious and legally binding climate treaty by 2015. However, the tangible results were less than encouraging. Despite some welcome new pledges, the numbers simply do not add up to anything close to what is required to cap global warming at 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Furthermore, the new resources raised and pledged for the financing of adaptation to climate change were a drop in the bucket — akin to having a bake sale to settle the national debt.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is fearful that the legally binding agreement, which we are scheduled to enact next year, will be insufficiently ambitious to solve our looming climate crisis, and that adaptation financing will be woefully short of what is truly required. If narrow interests and local electoral cowardice force us to retreat behind our national borders and bury our heads in the sand, we may squander a decade of effort and our only real chance to save the planet on which we live. The stakes are that high. We cannot afford to fail.

It is appropriate that the President of the General Assembly will preside over the launch of the International Decade of People of African Descent, which runs from 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2024. The theme of that Decade will be “People of African descent: recognition, justice and development”. The meaningful and action-oriented implementation of this theme can have far-reaching positive effects on the African continent and among its far-flung diaspora alike.

One element of recognition, justice and development that will be of central importance to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the wider Caribbean Community is the advancement of our claims for reparatory justice from the European colonizing Powers that engaged in native genocide, the transatlantic slave trade and the prolonged system of chattel slavery itself. Over the past year, CARICOM Heads of State and Government have unanimously approved a series of policies, structures and initiatives aimed at educating our populations and engaging former slave-holding and slave-trading nations in a conversation about reparatory justice. The level of priority that CARICOM Governments accord to the issue of reparatory justice cannot be overstated. At the historical root of our region’s many developmental impediments is an enduring legacy of slavery, which is the unchanging millstone that we have been forced to carry uphill for generations. We seek the support of

the international community in furthering our just and timely cause.

Similarly, in a region still grappling with the aftereffects of systematic discrimination, victimization and human rights violations under the cover of unjust law, we cannot countenance the re-emergence of judicially sanctioned bigotry within our Caribbean civilization. The application of the year-old decision of the Constitutional Court of the Dominican Republic continues to retroactively deny thousands of Dominican-born citizens of their rights to nationality, identity and equal protection. The unanimous international condemnation of the decision has led to welcome and increased political interaction between Haiti and the Dominican Republic on a host of bilateral issues. We hold out every hope that those discussions between neighbours will benefit both countries.

However, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the wider CARICOM remain outraged at the core human rights violations that have not been corrected and cannot be resolved by bilateral tête-à-tête. We are beyond the point where continuing human rights violations can be masked behind seemingly benign bureaucracy. We call on the international community to assist our brothers in the Dominican Republic in reinstating the constitutional and human rights of those Dominicans who have been so wrongly stripped of their citizenship and dignity.

Last year, from this rostrum, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines called on the United Nations to accept its role and offer recompense to the victims of the cholera outbreak in Haiti, it having been established that United Nations peacekeepers brought the cholera with them to Haiti (see A/68/PV.16). A year later, the United Nations continues to dodge its moral and ethical responsibility. The legitimacy of the Organization to conduct future peacekeeping missions and the legacy of its leadership at the highest levels will be irreparably damaged by any failure to immediately redress this glaring wrong.

The prestige and legitimacy of the United Nations can be further enhanced through further acceptance of the reasonable calls for Taiwan’s meaningful participation in the specialized agencies of the United Nations. Taiwan already participates actively and constructively in many critical international bodies. My country and several others in the Caribbean and Central America bear testimony to Taiwan’s principled conduct of its intergovernmental relations. Surely the

time has now come for this exemplar of the magnificent Chinese civilization to be permitted to participate in the work of various agencies of this world body.

The chosen theme for this general debate—“Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda” — reflects a wise focus on a central priority and core strength of this institution. The exercise and advancement of the right to development is an overarching priority for the overwhelming majority of the world’s peoples, and it is the absence of sufficient developmental progress that is often the root cause of a great deal of global violence and unrest.

The post-2015 development agenda must coalesce around a series of goals and targets that offer a people-centred path of progress for developing countries. In elaborating that agenda, and in this, the International Year of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), it is critical that the vulnerabilities and unique characteristics of SIDS inform that document. The recently agreed Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (A/CONF.223/3, annex), which emerged from the historic Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, must constitute a foundational input in shaping the development agenda in areas such as concessional financing for development, inequality, poverty alleviation, debt relief, disaster-risk reduction, oceans management and education.

In that regard, we consider it vital that the post-2015 goals and indicators focus equally on targets within developing countries and measurable, timely commitments from development partners. A major shortcoming of the Millennium Development Goals has been the nebulous nature of the so-called global partnership for development. Let us anchor our shared future ambitions in concrete, measurable and predictable action.

Civilized Governments and peoples must respect borders and sovereignty even if some of the forces unleashed by globalization and modernity do not. Let us build on what is right, good and proper in our new interconnected world and cast away not the rulebook but the excuses for disregarding its time-honoured rules.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines celebrates the good of a world in which every student of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines can browse the stacks of an American library using his or her own Taiwanese computer

that was assembled in China. It welcomes a business environment where we can rely on the support of an American non-governmental organization in engaging an Icelandic company and its Canadian counterpart in harnessing our national geothermal resources and propelling us towards 100 per cent renewable energy. We celebrate an international solidarity in which brotherly nations offer support in our time of need after a natural disaster, and engineers and architects convene on our shores to help us rebuild. We welcome technology that allows us the opportunity to communicate, celebrate or commiserate with our migrant diaspora in real time and affords them the opportunity to send remittances to their families at home from every corner of the globe. We value an international order that allows a tiny State to disagree respectfully with a large one without fear of unjust repercussions. We revel in regional integration arrangements, like the Caribbean Community, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, where sovereignty is respected and often pooled, in furthering a cooperative, people-centred vision for growth and development.

Those are not dreams but modern realities in our country today. They demonstrate the paths of peaceful coexistence and development that are possible when sovereignty is enhanced, not eroded. Any nation can like or dislike another nation, approve or disapprove of its decisions, admonish or praise its actions, befriend or avoid its Governments. Those are sovereign rights. But every nation is obliged to respect its counterpart’s equal and unfettered right to exist, act and determine its own political destiny and development path.

The challenge of the twenty-first century is the obsolescence, not of the rulebook, but of the outmoded playbook of cynical strategies, tactics and inconsistent application of international law by those who see it as a tool to further their goals, rather than a restraint on hegemonic geopolitical ambition. Sovereignty is not the right to erect a wall of repression or injustice around national borders. Nor is it the right to protect and project national interests to the detriment of another. It is neither sword nor shield. It is, instead, a responsibility to adhere to an ethic of reciprocity — to do unto other nations only what one’s own nation would accept being done unto itself.

*The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.*