



General Assembly

Seventy-fifth session

15th plenary meeting
 Tuesday, 29 September 2020, 3 p.m.
 New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Bozkir (Turkey)

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

Address by Mr. Nayib Armando Bukele, President of the Republic of El Salvador

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of El Salvador to introduce an address by the Head of State of the Republic of El Salvador.

Mrs. González López (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to introduce a pre-recorded statement by the President of the Republic of El Salvador, Nayib Armando Bukele, at this seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of El Salvador.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex I and see A/75/592/Add.11).

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Grenada to introduce a statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labour of Grenada.

Ms. McGuire (Grenada): On the occasion of the general debate at this historic seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, it is my distinct honour and privilege to introduce a pre-recorded statement by the Honourable Charles Peter David, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Grenada.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labour of Grenada.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex II and see A/75/592/Add.11).

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Barbados to introduce a statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados.

Ms. Thompson (Barbados): I have the distinct honour to introduce a pre-recorded statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados, the Honourable Jerome Walcott.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex III and see A/75/592/Add.11).

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Cameroon to introduce a pre-recorded statement by the Minister of External Relations of the Republic of Cameroon.

Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): It is a great honour and a pleasure for me to introduce, on behalf of Cameroon, a former trusteeship territory of the United Nations, the pre-recorded statement of His Excellency Paul Biya, President and Head of State

In accordance with decision 74/562, and without setting a precedent for mandated high-level meetings planned for future high-level weeks, the official records of the General Assembly will be supplemented by annexes containing pre-recorded statements submitted by Heads of State or other dignitaries, submitted to the President no later than the day on which such statements are delivered in the Assembly Hall. Submissions in this regard should be made to estatements@un.org.

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of the Republic of Cameroon, which will be delivered by His Excellency Mr. Mbella Mbella, Minister of External Relations.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Minister of External Relations of the Republic of Cameroon.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex IV and see A/75/592/Add.11).

The President: I now call on the Permanent Representative of New Zealand.

Mr. Hawke (New Zealand): *E ngā mana, e ngā reo, Rau Rangatira mā o te Ao, Ngā māngai o ngā whenua ake, Huri rauna I te Ao, Tēnā koutou katoa mai Aotearoa.*

My opening remarks were in Te Reo Māori, an official language of New Zealand and the language of the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand. While geographically remote, New Zealand is deeply connected to its region and to the rest of the world. That connectedness drives us to seek common purpose with the countries in the Assembly Hall — the common purpose of a more prosperous, sustainable and peaceful world for all.

For New Zealanders, diversity is strength. We strive for a more equal society and value strong institutions that promote fairness and deliver for all people. We are a country founded on the Treaty of Waitangi — *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* — which requires a genuine and sustained partnership and a search for shared solutions. We still have work to do at home, but these values guide our approach to global cooperation. Our connectedness also means that New Zealand relies on global cooperation and on multilateralism. At the heart of that is the United Nations. We invest in this system not only because it is the right thing to do, but because it helps build a safer, more prosperous and more sustainable future. Our security and prosperity are the peace and prosperity of every other country.

Our interdependence with other nations has never been more evident as our countries have tackled the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. New Zealanders believe in inclusiveness, equality and a sense of community, beliefs that shape our approach to tackling the pandemic. Our response has been science-based and precautionary. We responded rapidly to each outbreak and New Zealanders have played their

part in preventing widespread community transmission. The management of the New Zealand border continues to be our key line of defence.

While we are all learning to live with the impact of COVID-19 domestically, we must also focus on its impact globally. To defeat the virus globally, we will need to be at our collective best. We have to pool our best ideas, think innovatively and share our best people and resources. We need to invest in and trust each other. We support the World Health Organization and the role it played in coordinating an early response. The international system has responded well in addressing the early health, humanitarian and development effects of COVID-19, but the need for international cooperation goes beyond that. We must work together to develop and distribute a vaccine on an equitable basis. To achieve that, New Zealand has joined the COVAX Facility. This will ensure that COVID-19 vaccines can be equitably distributed to every country participating worldwide. By supporting COVAX, we also demonstrate our commitment to ensuring that vulnerable communities everywhere, including in the Pacific, receive the vaccines they need. No one is safe until we are all safe. We encourage other countries to support vaccine multilateralism and ensure the unimpeded, fair and equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines worldwide.

COVID-19 and its secondary impacts are having a disproportionate effect on the world's most vulnerable groups. Millions of children are out of education with no ability to learn from home, and millions have missed life-saving vaccinations. Ethnic minorities are dying from COVID-19 at a disproportionately high rate. Many working in the informal economy, particularly women, lack access to social safety nets. And there has been a concerning increase in gender-based violence. While a vaccine would return some normality to our lives, it may take years to recover from the socioeconomic effects of the pandemic. But we have an opportunity to mitigate them. We must work together for a global economic recovery that protects the most vulnerable, creates jobs and maintains supply chains and open markets. We must ensure that the recovery respects and promotes the human rights of all. We must recommit to the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. And we should rally behind the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire so we can all focus on prevention and recovery.

Where we live, in the Pacific, the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic have been and will continue to be particularly damaging. The outlook is challenging. Many small island developing States depend on tourism sectors that have been drastically affected by closed borders. Those countries also face significant constraints to ensuring economic resilience, and the pandemic has amplified those challenges. The international community must ensure that appropriate concessional financing is available to small island developing States to support their response to this economic shock. New Zealand is committed to working with the international community and supporting Pacific island countries to withstand the most damaging effects of the pandemic.

But in all crises there are opportunities. Our opportunity today is to build back better — to rethink how our economies can work for the many, not just the few, to better focus on the most vulnerable and to rebuild our societies to prioritize tackling the defining challenge of our generation — climate change. Many of the things I have said about COVID-19 apply equally to climate change, but there will be no vaccine against the latter.

The threat of climate change is more real in the Pacific than in any other region in the world. Some of the most climate-affected nations in the world sit within our region. Sea-level rise poses an extreme threat to many Pacific islands. They are paying the price for our collective inaction and their fate is in our hands. They rely on the United Nations and its Member States to make political decisions and commitments to protect their future. The full implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change is critical. Moreover, it is time for a global reset aimed at a greener economy. We must stop fossil-fuel subsidies and divert those billions of dollars into transitioning to clean-energy generation. It is time to rethink how our societies can simultaneously focus on the well-being of our people and of our environment.

The critical importance that biodiversity plays in ensuring the welfare of our people, the economy and the environment will be highlighted tomorrow in the high-level summit on biodiversity. Biodiversity all over the world is in serious decline. The time for action is now and New Zealand is stepping up. We have launched Te Mana o te Taiao, the Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy, to guide the way we protect and restore nature. We urge all others to join us

in increasing our ambition on biodiversity protection. It is one of the best investments we have in our future.

New Zealand will continue to advocate for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. We were the first country in the world in which women won the right to vote. Our top three constitutional positions are all held by women and we currently have our third woman Prime Minister. We are proud of our gains, but mindful of the continuing gap. On Thursday, we will celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the fourth World Conference on Women. The Beijing Platform for Action remains as relevant today as it was 25 years ago, and we recommit to completing the unfinished work. To achieve the commitments set out in Beijing, we must protect the rights of all women and girls. Collectively, we need to do more to eliminate gender inequalities. Realizing gender equality is everyone's responsibility. It is simply non-negotiable and we will not rest until it is achieved.

At recent events marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we recalled the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons. The testing of such weapons has also had a disastrous impact in the Pacific region. We know that no State or organization can prepare for the unimaginable suffering in the wake of a nuclear holocaust, and if we cannot prepare, we must prevent. That is why New Zealand signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We urge all others to join that landmark treaty and we welcome its imminent entry into force. The Treaty's global prohibition on nuclear weapons is a necessary step on the way towards their total elimination. As we will also emphasize in New Zealand's statement to be delivered later this week on the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, it is time for global negotiations involving all nuclear-weapon possessors to take place in order to enable us to achieve nuclear zero.

In conclusion, it was out of the devastation of the Second World War that nations pledged to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Now, in 2020 more than ever, the international community must step up collectively and in the common interest. Since 1945, New Zealand has championed the United Nations and the wider international system. Today we recommit to playing our part in ensuring that the multilateral system collectively responds to our shared and urgent challenges. New Zealand urges all other Member States to do the same. *Nāu te rourou, nāku te*

rourou ka ora ai te iwi. That translates as “With your food basket and my food basket, the people will thrive.” Stay safe, everyone.

The President: I now call on the Permanent Representative of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

Mr. Song Kim (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea) (*spoke in Korean; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): On behalf of the delegation of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session. I am confident that under your able stewardship the session will be very fruitful.

The Assembly’s current session is taking place in unprecedented circumstances. The world pandemic has claimed more than a million precious lives and plunged the whole world into extreme anxiety and chaos. The delegation of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea would like to take this opportunity to offer its deep sympathies and condolences to the bereaved families whose loved ones have lost their lives and to the Governments of all the countries that have suffered enormous human and material losses due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. We would also like to express our firm solidarity with all the medical workers of every country, and to the World Health Organization and the other international organizations that are sparing no effort in their sacred cause of preventing the spread of the pandemic and saving humankind.

Today’s stern reality, in which COVID-19 is becoming ever more serious as the days go by, demands that the Governments of all countries display effective leadership with a sense of their heavy responsibility for the safety of their people’s lives. Thanks to the far-sighted leadership of the Government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, which maintains a people-first policy as its political philosophy and guiding idea, the situation combating the epidemic in our country is now under safe and stable control. During the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak, Chairman Kim Jong Un of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, with extraordinary wisdom and determination, ensured that pre-emptive, timely and strong emergency measures were taken to prevent the entry and spread of the pandemic. In response to the rising number of global infections,

the State is now taking a series of measures to block the virus from entering the country. All our citizens are adhering strictly to the anti-epidemic regulations while remaining on high alert. The Government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea will not tolerate even the slightest carelessness or compromise, but will further strengthen the State’s emergency anti-epidemic measures until the danger of the pandemic crossing its borders is completely eliminated, thereby firmly safeguarding the safety of the people and the security of the State.

Building a peaceful world without war has always been the goal of the Government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. In the past few decades we have done everything possible to safeguard peace and security on the Korean peninsula and in the region. That notwithstanding, the nuclear threat to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea continues unabated, along with all sorts of hostile acts taking place before our very eyes. It is an undeniable reality today that cutting-edge military hardware, including stealth fighters, continues to be introduced into the Korean peninsula and that nuclear-strike weapons of all kinds are aimed directly at our country.

The conclusion we have drawn is that peace never comes of its own accord or through the mere wish of one side; nor is it granted by anyone else. In today’s world, where high-handedness based on strength is rampant, genuine peace can be safeguarded only when one possesses the absolute strength needed to prevent war itself. Since we obtained a reliable and effective deterrent to war in our self-defence by tightening our belts, peace and security on the Korean peninsula and in the region are now firmly assured.

Based on its reliable guarantee of safeguarding the security of its State and people, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea is now directing all its efforts towards economic construction. It is a fact that we badly need an external environment favourable to building our economy, but we cannot sell off our dignity, which we have defended because it is as valuable as our very lives, in the mere hope of a brilliant transformation. That is our steadfast position. At the historic fifth plenary meeting of the seventh Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea held in December of last year, Chairman Kim Jong Un put forward a vision aimed at breaking through the difficulties facing our socialist construction by confronting them head-on through self-reliance.

Great projects are being completed one after another, on a basis of self-reliance and self-development, to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Workers' Party of Korea and its brilliant labour achievements. At a time when the world was in despair as it was drawn into the catastrophe of the pandemic crisis, we in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were launching the construction of Pyongyang General Hospital as a modern medical service facility for the people, and we have now dynamically propelled its construction into the final stage. Although this year we suffered considerable losses, owing to unexpected natural disasters, we are striving vigorously to repair the damage caused by floods and typhoons by ourselves and to stabilize our people's lives as quickly as possible. The manoeuvres of hostile forces to stifle the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, along with numerous other difficulties, will continue to hinder our progress. However, the people will also further intensify their struggle to overcome them and open up a road to prosperity through their own efforts.

It has been 75 years since the United Nations took its first step. Humankind, together with the United Nations, is looking back on the 75 years that have passed and at the same time is envisioning a better future. The main theme of this general debate, namely "The future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism — confronting COVID-19 through effective multilateral action", reflects the demand of an overwhelming majority of the States Members of the United Nations that we build a peaceful and prosperous world on the basis of multilateralism. Multilateralism makes it possible to achieve peace and security and sustainable development by establishing cooperative relations among Member States based on the recognition that they have different ideas, systems, cultures and values. That should be encouraged and promoted, as it fully aligns with the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

The time is long gone when an individual country could hold sway over international politics, unilaterally imposing its will on the world, and multilateralism has become an irresistible global trend. The future that humankind wants is an independent world, free from domination, subordination, aggression or interference, where the sovereignty and equality of all countries and nations are ensured. The United Nations is needed to achieve that purpose. The United Nations should firmly

adhere to the principles of sovereign equality, mutual respect, impartiality and objectivity. It should have zero tolerance of high-handedness and arbitrariness, and it should eliminate biased practices and double standards in all its activities in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter.

In that context, we categorically condemn and reject the economic, trade and financial blockade of Cuba, an economic genocide that has continued for decades in gross violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law and an infringement on sovereignty. We strongly demand that it be terminated immediately. We extend our unwavering support to and solidarity with the Syrian people in their struggle to regain the Israeli-occupied Golan and defend its territorial integrity, as well as to the righteous cause of the people of Palestine to establish their own independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital. We also extend our support and solidarity to the Government and the people of Venezuela in their struggle to reject the interference of foreign forces and defend the sovereignty of their country.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will develop good-neighbourly and fraternal relations with all countries across the world that respect its sovereignty and are friendly to it, and will make a determined effort to safeguard peace and security in the region and the world at large.

The President: I now call on the Permanent Representative of Uganda.

Mr. Ayebare (Uganda): I have the honour to orally present a written address by His Excellency Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, to the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session.

"I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session, and to assure you of Uganda's full support. I would like to thank His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande for his exceptional leadership of the Assembly at its seventy-fourth session, particularly during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic period. I would also like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, for his dedication and commitment to the work of the United Nations, and to express my solidarity to all

countries that are fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and my condolences for the lives they have lost.

“Uganda welcomes the theme of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly. The United Nations is a fitting forum for speaking with one voice on the global pandemic. This session is a timely reminder of the vision, shared principles and commitments agreed on at our sustainable development summit, held in New York from 25 to 27 September 2015 (see A/70/PV.4). When we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we pledged to ensure that no one would be left behind by taking explicit action to end extreme poverty and curb inequalities. As we celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, we therefore need an Organization that is fit for the purpose of addressing global challenges. It is through effective multilateral action that we can mitigate the multifaceted impacts of the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis and accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In that connection, Uganda reiterates its commitment to multilateralism. We see multilateralism as a means to address complex and newly emerging threats and challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected every member of the international community in an increasingly interdependent world.

“Uganda, like many countries around the world, has had to respond to the onslaught of the pandemic. We viewed COVID-19 as a fearless foe of human life that had to be confronted. Our approach to dealing with it prioritized the protection of human lives. As a first pragmatic step to ensure that the country responded adequately and mitigated the impact of the pandemic, the Government developed guidelines and standard operating procedures to align and standardize its response. We combined systematic testing, tracing, quarantining and treatment with restrictions on movement and contact, aiming to suppress transmission of the virus. We combined all of those measures with a widespread media campaign to sensitize the public. The Government has also continued to strengthen its national health system as part of its commitment to universal health coverage and to ensuring that health facilities handling COVID-19 patients are well equipped with the necessary supplies in order to support

efficient and effective case management. Through those deliberate and targeted decisions, Uganda has been able to prevent mass coronavirus infections within the country. The Government has also prioritized sustainable recovery from the pandemic in its national COVID-19 response strategy.

“In addition to its incalculable health and human toll, the pandemic has left an indelible mark on the global economy. Across the world, countries are suffering from the sudden shock to their economies. But beyond the immediate challenges of the current crisis, there is a need for a greater focus on recovery from the epidemic. The impact of COVID-19 can be mitigated if we act immediately and collectively. We applaud the efforts of various international and regional organizations, such as the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the African Union (AU), the Commonwealth, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the East African Community (EAC), among others, in dealing with the pandemic.

“We commend the international community for the support it has given so far in dealing with the pandemic. The decisions in April of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank Group, and the Group of 20 to immediately suspend 76 countries’ debt-service payments for one year was laudable. However, the agreed suspension of debt is not enough to ensure that they can respond and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic or navigate its devastating social and economic effects. We call for more action on comprehensive debt-relief packages, particularly debt cancellations by multilateral and bilateral creditors, in order to enable us to obtain the funding we need for our COVID-19 pandemic response.

“I am glad to inform Member States that key sectors of Uganda’s economy, especially agriculture and information and communications technology, have endured through the COVID-19 pandemic. Production levels increased, exceeding pre-COVID-19 levels. Coffee exports continued to surge despite the coronavirus pandemic, with the figures for April 2020 showing growth compared with the previous year. Uganda has been able to stand up and weather the storm because of the appropriate actions we took as a Government,

including pursuing the right policy on promoting private-sector-led growth.

“The COVID-19 crisis has taught us a few lessons and shown us areas for reflection. First, it demonstrates how interconnected and interdependent our world has become. Secondly, we have seen that we must embrace the digital age and adopt more digital technologies for both production and services, such as banking, retailing and learning, as well as public services. Thirdly, many industries and institutions have shown the ability to adapt and redirect themselves. In Uganda, for instance, clothing factories are making masks, universities have started making ventilators and sugar refineries are manufacturing hand sanitizers.

“Uganda has demonstrated its commitment to scale up national efforts towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. In the wake of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we realize now more than ever the need to remain focused on critical efforts to achieve the overarching Sustainable Development Goal of eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions and spur socioeconomic and political development.

“Progress has been registered in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as reflected in our second voluntary national review report, which was presented at the 2020 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. In that regard, Uganda adopted its third five-year national development plan for 2020/21 to 2024/25 under the theme of “Sustainable industrialization for inclusive growth, employment and wealth creation”. The plan emphasizes key interventions in broad transformative categories for implementation, including environmental protection, governance and industrialization, working closely with development partners and other relevant stakeholders, particularly in the context of building back better in the work of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. It prioritizes the elimination of the silo approach to service delivery and enhances synergies across sectors and among other actors in the implementation of national sustainable development priorities and policies.

“Climate change remains one of the greatest challenges of our time. We continue to witness

climate-change disasters across the globe that result in considerable loss of life and property. It is clear that no country is immune to such disasters. Addressing climate change calls for effective and bold multilateral action from all of us. Uganda, for example, has continued to experience prolonged droughts, melting ice caps on its highest mountain, Mount Rwenzori, floods, erratic rainfall and landslides. We recently experienced the impact of intensive and prolonged rainfall that increased the levels of major bodies of water and caused flooding in several areas of the country. The Government will continue to invest in climate adaptation and mitigation measures that include expanding access to and consumption of clean energy in order to enhance production, as well as increasing forest and wetland cover, in line with our ambitious nationally determined contributions. Those investments will enable us to halt, reduce and reverse environmental degradation and the adverse effects of climate change, as well as to improve the sustainable use of natural resources for inclusive economic growth.

“Mobilizing the means of implementation for mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change, including resilience, remains critical, particularly at the international level. In that regard, Uganda will support bold action proposals at the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, scheduled for 2021, in the areas of mitigation, adaptation and financing. We therefore urge developed countries to fulfil their financial commitments in line with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change to provide \$100 billion annually by 2020 to assist developing States parties in both mitigation and adaptation. We also continue to witness an increasing trend in biodiversity loss, with wildlife and other living species endangered and at risk of extinction. We all rely heavily on the planet for our livelihoods. In that regard, we should therefore reaffirm our determination to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable production and consumption and the sustainable management of natural resources so that it can support the needs of present and future generations.

“As the United Nations commemorates its seventy-fifth anniversary, Uganda joins the community of nations in acknowledging the

legitimacy, convening power, normative impact and undeniable successes that our shared vision can achieve. Much, however, remains to be done in order to further strengthen international cooperation in achieving the three interrelated and interdependent goals of global and regional peace and security, sustainable economic development for all and the advancement of human rights and dignity.

“This seventy-fifth anniversary year also marks the end of the third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, at a time when 17 non-self-governing territories remain on the books with regard to the implementation of the declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples. The unresolved question of Western Sahara remains the single issue standing in the way of the total eradication of colonialism on the African continent. Uganda therefore joins the international community in underscoring its commitment to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including those of equal rights and the self-determination of peoples.

“The General Assembly approved the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of the operational activities for the development of the United Nations system and the repositioning of the United Nations development system in 2016 and 2018 respectively, in order to make the development system more strategic, accountable, transparent, collaborative, efficient, effective and results-oriented. That approval arose out of the need to reposition United Nations operational activities for development so that they support countries in their national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We commend the Secretary-General for the progress made so far in implementing the approved reforms in consultation with Member States. Uganda will work within the Group of 77 (G-77) and China during the next cycle of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review to ensure that it receives appropriate policy guidance over the next four years to support countries in accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in their jurisdictions.

“South-South cooperation has continued to prove to be an important element of international cooperation in addressing global challenges in the global South, particularly during the current

COVID-19 pandemic. Countries in the global South have received support from their global counterparts, which has enhanced their national as well as regional capacities in responding to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. Cognizant of the critical role of South-South cooperation in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Uganda will continue to support the strengthening of South-South cooperation among the members of the G-77 and China and within the United Nations, in line with its principles. As host of the third South-South Summit, I look forward to welcoming the leaders of the G-77 and China to the Summit, to be held in Kampala on suitable dates in 2021.

“Uganda applauds the Secretary-General for his timely appeal for a global ceasefire during the COVID-19 pandemic. There is no doubt that the pandemic has had a global impact on all aspects of our lives, social, economic and political, and in almost all countries across the globe. Where armed conflicts and wars have continued, the pandemic has made worsening situations even more dire. Africa’s continental and subregional organizations have continued to play a critical role in conflict prevention and crisis management across the continent. I welcome the direct partnership and engagement between the United Nations and the African Union on peace and security matters, which have accelerated in recent years. Our experience has shown that wherever the international community, and the United Nations in particular, has supported regional efforts, they have been successful. We should encourage and strengthen that partnership.

“Uganda continues to support and advance peace and security efforts in the region. We are fully aware that the prosperity and development of countries in our region and beyond are inextricably linked to peace and security. We remain actively involved in regional initiatives such as those of IGAD, the EAC, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the AU, and are encouraged by the progress we see. We will continue to support the peace efforts under those frameworks, such as those in South Sudan, the political transition in the Sudan and the stabilization efforts in Somalia.

“The threat of terrorism remains a security challenge of our time. We should be mindful that while COVID-19 and a number of measures taken

by Governments around the globe may have helped to suppress the activities of violent extremist and terrorist groups, the new normal created by the crisis can also play into the hands of violent extremists and terrorist groups. Uganda remains committed to supporting global and regional counter-terrorism efforts. In our own region, terrorist groups such as Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, Al-Qaida and the Allied Democratic Forces continue to be a threat to our common security and development. Neutralizing them requires cooperative and firm responses.

“After 75 years of the existence of the United Nations, the need to reform the Security Council is more urgent and imperative than ever. The current geopolitical realities such as the global health pandemic are compelling reasons for comprehensive reform of the Security Council. Reform will further enhance the Council’s authority and efficiency. Seventy-five years on, it is time to take bold steps to address the long-standing injustice and imbalance in the present configuration of the Security Council. We should make way for the equitable representation of unrepresented and underrepresented regions, especially Africa. African issues dominate the Council’s agenda, and yet Africa remains the only region without representation in the permanent category of Security Council members and is also underrepresented in the non-permanent category. We should demonstrate the political will to redress the historical injustice done to the African continent. We therefore urge all Member States to work to achieve progress on comprehensive reform of the Security Council.

“Finally, later this year an important election will be held for judges of the International Court of Justice, one of our Organization’s key organs. Uganda accepted the Court’s compulsory jurisdiction, without any reservations, as long ago as March 1963, when we were a new member of the United Nations family. We are proud that Judge Julia Sebutinde of Uganda, the first African woman on the Court and one who has served it with distinction, will be up for re-election for a second and final term. I commend Judge Julia Sebutinde to the General Assembly and request its support for her re-election to a second and final mandate on the International Court of Justice.”

The President: I now call on the Permanent Representative of Togo.

Mr. Kpayedo (Togo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session. We also commend the outstanding work of the outgoing President, His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, who contributed to advancing the Organization through his wisdom and leadership during the difficult time that we are going through. I would also like to reaffirm our confidence in and pay tribute to Secretary-General António Guterres for the skill with which he is pursuing our shared goals.

When it comes to an end, the year 2020 will undoubtedly be seen as one of the most difficult in history in terms of the public-health crisis brought about by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which has spread all over the world, causing untold human suffering. It has exposed many unforeseen vulnerabilities among the international community while causing an unprecedented economic crisis. While we are deliberating here in the Assembly we are still searching for a lasting cure for this plague. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the memory of all the victims of the virus and to commend the extraordinary work of the health-care workers from every country who have saved millions of lives.

This session is therefore taking place in an extremely unusual context in which our world is more disrupted than ever. The human tragedy that is the result is putting multilateralism to the test and urging us to act resolutely together to halt this scourge. That is why I welcome the choice of theme for this session of the General Assembly, “The future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism — addressing Covid-19 through effective multilateral action”. In many ways, the theme is emblematic of the overall environment of anxiety, which compels us to be united in solidarity and more determined. The COVID-19 pandemic requires immense sacrifices of us, and our success in halting the crisis will depend on our willingness to unite our efforts to counter the pandemic and prevent our populations from falling back into extreme poverty. It is an unfortunate fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed our efforts to meet several Sustainable Development Goals, including in the areas of health, hunger and decent work. It is therefore imperative that the international community adopt a concerted, global

and coherent approach to respond appropriately to the pandemic. In that regard, I commend the initiative of the Secretary-General who, from the very beginning of the pandemic, launched a global response by the United Nations system to address the pandemic and guide our States to safeguard themselves against the adverse consequences of the pandemic.

It has been established that owing to the virus's highly contagious nature, the preventive measures that we are taking today will not be sufficient on their own to counter and eventually eliminate it. Vaccination therefore continues to be the lasting solution. In that regard, my country encourages all the research that is under way throughout the world to achieve that goal. Although it is promising, we are already dealing with the issue of access to future vaccines. While it is true that pharmaceutical companies are committing enormous financial resources to that end, we must not sacrifice our humanity to economic profit. We will therefore need to ensure that access to any future COVID-19 vaccine is equitable, affordable and not subject to market forces. Accordingly, I welcome the adoption of resolution WHA73.1 by the General Assembly of the World Health Organization (WHO), pursuant to which Member States have provided that full access to any such vaccine and other related medicines shall be timely, equitable, of high quality, safe and affordable for all. My country also welcomes the COVAX Facility initiative launched by WHO — a mechanism for the group purchase of eventual COVID-19 vaccines, coordinated by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization — which will guarantee every participating country fair and equitable access to vaccines through an allocation framework that WHO intends to set up.

The African continent, which is confronting the cruelty of poverty and endemic and cyclical natural scourges, is also seeing a worrying spread of the disease. In order to counter that, the African Union has implemented a control-and-prevention strategy, recommended by the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, the cost of whose implementation alone is estimated at more than \$200 billion. It has also established the African Medical Supplies Platform to improve the provision of COVID-19-related medical equipment and supplies, access to which has become increasingly difficult owing to the strong market demand. In that regard, I welcome the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union to address the challenges posed by the pandemic. My

country believes that the Secretary-General's call to the leaders of the Group of 20 to adopt a recovery plan for developing countries, as well as calls for debt suspension and cancellation, will result in action being taken.

In the framework of its COVID-19 response, after our first case of the disease was diagnosed, on 6 March, Togo set up a crisis committee, personally chaired by the President of the Republic, a national coordination response, a management committee and a scientific committee. In view of the disease's long-term socioeconomic impact, my Government has also launched a national solidarity and economic recovery fund totalling 400 billion CFA francs, or approximately \$665 million. The measures taken involve prevention through social distancing, case detection, the compulsory wearing of masks and education and awareness-raising among the population. We have also shut down various areas of the country, established a curfew, closed borders, schools and universities and banned gatherings.

With regard to health care, the Government has opened dedicated centres in Lomé and in each of the country's economic regions, trained personnel and supplied critical laboratory, medical and protective equipment. The scientific committee has developed a treatment plan. We have taken various social measures for the benefit of the population, particularly the most vulnerable sectors, in order to mitigate the impact of the pandemic — reducing the costs of water and electricity, removing taxes on basic needs, providing food distribution and subsidizing the most disadvantaged citizens through the Novissi cash transfer programme, and, lastly, supporting businesses. We would therefore like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to our various partners and all who are assisting Togo in the fight against the pandemic.

As we commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations this year, it is fitting to note that our institution has made great progress in the areas of peacebuilding, respect for human rights and the promotion of truly sustainable development, despite the prejudices that have to be overcome. One of the Organization's major achievements is in the area of the promotion of peace and security, with peacekeeping operations that have helped to save many lives and restore stability and security in a world plagued by conflicts and emerging threats such as terrorism and violent extremism. Our peacekeeping operations, in which as one of the major troop-contributing countries

Togo is an active participant, have been enhanced and improved over time. This is the right occasion to welcome the fact that they are moving resolutely and increasingly towards a preventive and multidimensional approach.

In the area of development, the Organization's adoption in 2015 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is still so far the most ambitious tool for ensuring our peoples' welfare. The 2030 Agenda, which capitalizes on the experience gained from the Millennium Development Goals, integrates the three dimensions of sustainable development — economic, social and environmental — in a cross-cutting approach. The Organization has also excelled in promoting human rights. International human rights standards have accordingly flourished in various areas, especially with regard to women and children.

However, such successes here and there must not blind us to the fact that the Organization is still facing many other challenges. Only active international cooperation and international solidarity can help us deal with them effectively and successfully. We have not yet banished the spectre of war and armed conflicts in all their forms. And nowadays such conflicts have taken on a new form, driven by non-State actors and amorphous networks that fuel terrorism and religious extremism, including in the countries of the Sahel region and Central Africa. Moreover, climate change, especially the destructive weather events that we have recently seen in Africa, and the migration crisis are challenges that the Organization must meet with bold and sustainable responses if it is to achieve the ideals it was founded on.

Our peoples' expectations are high and pressing, and my country urges all States to assume their responsibility to meet them and commit to taking action, which, to be blunt, entails revitalizing and reforming our Organization, particularly its principal organs, including the Security Council, in order to make it more representative and better adapted to the demands of our time. We firmly believe that greater transparency, justice, equity and democracy, with strict respect for the sovereign equality and dignity of States, particularly in Africa, will enable the Organization to write a new chapter in its existence. To that end, we must not give in to the temptation of turning inwardly as nations. Let us rather move forward together and united in the hope of the peace and development to which our peoples remain firmly committed.

The President: I now call on the Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Gastorn (United Republic of Tanzania): I am pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of His Excellency Mr. John Pombe Joseph Magufuli, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, who could not virtually join this meeting of the General Assembly owing to the ongoing general election campaign in the country. Mr. Magufuli is standing for a second presidential term in the 28 October elections. The Government of Tanzania would like to emphasize its resolve to ensure that this year's campaigns and elections are conducted in a democratic, peaceful, credible, fair and transparent manner, as Tanzania has done in all its elections without fail since 1965.

The United Republic of Tanzania extends its warm congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation in discharging your noble mandate. I also want to pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, for the excellent leadership and commitment he demonstrated during his term of office in difficult times.

It was with great sadness that in July Tanzania lost one of its great leaders, the late Benjamin William Mkapa, former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, and I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to everyone for their condolences.

This year's general debate hinges on multilateralism, which matches very well with our major preoccupation of ensuring that no one is left behind. We welcome and fully endorse the theme for the general debate. You are taking on the presidency, Sir, during challenging times, as the world is battling through the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which is unprecedented. The outbreak and spread of COVID-19 around the world remind us that we need to enhance solidarity within the multilateral system to confront our global challenges. The pandemic has drastically claimed many lives and disrupted the economies of individual countries and the world at large. In that context, I would like to convey our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and loved ones of those who have passed away and to wish a quick recovery to those who are undergoing treatment. We also appreciate all the initiatives within the United Nations system aimed at mobilizing efforts to confront

the pandemic, including sharing best practices to prevent it from spreading further.

At the national level, our Government has taken concerted and decisive actions to mitigate and prevent the spread of COVID-19 that have so far produced positive results in fighting the pandemic in our country. All socioeconomic activities have now been resumed normally. Despite these successes, we cannot deny the adverse effects that the pandemic has had in our country and the world at large, especially where the least-developed and developing countries are concerned. We express our sincere appreciation to our development partners, including the international financial institutions that have complemented our national efforts to combat the pandemic through debt relief, the postponement of debt payments and the provision of grants. In the same spirit, Tanzania further urges international financial institutions and development partners to devise mechanisms to provide resources on unconditional terms to complement the efforts of the least-developed and developing countries in the fight against the pandemic, including, but not limited to, further debt-relief measures to enable them to revamp their economies more rapidly.

As we mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Organization, the United Republic of Tanzania would like to reaffirm its shared commitment to maintaining the pillars of the United Nations — peace and security, human rights and development. Tanzania's independence remains a remarkable testament to the commitment of our Organization to the ideals of the Charter of the United Nations. The United Nations was instrumental in facilitating our independence. Tanzania remains a committed member of the United Nations, and through the Special Political and Decolonization Committee has supported the liberation struggles of many fellow States in their fight to regain their independence. Over the years, Tanzania has also participated in promoting the pillars of the United Nations in matters of peace and security and in working towards the sustainable future that we are all hope to see. We are proud to have participated under the umbrella of the United Nations in peacekeeping operations. Tanzania currently has more than 2,303 peacekeepers serving in six missions, and we believe that peace and security are the cornerstone of our socioeconomic development.

There is no question that multilateralism is an important tool for collaboration among nations, as the United Nations has ably demonstrated. As we enter the

Decade of Action for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we continue to believe that the United Nations is ultimately the right platform for addressing global challenges. In implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the current Government of Tanzania has accomplished a number of achievements in various sectors. Our national economy is growing at a rate of 6.9 per cent, as compared to 6.2 per cent in 2015. However, COVID-19 resulted in a lower growth projection to 5.5 per cent, creating our need for relief to support a more vibrant economic growth projection. Inflation rates have remained stable at a single digit of 4.4 per cent, with the lowest rate recorded at 3.4 per cent in 2019. As a result, on 1 July the World Bank announced the upgrade of Tanzanian economy from least-developed to lower-middle-income status, five years before the national development vision's projection of 2025. That milestone is the result of different national measures, mainly focused on clamping down on corruption, improving public administration and the proper management of public and natural resources. It has also been made possible by the Government's reforms and partnerships with various development partners. We therefore would like to express our sincere gratitude to the United Nations and its specialized agencies, funds and programmes and other development partners.

In our efforts to integrate economic and human development, we have made progress in improving the infrastructure necessary for the provision of social services. For instance, in the past five years we have built a total of 1,769 health-care facilities around the country, ranging from dispensaries to referral hospitals. Additionally, the construction and renovation of water infrastructure has led to improved access to clean and safe water for 70.1 per cent of the population in rural areas and 84 per cent in urban areas. Rural electrification has provided a total of 9,112 of Tanzania's 12,268 villages with electricity.

Twenty-five years after the adoption of the Beijing Platform, inequality still looms large in the world. Despite the challenges that remain, Tanzania has been able to put in place various national frameworks to guide the implementation of measures ensuring gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, including mainstreaming gender equality objectives in all Government policies and programmes. In terms of promoting the right to education, the Government has also overseen major construction and rehabilitation of

learning and teaching facilities, as well as the provision of free education in primary and secondary schools. That has raised primary school enrolment from 1 million students in 2015 to 1.6 million in 2020. Consequently, the number of students enrolled in secondary school has also increased from 1.6 million in 2015 to 2.1 million this year.

The Government has enhanced interconnectedness and has managed to build 3,500 kilometres of roads and numerous large bridges in the past five years. Moreover, we have upgraded major ports and other transport facilities, ranging from the standard-gauge railway that runs through central Tanzania to the restoration of other railway transport facilities in the eastern corridor. Other milestones include the manufacture and refurbishing of ships to improve water transport and connectivity in areas surrounded by bodies of water. The Government has also overseen the procurement of 11 aeroplanes, of which eight are operating commercially.

In an effort to build the industrial economy in Tanzania, we have embarked on the establishment of 8,477 new industries in the large, medium and small categories. That has gone hand in hand with the construction of a major hydroelectric power plant on the Rufiji River that will have the capacity to provide 2,115 megawatts of electricity, enough to boost our energy supply for industry. Our blueprint for the industrial economy and human development seeks to address infrastructure and regulatory hurdles and thereby create a smart, functional and fair investment and business regulatory regime. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to invite and encourage international investors to come and invest in various sectors in Tanzania. We have a stable and favourable investment environment and look forward to welcoming everyone.

At this point I would like to expound on a number of issues that my Government feels require particular international attention and are therefore necessary to emphasize.

We should remind ourselves that the credibility of the United Nations rests on a well-represented and responsive Security Council. In that respect, we reiterate the Common African Position, as elaborated in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration.

On 17 August, Tanzania handed over the chairmanship of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to Mozambique. Tanzania is proud to have served SADC for a period of one

year amid a number of challenges, while reaching milestones in the areas of peace and security, democracy, good governance, financial integration and social development. Those achievements reflect the commitment that Tanzania has always had and continues to spearhead in efforts related to regional integration and international relations.

On 25 October 2019, Tanzania joined other SADC countries in commemorating the day of solidarity with the Republic of Zimbabwe against sanctions in Zimbabwe. We continue to call for the removal of all forms of unilateral coercive measures in the form of sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe to pave the way for that country's socioeconomic transformation and economic development.

The swearing-in in June of His Excellency Mr. Evariste Ndayishimiye, President of the Republic of Burundi, was the culmination of the long-awaited presidential elections in Burundi. With the elections' peaceful conclusion, Tanzania urges the international community to assist the new Government by providing much needed aid for the economic and social development of the citizens of Burundi and the region at large.

Tanzania reiterates its position of support for a stable, peaceful and prosperous Democratic Republic of the Congo. We commend the efforts made so far by the United Nations, the SADC region and the whole international community to make it happen. In that regard, we also want to stress that continued and pragmatic engagement is crucial in order to align SADC's position with the reconfiguration of the Force Intervention Brigade, so as to maintain its effective defence capability, operational effectiveness and command-and-control unit.

Tanzania has always expressed the view that the economic embargo imposed on Cuba in 1960 has outlived its relevance. We encourage both parties to engage in constructive dialogue aimed at achieving its total removal.

On the question of Palestine, we continue to support the resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine, which hinges on a two-State solution in which both live side by side in peace and security.

I would like to conclude by pledging to the Assembly that the United Republic of Tanzania will continue to render the necessary support to the United Nations

in ensuring success in all important global agendas, including the promotion of the equality and self-determination of nations, peace and security, human rights, development, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the United Nations reform processes. Once again, we reiterate our commitment to multilateralism and call on all Member States to embrace it for a just and better world. God bless the United Republic of Tanzania, God bless Africa, God bless the United Nations and God bless us all.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate. I will now make a statement.

As I close today's meeting, I would like to thank all leaders for their contributions to the general debate of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly. It has been substantive and exceptional. For the first time in the history of the Organization, global leaders were not able to be here in person, but that did not prevent multilateralism from operating at the highest level. Heads of State, Heads of Government and Ministers laid down a complete agenda that not only supports the priorities I set out but provides enhanced guidance on the steps needed to overcome the challenges we face. The added feature of introductory remarks by Permanent Representatives was pioneering and maintained the spirit of the occasion.

The fact that so many world leaders chose to address the Assembly is a testament to the power and relevance of the United Nations. No other platform on the international calendar has this convening power. No other organization can bring so many global leaders together. No other body has the potential to address global challenges like the United Nations. Through their visual presence, our political leaders have demonstrated their commitment to multilateralism and to the United Nations. The vast majority confirmed that commitment in their speeches. Many recognize that multilateralism presents the most effective system for addressing global challenges such as the pandemic and climate change. I thank the Assembly for the full and comprehensive endorsement of the rules-based international order and the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. I also take note of the very strong calls for reform and for an increasingly effective United Nations that is aligned with the realities of the twenty-first century and can deliver the future we want.

I welcome the strong support for my call to recommit to and strengthen multilateralism, and in that

regard, for the adoption by consensus of the declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations (resolution 75/1). While sovereign countries can undertake actions as they deem fit, leaders were clear that solutions in an interdependent and interconnected world can come only from multilateral actions with the United Nations at their centre. In the coming year and months ahead, I will rely strongly on Member States and their leaders to support me in that regard. And I urge the Assembly to stay positive and look at the bigger picture. One thing is clear — we are stronger together. Our global consultation around UN75 revealed that this is precisely what people around the world want — greater solidarity, stronger international cooperation and coordination and ever more united nations.

The call for solidarity is impossible to ignore in the context of the current pandemic. Every Member State's remarks referred to the catastrophic consequences of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. There was clear recognition that a virus that ignores global borders requires a solution that delivers for us all, and that we are all experiencing challenges arising from the pandemic. Unilateral actions have failed to halt the spread. Significant efforts are needed to combat the current pandemic and prepare for future health shocks. The Assembly has asked me to focus on the following three issues, which I will continue to address throughout my presidency.

First is the importance of early-warning systems in creating the conditions that can prevent the emergence of another disease. Secondly, we need inclusivity in our approaches to dealing with the crisis. And thirdly, we should have equity in access to future vaccines. At the special session of the General Assembly on the pandemic to be held later this year, I encourage representatives to present policy solutions on those three issues aimed at strengthening cooperation and putting the world back on track towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. I wholeheartedly endorse the call for vaccines to be distributed equitably not just from a practical perspective but from a moral standpoint as well.

COVID-19 is a practice test that has revealed our weaknesses and the areas that we must strengthen together. I was pleased to hear that so many member States recognize the opportunity to build back better so we are better prepared for future crises. We all know that we must build resilience now to prepare for whatever

comes tomorrow. And we know that we have a road map to achieve it in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I therefore welcome the overwhelming support that leaders have shown for the Sustainable Development Goals and the Decade of Action as the best way to end poverty, rescue the planet and build a more peaceful world. That is particularly important when considering climate action. Many States are taking steps to present enhanced nationally determined contributions ahead of the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 26), which I warmly welcome, and I encourage others to follow and enhance the efforts being made ahead of COP 26, to be held in Glasgow next year. The pandemic has diverted resources and attention but climate change is still the greatest long-term threat to humankind. As fires rage, sea levels rise and biodiversity is lost, there is even greater urgency to the pursuit of our climate goals and their integration into our plans to build back better from the pandemic. I will work closely with States to make COP 26 a landmark in our mutual quest to combat climate challenges. I also look forward to discussing the importance of biodiversity, particularly with respect to disease, at the first-ever United Nations biodiversity summit, which meets tomorrow.

Many speakers have raised concerns about threats to international peace and security, and they are well founded, given the devastating consequences of various conflicts around the world. The pandemic has only aggravated the situation. As the representative of the membership as a whole, and within my mandate, I intend to regularly follow up with the Security Council and the Secretary-General with regard to the urgency that representatives have outlined. Seventy-five years after the founding of our Organization, conflicts still rage around the world and many protracted crises remain unresolved. We can find practical solutions if we join efforts to prevent instability and achieve sustainable peace. Everyone agrees on the need for a global ceasefire call. Now is the time for implementation. I ask that the Assembly consider the day-to-day implications of these devastating conflicts for ordinary civilians, including some of the most vulnerable groups, such as women and displaced persons.

Nuclear proliferation was a key concern and I welcome steps towards nuclear disarmament, including support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. I welcome Member States' continued commitment to

nuclear-weapon-free zones and to the ratification and implementation of disarmament and non-proliferation treaties. Peace is more than an absence of war, but I was encouraged to hear the strong commitment to disarmament — a crucial tool in conflict prevention, alongside preventive diplomacy. I also recognize that achieving consensus on such issues is difficult. We need strenuous efforts to overcome the divides. I am ready to work with the Assembly, the Security Council and the Secretary-General to help remove the gaps and improve trust, and I look forward to discussing the issue further during the high-level plenary meeting to be held this Friday, 2 October, to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

The challenges facing us are enormous, but so are the possibilities for solutions. By working together, we can overcome them. We must be as inclusive as possible in our deliberations. The United Nations has yet to achieve gender equality. We cannot be complacent. I count on the support of the Assembly on 1 October as we mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the fourth World Conference on Women. On the issue of participation, throughout my term I will endeavour to involve civil society in a meaningful way so that a diverse range of voices can be heard in this Hall. The people we serve, particularly those in need or in vulnerable situations, should feel that their concerns are being considered at the United Nations, whose most representative organ is the General Assembly.

Before we adjourn today's meeting, I want to applaud the dedicated personnel of the United Nations, without whom none of this would be possible. Particular praise should go to the safety and security personnel, the staff of the Pass Office, the protocol team, the interpreters, the Office of the President of the General Assembly and all the staff of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, who have dealt exceptionally well with the new circumstances and played a crucial role in the success of today's meeting. Let us applaud them together.

Finally, I would like to thank all Member States for their contributions to today's debate and their continued commitment to the United Nations. The Assembly has laid down a bold agenda before me that is closely aligned with my priorities for this session, and I look forward to working with representatives for a session that can contribute to improving the lives of all the people we serve.

A number of delegations have asked to speak in right of reply. I would like to remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mrs. Monica (Bangladesh): Bangladesh is taking the floor in exercise of its right of reply with regard to the statement made by the Union Minister for the Office of State Counsellor of Myanmar earlier today (see A/75/PV.14, annex VIII).

We were outraged to witness another blatant demonstration of falsehoods and fabrications by Myanmar. Myanmar's statement on the developments in Rakhine, particularly the bilateral repatriation process, is not only concocted, it is grossly misleading. Bangladesh strongly rejects such baseless accusations, falsifications and misrepresentations of facts. We emphatically reject the allegations that Bangladesh is harbouring terrorists from Myanmar. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh has maintained a zero-tolerance policy on terrorism, terrorist financing and other drivers of terrorism. We do not allow our territory to be used by any terrorist entities on any pretext. Our track record in countering terrorism with due respect for human rights has earned us appreciation in every forum. Myanmar, on the other hand, should look in its own mirror. Its track record of inhumane treatment of its ethnic minorities is nothing new. It is its State policy, a deliberate policy of exclusion and persecution of its own people that instigates insurgency and turns the country into a breeding ground for all kinds of organized crime. It is rather Bangladesh that has repeatedly offered Myanmar meaningful security cooperation. However, Myanmar has shown no interest and continues to resort to an unsubstantiated blame game.

As we speak, a deadly conflict is going on in Rakhine state. Despite the global call for a ceasefire by the Secretary-General, Myanmar has deliberately kept Rakhine state out of the purview of the ceasefire in order to implement its genocidal campaign against its own people, the Rohingya. Bangladesh was one of the first countries to join the global ceasefire call.

Let me now turn to the issue of repatriation. First of all, the Rohingya issue is not a bilateral one. It is Myanmar's internal problem. As my Prime Minister reiterated in the Assembly earlier this week (see A/75/

PV.12), the Rohingya problem originated in Myanmar and its solution lies in Myanmar. By virtue of being Myanmar's neighbour, we have become victims of their internal policies and actions, which have resulted in more than a million of their nationals taking shelter in our land. We have persistently called for resolving this protracted problem through dialogue. We entered into bilateral agreements with Myanmar in good faith. But it appears that Myanmar still has no intention of living up to its side of the agreement and instead is resorting to distorting history and facts to justify its genocidal acts. The unsubstantiated claims and undue accusations against Bangladesh were made by Myanmar's Minister today to avoid admitting Myanmar's own obligations to repatriate and reintegrate the forcibly displaced Rohingya in safety and dignity. Obviously, the conditions are so bad that not a single Rohingya has agreed to return voluntarily. The international community and United Nations agencies are witness to that. We call on Myanmar to open up Rakhine state to international organizations — to the United Nations, the media and Member States — so that they can observe the situation on the ground.

After the extensive hearing in the International Court of Justice in December 2019, all of us in this forum are well aware of what caused the forced displacement of the Rohingya from Myanmar. During the hearing, Myanmar's efforts to downplay the magnitude of the atrocities were witnessed by the whole world. We saw in utmost dismay how, except on one occasion, Myanmar's State Counsellor refused even to refer to these persecuted people as Rohingya. Today, 1.1 million Rohingya are sheltering in Bangladesh. Those Myanmar nationals fled for their lives in the face of the carnage unleashed by the Myanmar junta in August 2017 in the name of clearance operations. The whole world watched in utter horror as tens of thousands of innocent Rohingya, a large majority of them women and children, fled burning homes and villages, rape and murder.

What did Bangladesh do? We opened our border and we saved lives. We acted in good faith. In a gesture of good-neighbourliness, we negotiated bilateral arrangements for return. We have tried to arrange a repatriation process under those instruments. Yet not a single Rohingya agreed to go back. Against the backdrop of Myanmar's persistent claim that it was ready to receive the Rohingya, we agreed to facilitate repatriation on two occasions, in November 2018 and

August 2019. Unfortunately, not a single person cleared by Myanmar agreed to return, given their apprehensions about further persecution and the lack of any visible action on the part of Myanmar to address their core concerns. The Myanmar Minister claimed that 350 Rohingya have returned to Myanmar of their own volition. Mr. President, that is 350 out of 1.1 million in two years.

Even if we are to accept the Minister's statement, we would like to know who those 350 Rohingya are. Where are they now? Are they living in their homes in safety, security and dignity? Without any concrete evidence of their whereabouts, a mere reference to 350 people out of 1.1 million does not testify to any improvement in the reality on the ground in Myanmar. Clearly, that has not convinced a single Rohingya sheltered in the camps to return home. Why do they not want to return? It is because they do not trust Myanmar. They are afraid for their lives. They do not know what awaits them in Myanmar. We are still receiving reports every day of continued isolation, discrimination and clearance operations obliterating villages, wiping out entire habitats, even changing maps. Where do they return to?

We urge Myanmar to abandon its policy of lies and propaganda and demonstrate the genuine political will needed to take back its own nationals in safety and security to their homes. Myanmar needs to show its people that when they return, they will not be killed, raped or tortured again. Myanmar should undertake concrete actions, not just seek the attention of the international community by making hollow calls about taking back its citizens. Myanmar must address the real causes that prevent the displaced Rohingya from going back voluntarily and not utter a charade of falsehoods or shift the blame and onus onto its neighbours. It is not Bangladesh's responsibility to keep bearing Myanmar's burden again and again. We urge Myanmar to end the false accusations and instead demonstrate to the Rohingya people and to the world that Myanmar will provide a safe space where the Rohingya will not be subjected to any kind of violence but will have proper homes and access to education, health and livelihoods.

We ask the international community to help Myanmar to provide those facilities. And Bangladesh stands ready to engage with Myanmar for the repatriation and rehabilitation of the Rohingya people. Myanmar needs to have a genuine intention and political will to address this issue and earn respect internationally.

Mr. Sahraei (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to express my delegation's sincere condolences and utmost sympathy to the Government and the people of Kuwait on the demise of Kuwait's Emir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and to pay tribute to his outstanding contribution to promoting moderation, peaceful coexistence and the maintenance of peace and security in the Persian Gulf and beyond.

Today the Prime Minister of the Israeli regime made some baseless and unfounded allegations about my country (see A/75/PV.14, annex XV). The dissemination of false and fabricated accusations against countries of the region, particularly the Islamic Republic of Iran, has long been a standard practice in Israel, with the exclusive purpose of concealing its crime and brutality against the innocent Palestinian people. Nevertheless, it is quite evident that no amount of disinformation or manufactured crises can cover up the regime's criminal nature, not to mention the expansionist and warmongering policies that it has pursued over the course of the past seven years.

In flagrant violation of international law and total disregard for all relevant United Nations resolutions, Israel continues to violate the fundamental rights and dignity of the Palestinian people and other Arabs living under its occupation. As a result, Palestinians are deprived of their lands and properties, forcibly evicted and subjected to violence, terror and intimidation. Meanwhile, any rights of the Palestinians to self-determination have been negated under the title of one Jewish State. Worse still, under the current challenging circumstances and as the international community focuses on mitigating the severe effects and consequences of the coronavirus disease pandemic, the Israeli regime continues to exploit this period in order to accelerate its illegal settlement activities and annexation schemes and to further entrench its military occupation. Simultaneously, the inhumane and suffocating blockade on the Gaza strip continues to deepen the severity of the humanitarian crisis and inflict misery on the Palestinian civilian population there. At the regional level, Israel's continued occupation of territories in the Syrian Golan, as well as part of Lebanon, and its frequent encroachment on the countries of the region, have seriously endangered peace and security in the region and beyond.

Israel continues to flout all international regimes governing weapons of mass destruction by refusing

to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention or the Biological Weapons Convention. Furthermore, it continues to seriously hamper the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zone in Middle East proposed by Iran in 1974. It is a fact that it is the nuclear weapons in the hands of this regime that pose the most serious threat to the security of States in the Middle East and to the non-proliferation regime. Yet Israel nevertheless attempts to portray Iran's conventional-weapon capabilities and its exclusively peaceful nuclear programme, which is under the most robust possible verification by the International Atomic Energy Agency, as challenges to regional stability. This is only a hypocritical move to distract attention from the real danger that Israel poses to regional peace and security, particularly through its nuclear-weapon arsenal, as well as its clandestine nuclear installations and activities.

The Israeli regime's entire history is full of aggression against its neighbours and other countries in the Middle East. Given such a grim record, the regime's hysterical attempts to seek international sympathy and favour by claiming that it is in fact the one under threat are nothing but manipulative propaganda. All of these illegal policies and practices have continued while the Security Council, the main body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, has failed to live up to its responsibilities vis-à-vis Israel's aggressive policies against Palestinians and countries of the region. The full-fledged and discriminatory support of the United States, which has resulted in rendering the Security Council inactive and ineffective with respect to all of Israel's crimes and illegal measures, has played a major role in emboldening it to continue such policies and practices unabated and with total impunity.

Given Israel's threat to regional and international peace and security, as well as its unlawful and brutal measures against the Palestinian people, the international community, the United Nations and the Security Council must be fully vigilant with regard to the destabilizing policies and illegal practices of its regime in a volatile region of the Middle East, along with their ramifications for international peace and security, and therefore hold Israel accountable for all its inhumane policies and unlawful practices.

I would also like to take this opportunity to respond to unfounded claims against the territorial integrity of my country by the representative of the United Arab Emirates with regard to the Iranian islands of Abu Musa

and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs. The Islamic Republic of Iran reiterates its consistent and principled position that it does not recognize the existence of any such dispute between Iran and the United Arab Emirates. The three islands have always been an inseparable part of Iranian territory and any claim to the contrary is therefore categorically rejected. Nonetheless, and to show its utmost respect for the principle of good-neighbourliness, Iran has always expressed its readiness to talk with the United Arab Emirates bilaterally about a view to removing any misunderstanding about Abu Musa that the United Arab Emirates may have.

By making unfounded claims against my country, the United Arab Emirates is trying to abuse the General Assembly in order to advance its expansionist policies in the Persian Gulf region. Its ill intentions spring from its hopes that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action can be replaced by a more comprehensive agreement. That is nothing but a strategy to cover up its joint action with the United States and the Israeli regime aimed at seriously weakening the effective implementation of the Plan of Action and Security Council resolution 2231 (2015). It continues to pursue such policies systematically, in gross violation of its explicit legal obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and resolution 2231 (2015).

The United Arab Emirates has also called for a halt to Iran's ballistic-missile programme. That is a clear example of interference in the domestic affairs of another State as prohibited by the Charter of the United Nations. And that call is also aimed at distracting attention from its skyrocketing military expenditure as well as its greedy appetite for importing sophisticated weaponry. Besides that, the United Arab Emirates is hosting large numbers of foreign forces and military installations, making our region home to the highest concentration of foreign military installations in the world. Its claims that it is in fact the one under threat are therefore nothing but manipulative propaganda. The United Arab Emirates' projection of its power and expansionist policy have extended well beyond the region, as can be currently seen in its well-documented transfers of arms and ammunition to countries in situations of regional conflict from Syria to Libya, in clear violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to urge the international community to take appropriate measures regarding the destabilizing behaviour and

unlawful conduct of the United Arab Emirates in the already volatile region of the Middle East.

Mr. Bastaki (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we would like to offer our condolences to Kuwait and its people following the death of Emir Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. May God rest his soul in peace and bring patience and solace to his people and the Arab and Islamic nations.

My delegation would like to respond to the statement by the representative of Iran. First, my country stresses that the three Arabian Gulf islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa are an integral part of the territories of the United Arab Emirates. We categorically reject Iran's continued occupation of them, which has no justification, and renew our call to Iran to respond positively to our invitation to reach a peaceful settlement to the issue of the three occupied Emirati islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, through direct negotiations or by resorting to the International Court of Justice.

Secondly, the United Arab Emirates is not seeking any kind of confrontation. At the same time, however, we cannot accept the aggressive and dominant nature of Iran's policy in the region. We are extremely concerned by its repeated and continued non-compliance with Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) in the light of the forthcoming lifting of the restrictions imposed on the transfer of weapons to and from Iran. It is now more essential than ever for the international community to take concrete measures to address Iran's destabilizing behaviour and its violations of successive Security Council resolutions.

Thirdly, the Iranian representative claimed that my country is jeopardizing the security situation in the region. That is false. The Arab coalition in support of legitimate rule in Yemen, at the official request of the legitimate Yemeni Government, has contributed to protecting Yemen and its people from the Iran-backed Houthi militia. Iran is arming, empowering and supporting the Houthis financially, strategically and militarily, including by training Houthi fighters and sending shipments of weapons and ammunition to Yemen, in flagrant violation of Security Council resolutions 2216 (2015) and 2231 (2015). Through its participation in the coalition, my country has spared no effort to protect Yemen and its people by acting in accordance with international law and making great sacrifices to ensure a better future for our brother

people of Yemen and the region as a whole. The United Arab Emirates will continue to coordinate with its partners and remains committed to achieving the coalition's goals to support legitimacy in Yemen through joint efforts.

The Iranian representative also mentioned the situation in Libya. My country's position in that regard has been clear since the very beginning of the crisis in that country. We reiterate the importance of achieving a fair and comprehensive peace, establishing a ceasefire and reaching an inclusive political settlement, and we support the efforts of the United Nations and all relevant international agreements in that regard.

Mr. Zaw (Myanmar): I have asked for the floor to respond to the statement just made by the representative of Bangladesh. It is regrettable that the statement contained a bunch of false accusations and misled the Assembly with fabricated information. There is clear evidence of the presence of Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) terrorists and their supporters in the camps of Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. They have been trying to hamper the repatriation process by means of threats, violence and harassment against those who wish to return to Myanmar. There has also been extensive media coverage of the problem. Bangladesh must acknowledge that the presence of ARSA terrorists and supporters in the camps poses a risk to both Myanmar and Bangladesh and the efforts to prevent their activities must be strengthened. Rhetoric and zero-tolerance policies on terrorism will not suffice.

We fully share the concerns of the international community about the violence affecting the community in Rakhine. In fact, our Government's efforts to bring peace and stability to Rakhine predate the violent attacks by ARSA terrorists in 2016 and 2017 that triggered the humanitarian crisis. Bangladesh has always said that the current humanitarian issue is Myanmar's problem and that Myanmar has to solve it. Yes, we are well aware of the problem of Rakhine state, and the present Government has taken the initiative to find a sustainable solution to that deep-rooted issue. We have set up bilateral mechanisms to implement the signed repatriation agreements and we believe that we will be able to implement those agreements successfully if our two countries — and specifically Bangladesh — work together in good faith.

However, Bangladesh has chosen a different path. Instead of solving the problem bilaterally in an amicable

manner, as neighbours, Bangladesh consistently seeks action on the part of the international community against my country, including through its leaders' constant calls to countries and regional groups to impose political and economic sanctions on Myanmar. Its ongoing hostile attitude towards Myanmar will not help to achieve our agreed objective of solving the issue of displaced persons in a peaceful and sustainable manner. Rather, it can only exacerbate the existing problems and prolong the plight of the displaced persons in various communities in Rakhine. Now is the time for Bangladesh to stop demonizing and pointing fingers at Myanmar. Seeking international coercive pressure on Myanmar will do no one any good. Such pressure tactics are futile and counterproductive.

As my Union Minister made it very clear this morning (see A/75/PV.14, annex VIII), Myanmar's consistent policy is to maintain friendly relations with all of its five neighbours, including Bangladesh. Let me emphasize here once again that bilateral cooperation is the only way to effectively resolve the repatriation issue between Myanmar and Bangladesh. In that regard, Myanmar will always be a willing partner if Bangladesh commits to the bilateral process.

Finally, let me conclude by categorically rejecting the accusations in the statement of Bangladesh. It is completely untrue and totally at variance with Myanmar's good-neighbourly and friendly policy towards its neighbours.

Mr. Musayev (Azerbaijan): The comments made by the delegation of Armenia at the general debate on 26 September in exercising its right of reply (see A/75/PV.13) are yet another failed attempt to deny the facts and mislead the international community.

The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan began at the end of 1987 with Armenia's unlawful and groundless territorial claims on the Nagorno Karabakh autonomous province of Azerbaijan. The claims were accompanied by extraordinarily cruel and violent efforts to achieve them, including carefully orchestrated attacks on Azerbaijanis in Nagorno Karabakh, a total ethnic cleansing of the area and the forcible expulsion of 250,000 Azerbaijanis from Armenia itself.

On the eve of Azerbaijan's independence, the illegality of any attempts designed either to unify the Nagorno Karabakh region with Armenia or enable its secession from Azerbaijan was confirmed at the highest constitutional level. Consequently, the definition of the

territory of Azerbaijan as it proceeded to independence, in the light of the applicable law, clearly included the Nagorno Karabakh region. The situation following the independence of Azerbaijan and Armenia's actions is also well known. In its unanimously adopted resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), the Security Council condemned the use of force against Azerbaijan and the occupation of its territories, reaffirmed respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and the inviolability of its international borders, confirmed that the Nagorno Karabakh region was part of Azerbaijan and demanded the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

It is important to note that the Security Council resolutions were adopted after the extremist forces among the Armenian community of Nagorno Karabakh unilaterally declared their so-called independence. The Security Council therefore made it absolutely clear that such an action had no legal effect whatsoever and invalidated Armenia's claims over the territories of Azerbaijan once and for all. The status of the Nagorno Karabakh region is unequivocal. It is an internationally recognized territory of Azerbaijan under Armenia's temporary unlawful occupation. Armenia's speculations regarding self-determination have no foundation in international law. In fact, it is the right to self-determination of the people of Azerbaijan that is being grossly violated as a result of Armenia's policy of aggression, occupation and ethnic cleansing.

As for Armenia's allegations regarding so-called Armenophobia or hate speech, their purpose is evidently to disguise Armenia's own hate crimes and long-standing, deep-rooted racist policies. As an aggressor, terrorist and racist State, Armenia is the main destabilizing factor and serious threat to peace and security in the South Caucasus. Two days ago, on 27 September, Armenia's armed forces subjected the positions of Azerbaijan's armed forces along the front line and in adjacent populated areas of my country to intensive fire with the use of large-calibre weapons, artillery and mortars, in blatant violation of international law. Those acts resulted in numerous civilian and military deaths and injuries. Extensive damage was inflicted on civilian property and infrastructure in the area, and even hospitals were not spared. In order to repulse the aggression and ensure the safety of the population, the armed forces of Azerbaijan undertook

countermeasures in the exercise of their right to self-defence and in full compliance with international humanitarian law.

The current outbreak of hostilities is the consequence of Armenia's attempt to derail the peace process. Armenia's inflammatory and warmongering statements and consistent provocations on the ground include deliberate attacks in April 2016 and July 2020, a sabotage-reconnaissance group's incursion into the territory of Azerbaijan in August and purposeful actions aimed at changing the demographic, cultural and physical character of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan with a view to their colonization and annexation.

The achievement of peace, security and stability demand, first and foremost, the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and the restoration of the territorial integrity of my country within its internationally recognized borders.

Mr. Knyazyan (Armenia): Azerbaijan's baseless statement is aimed at concealing its responsibility for a pre-planned large-scale military aggression against the people of Nagorno Karabakh. On 27 September, Azerbaijani armed forces launched a large-scale airborne-missile and land attack along the entire line of contact between Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijan, targeting civilian settlements, infrastructure and schools, including in the capital city of Stepanakert. Four civilians, including two children, were killed during the strikes, with dozens left wounded. The aggression was carefully prepared and any reference by the Azerbaijani side to an alleged counter-attack is utterly deceptive.

Azerbaijan has never made a secret of its strategic goal of resolving the conflict by using force and has therefore maintained high tension across both the line of contact and the Armenian-Azerbaijani State border. Azerbaijan has been continually preparing for a new cycle of escalation. For the past two months it has closed down air corridors, despite the absence of any threat to civilian air traffic. Turkey and Azerbaijan have been carrying out provocative flights at Armenia's State borders and the line of contact. On 21 September, Azerbaijan began drafting reservists and confiscating civilian trucks for military needs. Moreover, on 25 September, the Azerbaijani Ministry of Defence rejected the request of the Organization for Security and

Cooperation in Europe monitors to conduct ceasefire monitoring along the line of contact. There have also been credible reports of foreign terrorist fighters being transported from the parts of Syria presently under Turkish military control to be used in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

Starting in the early morning of 27 September, the Azerbaijani authorities blocked social networks and media outlets, while Turkish military media representatives have been present in the conflict zone from the outset of the attack. Preparations for this aggression were accompanied by large-scale military exercises conducted by Azerbaijan and Turkey between 29 July and 10 August in Baku, Nakhichevan and other cities in Azerbaijan, involving thousands of military personnel, hundreds of armoured combat vehicles, artillery and military aviation, including unmanned aerial vehicles. After the military exercises, Turkish military personnel and equipment remained stationed in Azerbaijan. On 27 September, shortly after the start of the Azerbaijani large-scale military offensive, Turkey openly supported Azerbaijan. In contempt for the international community's continued calls for an end to the hostilities, Azerbaijan is expanding the geography of hostilities to the territory of Armenia, with the active encouragement and political and military support of Turkey. Today a Turkish F-16 fighter shot down a SU-25 plane of the Armenian air force as it was patrolling Armenian air space in the Vardenis region of Armenia.

Armenia remains committed to supporting the Secretary-General's appeal for an immediate global ceasefire. In these challenging times for humankind, the coronavirus disease pandemic calls for a global imperative of solidarity, dialogue and restraint. Adhering to a ceasefire will require the full and unconditional commitment of all the parties to conflict. Azerbaijan's aggression against the people of Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh clearly demonstrates why that Member State has chosen not to join the Secretary-General's crucial peaceful initiative, which Armenia has supported in good faith from the very start.

The political and military leadership of Azerbaijan bears full responsibility for the consequences of its aggression, which is incompatible with international law and the core values of humankind as well as a serious challenge to regional peace and stability. As a security guarantor of the people of Nagorno Karabakh, Armenia will take every measure necessary to protect their inalienable human rights and deliver a

proportionate response to the aggressor. The right of the people of Artsakh to live in safety and dignity, free from fear and coercion, must not be compromised under any circumstances. The right of the people of Nagorno Karabakh to self-determination is an integral part of the conflict settlement and is fully acknowledged by the international community as such. Armenia strongly condemns the aggression conducted by Azerbaijan in flagrant violation of international law, which demonstrates a highly dangerous and irresponsible intention to instigate a large-scale war in the region.

Mr. Sahraei (Islamic Republic of Iran): With regard to the repeated baseless claims about Iran's three islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb in the Persian Gulf, we must make it clear that those claims constitute a notable instance of attacks on the territorial integrity of my country and its thousands of years of history. Once again, we reiterate that those islands have been and continue to be an inseparable part of Iranian territory and we therefore categorically reject any claim to the contrary.

It is quite evident that after almost six years of aggression, death and destruction in Yemen — in which thousands of civilians, including women and children, have been killed and homes, mosques, hospitals, schools, marketplaces, diplomatic missions and even wedding and funeral ceremonies targeted — the United Arab Emirates is deliberately attempting, through fabrication and disinformation, to distract attention from all the crimes it has committed and continues to commit in Yemen in flagrant violation of basic principles of morality and humanity and the rule of international law, particularly international humanitarian law, which entails their international responsibility.

Likewise, it is clear that no amount of smear campaigns can cover up the United Arab Emirates' use of starvation as a war tactic in Yemen, which has caused the worst humanitarian crisis in contemporary world history. That is also the case with respect to the United Arab Emirates' inhumane acts aimed at exacerbating the extremely serious health situation resulting from the coronavirus disease pandemic in Yemen, by preventing fuel, food, medicine and medical equipment from reaching the most populous areas of the country, potentially ensuring the further deterioration of an already critical humanitarian situation.

The United Arab Emirates is called on to truly reconsider its hostile policies towards the countries of the

region, observe the principle of good-neighbourliness, respect international law and avoid policies that spread hatred and sectarianism in the region and beyond.

Mr. Bastaki (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): The representative of Iran continues to claim that the three islands under discussion belong to Iran, whereas we wish to stress that the three islands are Emirati islands under occupation. We have repeatedly requested that negotiations be held, whether directly or by resorting to the International Court of Justice, in order to resolve the issue of the three islands.

As for the situation in Yemen, we repeat that the Arab coalition supporting legitimacy in Yemen intervened following an official request from the legitimate Yemeni Government. Iran's actions, which are having a negative impact on Yemen, constitute a violation of the arms embargo and related restrictions through its transfer of weapons to the Houthis in Yemen.

Meanwhile, my country continues to support Yemen and its people by providing humanitarian assistance in coordination with United Nations agencies and through bilateral relations with the Yemeni people. We reject the false accusations of the representative of Iran, as we have so often reiterated at meetings of the General Assembly. We support the efforts of Mr. Martin Griffiths, the United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen, and we also support the Secretary-General's calls for a permanent ceasefire, especially in the light of the current coronavirus disease crisis. We believe that the only solution for Yemen is a comprehensive political response, not a military one.

Mr. Ba Abbad (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by offering my sincere condolences to our brothers in the State of Kuwait for their loss of a champion of humanity and peace, the Emir of Kuwait.

I thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to respond to what the representative of the Iranian regime said. It is very strange to hear him talk about the miserable situation in Yemen as though his country is not responsible for it. Iran is continuing its intervention, aimed at destabilizing Yemen's security and stability by supplying the Houthi militias with money, weapons and technical and military expertise in order to prolong the war and implement its expansionist agenda in the region at the expense of the suffering of millions of Yemenis. Flagrant evidence of Iran's interference in Yemen can be found in the reports of the Panel of Experts of the Security Council Committee

established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014), which state that the Islamic Republic of Iran is not complying with paragraph 14 of resolution 2216 (2015). As you know, Mr. President, that paragraph defines the arms embargo with regard to the supply of weapons to Yemen, but the world has seen the unequivocal evidence that Iran is providing the Houthi militia with Iranian-developed weapons that were not on the Yemeni army's weapons lists prior to 2015. The Houthi militia has used those weapons to attack cities, launch missiles and drones and kill civilians in Yemen and on the territories of our sister Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

There have also been reports of Iran granting oil derivatives to the Houthi militia, who in turn sell them on the black market and utilize the funds to enrich their leaders and prolong the war. In addition, United Nations reports confirm beyond any doubt Iran's interference in the internal affairs of our country, its assistance to the Houthi militia in the form of money and weapons, its violations of Security Council resolutions and its destabilization of security and stability in Yemen and the region. Iranian regime officials and Houthi militia leaders do not hesitate to boast to the media about their relationship, and even about Iran's victories in Yemen. The Iranian regime has recognized a Houthi so-called ambassador to Iran and has allowed him to occupy the Yemeni Embassy in Tehran, in clear violation of all protocols and governing agreements for diplomatic relations between States.

It is shameful to hear such hypocritical and fallacious statements made by the representative of the Iranian regime in this forum.

The President: Before concluding our consideration of agenda item 8, I would like to express my appreciation to the staff of the Office of Information and Communications Technology of the Secretariat, particularly its Broadcasting and Conference Support Section, for their support concerning all the pre-recorded statements heard during the past six days of the general debate, as well as at the high-level meeting to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations (see A/75/PV.3).

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 8?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 128 (continued)

Strengthening of the United Nations system

(a) Strengthening of the United Nations system

Draft decision (A/75/L.2)

The President: In connection with this item, the Assembly has before it a draft decision issued as document A/75/L.2. I would like to inform members that the debate on the sub-item will be held at a later date. In that connection, I am pleased to inform members that the 3rd plenary meeting, which was suspended on 21 September, will be resumed on Monday, 26 October, at 10 a.m. in the General Assembly Hall, in order to exhaust the list of speakers for the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations.

Furthermore, in line with resolution 73/299 and the declaration on the commemoration of the seventh-fifth anniversary of the United Nations (resolution 75/1), adopted on 21 September, in particular the call to make the United Nations more inclusive and engaged with all relevant stakeholders, this draft decision has been proposed, without setting a precedent for future mandated high-level meetings, to allow entities and organizations having received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the meetings and the work of the General Assembly to submit a pre-recorded video statement by their high officials for the high-level meeting. The requirement for the video to be introduced in the Hall by a representative would apply as it did under decision 74/562.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft decision A/75/L.2, entitled "High-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations". May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft decision A/75/L.2?

Draft decision A/75/L.2 was adopted (decision 75/505).

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 128.

Programme of work

The President: Before adjourning the meeting, I would like to inform delegations that the next plenary

meeting will be held on Tuesday, 13 October, at 10 a.m. in this Hall. The General Assembly will then hold the election of members of the Human Rights Council, under sub-item (c) of agenda item 119.

I would also like to inform members that the programme of work of the plenary will be made available on the website of the General Assembly at

its seventy-fifth session, under the heading “Meetings schedule”, and will be published in the *Journal of the United Nations*. Delegations wishing to be inscribed on the list of speakers for plenary meetings of the General Assembly are kindly requested to do so through the e-deleGATE portal.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.

Annex I

Address by Mr. Nayib Armando Bukele, President of the Republic of El Salvador

[Original: Spanish]

I bid greetings to all the peoples of the world and express my solidarity with regard to the times we are all going through, which are of a momentous and historical scale and more challenging than we have ever experienced.

The pandemic has already claimed more than 1 million lives — millions of lost dreams, millions of people who are mourning the death of loved ones and millions of lives that will have forever been changed. We must continue working for them and prevent those numbers from increasing. God grant that my prayers be with them.

This turning point for humankind has significantly heightened our responsibility. The fate of generations will depend on the actions we take or fail to take in the days to come. And here we are in the General Assembly 75 years after the founding of the United Nations, one of humankind's great ideas.

I thank all those listening to me, who could be doing something else with their time, which is a commodity that is becoming increasingly precious and scarce. I especially thank the Salvadorans both outside and inside our country for allowing me to be here and work for them. And, above all, I thank God, as all that happens is because of Him.

A year ago in the same General Assembly, I mentioned the urgent need for it to change its format and said that if it failed to do so, the Assembly would become irrelevant. Subsequently, the format of the General Assembly has changed slightly, but it has changed. The change was caused by a historic pandemic, but it has changed. What are the results of the change? The Assembly has become even more irrelevant. This year it has become so irrelevant that its relevance has not even been discussed.

For the vast majority of the world's population, it is as if it did not exist. Not only do most people not watch these speeches, they do not even recall that the General Assembly exists. And depending on their age, some may be unaware that it ever existed. In order to test that theory, over the past several days, I asked people of every walk of life and age questions about the General Assembly. Most of them did not even know the Assembly was in session, and the minority of people, who did know, did not even know the theme or who was going to speak. If you do not believe the results of my experiment, ask the first person you see after watching this speech.

I say this as a proponent of self-criticism, given the fact that, as President of El Salvador, I am a member of the General Assembly and, as a human being, I am a firm believer in the potential for this tool to do good.

However, as I warned the General Assembly last year, the world has already changed and continues to change increasingly rapidly, and whoever fails to change runs the risk of disappearing. Today's world is very different from the world of just a few years ago. In no moment in recorded history, has society changed and continued to change to such an extent in such a short time.

And what have we the General Assembly done? We merely send video-recorded statements, as we have been forced to make a change in response to the pandemic

instead of a courageous change to build the future we want. That change alone is insufficient, and the world will continue to change, whether we do or not. To some, these words may sound harsh, but it is my high regard for the founding principles of the United Nations and the Assembly that compels me to speak them.

I want it to change so that it survives. I want it to change so that we as humankind can use this great tool. I want it to change so that all of us together have a hand in changing the world and our shared destiny, not only the General Assembly, which risks becoming irrelevant.

As the year comes to an end, we continue to reel from the effects of one of the greatest crises in the modern history of humankind. And what have we the United Nations done? Let us perform the same experiment once again: ask the first person you see what the United Nations has done during the pandemic. It is in this connection that I would like to thank the countries and organizations that have helped and continue to help us survive the crisis.

I thank the Government and the people of the United States, who helped us transform a public system with 31 intensive care units into one with more than 1,000 multifunctional units, while sending us about 600 respirators, at a time when they were in short supply in the world.

I also thank the State and the people of Japan, without whose help we would never have been able to establish the largest hospital of the region and one of the most advanced and largest hospitals to treat the coronavirus disease in the world. I will forever be grateful to and in deep admiration of the Government and the great people of Japan, who as a society exemplify giving service to the world.

On behalf of the people of El Salvador I also express my heartfelt thanks to all the countries, representatives of private enterprise and volunteers throughout the world who have helped and continue to help us. All the help has enabled us to continue saving thousands of lives, not only in terms of the pandemic, but also the future. Every life that we have saved and will save together represents generations saved — hundreds of thousands of future lives and stories that will have been preserved thanks to our recent action. I thank God for giving us the opportunity and everyone who has helped us to do that.

Such help, however, has mostly been bilateral work, not necessarily owing to the United Nations system. Despite the fact that it was established mainly to deal with events such as the current existential threat facing humankind, there has been a lack of leadership on the part of the Organization to unite the world to counter the virus together.

But crying over what could have been is counterproductive. We must see this as an opportunity and wake-up call so that we are prepared for a similar, or even more powerful, blow — the next global threat — and, more important, so that we take advantage of this unique historic opportunity to build and create our future.

When I was a child — and I like to believe that it was not long ago — we thought about the future and our minds were carried away by the possibilities — flying cars and humans devoting their lives to the arts and humanities while robots would do the work that they did not want to do. The world we imagined speaks in a multifaceted way to the future of humankind's collective consciousness in a multicultural world, free of war, channelling its efforts to explore the stars and place them within humankind's reach.

What do young people imagine now, as they look towards the future? The answer is natural disasters, pandemics, wars, apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic scenarios and dystopian societies. If you do not believe me, try the experiment once again, and ask the first young person you see: How do you imagine planet Earth in the future?

But certain aspects of the future that many of us imagined as children are today realities. Technology has reached levels that even the most daring futurologists could not have imagined. Almost everyone listening to me has a supercomputer in their pocket. Moreover, your mother may be listening to me with such a supercomputer.

Any smartphone today has millions of times more computing power than the supercomputer that took us to the moon. The latest iPhone is far more powerful than the supercomputer of the 1970s, 1980s and even 1990s. There are also billions of these supercomputers scattered throughout the globe, connected to one another by the largest network in human history.

A year ago, in this Hall, I mentioned the potential of this network, and, since then, it has become much larger and more powerful. In a year, it will be even more so. How do we manage it? I believe that we have yet to understand its potential and the potential of all the tools we have available both individually and collectively to us through it.

Never in human history have we had so many opportunities to be able to do what we want to do, be honest with ourselves and create what we want to create. This network allows us to instantly connect with the best minds anywhere in the world. This network enables us to connect with people with the same interests, aspirations and vision of the world. I am speaking from the individual's perspective. Imagine what we humankind can do.

There is something wrong with this world when millions of people have supercomputers in their pockets and the problems remain the same — historical problems like hunger, homelessness, deaths from curable diseases, which are all relatively easy for humankind to resolve. If the whole world decided to resolve every one of them, they would be solved in a matter of months or even sooner.

We have only marginally tested that ability to change the world in recent months. Yet the results have been incredible at both the international and local levels. We are seeing that in the race for a vaccine and collaboration involving treatments of the virus at the global level. In that regard, I very warmly thank the members of the Italian medical community, in particular, whose research led to the initial treatment that saved thousands of lives in El Salvador, not to mention the entire world, at their own great personal risk, at a time when we knew little about the virus. I thank them on behalf of the people of El Salvador. The applause of the world would fall short of justly singing their praise.

At the local level, in El Salvador we have seen how in a matter of months we have put an extremely precarious human health-care system on track to becoming a first-world system. Although progress remains to be made, we have realized that, if we try, we can achieve much more faster than we ever imagined. Every day that we fail to work together in order to solve the world and humankind's problems represents lives that will be lost forever. We will lose those opportunities forever.

In El Salvador, we are trying at the same time that we are cleaning house with regard to problems that lie ahead, but, thanks to God, we are seeing tangible results.

With the help of friendly countries, we have succeeded in drastically lowering all insecurity indicators, including homicides, extortion and robberies, among others. In our Administration, we have saved an average of nine lives a day from being murdered — and nine families from mourning the death of a loved one. I thank God that we have achieved that much faster than we thought possible.

I pray to God that this trend continues and that we will soon be able to transform El Salvador into one of the safest places in the continent — a country that, until only two years ago, many considered as the most insecure country in the world. Much remains to be done. There are several issues that we have to resolve, but if we use the tools that we humankind have created, we can accelerate the process that all developed countries have had to go through.

We are doing it. We are beginning to educate and build a new country. Our idea is to begin building a model society for the world, already embodied by several societies with their own particularities, as examples of what we can achieve as part of humankind. In advocating our vision of what can be accomplished as an interconnected society, I therefore call on all the thinkers and doers of the world who want to participate in the development and consolidation of a country to work with us to build the miracle sovereign State of El Salvador.

El Salvador is a country where the political will exists to take the leap that is so urgently needed by the General Assembly. In El Salvador, members will enjoy the availability of a Government with the desire, ideas and the mission of a forward-looking people striving to create their own future, while, at the same time, contributing to humankind — as well as excellent weather and waves every month of the year.

We are a country that is in the process of being built, which is extremely exciting, but we would like to speed up the process. That is why we are entreating the pioneers of the world to help us in both the public and private spheres in which we are almost completely connected throughout the world where with a few key strokes I can reach them in everywhere so that they can answer me, collaborate and build. That tool is there in order to move humankind at least a little bit in the right direction.

We are counting on the creative human imagination, which differentiates and will continue to differentiate us from other species. The human species will live thousands of years longer and always have something to invent. The possibilities of our —humankind's — future are almost limitless. But we have to take control of our destiny. Humankind must always seek its path, and the purpose of certain pioneers is to ensure the consciousness and the courage to do so. If we unite and succeed in achieving that goal, we may even live to see ourselves as the architects of one of the golden ages in humankind's history.

May God enlighten us all and allow us to rebuild the future together as brothers.

Thank you very much.

Annex II

Statement by Mr. C. Peter David, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labour of Grenada

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I extend cordial greetings from the Government and people of Grenada, on whose behalf I am always honoured to address this noble institution and its distinguished members.

Mr. President,

I join those before me in congratulating you on your election as president of this 75th session of the General Assembly. I am confident in your stewardship and assure you of my delegation's cooperation and support. Your presidency and leadership during these turbulent times require agility in navigating such waters.

I also take this opportunity to commend your predecessor, Ambassador Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, for his able stewardship of the 74th General Assembly.

I further wish to thank both you and Secretary-General Guterres for your leadership and willingness to serve as guardians of the spirit of our UN Charter.

Mr. President,

Grenada recommits, unwaveringly, to the United Nations and its principles as outlined in the Charter. Our commitment, in national and international fora alike, to the norms of peace, equality, justice, and to human rights and multilateralism, is clear.

Let us never forget that the *raison d'être* of this august body is essentially to solve the world's problems through multilateral efforts.

The growing challenges we now face as a global community, such as poverty, poor education and climate change, have been compounded by this dreaded pandemic, and, in turn, risk stymieing the progress made in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. This risk is more acute than most to Small Island Developing States, such as Grenada, given our unique vulnerabilities, including climate change impacts and high indebtedness.

Mr. President,

These are problems that cannot be solved by individual member states. Our efforts must be collective, focused and strategic, if we are to achieve meaningful progress for the future we want.

It goes without saying that we are at a time of immense challenges, but consequently equally, immense opportunities. The world is at the juncture where the old reality meets the genuine potential of a new world order — only if we can grab this moment through genuine multilateralism.

Across seas and continents, people have had to reconcile their pain, with the hope that is needed to survive and to thrive.

The United Nations we NEED is a United Nations that respects, promotes and encourages solidarity and joint action. The United Nations we NEED must promote equality and respect for all humanity. The United Nations we NEED must protect populations from the crippling effects of unilateral sanctions and other coercive measures. The United Nations we NEED must always keep at the forefront achieving sustainable development for all peoples.

Whilst the values and goals of the Charter continue to be relevant today as they were 75 years ago, its commemoration provides us a singular opportunity to not only reflect on our achievements, but also on our shortcomings. Above all else, we must remain resolute in ensuring inclusivity in overcoming and addressing the great challenges we face and do so together.

Mr. President,

Our Assembly is occurring in a global context, with continued and increasing anxiety occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic, social and political upheavals it has caused around the world.

COVID-19 and its adverse impact on the economy of small states, particularly small island developing states, and the achievement of the sustainable development goals cannot be overstated.

In Grenada, for example, we are dealing with the devastating impact of the pandemic. From projections for an eighth consecutive year of growth, Grenada is now facing the stark reality of negative growth, triggered largely by the significant impact on tourism, construction and education. This has resulted in a drastic decline in Government revenue.

In July, for instance, the combined revenue collection by Customs and Internal Revenue Division dropped by 53 per cent compared to that of 2019; a decline likely to be replicated across our main revenue generating departments over the next few months. A staggering figure for a small island developing and micro-state as Grenada.

The Government of Grenada is, therefore, utilizing its reserves and seek international help to finance any deficits and bring relief to its citizens, while continuing the fight against the deadly virus. Already, we have attracted funding from the International and Regional Financial Organizations and friendly governments. We continue to look at other sources for grant and soft loan financing, as well as explore options for debt relief.

Notwithstanding these economic challenges, the Government established a COVID-19 Economic Support Secretariat, along with the relevant stakeholders, with the aim of providing relief measures to the sectors most affected.

Moreover, seven Cabinet-approved sub-committees were established with assigned responsibility for each of the productive sectors of the economy, namely, Tourism and Citizenship by Investment (CBI); Construction (Private and Public); Education Services; Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises; Agriculture and Fisheries; Wholesale & Retail Trade & Manufacturing; and E-Commerce/Digitalization.

Mr. President,

The inescapable fact, however, remains that despite the best efforts of individual governments, like Grenada, this unprecedented global scourge has deep and lasting economic and social impacts on already vulnerable states. While Grenada has thus far been able to successfully combat the health crisis doing our part to stop the spread and preserve life, with a total of 24 cases and currently COVID-19-free, such success was and is only possible through concerted action and stringent measures, which further exacerbate our socioeconomic crisis.

There is, therefore, an urgent need for greater cooperation in combating this dreaded pandemic and this reputable body is best suited to meet this challenge. COVID-19 impacts us all and we must work together as the failure of one link in our global chain to fight this pandemic affects us all.

Mr. President,

In the spirit of multilateralism and inclusion, Grenada has always supported and continues to support General Assembly Resolution 70/5, which calls for an end to the economic, commercial, and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

We call for an end to the Embargo against the Cuban people and we ask for continued solidarity and support for the Government and people of Cuba.

In spite of all its challenges, the role Cuba has played globally in helping to fight this global pandemic must be noted and lauded. The country's doctors have been at the forefront of this battle in all regions of the world.

Grenada wants to thank the Government and People of Cuba for the assistance in our own fight, as well as all the other nations which provided direct assistance in this regard.

Mr. President,

The United Nations membership must make Article 3 of the Charter a major priority in the next few years. Our founding fathers called for this body

“to achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion”.

We must do all in our power to provide added economic opportunities for the developing world. I, therefore, call on the Economic and Social Council to actively pursue undertakings that could create an encouraging atmosphere for Member States to have the opportunity to raise the standard of living of its people particularly in this pandemic period.

In this current global environment, we must be ever conscious that inclusion in the process of the global economy is vital.

Finally, I must recall Article 1 of the United Nations Charter which calls for the Organization “to maintain international peace and security; and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace.”

We must be relentless in our pursuit of the purposes of this organization. Our challenge is to work towards the strengthening of multilateralism if we are to effectively address the global issues that threaten humanity.

Our quest must be for economic opportunities for all states. And our goal should be for the peaceful coexistence of all peoples of the international community.

Indeed, Mr. President, if we can achieve this, we will be well on our way to achieving the future we want.

I thank you.

Annex III

Statement by Mr. Jerome Xavier Walcott, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados

Your Excellency, Mr. Volkan Bozkir, I congratulate you on Turkey's election to preside over this historic 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I pledge Barbados' full support during your presidency. We are confident that the work of the General Assembly will be facilitated, Mr. President, by your steadfast dedication and competent leadership.

I also wish to express my appreciation to your predecessor, H.E. Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande of Nigeria, for his excellent stewardship of the 74th Session, and his wise guidance in adapting the Secretariat and Member States to the world of virtual diplomacy to advance the Organization's work in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

At this critical juncture in its history, Mr. President, when the United Nations should be celebrating its 75th Anniversary, the world is consumed by many complex challenges. Challenges that arise from a world in crisis, and a world with no global leadership.

A world that appears to have lost its moral compass.

Globally, we are witnessing an increased focus on systemic racial injustices, economic and social inequities, transnational crime, terrorism, human trafficking, increased human displacement, rising autocracies, violence against women and the climate crisis, to name but a few.

Geopolitical tensions are increasing as some countries, displaying an alarming preference for unilateral action, are dominating and marginalising others. Multilateralism, one of the philosophical underpinnings on which this very organisation was founded in 1945, is under serious threat.

Power imbalances are causing the world to lose its equilibrium.

Notwithstanding, Barbados continues to hold in highest regard the fundamental precepts of international community and collective action.

The imbalance of which I spoke earlier Mr. President is also evident when you look at how some States are being treated with respect to their debt management.

The refusal of those who have it in their power to help revive our economies — whether it be by moratoria or refinancing, or even access to concessional loans and grants — is causing us greater economic hardship.

Small island developing states, many of which are in the Caribbean and Pacific, labour under onerous debt burdens. Our African brothers share a similar fate. Sadly, for many of us, this remains our post-Independence legacy.

When Barbados joined the United Nations, it was our intention to be craftsmen of our fate and plan trajectories for our post-colonial development. Instead, we now find ourselves ensnared in the false per capita-based construct of so-called "middle income countries". An assessment which bears little resemblance to our everyday existence. An assessment which prohibits our access to concessional loans or financing in adequate amounts, thereby stymieing our development.

Is not now the time for debt forgiveness? Is it not now the time for the creation of innovative economic instruments to reverse the widening gap of inequality?

Another instance of one-sidedness is in the global financial system where organisations of limited membership engage in universal “blacklisting”, and correspondent banking relationships are unilaterally withdrawn. Our small countries are blacklisted for daring to exert their sovereign right to create their own taxation systems and are forced to compete under rules that we have had no voice in setting.

This arbitrariness in engagement with countries like Barbados must cease. It is done without our knowledge and involvement. It is contrary to the laws of natural justice. These combined factors are pushing our countries back into a state of post-colonial penury.

Mr, President, nothing more starkly exemplifies this imbalance of power like climate change. Severe weather events are occurring across the globe and are making our climate mitigation and adaptation efforts even more urgent. As small island developing states, we are struggling to stay afloat literally and figuratively. Just think about what is happening to The Maldives.

In Barbados we have lost over 60 per cent of our coral reefs along with the rich abundance and diversity of species that the reef ecosystems support. In response, my government has launched an ambitious programme called Roofs to Reefs to save the remaining reefs and hopefully use modern exciting new technologies and the creation of new marine protected areas to rehabilitate damaged reefs.

What is ironic is that some countries represented here today provide advice on how Small Island Developing States can increase their resilience, and then take decisions in other areas that can significantly undermine those efforts. It is no secret that the greatest contributors to the climate crisis do not bear the consequences proportionally, and consequently they are not incentivized to decrease their greenhouse gas emissions.

Barbados, for its part, is not postponing its climate ambition. We will not be deterred! Barbados will be fossil-fuel free by 2030.

The United Nations must take greater steps to strengthen and revitalize the climate agenda. The challenges of sustainable development and creating resilience to climate change will assume even greater importance for our deliberations and negotiations. The UN will, of necessity, have to thread the needle carefully on these issues, some of which are of an existential nature for our countries.

I take this opportunity to express Barbados’ appreciation to the host of COP-26, the United Kingdom, for doubling its contribution to the Green Climate Fund to £1.44 billion. We are of the view that the need for adequate climate finance in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic cannot be overstated.

Mr. President, yet another reality that confronts us now is that once again the world is on the brink of devastation, This time at the hands of a pervasive new enemy, the COVID-19 pandemic.

This novel coronavirus has stripped us bare!

It has manifested into a “perfect storm” that has undoubtedly derailed what limited progress we were positioning ourselves to make in implementing the 2030 Agenda, and has jeopardised our ability to meet the Sustainable Development Goals

within the agreed timeframe. Above all, it has exacted a horrific toll on millions of families worldwide and has already taken close to a million lives.

That is why, Mr. President, Barbados unequivocally supports the Secretary-General's call in his recently issued Policy Brief on Debt and COVID-19 that the international financial institutions, the multilateral development banks and the UN should provide debt relief. Equally, we support the calls by ECLAC for the use of a vulnerability index through which issues of debt can be addressed and access to capital determined.

We also eagerly look forward to the results of the upcoming High-Level Event on Financing for Sustainable Development in the COVID-19 Era and Beyond where Member States will be presented with to address areas ranging from Illicit Financial Flows to Sustainable Recovery and the crushing debt burden faced by Small Island Developing States.

We are resolute in our view that debt relief and support measures, or additional financing, cannot be bound to any conditionality.

Barbados is also supportive of the UN's Economic Commission for Africa in its call for the creation of a special purpose lending vehicle, the Liquidity and Sustainability Facility, to support African, American and Caribbean countries in advancing sustainable development initiatives and, more immediately, facilitating access to liquidity, lending and investment. In terms of the current COVID-19 crisis, such a facility could significantly lower borrowing costs, support financial sustainability, and help countries access markets for needed bridge financing and liability management.

Mr. President, Barbados' recovery from the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will be slow and painful. Resuscitating our economy has been a balancing act between reopening for tourism-related services and air travel, and ensuring that our population remains safe. Given the importance of the global tourism industry, we are of the firm view that workers in these sectors should be prioritised among those frontline workers earmarked to receive approved vaccinations. This would put hundreds of millions of people back to work and stimulate the largest global economic driver,

Barbados and the Caribbean community owe a great debt of gratitude to Director General Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus and the World Health Organization for their support and solidarity in ensuring our access to stocks of tests and equipment needed to combat COVID-19. Barbados is also grateful for the assistance received from many other countries, allies, partners and agencies around the world which enabled us to manage and control the spread of the virus.

The United Nations must continue to play a key role in the global response to the pandemic to help its Members in their recovery and to assist them to build back better and greener — better economies, better societies, better conditions for the upliftment of the poor and marginalized,

Permit me, Mr. President, to mention of a few other issues of key importance to Barbados.

It is widely recognised that chronic non-communicable diseases are a global problem and constitute the largest cause of morbidity and mortality in the world. We therefore call on the United through its Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention

and Control of NCDs, and on the World Health Organisation, to develop a health strategy aimed at treating these NCDs as part of a comprehensive development plan. I take this opportunity to point out the nexus between NCDs as both predisposing and exacerbating factors for COVID-19. This linkage makes the management of the NCDs all the more critical.

Mr. President, Barbados calls once again for an end to the Economic and Trade Embargo imposed on Cuba, our sister Caribbean nation. Deep bonds of friendship and family link our two countries, and I wish to place on record Barbados' deep gratitude to the Government and people of Cuba for their invaluable assistance rendered through the provision of much-needed healthcare workers to help us respond to COVID-19.

With respect to Venezuela, Barbados continues to call for sustainable, legitimate and peaceful stability in this important regional partner. In this regard, we look forward to the holding of inclusive elections.

I am pleased to advise, Mr. President, that from April 25th to 30th 2021, Barbados will be the first Small Island Developing State to host the UNCTAD quadrennial meeting. We eagerly await the opportunity to welcome the world to our shores.

The UNCTAD 15 theme From Inequality and Vulnerability to Prosperity for All will facilitate the discussion of a wide range of issues, including the impact of COVID-19 not just on trade and development, but also on our ability to attain the SDGs and Agenda 2030. We will also focus on the future of the multilateral trading system, the measurement of vulnerability, the management of debt, and the structural transformation of developing countries.

Mr. President, let me emphasize that Barbados is clear in its conviction that after seventy-five years the United Nations remains the pre-eminent organisation to respond to the global challenges before us, and to support the international community in the task of rebuilding our societies and economies in an inclusive and sustainable manner.

However, the organization must become nimble and focus more on people, more on delivery and less on bureaucracy. Barbados fully supports Secretary-General Guterres in his repeated calls for a New Global Deal. This New Global Deal must make the United Nations relevant not only to its founding members, but also to countries like Barbados which joined the organisation well after.

Mr. President, now is the time for leaders to foster unity and solidarity. Now is the time for us to display global moral leadership to promote international cooperation and collective action.

I am obliged to you.

Annex IV**Statement by Mr. Lejeune Mbella Mbella, Minister of External Relations of the Republic of Cameroon**

[Original: French]

Mr. President,

It is with great pleasure that I take the floor today to contribute to this year's general debate on the theme: "The future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism".

First of all, allow me to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election as president of the 75th session of the General Assembly.

I would like to salute your predecessor, Ambassador Tijjani Muhammad-Bande of Nigeria, who efficiently led the work of the 74th session.

I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to our Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, who works tirelessly to build a world of peace and justice, in an environment marked by multiple bouts of upheaval.

For the first time in its history, the high-level week is taking place without world leaders being physically present and the general debate is taking place by video teleconference. This technical feat compels us to work together to provide a coordinated response that will help curb this health crisis.

Heads of State and Government,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The United Nations is celebrating its 75th anniversary — a respectable age. It was baptized in 1945 and has helped to unite the efforts of all Members to save future generations from the scourge of war, promote social progress and create better living conditions for all peoples.

The past 75 years have shown that the success of our Organization's mission depends on its ability to bring people together to meet the multiple challenges facing the world.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Whether we like it or not, multilateralism is on our minds.

Nationalism can at times be appealing, but it must be acknowledged that the majority of today's problems are transnational in nature. There is no shortage of examples. I could cite among many others, global warming, migration, terrorism, trafficking of all kinds and so on, which can be combated only through international cooperation.

For more than seven decades, multilateralism has spared the world the tragedy of another world war. It has contributed to economic development and technological advances in various parts of the world.

While the United Nations has played an important role in this process, it is clear that many conflicts and tensions remain. At the same time, as I mentioned earlier, new threats have emerged. Rising inequality is one of them.

In today's globalized world, Cameroon would like that special attention be paid to the manipulation of public opinion and, in particular to the spread of false information through social networks, which increasingly constitute genuine threats to peace.

Above and beyond declarations of good will, my country believes that attaining the Sustainable Development Goals also depends on how each member of the international community assumes its responsibilities. Despite its limited means, Cameroon strives to make progress in eradicating poverty, promoting the rule of law and improving the quality of education.

But it must be acknowledged that low-income countries still have a long way to go.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since its inception, our Organization has been committed to conflict management and peacekeeping. The increase in the number of peacekeeping operations is a poignant illustration. More than 70 United Nations peacekeeping missions are in operation to support peace processes through, among other things, disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation, ceasefire observation and the maintenance of law and order.

The growing collaboration between the United Nations and other multilateral bodies in these areas is a step towards advancing multilateralism. This is particularly the case of the African Union, with which joint missions have been deployed and whose example has inspired African missions.

As a troop contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations, Cameroon has shown an ongoing commitment to the maintenance of international peace and security. Indeed, my country has continued to contribute to this multilateral effort. For decades, Cameroon has contributed troops to peacekeeping operations, such as MINUSTAH, MONUC, MINUSCA and MONUSCO, and can, I believe, be satisfied with them.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The maintenance of peace and security also requires the United Nations to address the issue of climate change once and for all, as it has an impact on security. Yet some deny it, despite the fact that the increase in natural disasters is a stark reminder. It is clear that climate change poses a serious threat to human life. That is why urgent measures must be taken to ensure the future of humankind and to acknowledge the right of humankind to live in a healthy environment.

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Because peace is not merely the absence of war, but also access to food and basic services, Cameroon would like greater attention to be paid to the issue of development. At a time when many developing countries, in Africa and elsewhere,

combat poverty, it is important for the markets of developed countries to be more open to them. This openness would be a useful complement to the official aid and technical assistance that these countries receive from external sources.

For its part, Cameroon aims to build a society in which everyone's basic needs are met. This entails ensuring food security, eradicating poverty, combating discrimination and expanding access to health care. It is in this spirit that my country adopted its national poverty reduction strategy.

However, these efforts by my country are being hindered by the actions of the extremist group Boko Haram in the northern part of Cameroon. A sociopolitical crisis has compounded those difficulties in the north-west and south-west regions of the country where armed groups are terrorizing the population. The Government's efforts to protect the population and restore normal living conditions in the areas concerned have begun to show signs of success. A gradual return to calm is expected.

My country's Government is determined to pursue its mission, based on the principles of the rule of law, human rights, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination, exploitation and injustice. In prioritizing the need for consensus, Cameroon has successfully led a major national dialogue to address, among other things, the root causes of the crisis in the north-west and south-west regions to respond appropriately. The discussions have led to the adoption of the law on decentralization, which includes, in particular, granting special status to the north-west and south-west regions and implementing a reconstruction and development plan for the regions.

While Cameroon is making every effort to address the challenges threatening its stability and development, we must acknowledge that it is difficult for a country to face terrorism on its own. That is precisely why the international community must be called upon to collectively combat terrorism wherever it may be.

Mr. President,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

After 75 years of evolving efforts to achieve multilateralism, racism persists, barriers preventing the free movement of people are once again being set up, and fear of the other, especially migrants, continues to persist — all of which call for genuine multilateralism.

It goes without saying that the revitalization of the General Assembly will have to be combined with the that of the Security Council, which has been under way for several years. With regard to that issue, Africa expects all its partners to show solidarity in allotting two permanent seats, with all attendant rights, and two non-permanent seats to redress a historical injustice — an arrangement on which everyone seems to agree today.

The successful conclusion of negotiations on those two reforms would be the best anniversary gift that we the Member States could offer to the UN and all humankind, for whom our Organization remains the most appropriate forum for promoting peace, security and social progress.

I thank you for your attention.