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President: Mr. Freitas do Amaral (Portugal)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 9 (continued)

General debate

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Benin, His Excellency Mr. Edgar-Yves Monnou.

Mr. Monnou (Benin) (*interpretation from French*): You have the difficult and noble task, Sir, of guiding the work of the General Assembly at a time when the United Nations is celebrating 50 years of existence and approaching a decisive turning-point in its history. Your election to this high office is cause for joy and satisfaction in the delegation of Benin, on behalf of which I have the great honour of speaking from this world-renowned rostrum.

I am pleased to be able to add my voice to those of preceding speakers in congratulating you sincerely and warmly and also in congratulating the members of your Bureau. I am particularly glad in that you represent a country, Portugal, with which Benin is honoured to have excellent relations and valuable cultural ties. It is my belief that your experience and your qualities and abilities will help to ensure smooth proceedings and success here in our discussions.

You, Sir, are taking over your office from my brother Amara Essy of Côte d'Ivoire, to whom I would like to

extend the satisfaction and appreciation of my delegation on the exemplary manner in which he presided over the work of the forty-ninth session. In an international situation marked by doubt, fatigue and an absence of resources, he endeavoured with lucidity, resolve and perseverance to reconfirm the central and irreplaceable role of this Organization in attaining peace and social progress.

I would also wish fraternally to extend a well-deserved tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, whom I welcome here with us today, a man of conviction and humanism whom we should support and recognize for his efforts and initiatives to translate into action the purposes and principles of the Charter.

Our world has changed considerably, and the wheels of history continue to turn inexorably, throwing up their share of upheaval and change, which makes even clearer the need for a universal forum and an instrument as valuable as the United Nations. It has asserted itself as an essential catalyst for international cooperation based on interdependence and an awareness of the common future of mankind.

The ceremonies commemorating 50 years of the United Nations give us an opportunity to evaluate what it has done. I shall confine myself to just a few points.

There is a saying in my country that whenever we hesitate about how to proceed in life, we should look

back over the road we have travelled. So, in that context, I would like to recall that there should be three pillars supporting this Organization, namely: the maintenance of peace and security; economic and social development; and respect for and protection of human rights.

I think I am right in saying that, since 1945, peace has in general been maintained. Most States have now gained their sovereignty and their peoples are exercising their rights, and the fundamental nature of respect for human rights has been universally recognized.

Yet, there are such deep cracks in the second pillar that the whole building may crumble. Hence the United Nations is now at a critical turning-point in its history.

In a world in which economies and markets are being globalized, a world that is almost entirely characterized and united by the communications revolution and the progress made in transport, we soon realized that peace does not simply mean that weapons are silent. Increasing interdependence has not really created a genuine feeling of solidarity. Although this is often said — some of us speaking before the international community every year from this rostrum — it has not prompted collective action to ensure prosperity for all.

The three pillars that symbolize the authority of the United Nations and its ability to carry out its mandate must all be strengthened if the building is to continue to stand.

I did not mean to turn my back on Benin's tradition by allowing myself to turn the thoughts of this Assembly towards symbolism, but rather to highlight the reality of the problems we face and the scope of the challenges they throw down before us. Human dignity is what is at stake here.

The United Nations can become stronger only by strengthening its second pillar, by promoting action in economic and social areas, by focusing its concerns on development in order to achieve or maintain peace through the promotion of social development.

The Organization therefore has a central role to play in preventing mankind from drifting towards new confrontation and impoverishment, and in enabling man to gain greater control over his environment and his fate.

The new dynamic in international relations resulting from the end of ideological confrontation is characterized

by a search for a new kind of inter-State relationship. As a result, the hotbeds of tension and conflict that have not been quelled are now approaching a solution or are being contained. And yet, there is still such upheaval in some parts of the world that international peace and security are being threatened.

I am thinking here of the negotiations between Israel and Palestine. They are the result of resolute action. We know how difficult was the road leading to the establishment of lasting peace in view of the level of distrust and the acute, accumulated suffering involved. Yet, we have high hopes that bitterness and fear will be overcome so that dialogue may continue. We must all encourage dialogue between Israel and the States of the region, and to that end, the good will of all is essential.

In Benin, we welcomed the fact that the weapons had finally fallen silent in southern Africa. For the first time in several decades, the region seems to be able to devote all its energies and resources to development activities.

Here, we wish to pay tribute to the maturity of the people and leaders of Mozambique who have helped to establish a State based on the rule of law and political pluralism on the basis of free and democratic elections. I can only congratulate the United Nations on what it has done to promote peace in that country. We are all concerned that peace should be strengthened through stability, reconciliation and national reconstruction. Faced with this situation, the international community must, more than ever before, support Mozambique by providing assistance that can recreate an environment conducive to economic development.

I also welcome the agreements signed at Lusaka between the Government of the Republic of Angola and UNITA, and on behalf of my delegation I should like to encourage them to live up to the commitments they have made.

The positive developments in Haiti are also most welcome. Benin applauds the reinstatement of the legitimate Haitian authorities and the courage and sense of responsibility shown by the President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who has engendered a spirit of reconciliation. We appreciate the efforts made by the Government of Haiti to strengthen democracy in the country by establishing institutions following free elections. We have high hopes that security and stability can thus be re-established and will help to promote economic and

social development, the only guarantee of lasting democracy.

Unfortunately, however, in other regions, the course of history is still not running smoothly. This is the case in Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi and Liberia, where events would seem to suggest that the protagonists have learned nothing — but they have forgotten nothing either.

In Somalia, the absence of any viable State structure has plunged the country into an impossible situation with momentous consequences. The desire to secure advantageous negotiating positions through the use of force has led to continued suffering for the country. In expressing our sympathy for the people of Somalia, Benin wishes to remind the various factions that they must create the conditions for dialogue and national reconciliation and we would urge them to be tolerant.

In Rwanda and Burundi, re-establishing the judiciary and establishing public order would seem to be the only means of putting an end to the spiral of violence and encouraging national reconciliation, which is a prerequisite for establishing trust and encouraging the voluntary return of refugees. We cannot deny that the slow pace and the fragility of developments in the situation in those two countries raise fears that the tragic events we so recently deplored may recur at any moment.

In Liberia, we welcome the new situation that has emerged from the cease-fire and the establishment of the Council of State. We urge all parties to strengthen the renewed peace by effectively disarming all the factions.

The former Yugoslavia is undoubtedly the world stage on which new types of conflict and efforts to limit them are running at the same time. While taking what may seem a dispassionate look at the situation in the Balkans region, we are not insensitive to the fate of millions of women, children and elderly people who are the victims both of new kinds of exclusion and of the irredentism of the peoples of the region.

I should like to take this occasion to reiterate that Benin strongly condemns “ethnic cleansing”, no matter who its perpetrators may be, all violations of humanitarian law and all attacks against United Nations personnel.

Benin supports the idea of a comprehensive settlement with respect to the consequences of the disintegration of the former Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia. For this

reason, I appeal to all the protagonists to put an end to the fighting and to attacks against innocent civilians.

The New York agreements of 26 September 1995 between the three major protagonist groups constitute a decisive step towards general and lasting peace in the region, which, I trust, will soon cease to be the powder-keg of today’s world.

The deplorable, indeed tragic, situations that I have just described strengthen my conviction that the protection and promotion of human rights and of fundamental freedoms still deserve our full attention. They justify the drafting of new international instruments to complete the existing legal arsenal, so that those who continue to perpetrate cruel and inhuman acts, genocide and “ethnic cleansing” can be punished. In this spirit, Benin supports the establishment of international tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

But what will all these efforts mean if we do not put an end to the production, accumulation and international transfers of weapons, and if we do not progress towards general and complete disarmament under international control?

In this connection, Benin reiterates its unwavering support for all United Nations resolutions relating to the reduction, limitation and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

One of the mandates of this Organization is to make general development efforts the focus of our concerns. Changes in international relations and the liberalization of trade have made us more aware of the many different sectors and players involved in development. The deterioration of our environment has alerted us to the need to focus our behaviour and actions on ensuring the long-term development of future generations.

We are both witnesses to and players in the changes we are experiencing today. And yet we are not unequipped to implement the transition to another kind of development, because we have at our disposal the tools for both diagnosis and prevention. There is only one possible approach: the political will to implement our respective commitments.

I should like to emphasize that as concerns implementation of their commitments the developing countries in general, and Africa and the least developed countries in particular, have proceeded resolutely towards

qualitative political and economic changes. In so doing, they have required enormous sacrifices on the part of their peoples in order to readjust and adapt to new world conditions.

We must acknowledge, however, that the commitments to carry out the duty of solidarity have not yet materialized. Benin, of course, fully appreciates the international community's support for the developing countries, and particularly for Africa and the least-developed countries in general. However, the assistance provided is far from meeting either the needs or the expectations.

I sincerely hope that the results of the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Mid-term Global Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least-developed Countries for the 1990s, which began here in New York on 26 September, will make it possible to overcome these shortcomings.

I urge the international community to live up to its commitment to solidarity with Africa by contributing to the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. At the high-level meetings of the Economic and Social Council held in Geneva from 4 to 6 July last, the international community reconfirmed its commitment to contribute effectively to the development of Africa and to the implementation of this New Agenda.

It is therefore urgent — and this cannot be said often enough — to reduce the debt burden to a level that would enable us truly to set development in motion. I should like also to invite all States to speed up their respective constitutional procedures for ratifying the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa.

The demonstrations organized worldwide at the time of the first World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought bear witness to the commitment of peoples and Governments to tackling seriously this worldwide environmental problem. This commitment must be backed by the depositing of the 50 ratification instruments needed for the entry into force of the Convention in 1996. The first conference of the parties could thus take place in 1997, the year earmarked for the mid-term review of Agenda 21 and of all the recommendations and conclusions of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Measures must also be taken to speed up the integration of Africa into the international trade system and

to help in diversifying economies and encouraging investment. Only in this way will that continent, which has suffered greatly throughout history, be able finally to emerge from the hellish cycle of poverty.

Benin is prepared to contribute to making 1996, the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, an occasion for us to strengthen the moral obligation and duty of solidarity that underlies the struggle against poverty. But our Governments' actions can be successful only if they are supported by all our partners in development.

The year 1996 will also see the holding of the Ninth United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), which is being referred to as the "City Summit". These two major Conferences, whose importance cannot be overemphasized, will provide to the international community an opportunity to assess the progress made in the context of the commitment entered into at Cartagena in February 1992 and of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000. However, the preparatory committees for those two Conferences must focus on finding specific solutions rather than short-lived measures and recommendations.

I am convinced that development cannot be achieved simply by transferring one model of production and consumption from one region of the world to another. We must go beyond that cliché and base ourselves on a true partnership for development, in which responsibilities would be shared equally. For this reason, Benin welcomes the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Benin fully endorses the elaboration of an Agenda for Development with a view to the effective implementation of the programmes of action that have not yet been carried out.

In conclusion, I should like to express our firm conviction that this session of the General Assembly will make it easier for us to achieve a consensus acceptable to all on ways and means of revitalizing and strengthening the institutions and structures of the United Nations.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, His Excellency Mr. Ro-Myung Gong.

Mr. Gong Ro-Myung (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of this historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Leadership has never been more critical to this Organization, and we are most grateful for the able work of your predecessor, Foreign Minister Amara Essy of Côte d'Ivoire, and of the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

We stand at the threshold of a new era, a time of great peril and magnificent promise. The choices that we make in the coming weeks and months could rejuvenate the United Nations for a new century of cooperation and progress, or they could consign the world body to years of stagnation, decline, and irrelevance. Neither path is inevitable, and none of the United Nations shortcomings are irreparable. The choice is ours.

The world, like the United Nations, is in a period of transition and flux. Virulent local conflicts in several regions are being met with global cooperation to contain the violence, assist the victims and mend the political and economic fabric of the shattered societies. During this past week alone, patient and firm diplomacy has yielded encouraging results in the Middle East and the former Yugoslavia, two areas known more for conflict than compromise. In some places, however, gross violations of human rights and genocide are being committed, even as great strides are taken globally by way of strengthening international law and human rights standards, most recently through the Fourth World Conference on Women. As the fields of communications, trade and technology have expanded to global proportions, interdependence has become a fact of life.

In a world of change, no institution — least of all the United Nations — can afford to stand still. The world body, after all, is an experiment. Launched by leaders of vision, foresight, and courage at another historic turning point half a century ago, the United Nations has steadfastly stood for change through peaceful means, for cooperation over conflict, and for hope over despair. Today, we have been called upon to reinvent the world Organization to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, while we recommit ourselves to its founding, and enduring, principles.

There is little doubt that this is a time of testing for the United Nations, but really it is the Member States — all 185 of us — that are being challenged as never before. It is our collective will, commitment, and inspiration — or lack thereof — that will determine the fate of history's greatest experiment in international organization. Our

responsibilities begin with paying our financial obligations in full and on time, but they run much deeper and wider. The Republic of Korea recognizes that the time has come for far-reaching reform in the way the United Nations conducts its business and structures its programmes. Korea gladly joins the many other nations to make this historic General Assembly session a time of reflection, recommitment, and renewal.

No dimension of the United Nations work has been more severely or dramatically tested than its far-flung peace operations. All of us owe a debt of gratitude to the men and women from 70 countries whose courage and fortitude have kept the hope of peace alive under the most difficult and trying circumstances. We have asked them to accomplish a great deal with very little. If the United Nations is to respond effectively to the new forms of conflict that threaten peace and human security in today's uncertain world, it is imperative that its peace operations be strengthened and renovated. We appreciate the ongoing efforts to enhance the preventive diplomacy and rapid reaction capabilities of the United Nations, both within and outside the framework of the Organization.

One of the most promising avenues for bolstering United Nations capabilities is the United Nations stand-by arrangement system, and I would encourage the broadest possible participation by Member States. Today, my Government reaffirms its decision to take part in the United Nations stand-by system and its willingness to provide some 800 men for this effort, including an infantry battalion, engineering units, medical units and military observers.

Since Korea's first participation in United Nations peace-keeping operations in Somalia in 1993, when it sent an engineering battalion to the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II), it has dispatched a medical unit to the Western Sahara and military observers to both the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) in Kashmir and the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG). I am also pleased to inform the Assembly that next week a Korean bridging unit of engineers will arrive in Angola to take part in the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III).

My Government is determined to expand its contributions to the peace-keeping operations of the United Nations at a level commensurate with our national capacity.

As one of the troop-contributing countries to United Nations peace-keeping operations, we feel a great deal of concern over the fact that the number of casualties among United Nations peace-keepers is sharply increasing and that their safety is frequently endangered.

We firmly believe that hostile acts against United Nations personnel, such as armed attack and hostage-taking, are absolutely unacceptable and should not go unpunished. While we appreciate efforts for the protection of United Nations personnel, such as the conclusion of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, we feel that it is the collective responsibility of all Member States of the United Nations to ensure the safety and security of United Nations peace-keepers.

The challenges before the United Nations, of course, are hardly confined to traditional security concerns. Unrest in many parts of the world serves to remind us of the economic, social and political roots of conflict. Uneven patterns of economic and social development are of particular concern.

On the positive side, despite a slight decline in growth since last year, the recent economic recovery of the developed countries and sustained growth in a large number of developing countries have helped boost the global economy in 1995. Economies in transition have shown encouraging signs of improvement. The overall economic situation in Africa has also made headway, albeit slow and modest.

However, developing countries, particularly those in Africa, require the assistance of the international community in their developmental efforts. Fostering a favourable external economic environment for them is essential. In this regard, my delegation believes that the debate in the Economic and Social Council on the theme of development in Africa this year was both timely and appropriate.

In strengthening its cooperation with developing countries, particularly with the least developed countries, my Government places primary emphasis on human resources development. We are implementing a plan, which was announced by President Kim Young Sam at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, to provide technical training for over 30,000 people from developing countries, particularly from the African continent, by the year 2010.

Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We welcome the fact that the issue of development is receiving renewed attention as a pre-eminent global concern. My Government is actively participating in the Working Group of the General Assembly on "An Agenda for Development". Although the primary responsibility for development falls on the individual Government, we believe that national development efforts also require the assistance of the international community.

In that spirit, we vigorously support the multilateral efforts to realize sustainable global development. As a follow-up to President Kim's announcement at the Copenhagen Summit of our intention to increase our official development assistance, we plan to enlarge our voluntary contribution to the operational activities of the United Nations by 65 per cent next year, and will continue such efforts in the coming years.

In our view, the Copenhagen Social Summit was a milestone, not only because it laid a sound foundation for international assistance and cooperation in the area of sustainable social development, but also because it charted a clear direction for future action.

Women's issues have also become a key part of the global agenda. My Government welcomes the recent discussions in Beijing on the enhancement of the status of women and looks forward to the full and early implementation of the plan of action adopted at the Conference.

The protection and enhancement of human rights are an enduring task. The inalienable and basic rights of human beings must be faithfully protected and preserved. As articulated in the Vienna Declaration, the primary responsibility for protecting human rights should be borne by the respective Government. However, it should also be noted that the cooperation and attention of the international community, including the United Nations, are paramount to the efforts in this field.

Since the inauguration of President Kim Young Sam in February 1993, the Government of the Republic of Korea has placed an especially high priority on the promotion of democracy and human rights. The Government has ardently supported the democratization process and has successfully taken various reform measures to promote human rights in the country. I should like to take this opportunity to express my

Government's deep concern over the human rights situation in North Korea. As my Government strongly believes that the people in North Korea, as our kindred, should enjoy the fundamental human rights to which all of us are entitled, we urge Pyongyang to respond positively to the international calls for the protection of human rights, especially through opening its society.

An outstanding and emotional dimension of this issue is the division of families on the Korean Peninsula. During the Korean War, in 1950 to 1953, 10 million people were separated from their families. Most were never to hear from each other again, because even the exchange of letters was prohibited between the two Koreas. Even after the war, hundreds of South Koreans were forcibly taken to North Korea against their will, leaving behind families grieving over separation and anguished by the uncertainty of whether the other members were still alive. I believe that it is high time for the community of nations, particularly the United Nations, to render its assistance and do its part for these divided families so that they may at least hear from each other until they are finally reunited.

Turning to the issue of disarmament, I would like to take this occasion to declare, on behalf of my Government, a one-year moratorium, which may be extended, on the export of anti-personnel land-mines. We hope that our decision will strengthen the international efforts to limit the proliferation of land-mines and to end their indiscriminate use.

Considering the continued importance of the Conference on Disarmament as a unique negotiating forum for disarmament, my delegation welcomes the decision on expansion of membership of the Conference, adopted by consensus at its plenary meeting a week ago. We hope that the countries of the Group of 23 that wish to participate in the Conference will be given full-fledged membership at the earliest possible date.

The Republic of Korea, as one of the original signatories to the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1993, has taken steps to ratify the Convention with a view to supporting the international endeavours to prohibit and eliminate all types of weapons of mass destruction. As we all recognize, universal adherence to the Convention is an essential step towards securing an effective non-proliferation regime in this area. The Republic of Korea therefore strongly urges those countries, including the DPRK, which have not yet joined the Convention to do so as soon as possible.

In our efforts to curb the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) by consensus last May was a watershed event. We urge the nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their responsibilities under the NPT to make the world nuclear-free. In this regard, my delegation joins the call of many other countries for the early conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty, a global agreement which would undoubtedly help facilitate the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons as envisaged in the NPT.

In the same spirit, it is deeply regrettable that some countries with nuclear weapons are still engaged in nuclear testing. On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Korea, I would like to urge those nations with future plans for testing to cancel them without delay.

My delegation strongly endorses the efforts to strengthen the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We believe that the future of the NPT also depends upon cooperation between States in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In this regard, we believe that the legitimate demands of the non-nuclear States to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy should be duly respected and that resolute measures should be taken against those States that fail to fulfil their obligations under the IAEA safeguards system.

The North Korean nuclear issue remains a paramount security concern for North-East Asia and the world. The Republic of Korea urges North Korea once again not only to comply with its NPT obligations and IAEA safeguards in a full and complete manner, but also faithfully to implement the Geneva Agreed Framework between the United States and the DPRK of October 1994. Furthermore, North Korea should live up to its commitments and obligations under the Joint Declaration on Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

Maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula is not just an issue affecting 70 million Koreans, but also a strategic issue with critical implications for the North-East Asia region and the world at large. Accordingly, we believe that the current armistice agreement must be kept in force until a permanent peace mechanism is set in place. With a view to dealing with all inter-Korean issues, my Government earnestly hopes that the North Korean leadership will respond positively to our call for inter-Korean dialogue and cooperation.

As I noted at the outset, the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations provides a unique opportunity for the international community to revitalize, strengthen and reform the United Nations system. To this end, a number of proposals, studies and reports have been put forward. My Government is closely following the constructive discussions which have been conducted thus far in the working groups of the General Assembly seeking ways to augment the effectiveness, efficiency and democracy of the Organization.

As for the Security Council, we are of the view that in reforming it account should be taken first and foremost of the need for equitable geographical representation in its membership and enhanced transparency and efficiency in its working methods. Given the utmost importance of the issue and its implication for other issues, we will remain flexible and open-minded to various ideas and suggestions and make due contributions to the process of consensus-building. We also believe that the coordinating role of the Economic and Social Council should be strengthened, particularly in the area of operational activities.

On the financial aspect of the United Nations, it is alarming to note that the total amount of unpaid assessments is well over \$3.5 billion. An effective solution to the current financial difficulties should be found in order to meet the increasing demands of the United Nations and to strengthen it. It is in this context that we again urge all Member States to pay their assessed contributions on time and in full.

In order for reform to be successful, however, it is crucial to secure a broad consensus among Member States. We must not forget that consolidated political will, mutual confidence and a sense of common interest and benefit among Member States are key elements in the process of reform. In this spirit, reform begins at home, in rededicating ourselves to the community of interests and principles that serve to unite the disparate nations of the world.

In three weeks, in this Hall, the leaders of more than 150 nations — three times as many as met in San Francisco a half-century ago — will reaffirm their commitment to the ideals and purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

As the nations and peoples of the world reflect upon what the United Nations has achieved in its first half-century and what it should aspire to in the years ahead, the Republic of Korea wishes to renew its determination to

render full and unswerving support for the revitalization of the world body in the years ahead. We believe in the collective ability of nations to build a safer, more prosperous and just world, and we are committed to do our part.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Her Excellency Mrs. Lena Hjelm-Wallén.

Mrs. Hjelm-Wallén (Sweden): First of all I should like to welcome the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement being signed today in Washington by Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin. This show of reconciliation should be an example to parties in various conflicts the world over.

As the United Nations celebrates its fiftieth anniversary, it is time to look to the future. The world is different. The end of the cold war, the spread of democracy, economic globalization, and the explosive growth of communications have led to far-reaching changes. Distances between people are shorter, national boundaries are more open and global interdependence is increasingly apparent.

Security is no longer primarily a military matter. Security also implies building confidence, justice and equal opportunities to achieve lasting and sustainable peace, both within countries and through closer cooperation between countries and peoples.

Such cooperation is needed at the regional and global levels. Further enlargement of the European Union would be a step towards a pan-European community for peace and security. We have a historic opportunity to create a united Europe, ultimately developing integration and cooperation to a point where war becomes inconceivable anywhere on our continent. In my vision, the European Union must be a genuine peace project, opening itself towards the rest of Europe and the rest of the world.

At the same time, major threats to human security are global. They must be met by global action. Thus, we must revitalize the United Nations system, and adapt the Organization to the new reality. We need an effective instrument for global cooperation — for peace and security, for sustainable development, for justice and for a life in dignity for all.

We are more convinced than ever that, with 50 years of experience, the United Nations is an indispensable tool

for achieving these goals. Fifty years of experience have strengthened our support for the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

In pursuit of these goals, United Nations personnel all over the world are making major contributions. They merit our deep gratitude. We pay special tribute to those who have lost their lives in the service of the world community and we extend our sympathy to their families.

Appalling pictures of human suffering in Somalia, Rwanda and former Yugoslavia force their way into our homes. We see the United Nations humiliated. The apparent shortcomings of the world Organization have sown doubts about the feasibility of multilateral global cooperation. But the problems of the United Nations are in fact those of its Member States. They result from a combination of growing needs and expectations, on the one hand, and insufficient resources and a lack of political will, on the other.

Sweden's former Prime Minister, Olof Palme, developed this theme in a speech he gave from this rostrum 10 years ago at the special commemorative session to mark the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations. He said:

"Let us not make the United Nations the scapegoat for problems that reflect our own shortcomings. It is not the United Nations that has not lived up to us; it is we who have not lived up to the ideals of the United Nations. It is by improving ourselves and our policies that we can improve the United Nations." (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fortieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 43rd meeting, p. 64*)

Let us not curse the dark but instead shed light. Let us draw lessons both from the more difficult United Nations operations of recent years, and the more successful ones — El Salvador, Namibia, Mozambique and Cambodia.

We have learned that we must take action at an early stage, before the catastrophe is a fact, before the genie of violence has escaped from the bottle. The United Nations Charter offers plenty of scope for preventive efforts. Action must be undertaken with the consent of the States concerned and their sovereignty must be respected. We appeal to Governments: in an internal conflict accept the assistance offered by the United Nations or by a regional organization.

Prevention is seldom glamorous. It does not make headlines. Long-term, often tedious, work, with the focus

on the fundamental causes of conflicts, must be backed up by deliberate political support.

More resources must be earmarked for preventive measures. This is an investment that is needed if we are to avoid new tragedies. The Swedish Government is currently studying how to improve the United Nations capacity for early-warning and preventive action.

We have learned to focus on the security and needs of human beings. Our goal must always be human coexistence, irrespective of cultural, religious or ethnic differences. We must never confine ourselves to drawing up maps that reflect the realities of power politics. We must never accept the evil of "ethnic cleansing". If we do, we will ultimately threaten ourselves and our future.

We have also learned the importance of the principles of international law and respect for human rights. Humanitarian law must be defended and reinforced and war crimes investigated. For example, we must find out what happened to those who disappeared in Srebrenica and Zepa. By bringing war criminals to trial we will enhance respect for humanitarian law. Perpetrators of cruelty, rape and torture must be made to understand that they cannot act out their perversions with impunity. We support the international criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and the Rwanda tribunal.

We have learned that a democratic culture provides greater potential for prevention and conflict resolution. Continued democratization within individual countries must be encouraged, underpinning a democratic international community. Sweden is honoured to be the host country of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), which supports democratization processes throughout the world. The work of IDEA will be a valuable complement to the efforts of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations in this area.

We have learned that troops must be made available for rapid-reaction operations when non-military measures have failed. As a conflict begins to escalate, every hour is precious. The lack of well-trained and well-equipped peace-keeping forces, ready to be deployed at short notice, may preclude successful action. Failure to achieve the proper execution of Security Council decisions due to lack of troops undermines respect for the United Nations. We welcome the efforts made — by Canada and Denmark for example — to improve the United Nations

stand-by capacity. Sweden will contribute an international force to achieve this objective.

We have also learned that the Security Council mandates for United Nations peace operations must be more precisely formulated. Clear messages to the parties concerned are necessary. Unclear mandates may lead to ambiguous perceptions of the United Nations role in a conflict.

We have learned the need to strengthen the United Nations ability to command and control peace operations. We welcome the reinforcements of the Secretariat that have taken place. Confusion occurs when troop-contributing countries intervene in the field through direct contacts with their own contingents. An effective forum for consultations with troop contributors could add to more effective management of peace operations. Such a forum should be established under the Security Council, preferably in accordance with Article 29 of the United Nations Charter.

We have also learned that coordination of diplomatic, humanitarian and military efforts must be improved. Those who are to do the work in the field — humanitarian organizations and potential troop-contributing countries — should participate at an early stage in discussions on the implementation of mandates for complex United Nations peace operations. In this context, I would like to underline the importance of the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

Further, we have learned the need to involve non-governmental organizations in such humanitarian operations. We have learned the value of comprehensive United Nations efforts in which humanitarian assistance, peacemaking, peace-keeping and long-term peace-building are carried out simultaneously, thus mutually reinforcing each other.

We have learned that monitoring respect for human rights can build confidence, thus allaying fears and preventing the use of force.

We have learned the vital importance of regional organizations for peace and security, as foreseen in Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is already playing a prominent role in conflict management in Europe. In other parts of the world — in Africa, Asia and the Americas — regional and subregional organizations are in a position to fulfil similar tasks, if necessary with the support of the United Nations.

Military operations should be based on decisions taken by the United Nations, the OSCE or corresponding organizations in other regions. Other regional arrangements may have a role in organizing and executing such operations, but the bodies I have just mentioned should assume overall political and strategic responsibility.

As we approach the twenty-first century, the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations offers an opportunity to establish a solid basis for improved global cooperation. Sweden welcomes the reform process now under way in the United Nations. To embrace multilateralism we must all rise above short-sighted interests and focus on what is best for global cooperation. We need political leadership from Governments if we are to make progress.

Adapting the United Nations to the demands of the new era will involve hard work and difficult negotiations. We must not miss the opportunity provided by this anniversary. We need speedy progress. A clear timetable and a comprehensive framework are required for necessary change.

The Commission on Global Governance, under the chairmanship of Sir Shridath Ramphal and the Prime Minister of Sweden, Ingvar Carlsson, offers several proposals for a stronger, more efficient and more democratic United Nations. The Commission's report is a valuable contribution and a source of inspiration for United Nations reform.

In order to be effective and more representative, the Security Council requires enlargement. We would welcome Germany and Japan as permanent members. At the same time, the need for geographical balance must be met. We want a more transparent Security Council. We want a composition and a decision-making process which prevent the division of the world into spheres of interest. The reform of the Security Council should be reviewed after 15 to 20 years with a view to maintaining its legitimacy and to achieving optimum flexibility.

We meet at a time when the financial situation of the United Nations is critical. Last Monday the Nordic Foreign Ministers, in a joint statement, highlighted the threat to multilateralism caused by the present financial crisis. Nowhere is the crisis in multilateralism seen more clearly than in the unwillingness of some Member States to pay their assessed contributions to the United Nations in full, without conditions and on time. It is unacceptable that so far only one third of the Member States have paid

their regular-budget contributions for this year. Countries constantly demand more from the Organization, yet some of them are not willing to pay their membership fees. They apparently want others to foot the bill.

Unilateral withholding of payment cannot be justified. Unilateral measures undermine multilateralism, particularly when taken by the single most important contributor. It is humiliating to see the Secretary-General spend time and energy begging for funds when the world community is demanding that the United Nations concentrate fully on the tasks which it was designed for.

The United Nations needs revised scales of assessment to better reflect Member States' ability to pay. Together with the United Kingdom, my Government has presented concrete proposals to address this problem.

In the longer term, the resource base of the United Nations must be strengthened. The possibility of additional sources of funding needs also to be considered.

Poverty and social misery are the greatest long-term threats to international peace and security. Some of the poorest countries have been caught in vicious circles of debt management. The United Nations must be given a stronger and better-defined role in the economic and social fields.

A clearer division of work is called for in development assistance. Better coordination, more distinct priorities and more effective management by the United Nations development agencies are required. The governing boards of these agencies must be in a better position to play their leading role in the implementation of development assistance. Furthermore, we need improved forms of financing, with a higher proportion of assistance levied and negotiated in advance. More long-term planning of assistance is required, and the flow of funds must become more predictable.

Sweden continues to be one of the largest voluntary contributors to United Nations economic and social activities. We expect other donor countries to assume their responsibilities to the same degree. As regards total development assistance, it must be possible for most donor countries to reach the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product.

The United Nations is contemporary with the atomic bomb. Today we no longer accept living under a nuclear threat. The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-

Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was an important step in the right direction. We urge those few States which have not yet acceded to the NPT to do so without further delay, thus making it clear to the world community that they renounce the nuclear-weapon option.

In May of this year the 180 States which have acceded to the NPT confirmed that the ultimate goal is to abolish nuclear weapons. International bans on chemical and biological weapons are already in place. It should be possible, if there is political will, to achieve within 10 to 15 years an agreement prohibiting nuclear weapons, thus making this threat to human existence a brief interlude in our history.

A comprehensive test-ban treaty must be achieved in 1996, banning all nuclear tests for all time. In the meantime, we urge the nuclear-weapon States to refrain from all nuclear testing in order to ensure that faith in a future free from fear of a nuclear holocaust can be sustained.

Every day, every hour, around the world, anti-personnel mines indiscriminately maim innocent civilians, many of them children. The ongoing Conference in Vienna to review the 1980 weapons Convention should result in a strongly and concretely reinforced regime against anti-personnel mines. This is a fundamental, moral and humanitarian imperative, and it is one step on the road to a total international ban on the use of anti-personnel mines. Moreover, substantial resources need to be invested in efficient mine clearance. Sweden is ready to contribute expertise and assist in the development of more advanced technology in this field.

Furthermore, at the Vienna Conference, Sweden has proposed an additional protocol on blinding weapons. For more than a decade we have worked for explicit prohibition of blinding as a method of warfare. We now hope that it will be universally accepted.

Security is a broad concept in today's world. We know that poverty, social injustice, environmental degradation, rapid population growth and massive refugee flows create fear, disruption and conflicts.

The major United Nations conferences on environment and development, human rights, population, social issues, women and human settlement all involved crucial questions of survival. We welcome the outcome of these conferences, the most recent of which was the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing. We

need to address both the root causes and the consequences of social injustice. Sustainable social and economic development can be achieved only with the full participation of women.

To Sweden, multilateral cooperation is the most important instrument for mastering the crucial issues of survival. For this reason, we will continue to be an active Member of the United Nations. For this reason, we believe wholeheartedly that multilateralism is not only a matter of solidarity, but, indeed, a question of enlightened self-interest.

As an expression of our strong commitment to the United Nations and to international peace and security, Sweden is a candidate for a seat on the Security Council in 1997-98. Our candidacy is a matter of highest priority for the Swedish Government and the Swedish people. It has been launched with the full support of the other four Nordic countries. As a member of the Council, we will make a constructive contribution to its work. Our dedication will be consistent with our record as a United Nations Member. Our support for United Nations ideals and activities is concrete, substantial and unwavering.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Ukraine, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko.

Mr. Udovenko (Ukraine): I should like first of all to congratulate the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Freitas do Amaral, on his election to that high position. To guide the proceedings of the most representative organ of the United Nations in its jubilee year is a great privilege for a politician and diplomat, as well as for the country that he represents. We hope that his vision of the future of the Organization, contained in his opening remarks, will find support among Member States.

The delegation of Ukraine also expresses its gratitude to Mr. Amara Essy for successfully guiding the General Assembly at its last session. Many years of close cooperation have bonded me with Minister Essy, whom I highly respect for his diplomatic and human qualities.

In the historical calendar there are dates that can never be forgotten. The year 1945 is one such memorable time. Recently, we all commemorated together the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. The calendar of international life is for ever interwoven with the half-century history of the United Nations.

In paying tribute to the founders of the United Nations, Ukraine among them, our delegation would like to note the leading role of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt — one of the initiators of the creation of the universal Organization and the author of its very name — the United Nations. We are confident that the United Nations can work out an appropriate way in which to pay respect to this outstanding person.

During the past half century the United Nations, as no other international organization, has acquired credibility as a reliable instrument for maintaining peace, as a mediator and active participant in the peaceful settlement of conflicts, and as a champion of human rights. The United Nations has played a decisive role in the decolonization and self-determination of peoples. The United Nations has proved its viability, having experienced the difficult decades of the cold war, when the walls and the rostrum of its Headquarters often witnessed the struggle of two opposing blocs. Ukraine — whose institutions of statehood were developing along with the United Nations and were fully established after the proclamation of independence in 1991 — feels the considerable support of the United Nations as well.

Witness the dramatic events of the past quarter of the twentieth century, the pinnacle of the philosophic triangle of “peace-development-democracy” is peace. And the most illustrative example of this is the tragic conflict in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. This conflict, by its very nature, is due to all possible reasons: militant separatism, ethnic confrontation, religious intolerance. The most dangerous thing is the fact that, in terms of its scale, developments and tragic consequences, this conflict has turned into a real threat to international peace and security. I think that for all of us, Members of the United Nations, the painful fact is that we are compelled again and again to return to this issue, even during the jubilee fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

United Nations peace-keeping operations in this region have revealed both positive and negative aspects of international efforts. The Yugoslav example demonstrates, in general, that rethinking the role of the United Nations and adapting the role to current realities are proceeding very slowly. Sometimes it seems as if the Organization is continuing to live by the inertia of the old mentality, which does not allow it to use its potential effectively and makes it appeal to other organizations for help. Besides, we consider that most of the problems the United Nations is facing in the former Yugoslavia are rooted in the non-

observance of at least a number of the major established principles of peace-keeping.

In particular, this may apply to the principle of impartiality. Thus, a review of the discussions in the Security Council and the activities of the Contact Group does not, unfortunately, give a sufficient basis for talking about real political impartiality in the positions of some of their members in regard to all parties to the post-Yugoslav conflict. As a result, international public opinion bases itself on a policy of dual standards and biased assessments and decisions, and this does not enhance the credibility of our Organization.

It is universally recognized that success in the final settlement of any conflict depends on the will of the belligerents and their readiness to engage in a dialogue and international mediation. At the same time, the consent of the conflicting parties to facilitate United Nations peace-keeping efforts was not always given. The taking of peace-keepers hostage by parties to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia makes us think seriously of the need to establish a comprehensive mechanism for the use of force and to enhance the protection of United Nations peace-keeping personnel. In this connection, Ukraine, which initiated the elaboration of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, calls upon all countries to expedite the ratification of this document.

At the same time, in spite of all the unprecedented difficulties and some miscalculations in conducting United Nations peace-keeping operations in the former Yugoslavia, we find it necessary to keep United Nations forces there. Accordingly, we should continue to seek means to bring about a peaceful settlement of the conflict. It seems that today everyone agrees that there is no alternative to a political settlement. We welcome efforts in that direction, particularly the recent intensification of relevant activities by the United States. We also believe that Russia can play a greater and constructive role in a peaceful settlement. For its part, Ukraine, as a major contributor to the United Nations Protection Force, is ready to continue its cooperation with the United Nations in this field. I would like to confirm that Kiev is ready, if necessary, to host a meeting of the leaders of the parties to the conflict with the participation of all the countries and international organizations concerned. The President of Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, has sent letters with appropriate proposals to the leaders of Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The process of settling the Yugoslav conflict could, in our opinion, be intensified by expanding the composition of

the Contact Group and studying new approaches. As an example to follow, we note the international meeting on Bosnia held on 21 July in London, in which the delegation of Ukraine also took part.

While highly appreciating the considerable personal contribution of Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to the philosophy of peace-keeping, we consider that new approaches in this field require further practical development, in particular the principle of utilizing the rapid reaction force, which has already been quite actively involved in the former Yugoslavia.

The question of implementing the idea of establishing a United Nations stand-by force, in which Ukraine is ready to participate, is still outstanding.

We consider preventive diplomacy, which has demonstrated its potential in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, to be one of the priority trends in the development of United Nations peace-keeping activities. In this context we are again proposing consideration of the establishment within the United Nations, and specifically within the Office of the Secretary-General, of a standing council of international mediators, whose membership would include internationally recognized and authoritative political figures.

Economic sanctions continue to be an important instrument in United Nations conflict-settlement activities. In this field, we believe it is necessary to elaborate a comprehensive and detailed mechanism for the implementation of sanctions which would also take into consideration all their potential consequences, including the negative impact on third countries. In our opinion, it has now been demonstrated that the embargo regime against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is counterproductive and has not attained the main objective of promoting peaceful settlement of the conflict. Ukraine considers that, along with the process of further political settlement, the Security Council should lift economic sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which, in real terms, has already demonstrated its willingness to assist in the restoration of peace. At the same time, we proceed from the premise that mutual and simultaneous recognition of the States that emerged in the territory of the former Yugoslavia should be an important condition for the lifting of sanctions.

The principle that no single State or regional organization can be granted the right to be the main

guarantor of peace and security in one region or another should continue to be a cornerstone of United Nations conflict-prevention and crisis-management activities.

Among the international community's undertakings in the past year we could list many important achievements which have become our common gains. Today, in Washington, the ceremony for the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement is taking place, and we want to congratulate sincerely both parties and all those who contributed to this achievement.

I would also like to dwell on one accomplishment which has significance for our country. The Conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was undoubtedly the main event since the last session in the field of arms control and disarmament. It is symbolic that this Conference took place within these walls. Its decision on the indefinite extension of the Treaty is really a historic achievement. I do not think it would be going too far to say that Ukraine's accession to the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon State, and our ratification of the START-1 Treaty and its entry into force played a substantive role in making this event a reality. Thus, Ukraine made its tangible contribution to the global cause — freeing mankind from the most dangerous weapons of mass destruction. The voluntary renunciation by the third largest nuclear State of this monster of the twentieth century is unprecedented.

The NPT is undoubtedly a key treaty among all the existing treaties on arms control and disarmament, since it provides an opportunity to consistently coordinate policies in the field of nuclear disarmament, allowing non-nuclear States to conduct a dialogue as equals with nuclear States. At the same time, I would like to emphasize that in Ukraine's opinion, in spite of the record-breaking number of NPT participants — 179 countries — we cannot regard a situation as stable when States that build their security on the possession of nuclear weapons and States that have never had or have renounced them exist alongside each other.

In this connection, Ukraine attaches great importance to the negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear test-ban treaty. Unfortunately, the world community has not managed to mark the UN's fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations by concluding this treaty, but we share the hopes that the relevant talks will be successfully completed no later than 1996. In this context the necessity for all countries to observe the moratorium on nuclear tests is of special importance. Recent nuclear tests have aroused

justifiable concern in the world. Such actions are not conducive to enhancing the favourable international climate that emerged after the end of the cold war.

The huge existing arsenals of conventional weapons and the danger they constitute for mankind put these weapons on a par with weapons of mass destruction and require the same close attention. As of today, Ukraine is fulfilling its obligations under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. To support the initiative advanced by the General Assembly, the Government of Ukraine has declared a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel mines.

The course of the development of history has vividly demonstrated the interconnection and interdependence between the safeguarding of peace and security and economic and social development. In spite of significant achievements in this field, the present-day picture of the world is far from being ideal. Problems of unemployment, underdevelopment, poverty, social disintegration and isolation require urgent solutions. These problems are especially acute for economies in transition that are carrying out fundamental reforms.

Ukraine, which inherited a heavy burden of problems from the former USSR, is undergoing a painful period of radical political and economic transformation. Having laid the basic foundations of a democratic political system and civil society over the past four years, Ukraine has entered a new stage of development. Last October, the President of Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, proclaimed a new economic policy based on the implementation of fundamental economic reform. Now, our main efforts are aimed at the further strengthening of democratic foundations, the creation of a socially oriented market economy, and the implementation of an open, predictable and consistent foreign policy. The reform of the State system of division of power is continuing. In contrast to most post-Soviet countries, we managed, without violent confrontation, to find a way out of the constitutional impasse. The important stage is ahead, namely the final drafting and the adoption of a new Constitution of Ukraine. A diversified system of external economic relations is being gradually established. The process of integrating the national economy into the world economic space is being intensified.

At the same time, the Ukrainian economy continues to suffer from a crisis phenomenon. Having charted a course toward market reform and its rapid implementation, Ukraine must seek its own national

model of market transformation. Today the establishment of an effective system of social protection is the Government's principal and most topical task.

The most important priority for President Kuchma and the Government of Ukraine continues to be the preservation of civil peace and inter-ethnic harmony in the country. In its four years of independence, Ukraine has managed to settle confrontational situations by peaceful political means. Ukraine's achievements in the field of securing the rights of national minorities are especially evident against the background of the numerous conflicts that unfortunately continue to be a reality in the territory of the former Soviet Union.

Ukraine's national legislation in this sphere has earned it high international marks, specifically from such authoritative organizations as the Council of Europe, of which Ukraine hopes to become a member this year. But, at the same time, we have problems in this sphere, particularly with regard to repatriating the deported Crimean Tatar people and representatives of other nationalities.

The Government of Ukraine has developed a large-scale national programme aimed at safeguarding the rights of national minorities and indigenous peoples and has established a fund for the deported peoples of Crimea. But for Ukraine, which faces conditions of economic crisis and a complicated financial situation and lacks the necessary infrastructure, services and mechanisms, the task of accommodating the hundreds of thousands of repatriated persons appears too complicated. Solving these problems requires a complex approach: the mobilization and consolidation of efforts at the national, regional and broader international levels.

In its international activities, Ukraine proceeds from the premise that stable development is a guarantor of lasting peace.

At present, when economic reforms in Ukraine are gaining momentum, we are especially interested in the widening of the activities of the United Nations and of its specialized agencies in the social and economic fields, aimed at establishing conditions for the integration of the Ukrainian economy and other economies in transition into the world economic space. The United Nations is an important instrument for promoting this process, and we appreciate the fact that the Members of this Organization show a deep understanding of the problems of countries in transition, including Ukraine.

We believe that creating internal preconditions for Ukraine's steady and gradual development has an international dimension as well. Ukraine's geo-political situation transforms its efforts to build an economically viable State into an important factor in promoting guaranteed peace, stability and security — including in the field of ecology — on the European continent.

It was this deep understanding of global interdependence that dictated, in particular, the political decision of President Kuchma to decommission the Chernobyl nuclear-power plant by the year 2000. Next year marks the tenth anniversary of the Chernobyl catastrophe, which not only left deep scars on the lives of the present generation of Ukrainians, Belarussians and Russians, but also has a global perspective. We propose to declare 1996 the Year of the Commemoration of Chernobyl and to organize special activities under the auspices of the United Nations. On the eve of this tragic anniversary, I should like once again to emphasize that nuclear-safety problems and the decommissioning of malfunctioning and outdated industrial nuclear facilities are critical, and not only for Ukraine. We are convinced that the time has come for a practical solution to the entire series of issues related to the accident, especially in view of the long-term nature of its aftermath. The sooner we invest money in the solution of this problem, the sooner we will be able to overcome it, with fewer negative consequences for humanity. We expect that the international community's support of Ukraine's efforts will be directed not only at the decommissioning of the Chernobyl power plant but also at solving the whole cluster of associated economic, social and ecological problems. In particular, we would welcome wide international participation in establishing an international scientific-technological centre in Chernobyl.

At the same time, I should like to emphasize that Ukraine retains a sense of realism with regard to the capacity of the United Nations to solve our national problems. We do not aim to compete with the less developed countries for the limited resources of the United Nations development system. We are ready and willing to cooperate with all interested partners, and we rely on the purposeful activity of the international community aimed at creating favourable conditions for expanding the access of Ukrainian exports to the world market. We expect that the World Trade Organization, which Ukraine is ready to join, will play an important role in the expansion and diversification of international trade and economic relations.

Recently the financial problems of the United Nations have had an acute political resonance. There can be only one conclusion: the existing financial system is incapable of guaranteeing the effective functioning of the Organization in the current situation and requires substantial reform.

We fully understand that the financial crisis of the United Nations has been provoked not only by political and economic circumstances but also by the imperfect system of apportionment of expenses, which is based on outdated principles. Ukraine will actively support the adoption of progressive changes to the methods of determining the scale of assessments and the special scheme of expenses for financing United Nations peace-keeping operations, with the aim of reflecting the principle of capacity to pay.

Ukraine's full participation in United Nations activities is impeded by its excessive contribution and its existing debt for financing United Nations peace-keeping operations. The State, which for the benefit of the world community has taken political decisions to voluntarily renounce nuclear weapons and decommission the Chernobyl power plant, should be able to concentrate its resources primarily on the implementation of those decisions. Ukraine, whose economy is undergoing an extremely difficult transformation and which is also suffering economic losses in the billions as a result of its strict compliance with the sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, can by no means continue to be held hostage to the settlement of the financial problems of the United Nations.

The world is changing. The cold-war confrontation between blocs, as well as bloc discipline, has become history. The interdependence of States at the regional and global levels is increasing. Given the nature of modern international problems, we should be ready to face the challenges of the new era. We need a strong and effective United Nations. Its renovation should encompass both the structure itself and the character of its activities, in accordance with the requirements of the new epoch. In our opinion, a number of measures should be taken to democratize the Security Council's activity, in particular to increase the legitimacy of its decisions and the transparency of its work.

On the whole, Ukraine supports the activity of the Open-ended Working Group on the reform of the Security Council and hopes that the interests of all regional groups, including, I should like to emphasize, the Group of Eastern European States, will be taken into consideration during the reform process. Ukraine also supports the proposals related to the improvement of the activities of the Economic and

Social Council. It stands for a reduction of the staff and the enhancement of the efficiency of the activities of the Secretariat, and for a reduction in the number of items on the agenda of the General Assembly.

In conclusion, I should like to paraphrase a point of common wisdom: when you criticize the reflection in the mirror, you are criticizing yourself. The United Nations needs renovation — so we need to renovate ourselves. This Organization will not become more effective and instrumental unless its Members show enough eagerness for practical efforts. I would not want this Assembly in the twenty-first century to listen again to wishful thinking that is not backed by our political will and readiness to work hard.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guinea, Mr. Kozo Zoumanigui.

Mr. Zoumanigui (Guinea) (*interpretation from French*): It is a great pleasure and, indeed, an honour for me, to convey to the General Assembly the fond greetings of the people of Guinea, its Government and its President, General Lansana Conté, at the opening of this session, which so fortuitously coincides with the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of our Organization.

The President returned to the Chair.

I am very pleased to extend to you, Mr. President, my warm congratulations on your brilliant election to the presidency of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. Your election and the outstanding efforts by your country, Portugal, within this great family of nations, are a cause of satisfaction to my delegation. I believe that with your experience and your abilities as a great diplomat, you will guide our deliberations with great success.

I would join other delegations in paying a well-deserved tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Amara Essy of the sister Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, whose dynamism and great qualities as a sophisticated diplomat helped us move forward as our Organization sought answers to the challenges facing our world today.

Also, I would here extend my Government's appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for the enormous amount of work he has done and for the resolve and wisdom that he demonstrates in seeking solutions to all the fundamental issues,

particularly those relating to peace, security, development and democracy throughout the world.

I should like to congratulate the people of Palau on their admission to membership in the United Nations as the 185th Member State. The presence of their delegation here with us confirms once more the universality of our Organization.

It is clear that the last few years of this century are being played out against a background of crisis and conflict, creating an impression of uncertainty as to the future of the human race. But we must recognize that the international community has made considerable efforts in preparing global strategies for peace and security throughout the world, taking into account the environment, sustainable development, the emancipation of women and the protection of children.

Despite these efforts, many parts of the world, sorely tried by poverty and backwardness, do not yet have sufficient food or enough drinking water, education or medical care. Civil war and natural disaster continue to endanger the economies of those same areas, which are already afflicted by a widespread world crisis.

Entire nations, such as my own, the Republic of Guinea, pay a heavy price because of their geographical location. More than 600,000 refugees and displaced persons from Liberia and Sierra Leone are now living in our country. The Republic of Guinea will never abandon its humanitarian duty to its Liberian and Sierra Leonean brothers, and continues to suffer the consequences of a fratricidal war which has lasted for six years in one of those neighbours and three years in the other.

It is true that relative calm, showing a clearer desire for peace in Liberia, has been noted since the agreements between the factions were signed on 19 August 1995 at Abuja.

In the view of my delegation, this new choice of peace in Liberia also requires a clear-cut effort on the part of the international community. In this connection, one has to ensure better control of weapons flows in the region. The Government of the Republic of Guinea is resolved to take action to that end.

Clearly, peace in Liberia will help to unblock the crisis in Sierra Leone and to establish in our subregion of West Africa an atmosphere of peace, security and lasting

stability, which are all essential to our programme for economic integration.

My Government also welcomes the Lusaka Agreements and we support all the efforts being made to implement those Agreements with a view to ending the crisis in Angola. It is our belief that if the political will shown on both sides is sustained, then the people of Angola will come to know the peace and stability they have yearned for so long and will be able to work for national reconstruction and economic and social development.

Here we would pay tribute to the joint efforts made by the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and by the international community for peace and reconciliation in that brother country.

On the question of Somalia, my delegation deplores the current blockage in the peace process. We would urge all parties to the conflict to demonstrate wisdom and mutual understanding with a view to finding a peaceful settlement to the crisis.

Turning to Rwanda and Burundi, my delegation believes that to encourage major efforts by the international community, those involved in those societies must triumph over hatred, cultivate a spirit of forgiveness and promote love and dialogue.

Today, the conflict in the Middle East is on a positive footing. In this regard, the advent of Palestinian autonomy in the Gaza Strip and Jericho, continuing negotiations for extending that autonomy to territories still under occupation, the Jordanian-Israeli agreement on borders and the Israeli-Syrian talks on the Golan are all significant advances that augur well for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question.

United Nations resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir, on recognition of the border between Iraq and Kuwait and on the situation in Afghanistan should, we believe, benefit from mutual understanding between those involved. The same holds true for the question of Western Sahara.

In the Korean peninsula, we are pleased to see an easing of tension. My delegation would encourage the North and the South to pursue their efforts towards the independent and peaceful reunification of their country into a confederated republic in keeping with the principle of one State, one nation, two regimes and two Governments. Moreover, my Government is pleased that

the talks between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States of America have led to a negotiated solution of the nuclear issue on the peninsula and to an improvement in the relations between those two countries.

In the former Yugoslavia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the multicultural and ancient civilization, born of the contributions of diverse peoples throughout the Balkans, is being jeopardized by human fury. My delegation believes that what is happening there, and indeed everywhere, should remind the international community of its responsibilities for peace and reconciliation among the peoples and their component groups.

All the wars that are ravaging entire regions of the world today share, along with their countless dead, the phenomenon of an endless flow of displaced persons seeking, over mountains and through valleys, a place of refuge. Despite the international community's spirit of solidarity, refugees and displaced persons experience the very worst deprivations. These days, their problem has grown to unprecedented proportions of gravity and complexity. Their numbers have increased from year to year, making it ever more difficult to manage the problem appropriately. In my delegation's view, the crises that spawn refugees constitute genuine threats to regional stability and world peace.

Guinea, which is participating in the United Nations security mission in the Rwandese refugee camps in Zaire, in keeping with a framework agreement signed with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and taking account of its own experience with Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees, believes that no effort should be spared to calm extremism everywhere. That is why my Government supports all initiatives to strengthen the intervention capacities of the High Commissioner for Refugees. Guinea also supports the drafting of an agenda for humanitarian action along the lines of "An Agenda for Peace" and "An Agenda for Development".

Despite the end of the East-West conflict, nuclear weapons remain the greatest threat to international peace and security, in spite of the remarkable progress made in bilateral and multilateral disarmament negotiations. Many dangers still threaten our efforts to achieve a collective security that would include the related issues of development, environment and human rights.

In certain key areas, there is an evident and growing trend in the trafficking and use of chemical and fissionable

materials in conflicts, as well as the hidden or overt desire of some countries to possess nuclear weapons. These facts represent dangers that increase the responsibilities of the United Nations, which is called upon to take rigorous verification measures.

That is why the Republic of Guinea welcomes the positive outcome of the New York Conference which led to the indefinite and unconditional extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. This was undeniably an important step towards nuclear disarmament and confirmed the special responsibility of the nuclear Powers. However, if it is to be effective, this achievement must be complemented by the immediate conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty. All nuclear tests must be prohibited.

It is obvious that this quick overview of the major concerns of our age — those relating to international security — amply demonstrate the importance today of United Nations peace-keeping operations. My Government therefore welcomes the special attention given by the United Nations to the settlement of conflicts in the world. We support the relevant views expressed by the Secretary-General in his Agenda for Peace.

None the less, while welcoming United Nations involvement in various theatres of operation throughout the world, we must also recognize that over the past few years the peace-keeping operations have, for the most part, yielded somewhat meagre results. This requires today, in the light of our experience, a reformulation of the entire issue of such operations.

If they are to be effective, peacemaking and peace-keeping operations must be the subject of broader agreement and dialogue among all the States Members of the United Nations, without discrimination. It is in that context that Guinea welcomes the establishment and work of the mechanism of the Organization of African Unity for the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts in Africa. We urge the United Nations and the international community to give it all the necessary assistance.

Economic and social development is a prerequisite of lasting peace and security. In developing countries, particularly in Africa, a sense of insecurity arises out of uncertainty in the future. It can thus be easily understood why we often see a collapse of political and social balances, leading to civil disorder and ethnic and religious conflicts.

Despite United Nations efforts in the economic and social field, the results remain meagre in some regions of the world, particularly Africa, which is still deeply affected by inequality, poverty and other serious problems that often weaken the social fabric and undermine the foundations of our States.

Recent trends in the world economy have helped to worsen this already precarious situation. Thus, the debt burden remains the main obstacle to development in poor countries, forcing them to devote a major share of their scarce resources to it. The collapse of the prices of commodities, which are their main contribution to the world market, has added to their poverty.

On top of these harsh conditions come the effects of the implementation, by some of our States, of structural adjustment programmes that are sometimes poorly prepared and often poorly implemented. If all of these various reforms undertaken by our countries are to bear fruit, all of the partners, national and foreign alike, will have to support Africa's development efforts in an effective way. If they are to be mutually beneficial, the proceeds of all public and private assistance will simply have to take account of everyone's respective requirements for well-being.

Within the framework of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, Guinea welcomes the Marrakesh Agreements that gave rise to the World Trade Organization. Those Agreements will be viable, however, only if they take genuine account of the need to promote the integration of the African economy into the world economy by developing its capacities and making it more dynamic. In this connection we strongly support the idea of setting up a commodities diversification fund.

My delegation greatly appreciates the special attention given to Africa at the summer session of the Economic and Social Council in Geneva, which considered the conditions for implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

Bilateral initiatives must be supported in order to strengthen South-South cooperation on the one hand and to continue the North-South dialogue on the other hand.

Moreover the Agenda for Development must focus primarily on Africa, where much of the population lives in poverty. Implementation of that Agenda, complementing the Agenda for Peace, will make it possible once again to measure the new political will that has emerged at recent

international conferences on social development, population and development, and women.

The Secretary-General's Agenda for Development offers an appropriate framework for North-South dialogue and it must also enable the United Nations to provide better coordination for, and to make more operational, the policies and programmes implemented by its specialized agencies and institutions, which have had a very limited positive impact on the economies of developing countries so far.

In this connection my Government notes with real interest and much hope that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations will be organizing a world summit on food security in November 1996. That world-wide meeting will make it possible we believe to formulate specific and appropriate solutions to the serious economic problems facing developing countries.

Of course, all these hopes will be in vain if the States of the world are unable to crush drug-trafficking and abuse.

While reconfirming our support for Agenda 21 and all the agreements on sustainable development, we believe that it is only greater political will that will make it possible to translate into action the decisions that emerge from these various meetings.

At the Halifax Summit, held from 15 to 17 June last, the Group of Seven quite rightly recognized that sustainable development was one of the major challenges of the twenty-first century. At that meeting it was also said that better quality of life for all was the objective of sustainable development, the foundations of which are democracy, human rights, transparent and responsible management of public affairs, investment in the human individual and protection of the environment. Guinea welcomes the commitments entered into by the Group of Seven to support national efforts in this area.

Protecting fundamental human rights, meeting human needs, achieving social justice and human development are still the focus of concern of the Government of Guinea in its ambitious economic and social reform programme, which has been under way since 1984. Guinea is party to several international conventions relating to human rights because it is firmly committed to promoting and protecting these fundamental rights and freedoms.

Today I am happy to be able to tell the international community that my country completed instituting its democratic republican institutions in June this year when we organized our multiparty legislative and municipal elections.

The successful completion of this process of democratization, the establishment of a State of law, and the liberalization of the economy in the Republic of Guinea all benefited from the support and understanding of the international community as a whole and I should like to thank you all for this.

The United Nations and its specialized agencies, as the paramount instrument for cooperation and multilateral agreement, see their responsibilities increased today more than ever before. Today this universal Organization has certainly acquired a certain prestige. Its help is requested in every area.

To strengthen its effectiveness on this fiftieth anniversary of its founding, the United Nations must restructure and revitalize its principal organs in the light of the changes that have taken place in the international arena and taking account of the challenges facing mankind in the forthcoming millennium.

The reforms must be based on the principle of equality among Member States at the level of decision-making bodies and also within the various organs.

It is only in this way that our common heritage, this irreplaceable tool, this United Nations, will be able successfully to discharge its mission of preserving international peace and security and promoting a fairer world, more equitable and more prosperous world.

The success of this institution does depend of course on an improvement in its financial situation at a time when its responsibilities are constantly increasing in this ever-changing international situation.

The United Nations has existed for half a century now. The solemn celebration of its first 50 years coincides with the twilight of the twentieth century and it offers its 185 Members an opportunity to try to revitalize its activities and to agree on equitable representation within its principal organs. In Guinea commemoration of this historic event is taking place with the full support of our Government.

May the decades to come bring greater understanding among people and among nations so as to ensure the greater happiness of mankind.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta, and former President of the General Assembly, His Excellency, the Honourable Professor Guido de Marco.

Mr. de Marco (Malta): It is with great pleasure that I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. You bring to the Assembly the wealth of your personal, political and academic experience and the positive contribution which Portugal has given to the work of the Organization throughout its 40 years of membership. At the dawn of democracy in your country, yours was a determining contribution towards freedom based on fundamental human rights and a State built on the rule of law. Your commitment to these principles required no mean measure of moral and physical courage.

May I join other speakers in saluting the Foreign Minister of Côte d'Ivoire, Mr. Amara Essy, who skilfully led the forty-ninth session and continued to promote the revitalization of the General Assembly within a broader framework of strengthening the United Nations system.

It is with great pleasure that we are convinced that, under your able leadership, Mr. President, Member States will continue to strive to ensure that this Assembly reflects with immediacy and with clarity that which the world community desires of the United Nations.

The maintenance of international peace through the advancement of social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom for all was 50 years ago, and remains today, the onerous but vital mission entrusted to this Organization by the peoples of the United Nations. In looking back at the past 50 years, we must exercise realistic restraint. It would be a mistake to recall only those instances when our efforts were crowned with success. It would be equally erroneous if we were to judge the efficacy of the United Nations by highlighting only those complex instances when results failed to do justice to our collective will and endeavour.

The determination to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war was what inspired nations and brought them together to form this Organization towards the end of the Second World War. We have managed to

avoid a global conflict. This is in itself a great achievement, one that inspires hope and confidence. Yet realistic restraint is particularly called for at this moment. Grief still echoes over the explosions of cannon fire aimed at villages and cities under siege.

During its first 45 years the United Nations was held hostage to the prevailing cold war logic. Yet even during those years, when world peace was strapped to the terrifying balance of nuclear destructive potential, there were moments of great significance.

The process of decolonization, even if there was suffering at times, remains a peak achievement in humankind's history during the twentieth century. It reaffirmed faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small. That process paved the way for the achievement of independence by peoples spread around the globe, who today are represented in this Hall as sovereign nations.

The five years since the end of the cold war have witnessed a world community subjected to the most intense periods of instability. High expectations violently oscillated with the doldrums of despair; the exuberant relief of peoples ridding themselves of totalitarian rule alternated with the miserable anguish of occupation and "ethnic cleansing"; rays of hope were paralleled by violent explosions of civil strife; nuclear non-proliferation was countered by a devastating spread in the traffic in conventional weaponry; peace for some was matched by wanton slaughter for others. Never have mankind's aspirations been so great, yet never have they been so formidably challenged.

Such events cannot but impact on our concept of security. The primary mandate of the United Nations is

"To maintain international peace ..., and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace".

How can we ensure and implement this commission?

Five years ago, in the General Assembly, I had the honour of calling on the United Nations to implement the provisions of Chapter VIII of the Charter with regard to regional arrangements. Later, at the Helsinki follow-up meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), Malta proposed that the CSCE declare

itself a regional arrangement, in terms of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter — which it did.

It is still too early to assess the impact and full potential of that development, particularly in view of the complex situations that already existed and continued to develop in the CSCE region. However, we are convinced that the future ability and effectiveness of the United Nations in containing, addressing and resolving situations of conflict is dependent on the creation and consolidation of such regional arrangements.

The world has witnessed communities rediscover the oldest recipes for the generation of human misery. Most of us believed that tolerance was universally embraced, that it was strong enough to have imbued the manner in which we view elements that give nations and ethnic and religious groups their rightful identity. The abuse of these elements as a platform and weapon of war cannot but instil in us determination to consolidate structures that promote a permanent confidence-building dialogue.

During the darkest hours of the cold war the CSCE learnt that confidence-building was the most effective guarantee in the promotion of a wider concept of security. That conviction remains as we seek to identify the supporting structures for a European security architecture. The broad elements of the emerging European security architecture are already in place.

On one hand, the CSCE, now changed into the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), is transmuting the notion of confidence- and security-building from a remedial measure of the age of antagonism to a tool of partnership in the new international environment.

On the other hand, the enlarging European Union, of which Malta expects to become full member in the near future, provides a unique and ever-deepening dimension of the process of regional cooperation. Malta has always seen membership of the European Union in terms that encompass not only economic but also much broader political dimensions. In this spirit, membership of the Union constitutes for us both the natural culmination of our significant economic and social development of recent years and — more important — the opportunity to participate in a collective endeavour that consolidates union within Europe and stability within the region, thereby providing a solid anchorage for those fundamental values of democracy, the rule of law and the observance of human rights to which we are deeply attached.

Comprehensive security is distinct from notions of defence. It is much wider in scope. It is more appropriate for treating issues not necessarily or immediately linked with a military threat or outbreak of conflict. Comprehensive regional security structures could be the most effective instruments for identifying, analysing and containing the original root causes of potential conflict.

Such regional arrangements cannot operate in isolation. They must take into account the work of other international mechanisms that help signal developments which, in the short or long term, could destabilize regional or international security. Early-warning systems are an essential ingredient for success.

To save succeeding generations from the scourge of war we must cultivate and nurture stability. Equilibrium in the socio-political environment cannot be ensured through suppression or imposition. It requires the development of effective rapid-response mechanisms to tackle problem areas that generate instability. A multifaceted approach demonstrates an awareness of the manner in which different issues, if left unattended or unresolved, fester and spread to threaten society.

Weaving such vital areas as human rights, fundamental freedoms and social justice into the broader network of comprehensive security is the foundation for the launching of stability pacts which give peoples and nations the reassurance of peace, dignity and freedom.

In this respect Malta has been active in promoting security and cooperation in the Mediterranean. The obstacles are enormous, but the perils that threaten to transform this historic middle-sea into a permanent lake of instability are even greater.

Though aware of the difficulties in the way of its final implementation, we have supported the idea of a conference on security and cooperation in the Mediterranean, and within this concept of stability in the Mediterranean we have ourselves proposed two distinct but correlated ideas, namely, that of a council of the Mediterranean and a stability pact for the Mediterranean. Both are based on the notion of dialogue in that region of turbulence.

The setting up of a council of the Mediterranean through an association of Mediterranean States at the level of Ministers of Foreign Affairs would facilitate cooperation at the highest political level. A parliamentary dimension to that association further enhances this joint action and ensures a wider spectrum of participation by the elected

representatives in the identification and solution of problem areas of common concern.

The measured success of the Stability Pact for Europe, first launched by France, has underlined the need for applying this notion to the Mediterranean region itself. With this in mind, at the concluding conference on the Stability Pact for Europe, Malta launched the concept of a stability pact for the Mediterranean based on the round-table system and not only bringing together parties to disputes but also making possible the discussion of issues which can serve to pre-empt the development of new threats to the security of peoples and States in the region. The generally positive reception which this notion has encountered encourages us to pursue its development further.

Malta welcomes the holding of a Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference at Barcelona in November to consider future economic and political relations as a milestone in the consolidation of regional cooperation. The Mediterranean's wealth lies in its heritage of cultural, religious and social diversity. A forced mutation of this rich mosaic into uniformity would be destabilizing. Confidence-building and mutual understanding create the route that leads to security and cooperation. We must walk that arduous path. Within multicultural diversity we must discover the common values that help foster dialogue. This requires shedding preconceived notions. It requires strong political will. It requires that we supplant instinctive mistrust with a spirit of mutual respect.

The key protagonists in the Middle East crisis have demonstrated how political will and dialogue can overcome obstacles that for decades appeared insurmountable. We have supported the peace process and will continue to support it, and we welcome the official signing in Washington today of the agreements reached last Sunday in Taba, Egypt, by Chairman Arafat and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres on behalf of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel, respectively. A just and long-lasting peace in the Middle East requires a solution that takes into account both the right of peoples to self-determination and the right of States to secure boundaries. May this process of dialogue inspire others who still resist this unique human tool of conflict resolution.

In particular, we are deeply concerned that the division of Cyprus has so far remained impervious to the efforts of the international community, especially those of

the Secretary-General, to find a just and lasting peaceful solution. We predict that persistent efforts in this regard will eventually prevail.

The Mediterranean process is of great significance to the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. The time that the United Nations has dedicated over the years to defusing and resolving issues which threaten peace in the region illustrates the weight which we attach to the spill-over potential of current crises. More important, however, is the fact that a successful Mediterranean process could inspire patterns of cooperation in other areas characterized by multicultural diversity.

Important as it is to create forums that make it easier for political leaders to enter into dialogue on and identify common strategies, the essential ingredient for long-term stability, is the building of peace in the minds of all women and men. The United Nations and its agencies have had a major role in the effort to identify common strategies for future achievements built on knowledge of and respect for the multicultural diversity of the world community.

During the past 12 months three world conferences have touched on the most crucial aspects of human rights and freedoms, the dignity of the human person and the right of all peoples to development. At Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing we worked together, conscious of our cultural differences, yet aware that diversity need not and must not impede our common endeavours if we are mindful of our common heritage, our common concern and our common interest.

This respect for multicultural identities has been evident in the commitments undertaken by States and in the principles which inspire the platforms of action. It must remain ever-present in the mind of all United Nations officials entrusted with its implementation.

One other area in which the United Nations has traditionally been very active is that of arms control and disarmament. Over the past 12 months the international community has had the satisfaction of seeing a successful conclusion to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Review Conference, with the agreement on the indefinite extension of the non-proliferation regime. Malta is proud to have taken an active role in helping to bring about this agreement.

We now look forward to an early agreement on the comprehensive ban on the testing of all nuclear weapons. We urge all countries, in particular the nuclear States, to

take all possible measures to ensure a successful conclusion, during the coming 12 months, of the negotiations which have been taking place within the Conference on Disarmament since 1994.

Anniversaries encourage us to drink from the original source for inspiration. The United Nations Charter was forged at a time when the struggle against a totalitarian world vision was nearly complete. The horrors of war were still tangible, but so also was the fear of what could have been the fate of humankind had a totalitarian vision prevailed.

The Charter established within its principal organs a delicate balance based on the equal rights of nations, large and small, and a pragmatic awareness of the particular role which certain States had in ensuring international peace and security.

During the past five years we have assisted in an intense discussion among Member States on whether or not there exists the need to evolve, reform or restructure the principal organs of the Charter. I am personally honoured to have been the first President of the General Assembly to chair such a discussion within the Organization and to make a presidential motion on this matter approved by the Assembly which ensured continuity. This process was later to give fruit in the formation of the Working Groups which examined the revitalization of the General Assembly and are still studying the different options relative to the restructuring of the Security Council.

In this ongoing process of review and evaluation, we have failed to take into account the future of the Trusteeship Council. Aware that the Trusteeship Council had nearly completed its responsibilities for the Trust Territories for which it was responsible, five years ago I proposed to the General Assembly a new, additional role — that of trustee of the different areas of common heritage. It is because of the uncertainty as to the future of the Council and the diverse opinions on this matter that we have requested the inclusion of an item on the agenda of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session entitled “Review of the role of the Trusteeship Council”.

We are confident that when the item is discussed by the Assembly — first in plenary and later within the Sixth Committee — Member States will bring and share their views with that same openness and frankness that have characterized the discussion of the other two principal organs. Naturally we shall, on that occasion, expound

further our ideas on how the Trusteeship Council could evolve.

There is one aspect which I consider it opportune to underline at this stage: the notion of the United Nations as a trustee. The notion that the Charter envisages is unique to the Trusteeship Council. It is a notion which, at the time, was immediately explicable and applicable to the Territories placed under its care. Today, in a world that has become a global community, we are aware that the different areas of common heritage protected by convention require coordination by a trustee.

To avoid fragmentation, dispersal or duplication of effort in areas which are our common heritage, our common concern and our common interest, we should explore the manner in which this principal organ of the United Nations can evolve that notion of trust, which was its major premise, to meet our present-day needs, an evolution that ensures that the Trusteeship Council holds in sacred trust the common heritage of humankind and acts as a guardian of the interests of future generations.

During the past months we have all invested much time and energy in generating public awareness on the importance of the fiftieth anniversary. The peoples of the United Nations are sensitive to what we do and decide in this forum, not out of mere curiosity or an interest in international affairs, but because the decisions we take have a direct bearing on their personal lives. They did so in the past, when decolonization brought sovereignty to States and freedom to many millions. They do so at present, when the United Nations and its blue insignia represent the last beacon of hope for those terrorized by the brutality of war, famine or disease. Likewise, our decisions have a bearing on the lives of those who serve the Organization in the field, on the fate of the families of peace-keepers killed in United Nations operations and all those of whom we expect sacrifice to ensure the success of sanctions.

We pay a special tribute to all United Nations peace-keepers, and in particular those killed while on mission. Their dedication to duty, humanitarian concern and peace is honoured by the whole international community.

Our deliberations this year have a particular significance. On them hinge the hopes of millions. As we take decisions, may we continue to be inspired by that commitment to the maintenance of international peace, the advancement of social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom for all peoples, which is the platform of action set forth in the Charter. Only then will we rightfully

deserve to be regarded as trustees of the common concerns, common interests and common heritage which the peoples of the United Nations have charged to our care.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, His Excellency Mr. Kassymjomart Tokaev.

Mr. Tokaev (Kazakstan): Please accept my congratulations, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session. This attests to your excellent qualities, which will undoubtedly contribute to the successful discussion of all the items on the agenda.

I would like to take this opportunity to express special appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his great contribution to the solution of international problems of the world community and his efficient management aimed at the establishment of new relations between nations in the twenty-first century.

We have to note that this anniversary session of the General Assembly is taking place at a time of increased tension and continued armed conflicts in different parts of the globe. One of the most dangerous and complicated is the Bosnian conflict. Events in Bosnia defy straightforward interpretation. At the same time, the readiness recently displayed by the parties in conflict to settle existing problems on the basis of adherence to the principles of State sovereignty inspires optimism and hope that long-awaited peace will be established in the Balkans. In Kazakstan's opinion one of the most important conditions for achieving peace is that respective countries in the territory of the former Yugoslavia continue to exist as sovereign States within the borders recognized by the world community.

We highly appreciate the role of the United Nations peace-keeping forces, which in differing situations have done their best to contain conflicts and alleviate the consequences of hostilities for the civilian population. We have no doubt that the Organization has to exercise all its authority in such situations. The world community should provide more effective assistance to the United Nations so that it can use its peace-keeping forces in areas of conflict in a more efficient and timely manner.

Creation of regional and global structures designed to promote long-lasting peace is an important aspect of international security. The balance of forces, upset after

the end of the cold war, should be restored not through the establishment of new military and political alliances but through international treaties and agreements promoting security and stability and through the establishment and use of effective mechanisms of preventive diplomacy.

We view as quite successful the activities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), whose sphere of responsibility includes not only Europe but Central Asia as well. A high degree of efficiency in security matters concerning the Asian and Pacific region is being displayed by the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) forum.

Kazakstan, for its part, continues its work towards the convening of a conference on interaction and confidence-building measures in Asia. The forum's mandate is being drawn up by the Special Working Group. We believe that all the countries of the Asian continent, despite their heterogeneity, have an equal interest in durable peace and stability, which is an important guarantee for their progressive movement towards economic prosperity and internal stability. Taking this opportunity, I urge all Asian countries to contribute to the realization of this idea, expressed by President Nazarbayev from the rostrum of this lofty Organization at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

We firmly believe that no matter how strong and effective the United Nations may be, no matter how comprehensive its activities are, security and peace should be the backbone of the policy of all countries, irrespective of their capabilities and regional affiliation. We see that in the new geopolitical reality more emphasis is being placed on meeting the various needs of the individual. There is a general understanding that quick solutions of security and stability issues cannot and should not take the place of a long-term strategy of sustainable development. In other words, in today's world there is an emerging tendency towards a gradual transition from national security to human security.

The Republic of Kazakstan, which used to be a de facto nuclear-weapon State and now is a nuclear-free State, is making its contribution to these global transformations. The elimination of all existing nuclear warheads in Kazakstan's territory and of the last nuclear charge at the already-closed Semipalatinsk nuclear-test site has been a highly important step in the fulfilment of Kazakstan's international obligations.

Kazakstan is a consistent advocate of a moratorium on nuclear tests and of a comprehensive test-ban treaty, which should be concluded as soon as possible but not later than next year.

Addressing the United Nations Conference on Disarmament in June 1995 in Geneva, Kazakstan's President reaffirmed its commitment to the consistent policy of the strengthening of international security in its new interpretation. The President of Kazakstan stressed that various needs of the individual must be met. Indeed, the success of the disarmament process is measured today not only by the percentage of warheads and delivery systems cut but also by the increase in the production of goods for the people.

In the light of the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit, emerging models of human development should include new concepts for solving educational, employment, environmental and health-care problems. Urgent and effective measures are needed to address a dangerous growth in unemployment — an especially pressing problem for the economies in transition. We believe that these countries can legitimately expect from the United Nations the adoption of special measures promoting their sustainable development. The priority that this matter should be given by the United Nations can be explained by a number of factors.

Indeed, modern geo-economic trends reflect the fact that in the near future world economic centres in North America, South-East Asia and Europe will emerge or be strengthened. The stability and effectiveness of these centres cannot be imagined without their involvement in trade and economic relations with the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, which, even taken separately, represent significant economic and political entities capable of filling existing gaps in relations between Europe and Asia, North and South. It is relevant, first of all, in the case of Kazakstan — a major Central Asian State.

Speaking of the need to adapt the United Nations system to the new geo-political realities, we think that the potential of the countries of Central Asia should be taken into account. Their capabilities in the formulation of the strategies of sustainable development and peace-making are becoming stronger. Close attention should be paid to the impetus for cooperation with the United Nations, in the interest of a secure world, that is being served by these countries.

In this context, I would like to draw attention to President Nazarbayev's initiative regarding the establishment, under the auspices of the United Nations, of a unit of the armed forces of three Central Asian republics — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. In our opinion, this would contribute to the strengthening of security and peace in Central Asia — a region which also has its areas of conflict.

In the opinion of Kazakhstan, priority attention in cooperation between the United Nations and the economies in transition should be paid to the protection of the environment, which is one of the five main dimensions of development. In the Central Asian region, the ecological threat is one of the most dangerous threats to human security.

We think that the world community should pay special attention to the tragedy of the Aral Sea region. According to the World Bank, in the next 25 years, the efforts to restore an ecological balance in the region will require \$50 billion. Such a project is not feasible without financial assistance from international organizations. Thus, we are interested in the search for new international sources of financing, and support the idea of devising a system of international taxes on arms transfers and transactions, involving currency flows, to achieve global human, including ecological, security.

I would like to say a few words about United Nations reforms. The position of Kazakhstan on this issue is as follows. Reforms are necessary, but they should be carried out with the utmost care, in order to avoid upsetting the balance of the whole system of international relations. The Charter of the United Nations should largely remain as the basis and the reference point for the work of the Organization, to which there is no alternative in the modern world.

Major changes that have taken place in the world since the creation of the United Nations should be reflected in the composition of the Security Council. Kazakhstan believes that the number of Council members, including the number of permanent members, could, in principle, be increased.

We welcome measures taken by the Secretary-General to reduce expenses related to the activities of the Secretariat. It is important, in our opinion, that such an essential body as the International Court of Justice should also be adapted to present-day requirements. The idea of having important decisions adopted in an economic security council appears to be worthy of attention, considering the

need, in the view of many countries, to reorganize and revitalize the Economic and Social Council.

Debates on fundamental United Nations documents — the reports by the United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "An Agenda for Peace" and "An Agenda for Development" — reveal the need for a more detailed analysis of ways to develop society by meeting the social, economic, political and cultural needs of the individual. We are especially aware of this now as we celebrate, under the auspices of UNESCO, the 150th anniversary of Abai, a great Kazak poet, educator and philosopher, who devoted his life to the mutual spiritual and cultural enrichment of nations.

The desire to jointly solve the issues of "peace and development" also lies at the heart of our proposal to set up a United Nations commission for central Asia — a joint body of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). This idea was initially proposed by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mr. N. Nazarbaev, at the Summit of the member States of the Economic Cooperation Organization in 1993 in Istanbul. The common nature of the social, economic and political objectives of the countries in the region, on the threshold of the twenty-first century, determines the need to establish regional mechanisms for their attainment and to create appropriate structures. The progress achieved by the countries of Central Asia in this regard is reflected by the rather effective activities of the OECD, as well as those of the economic union between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

Speaking about the importance of this problem for the Central Asian States, I would like to note that, judging by past experience, the efforts of two important regional Commissions — ESCAP and ECE — are not adequately coordinated with regard to this group of countries. As a result, the republics of Central Asia are not sufficiently involved in their programmes.

As the United Nations Organization approaches its fiftieth anniversary, it has great accomplishments to its credit in peacemaking and in the strengthening of international security. As a well-known Japanese writer once said: only life filled with a workaday routine might be worse and more dreadful than a war. Least of all would we like to see the United Nations as a structure which mechanically services the demands of mankind on a day-by-day basis. In other words, we do not want to see the

United Nations as a rigid structure, insensitive to the profound changes of our rapidly changing times. The world continues to pin its hopes on the United Nations as a concentrated source of wisdom, justice and responsiveness to the sufferings of mankind. The world appeals to the United Nations to rise above immediate plans and programmes in order to appreciate fully the mosaic of modern international relations in all their variety and diversity. And we firmly believe that the United Nations should adequately respond to the aspirations of all peoples yearning for peace and tranquillity, aspirations born out of their very existence.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.