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Fifty-first Session

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Official Records

President: Mr. Razali Ismail (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 9

General debate

The President: Before calling on the first speaker in the general debate, I should like to remind members of the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 3rd plenary meeting, on 20 September, that congratulations should not be expressed inside the General Assembly Hall after a speech has been delivered.

In this connection, may I also remind members of another decision, taken by the Assembly at the same meeting, that speakers in the general debate, after delivering their statements, would leave the Assembly Hall through room GA-200, located behind the podium, before returning to their seats.

I should also like to remind representatives that, in accordance with the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 3rd plenary meeting, the list of speakers will be closed on Wednesday, 25 September 1996, at 6 p.m. May I request delegations to be good enough to provide estimated speaking times that are as accurate as possible. This may also permit those speakers who are provisionally scheduled for some meetings actually to speak.

I now call on the first speaker in the general debate, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brazil, His Excellency Mr. Luiz Felipe Palmeira Lampreia.

Mr. Lampreia (Brazil): Please accept my congratulations, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. The Brazilian delegation is confident that, under your leadership, this body will find new strength in the pursuit of the principles and purposes of our Charter.

I also wish to pay tribute to my dear friend, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for the dedication with which he conducted the historic fiftieth session. We are grateful for his steadfast commitment to ensuring that our work was consistent with the high expectations of the fiftieth anniversary celebrations.

My delegation extends a word of gratitude and recognition to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros-Ghali, for the perseverance he has shown in carrying out his tasks.

For the first time, Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal and Sao Tome and Principe come to the General Assembly as members of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, a body dedicated to cooperation and political coordination. The member States of the Community intend to consult and to work closely together at the United Nations with a view to better promoting their common interests and fostering their linguistic, cultural and historical identity.

The countries of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) — Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay — have also come to the General Assembly

with an enhanced sense of unity. MERCOSUR gives living and concrete expression to economic integration and open regionalism and represents one of the creative forces at work in the Americas. It is a new and striking feature of our continent's identity and a reflection of democracy and the commitment to economic reform in our region.

With the customs union firmly in place, Chile has now joined MERCOSUR as an associated State by means of a free-trade agreement with far-reaching political and diplomatic implications. Bolivia will also shortly associate itself with MERCOSUR. We look forward to other countries' of the region joining as well to further bolster the dynamic and open nature of MERCOSUR.

Now firmly rooted in the process of expanding and acting as an important partner of a growing number of countries and regional groups, MERCOSUR is a positive response by South American countries to the challenges and opportunities of today's world. Such achievements as MERCOSUR and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries enhance their credentials and help to make the presence of those countries in the world an instrument for economic development and social progress.

My country comes to this General Assembly proud to present itself before the international community with a stronger presence in the world. Brazil owes this to the consolidation of its democracy, to economic stabilization and liberalization and to the resumption of economic growth with a deeper sense of social justice. It owes this as well to its participation in regional integration and in the globalization of the world economy. We are in tune with the two main forces that are shaping the world today: political and economic freedom, on the one hand, and cooperation through integration and trade on the other.

I am pleased to say that, through decisive action rather than words, we have made genuine strides in enlarging our dialogue and cooperation with friendly nations worldwide, developed and developing alike. We have strengthened traditional partnerships and established new ones, especially in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. We are aware that, if the Brazilian people are to consolidate these achievements, we will need to persevere in the policies that have brought us this far. We know that these policies have yet to meet many challenges Brazil faces in the social, economic and cultural fields. But they are an important beginning.

We are convinced that Brazil's growing interaction with its region and the world, the consolidation of its international partnerships and a fruitful dialogue and

cooperation with its many friends are necessary conditions for our country to continue to pursue its policies at the domestic level.

Brazil is one of the world's largest democracies, a dynamic and diversified developing economy, an attractive opportunity for productive foreign investment and a market of huge potential — in a word, a country capable of enjoying fruitful ties with all nations on the basis of mutual respect and reciprocity. By its very nature, Brazil can act as a bridge between the many different worlds that make up its own internal reality.

Our aspirations to enlarging the scope of our participation in the international decision-making bodies will always reflect a careful assessment of our own merits, of our specific weight and of the contribution that we can make to the community of Nations. We seek to be a force for peace and integration.

The fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations understandably raised the expectations of the international community — expectations that we would not dwell only on the past and on the many achievements of the Organization, but also look to the future in search of ways for it to come to grips with new realities and problems.

We can confidently say that the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary produced good results. As world public opinion was focused on the United Nations, leaders and Governments were compelled to reflect on the Organization and to make room for it in their political agendas.

The historic meaning of the San Francisco Charter was recalled, as was the importance of the United Nations as a forum for political debate and as a sounding board for conflicting interests in the post-cold-war era.

Our collective reflection clearly revealed that, without the United Nations, the world would only have been more violent, more unstable and insecure, more unjust and cruel — especially to the weak, who are prey to power politics and arbitrary decisions.

We celebrated great advances in international law and in the political and ethical commitments to the issues that concern humanity — issues such as sustainable development, protection of the environment, respect for human rights, disarmament, non-proliferation and the fight against poverty, terrorism, organized crime and drug

trafficking. We have thus given a positive account in the first 50 years of the United Nations.

We cannot say with the same confidence that the fiftieth anniversary has ushered in a renewed commitment to the United Nations and its future. Our efforts have fallen well short of the expectations of the international community. They have been disappointing even in the light of the predictions of some of the most cautious analysts. A stalemate persists — an uncomfortable stalemate that leads to a feeling of uncertainty and frustration, of insecurity about the future of the United Nations, and thus of apprehension.

In the wake of momentous changes on the international scene, the United Nations has embarked upon a new phase in its history without the means and the effectiveness to act as the highest political forum of mankind and to fulfil the mandate conferred upon it by the international community — a mandate that remains as valid today as it was half a century ago.

Back in 1961, President John F. Kennedy referred to the United Nations as “our last, best hope”. In the face of the threat of nuclear war and in the midst of various conflicts, those words expressed the confidence of the international community in an Organization founded on the universal principles of peace, understanding and prosperity for all peoples.

At that time President Kennedy renewed a pledge to the United Nations, offering:

“our pledge of support — to prevent it from becoming merely a forum for invective, to strengthen its shield of the new and the weak and to enlarge the area in which its writ may run.”

Thirty-five years after these inspired words, the United Nations finds itself at a crossroads. The world has changed, the correlation of forces has changed, and so have the hopes and expectations of countries with regard to the United Nations and its capacity to manage, prevent and settle conflicts. Yet various confrontations still cause suffering, instability and misery throughout the world.

This is happening just as the Organization faces the worst financial and motivational crisis in its history. There is a widespread feeling of dissatisfaction — sometimes veiled and sometimes explicit — with an Organization that still embodies the loftiest ideals ever conceived by the

human spirit in the search for peace and understanding among peoples.

Brazil is committed to the United Nations Charter and to the Organization’s political, legal and diplomatic legacy of the past 50 years. That commitment is part of the diplomatic history of my country and of the principles that have always governed our actions in this body and in our relations with all peoples, particularly with our 10 neighbours, with whom we have lived in peace for well over a century.

Compelled by that commitment, we sound a word of caution to those who, like ourselves, wish to see the United Nations as a source of leadership in international relations, as an instrument for promoting an international society based on freedom, the rule of law and the rights of the citizen.

With the political and ideological constraints of the cold war behind us, the world is now organized around much more concrete and pragmatic variables, such as international trade, investment flows and the transfer of technology. The emphasis on political and ideological coalitions has given way to an emphasis on economic coalitions. Pressured by public opinion, Governments are today concerned with social well-being, the quality of life, economic and social indicators and unemployment.

The focal point of the political debate is shifting irrevocably from strategy and ideology to economics and integration. That is why the world is following the path of large-scale regional economic agreements. North-South and East-West — the main axes of international politics in the last 50 years — have given way to groups of countries dedicated to the goals of economic integration and the coordination of macroeconomic, financial and trade policies.

North, South, East and West are no longer the cardinal points on the international political compass. The World Trade Organization and its body of universal rules and regulations for fostering free trade, the European Union, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (APEC), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Group of 7, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South African Development Community (SADC), and the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) have become, in their respective areas of action, the catalysts

for development, cooperation, understanding and, indeed, for peace.

The peace that the founders of the United Nations envisioned may come about as a result of the response by the various regions and groups of countries to the challenges, opportunities and risks of a new world, which today is called the world of globalization. It is a world that generates prosperity and a healthy competition among countries and regions; but it is also a world that swells the ranks of the destitute and the outcast among and within countries, a world that breeds conflict and increases inequality, a world that demands reason, reflection and constructive action.

Through peace, cooperation, respect for human rights and development, the United Nations has a major role to play in preventing the divisions of the cold war from finding new expression in a widening gap in well-being.

The Organization must evolve in order to successfully play that role as it has so often done in the past. It must adapt its structure and methods of work in order to optimize its human, material and financial resources. It must make use of the great political, strategic, and moral power it is able to muster. It must implement and follow up on its decisions, on the rules with which it updates and consolidates international law and on the commitments it has won from the international community.

Much remains to be done in the wake of the great conferences that have shaped the international agenda in the present decade. The conferences on the rights of the child, the environment and development, human rights, population and development, social development, women and human settlements have sealed commitments that must be honoured, decisions that must be implemented and follow-up work that must be carried out.

The United Nations must ensure that its agenda becomes more appealing and results-oriented, in order to earn the esteem of the public and to retain its primacy in international relations. We must correct the tendency to convene meetings whose only purpose is to produce other meetings or to adopt resolutions of a rhetorical nature. We must rid the United Nations of its image as a lethargic body incapable of rising to the challenges of our times.

Brazil is convinced that United Nations reform remains within reach, that it is still possible to ensure that the United Nations will play a paramount role in this new phase of its existence. We believe in reform as a means to

ensure that the United Nations becomes a viable and logical alternative to unilateralism and power politics. We believe in reform as a means to empower the United Nations to act in a radically changed world. We believe in reform as a means to restore the United Nations as a unique forum for political and diplomatic action and debate.

One year after our Heads of State and Government drew attention to the seriousness of the financial situation of the United Nations, a solution to the problem remains elusive.

To stifle the United Nations little by little by depriving it of the means to perform its functions is no way to secure greater administrative efficiency. Should this scenario persist, then the capacity of the United Nations to adapt to the dynamics of the contemporary world could be seriously jeopardized. We could very well witness a situation where other bodies come to occupy the space left by the United Nations, bodies with their own goals and agendas, which may or may not reflect the prevailing sentiments of the international community and the interests of world peace, security and stability. That is why we need perseverance, courage and, above all, the political will to advance the discussion on issues which reflect a true commitment to the United Nations, issues which relate to the very relevance of the Organization in international relations on the eve in the twenty-first century.

One of these issues is the reform of the Security Council. There is a virtual consensus that the Security Council should be enlarged to allow for greater participation by countries with the capacity to act on a global scale and the willingness to bear the responsibilities that would entail. We must now set a course for this process. Its outcome is essential for strengthening the United Nations.

Brazil has made several commitments in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. We are now committed to having the southern hemisphere recognized as an area free of nuclear weapons. It is our firm belief that this is a right to which the peoples of the southern hemisphere are entitled, and an obligation on the part of those throughout the world who possess nuclear weapons or the means to develop them.

A further commitment to disarmament in all fields that I now wish to convey to the General Assembly is the

decision by the Brazilian Government to declare a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land-mines. The experience of the Brazilian contingent serving in the United Nations Angola Verification Mission has underlined for us the importance of a universal moratorium of this kind and the need to rid the world of the scourge of land mines, which pose a threat to the daily lives of millions of human beings. We would like to see all countries that export land-mines or that have the capability to do so join in this decision.

The international community has placed its hopes in a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). These hopes are fully justified. We have a historic opportunity to put an end to an outdated practice which has increasingly drawn repudiation and condemnation from international public opinion. We are taking an important step towards general and complete nuclear disarmament and stating unequivocally that there is no room in today's world for nuclear weapons or regional arms races.

Brazil is committed to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and to the elimination of nuclear arsenals. It has consistently expressed its disapproval of nuclear tests. Brazil strove for approval of the CTBT at the Conference on Disarmament and considered the blocking of consensus in Geneva a grave setback. It was inconceivable to Brazil that we could have let the moment pass, that we could have run the risk of seeing the CTBT meet the same fate as so many other initiatives which were allowed to lapse into oblivion.

This is why Brazil was one of the first sponsors of the Australian initiative to seize the historic opportunity of submitting the CTBT for approval by the General Assembly. This decision reflected the commitment to bequeath to present and future generations a safer and nuclear-weapons-free world. This is why Brazil will immediately sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We call upon all nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon States to do the same.

The peoples of the world expect action and leadership from the United Nations. They expect that the United Nations will continue to be an essential benchmark of international politics over the next 50 years and that it will always be not the last, but our best hope.

The President: The next speaker in the debate is His Excellency the Honourable Philip Muller, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Marshall Islands, on whom I now call.

Mr. Muller (Marshall Islands): I wish to take this opportunity on behalf of His Excellency President Amata Kabua and the Government and the people of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to thank and to acknowledge the leadership of the outgoing President, Professor Diogo Freitas do Amaral, and also to congratulate you, Ambassador Razali Ismail, on your well-deserved election to the high office of the Presidency of the General Assembly.

I am pleased to inform you, Sir, that at the recently concluded South Pacific Forum meeting in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, your country, Malaysia, was invited to join the post-forum dialogue next year as a partner, where we hope to further our cooperation.

In our capacity as Chairman of the South Pacific Forum, I have the honour first to make some remarks of a regional nature on behalf of the Forum members that are also United Nations Members, followed by some remarks of a more national perspective.

The South Pacific Forum held its twenty-seventh meeting last month in Majuro, the capital of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. The theme for this session, "Pacific Solidarity for the Common Good", highlights one of the important building blocks of our regional cooperation towards sustainable development. The Forum leaders reviewed a broad range of measures in the area of economic reform and development. These and other important decisions of the South Pacific Forum leaders are contained in the Forum communiqué, which has been submitted to the Secretary-General and will be circulated as an official United Nations document.

In his opening remarks to the Forum at Majuro, the President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, His Excellency Mr. Amata Kabua, emphasized the unity and the harmony of the nations gathered at the meeting, which traversed immense ocean barriers. The restraining pull of national interests and cultural differences are all harmonized — fine-tuned, so to speak — into a single sea of unity. It is through this unity that seemingly insurmountable obstacles or intractable problems can be resolved. In deliberating on and reviewing their respective performances together and charting the way towards a prosperous and secure future for the region, the Forum leaders gave deeper meaning to the theme of this year's session.

I wish to make some remarks about the outcome of those discussions. Climate change is a global problem that

requires a global solution. The Forum has again highlighted its concern over climate change and called for urgent action in view of the second assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which states that the balance of scientific evidence suggests a discernible human influence on the global climate. This report has given us much to be concerned about, and the Forum countries call on the international community to accelerate negotiations at the next conference of the parties.

The international community needs to achieve significant progress towards the goal of lowering greenhouse gas emissions in the near future. The survival of many small island developing States, as well as many other developing States that are adversely affected in some way by climate change depends upon our taking action. We will all be adversely affected by climate change. For this reason we reaffirm our full support for the alliance of small island States protocol in the context of the discussions of the Ad Hoc Group on the Berlin Mandate, which calls for stronger carbon dioxide reductions in a time-bound framework.

Mr. Minoves-Triquell (Andorra), Vice-President, took the Chair.

During this session of the General Assembly we will review progress on a number of related issues under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, including fisheries conservation and management and efforts to reduce the incidence of illegal fishing practices. We will also reiterate the importance that our region has placed on the effectiveness of an international legal regime for oceans and their resources, including, in our view, providing adequate financial resources to the International Seabed Authority in Kingston, Jamaica.

The Forum leaders underscored the importance that the Pacific fish stocks have for international trade and our livelihood. We recognize that this important resource must be managed sustainably to maximize its benefits to our region. In this connection, the Forum leaders have requested our regional experts to develop comprehensive agreements for the sustainable management of the region's fisheries across the full geographical range of the stocks, including the high seas, taking into account the Agreement on straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks opened for signature here in New York last year. The Republic of the Marshall Islands has offered to host a second High-level Multilateral Consultation on the Conservation and Management of Fisheries Resources of the Central Western Pacific next year to advance this process. This ministerial meeting will discuss a number of

issues, including restocking, greater involvement of the distant-water-fishing nations in conservation and management, data gathering on the range of the stocks, and transshipments.

The Forum leaders are also committed to the review and appraisal of Agenda 21, which will take place at the special session of the General Assembly next year. Mechanisms have been established for regional dialogue, partnership and participation in the development of concrete proposals for action regarding the progress made since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. The Forum has asked its Advisory Committee to coordinate these tasks and make preparations to submit reports to that special session. In this respect I wish to call on our development partners to support the efforts of the Forum countries and our regional organizations, so that the special session will be a thorough and comprehensive review. But in this regard, we caution against a proliferation of organizations and meetings when the concerted efforts of the international community should be focused on practical measures, which will improve on the efforts under way at the regional level. It is problematic for our administrations, with limited resources, to cover too many meetings dealing with the same topics, and we fear that unnecessary duplication may occur as a result.

We will report to that session on a number of initiatives, following on from the report submitted to the Commission on Sustainable Development in 1996 by the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP). In our region we recognize the importance of the multiple role that forests have, and the need for a comprehensive approach by the international community to the sustainable management and conservation of all types of forests. For our part in sustainable forests management, the Forum endorsed a South Pacific Code of Conduct for Logging of Indigenous Forests in selected South Pacific Forum countries. Also, in the light of the fact that 1997 will be the Year of the Coral Reef in the Pacific, we hope to include progress reports on the implementation of coastal-zone-management strategies.

The international community took steps at the Barbados Conference to acknowledge the special situation and interests of small island developing States. We stress the need to give particular attention to the comprehensive Programme of Action produced at that Conference, and to have the special needs of small island developing States adequately addressed in the United Nations development efforts. In its review of Agenda 21 the special session

should lay the grounds for further international cooperation, national and regional initiative, and the mobilization of resources for meeting the sustainable development needs of small island developing States.

I wish to raise some of issues of political significance for our region. The Forum commended progress by France and parties in New Caledonia on the implementation of the Matignon Agreements. It welcomed the recent reception accorded to the Ministerial Mission from the Forum countries by the French and New Caledonian authorities. Forum countries encourage all parties to continue dialogue in the search for a durable solution to the question of the territory's long-term future.

I wish to inform the General Assembly that the Forum has reaffirmed its strong and unanimous support for Australia's candidature for the Security Council in this year's election. Furthermore, in recognition of the importance of Japan as a constructive partner for the region, the Forum also expressed strong and unanimous support for the candidature of Japan at the same election.

The Forum expressed satisfaction at the permanent cessation of French nuclear testing in the South Pacific. This marked the end of all nuclear testing in a region that had been subjected to both atmospheric and underground testing for five decades. China's recent announcement of a moratorium on nuclear testing meant that all five nuclear-weapon States were now observing testing moratoriums long urged by the Forum. Earlier this month the General Assembly took action to adopt and open for signature a comprehensive test-ban Treaty (CTBT). This was an effort fully supported by the Forum, and the resolution was sponsored by all the United Nations members of the Forum. We are pleased with the passage of resolution 50/78, and urge all States to join with us in signing and ratifying the CTBT as soon as possible, to facilitate the Treaty's earliest implementation.

We should recall the Advisory Opinion tendered by the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, which recognized that all members of the international community have an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. The Forum leaders urged all States concerned, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to continue meaningful negotiations with a view to further significant reductions of nuclear stockpiles in the near future as a step towards the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons.

They also warmly welcomed the signature and ratification by Vanuatu of the South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone Treaty, the signature of Tonga, and the signing of the protocols to the Treaty by France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. As a result of these developments, all States within the Treaty area have now given their support to the Treaty, and all five nuclear-weapon States have undertaken to respect its provisions. We welcome the ratification by France of the protocols. The Forum also urged early ratification of the protocols by the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

The Forum leaders were encouraged by the establishment since their last meeting of two nuclear-weapon-free zones: in South-East Asia and Africa. Leaders noted with satisfaction that these developments represented progress with respect to the decisions accompanying the indefinite extension in 1995 of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In this context, Forum leaders expressed support for an appropriate resolution at this session of the United Nations General Assembly whereby signatory States of the southern hemisphere nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties and other members of the international community could affirm their support for these zones and cooperate in the furtherance of the goals of these zones and of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

The Forum again reaffirmed the existence of a special responsibility towards those peoples of the former United Nations Trust Territory administered by the United States, the Marshall Islands, which was adversely affected as a result of nuclear-weapon tests conducted during the period of the trusteeship. This responsibility includes the safe resettlement of displaced human populations and the restoration to economic productivity of affected areas.

The Forum wishes again to raise concerns over shipments of plutonium and radioactive wastes through our region. These shipments must be carried out in accordance with the strictest international safety and security standards. All contingencies must be fully addressed, and full consultation must be carried out with the countries of the regions through which the shipments will occur.

I now wish to make some comments on behalf of my national delegation.

In regard to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), it is important that countries that were

severely affected by nuclear testing play a role in the 51-member Executive Council being envisaged within the CTBT framework to oversee all aspects of the implementation of the Treaty. I wish to reiterate that the Republic of the Marshall Islands stands ready to present its candidacy for that Council, once established.

We are grateful to President Clinton and his Administration for their transparent policy of disclosing previously classified information relating to the nuclear-testing programme in the Marshall Islands. We also wish to thank our friends and supporters in the United States Congress for their assistance. We hope that our cooperation continues to improve and that the process of disclosure is accelerated. All the information pertaining to the nuclear-testing programme should be provided to my Government, in order that we may fully comprehend the implications for our planning for the health and well-being of our citizens and our environment.

The Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands has recently learned that the damage caused by nuclear-weapon-test programmes during the trusteeship is far greater and more horrible than originally disclosed. The radiation released by all 67 nuclear-weapon tests is currently known to affect more atolls and more groups of people than previously disclosed, as reported by the White House Advisory Committee on Human Radiation Experiments. The health, environment, medical, social and economic consequences resulting from the effects of the radiation released remains a major concern for the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. As a result, at our current level of knowledge the costs related to the effects of radiation make it very hard to properly treat and care for the people who have, and continue to show, radiation-related illnesses. This also applies to programmes related to the rehabilitation of contaminated islands and the safe resettlement of affected communities.

We cannot solve these problems on our own, and we feel obliged to appeal to the international community. Our concern continues to be that our situation has not been fully addressed and rectified until now. We welcome the new willingness of the United States authorities to constructively work with the Republic of the Marshall Islands to address the full range of outstanding nuclear issues, which have for so long affected our relationship and the well-being of our people. We acknowledge the assistance that has been provided up to now, which includes efforts at clean-up and resettlement. But much more needs to be done.

We reiterate the call that was made to the High-level Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on the Financial Situation of the United Nations to reduce the so-called floor rate in the scale of assessments. This is an issue of vital importance to all developing countries with small economies, in particular a large number of small island developing States and least developed countries. The situation was firmly noted by the Committee on Contributions in its last report:

“the current floor assessment rate of 0.01 per cent resulted in a serious departure from the principle of capacity to pay for a number of smaller Member States.” (*A/50/11/Add.2, para. 50*)

We call on the Fifth Committee to take action on this matter as soon as possible, and the time for this has come at this session of the General Assembly. In our view, this would have a beneficial effect for over 60 countries.

Another area of reform that is of great concern to us is the expansion of the Security Council. The need for a more democratic process and for allowing greater participation in the work of the Council is something that we all reaffirmed during the fiftieth-anniversary session. However, we have to make more progress in implementing our ideas in this regard.

This will be a very important year for the United Nations in that we will take stock of many of our current activities and lay the groundwork for many others. As Chair of the South Pacific Forum, the Republic of the Marshall Islands will spare no effort to ensure a successful conclusion to this year's agenda. The Republic of the Marshall Islands has been an active participant in this Assembly in the five years that we have been a member. We have come a long way since the adoption of our Constitution in 1979. We pledge our cooperation to the President's leadership and we look forward to working closely with him and the members of the General Assembly.

**Address by His Excellency Mr. Marc Forné Molné,
President of the Government of the Principality of
Andorra**

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Marc Forné Molné, President of the Government of the Principality of Andorra.

Mr. Marc Forné Molné, President of the Government of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the President of the Government of the Principality of Andorra, His Excellency Mr. Marc Forné Molné, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Forné Molné (Andorra) (*spoke in Catalan; English text furnished by the delegation*): Allow me first of all to express the honour I feel as an Andorran at the distinction that has been conferred on our small country by this Assembly through your election, Mr. Minoves-Triquell, as a Vice-President for this year's session of the General Assembly. I thank you for calling on me to address this Assembly and assure you of the support of the people of Andorra and, I am sure, of all those who speak the Catalan language.

I must also thank the outgoing President, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for his excellent tenure at the helm of the General Assembly during the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. I do this with the satisfaction of congratulating an illustrious Portuguese, a brother from the Iberian peninsula who has been able to give this Assembly the necessary impetus to start off on the right foot and with hope for the new era of 50 years that must take us to the one hundredth anniversary of the United Nations. I wish also to convey to the new President, His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail, my warmest congratulations and those of my country on his election, and I have the great pleasure of assuring him of the close collaboration of the Andorran Vice-President of the General Assembly, who will always be at his service.

Andorra looks to the future of the world with optimism, sure that on this Earth men and women of good will will know how to overcome intolerance and injustice. In order to advance towards these objectives of progress, we will have to count on the United Nations. Its reform, which the Secretary General, at the call of all the States, has promoted during these last years, will give us a more efficient Organization, with more coordination and less costly duplication, responsible in the financial sphere and concentrated on its mandate.

My fellow citizens often ask me, "What can a small country like Andorra bring to the United Nations?" We are a State with very little land and with a population that we count in six tens of thousands, and we lack the political weight the force of arms normally provides. However, our

small size has been our good fortune. We have opted to lack armies and cannons since we destroyed all our country's fortifications in 1278. One day, we would hope, that admirable action of the thirteenth-century Andorrans will be imitated by our century's over-armed Powers, large, mid-sized and small. Our small population has been a good school for human understanding and our individual and collective aspirations, allowing for the precision of small-scale observation. Because we are small and peaceful, and because we have a lengthy history, we bring to the United Nations a vision of the world that is patient and optimistic, and it is our belief that if we have lived in our territory without bellicose conflict for more than 700 years, the same is also possible beyond our borders, for, in the end, the men and women who live in Andorra are different from the rest of mankind only in their collective historical experience.

It is the young people growing up in this latter part of the twentieth century who will pave the way to the third millennium. I should thus like to make them the main point of my statement this year in the Assembly's general debate. Later, I will mention my State's hopes for the young who are today being educated in an understanding of the challenges of the United Nations and of the need to promote democracy and human rights as the pillars of the peace, prosperity and justice for peoples that we are striving to attain, goals that, if we hurry in our task, we may be able to glimpse ourselves.

Earlier, I indicated that Andorra trusts the future. One of the principal reasons for that trust is probably the fact that a great part of our population is young and that our demographic pyramid is very different from those of our Western European neighbours. When human beings are young, everything seems possible. The energy we all possess allows us to look forward with strength, with courage and with hope. *Raisons d'état*, political evils, economic imperatives, the belief that the end justifies the means — all these have difficulty taking root in the young, since youth cares more about fidelity in friendship, more about making its imprint on society. Youth has idealism — something we too often criticize but something which feeds the genuine and vital fire that compels human beings to strive for dialogue and genuine coexistence — to aspire, for example, to the United Nations.

It is that aspect of the young that we must nourish if we desire a better world. Unfortunately, it is still very difficult for many young people to seek the good of mankind when in their own countries, cities or villages, our

in their homes or in their families, they lack the most basic physical or spiritual necessities, when the education they are given is the official doctrine of a despotic regime and when — as was the case with their parents and their grandparents before them — what they eat today is the meagre wage of much sweat. In the developed countries, unemployment among the young crushes the hopes of a large part of today's well-prepared generation, which will be forced to waste the education that decades of economic progress have enabled it to obtain. In States still striving to achieve development, in which 84 per cent of the world's population between 15 and 24 years of age lives, the situation is very worrying: AIDS, the rural exodus, poverty, hunger, medical shortcomings, sexual exploitation, juvenile delinquency — problems that also affect the developed countries — are particularly acute. Unemployment in developing countries is also a tragic evil. We know that more than 100 million new jobs will have to be created in the next two decades to satisfy the growing young and active population of the developing countries.

In confronting these problems we who govern must assume our responsibilities and give priority to policies affecting the young, especially those geared towards fighting youth unemployment. One of the first areas we must encourage is obviously that of training. Governments must coordinate economic plans with training policies so that students can learn professions that they will have some chance of practicing, as well as to prevent, insofar as possible, an excess of graduates in saturated sectors. We must also give appropriate encouragement, through programmes of coordination and technical assistance when necessary, to the integration of young people into the community. Small communities, when they work in conjunction with non-governmental organizations, pay special attention to the management of resources and are well aware of the needs of their young people.

This joint effort is most appropriate when we recall that we are living in an era in which society realizes that big government and its programmes sometimes give rise to more expenditure than advantages and that fiscal responsibility is of more benefit to the economy than is the multiplication of governmental departments, especially in the developing countries, where the public sector is still suffering the consequences of large-scale programmes that have not produced the results expected. In those States, Governments will find it to their advantage to acknowledge the value of fostering microcredits for young people with entrepreneurial projects. The example of Bangladesh, where such credits have enabled many women to achieve financial independence, is noteworthy in this respect. I would also

mention as an example of successful action the educational measures for young entrepreneurs that some Latin American States have taken with a view to the creation of new, small companies.

At the United Nations, States must give direct support to young people and to the programmes related to them. More specifically, I am thinking of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. That Programme, which was adopted by the General Assembly on 14 December 1995, defines some of the problems that affect the world's young people and indicates medical, educational and job-oriented priorities for the next few years. We must enlarge on that text. States Members of the United Nations must collaborate with the Secretariat in defining the Programme's possibilities and putting it into practice in a concrete way so that its message reaches all nations. What we do with today's youth will define the twenty-first century.

For the past year Andorra has actively participated at the United Nations in the debates involving the young. On 26 October of last year, in commemorating the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year, our Ambassador spoke in this Hall on the benefits of teaching tolerance and human rights to young people in schools. Andorra has also contributed to the United Nations Youth Fund.

Earlier, at the March 1995 Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, Andorra proposed a full and specific commitment asking the Governments of the world to foster dialogue between generations and achieved its incorporation into the Declaration by Heads of State and Government. Given the lack of specific references in many United Nations texts, this provides a good basis for subsequent studies on youth-related themes.

At this juncture, I should like to say that the fact that we concentrate our attention on youth must never lead us to forget members of older generations, particularly the elderly. Dignity in ageing must be recognized and promoted, particularly today, when the progress of medicine is making possible the lengthening of human life. Intergenerational solidarity accompanied by dialogue, is an integral theme of any policy geared to the support of the young. Indeed, when we talk of giving primary attention to youth, that must not mean a glorification of the first decades of human life to the detriment of old age. On the contrary, it should mean a recognition of the

determining role that young people play in what will happen later.

I should like for a moment to pay a tribute here to a generation of young people which the media has of late characterized as being “lost” — the young people of Bosnia and other parts of the former Yugoslavia who, not so many years ago, were confident children of Europe and who have now spent their youth amidst fratricidal struggles and “ethnic cleansing”, with all the revulsion inherent in that expression, a youth spent between death and barbarism. Andorra, which, during the Spanish Civil War and later during the Second World War, was a land of welcome and refuge for other lost generations of other wars — also fratricidal, and, indeed, if all human beings are brothers, what war is not fratricidal? — feels solidarity with these young people of Bosnia, upon whom has fallen the responsibility for building a new coexistence and for erasing from the collective consciousness these past years of propaganda and demagoguery and for breaking with the history of confrontation that afflicts the Balkans.

Bosnia is not the only place where we have witnessed difficult times. Angola, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Haiti, Guatemala, El Salvador, Burundi, Rwanda, Iraq and many other places have in recent years been affected by conflicts of great complexity. Some of these problems have already been solved or attenuated, often thanks to United Nations action. Developments in the situation in El Salvador are a good example. Other conflicts continue, a cause of great consternation to the international community.

My Minister of Foreign Affairs reminded us last year, in this Assembly Hall, of the considerable increase in military personnel deployed for the United Nations in recent years. At the beginning of 1988, there were just over 9,000 Blue Helmets in the world engaged in peacekeeping operations. Seven years later, there are over 70,000 — this in spite of the fact that the military and logistical means of immediate action are not in the hands of this international Organization.

Ultimately, we — the States that decide how this Organization shall act — are the ones responsible for failing to end or prevent conflicts. Criticism must be constructive. When we accuse the United Nations of a lack of action in Bosnia, let us ask ourselves why the policies of the members of the Security Council are so divergent and difficult to coordinate. We must therefore make an effort to provide information so that the public has an accurate idea of what really happens behind the flags that adorn this

building. We must make the successes of the United Nations known, not just its shortcomings. We must highlight its efforts to promote international law, a body of law that will guarantee negotiated solutions instead of shows of strength, a principle that is essential for the survival of small States. We must recognize the small, quiet steps humanity takes day by day in United Nations committees, steps geared towards the promotion and application of human rights. If in a particular State some people, be it only a few, no longer suffer torture or repulsive abuse when they are arrested; if in some parts of the world blood is not shed because international shame projects itself on those countries; if in other places, nuclear tests will not shatter the peace of the people living there because we have signed a treaty prohibiting such actions, then the United Nations deserves all our support.

We must foster confidence in the future of men and women, not cynicism towards international organizations. If we do not, we run the risk of encouraging movements that seek to express this cynicism through violence and terrorist acts. We have no choice but to consider the means democracy gives to its enemies that they can use to destroy it, particularly through terrorism. When the media tell us that the United Nations is a potential terrorist target, we become even more conscious of our commitment to strengthening efforts more effectively to publicize the task of our Organization. The energies of our youth must not be directed towards violent expressions of social discomfort. We must therefore channel them, as I have stated before, towards creativity in one's work and promoting confidence in humanity's potential. When, a few years ago, the political scientist Francis Fukuyama, as witness to the end of the cold war, wrote about the end of history, he forgot about the immense creativity of human beings. When one period of history ends, another one begins. Our responsibility is to ensure that the period of history we have entered in the nineties rejects the obscurantism produced by the fear perpetuated by human beings, and reflects the qualities humanity holds highest.

The framing of a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which I will sign tomorrow on behalf of the Andorran Government, along with many of the representatives here, is an achievement of which the United Nations Organization can feel proud and a clear example of what we can do when the peoples of the world unite with the strength of an ideal of peace. Andorra, an initial co-sponsor of the resolution that brought this Treaty to the General Assembly, adheres to

its principles in full, principles which provided the basis for the founding of our country. In the same fashion, not very long ago we gave top priority to acceding to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons with the hope of promoting that text of peace. Peace! The cry of alignment for the traditionally neutral States, one of the most noble cries, is — let us not fool ourselves — still far from being answered. The CTBT is only the first step, and an essential one, towards more efforts to ensure nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and the reduction of other types of arsenals — goals to which Andorra will devote much attention.

To help achieve these objectives, the Government of Andorra has a mandate of solidarity which is enshrined in our Constitution. In its preamble, the Andorran people declare themselves eager to make every effort to promote values such as freedom, justice, democracy and social progress, to maintain and strengthen Andorra's harmonious relations with the rest of the world on the basis of mutual respect, coexistence and peace, and willing to bring their collaboration and effort to all the common causes of humankind.

At present, States, large or small, within the framework of the United Nations, have a duty to provide a source of inspiration for the ideals of youth, prevent isolationism and look beyond their borders, share experiences and show solidarity with States in distress. This notwithstanding, Governments continue to have a fundamental role in the internal activities of States, so that few United Nations efforts and initiatives can really be effective without their active cooperation.

For this reason, the leaders of States who, year after year, gather in this Assembly Hall must leave here convinced of our unavoidable responsibility to promote human rights within our own borders and social and economic development in our States.

In accordance with article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Andorra signed and ratified less than a year ago, thus contributing to the universal process of ratification so desired by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), it is vital that Governments ensure that tolerance and human rights are taught freely and comprehensively at school in order to rear new generations that are much more sensitive to the universality and relevance of these rights. We must also encourage States still using other forms of government to adopt democratic processes, and make the rule of law a priority for leaders in the coming years. There are no peoples unprepared for

democracy, only leaders with little aptitude for fostering it.

I wanted to introduce a spirit of optimism in my speech today. When optimism does not conceal reality, but instead tries to transcend it, it is the best remedy against the apathy that can affect the human heart in a world full of conflict. I have spoken of youth and its optimism, and of the need to focus our attention on the problems affecting youth. I have lauded the successes of the United Nations, but I have also noted the difficulties we will have to overcome if the United Nations, is to enjoy qualitative growth. I have advocated the teaching of human rights, of democracy, of tolerance, and of social and individual responsibility for the progress of human communities. Four years before the new millennium, we must give our youth optimism and confidence in the future.

One year ago, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Andorra concluded his statement before this Assembly with some words by Robert Kennedy. Previously, my predecessor in the presidency of the Andorran Government borrowed from John Fitzgerald Kennedy the expression "*Ich bin ein Berliner*" to declare himself an Andorran in a speech on the particularities of small States. To make reference to the Kennedys is to make reference to an optimistic decade imprinted with the ideals and dreams that a young American President spread around the world. It was also a decade of harsh realities and contradictions, as in the world today. Ideals, however, last because there is always a new generation to adopt them. Today I reiterate the promise that President Kennedy made to the United Nations:

"To that world assembly of sovereign states, the United Nations, our last, best hope in an age where the instruments of war have far outpaced the instruments of peace, we renew our pledge of support to prevent it from becoming merely a forum for invective, to strengthen its shield of the new and the weak, and to enlarge the area in which its writ may run".

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Argentina, His Excellency Mr. Guido Di Tella.

Mr. Di Tella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): May I first extend to Mr. Razali Ismail my warmest and most sincere congratulations on his

unanimous election as President of this important session of the General Assembly.

I recently accompanied President Carlos Saul Menem on a visit to his country, and I have the most pleasant memories of his countrymen's hospitality, of the vitality of his culture and of the extraordinary strength of his country's economy.

To Ambassador Freitas do Amaral, who presided over the Assembly at the last session, we express our most sincere admiration. His term was a year full of difficulties and challenges, and he left us a positive vision of the questions of the future.

I have had the privilege of participating in the general debate for the last six years. During that period, significant changes have come about and profound contrasts have arisen in the world. The scepticism of some notwithstanding, allow me to recall some of the progress made on the international scene: we have improved mechanisms for international peace and security; we have advanced in the universal consolidation of democracy and tolerance; we have created institutions to prevent very serious crimes that offend the world's conscience from going unpunished, which clearly reflects the concept that justice and the law are inseparable components of a stable peace; we have successfully stepped up intense collective work towards non-proliferation of nuclear and conventional weapons, including anti-personnel mines. The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban-Treaty will undoubtedly contribute to greater progress, as will the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. We have also begun to articulate the concept of sustainable development to ensure progress for current generations without compromising the viability of such progress for those of the future. We have opened new paths to free trade, eliminating barriers which, until yesterday, were regarded as normal instruments of national policy.

All this has happened in recent years, and it is only fitting to recognize that the Secretary-General has anticipated, promoted and reflected all this in his annual reports, in his Agenda for Peace and in his Agenda for Development, documents that are essential for the interpretation of the process begun at the end of the cold war.

Allow me to take this opportunity to state how my country has dealt with all these transformations. Argentina

has actively promoted the new agenda. It has adapted itself domestically and internationally to fulfil the objectives and principles of the Charter, both in its letter and its new spirit.

Argentina has consolidated democracy and has taken a very active role in the defence of fundamental rights and freedoms. It has given constitutional status to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to the main human rights treaties to which it is a party.

Argentina has got its economy in order and opened up new possibilities and potential for its people by promoting good governance, fiscal discipline, accountability in the management of public funds, equality before the law for domestic and foreign investors and the fight against corruption.

In particular, Argentina has presented and promoted in the Organization of American States (OAS), as well as in this Assembly and other international organizations, initiatives to combat the curse of corruption, which is an enemy to development, investment and charity in society.

Mr. Melgarejo Lanzoni (Paraguay), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In Argentina, sustainable development goes beyond academic discussions. The growing deterioration of the ozone layer in the southern hemisphere has affected the daily life and health of the population of southern Patagonia. Argentina, in cooperation with other countries in the region and the United Nations system, has assumed a leading role in reducing the risk level for the affected populations by establishing five ozone-layer monitoring stations in our national territory, incorporating them into the world multilateral environmental monitoring system. We strongly hope that the international community will join us in this effort by taking the necessary actions to cooperate in protecting the atmosphere.

In our subregion, the southern cone of the Americas, Argentina, together with its neighbours, has played a significant role in eradicating distrust, in resolving border problems, in promoting physical and economic integration and in fostering political cooperation, all of which have generated an exemplary framework for cooperation and convergence.

On the basis of political and economic stability, we have designed ambitious mechanisms for integration, and we have made the Southern Cone Common Market

(MERCOSUR) and the Rio Group important channels for our foreign policy.

In the agreements signed at the last MERCOSUR presidential summit, the States parties — Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina — ratified their commitment to democratic institutions. As our country sees it, this should be a prerequisite for full membership in MERCOSUR. The States parties established a mechanism for consultation and political cooperation aimed at reviewing international activities of special interest to them.

At that time, agreements were also signed between MERCOSUR and Chile and Bolivia, which will significantly broaden MERCOSUR and launch our economies into an ever more globalized system. Clear evidence of this is the adoption of the interregional framework agreement between MERCOSUR and the European Union, which has given rise to positive expectations and created opportunities for strengthening links between the two regions in the economic, political and cultural fields.

Argentina has promoted common activities on issues of growing importance, such as protection of the environment, preservation of natural resources and social and human development, within the framework of regional mechanisms for dialogue and political cooperation, as well as bilaterally, in regional forums and at the United Nations. Argentina participated in the adoption of concrete decisions to fight terrorism, drug trafficking and corruption, which are the new threats to international peace and security.

Argentina's natural interest in the South Atlantic is reflected in our participation in the zone of peace and cooperation in the South Atlantic, which embraces countries from both sides of the ocean in constituting an area to which we attach special significance.

Member States of the zone are committed to respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity, promoting democracy, human rights and civil liberties, joining efforts for nuclear non-proliferation and de-nuclearization, and to cooperating in the struggle against drug trafficking. We are very pleased with our contribution to maintaining, together with other coastal States, the political balance and economic potential of the South Atlantic.

However, there is still an important unresolved issue: the persistent sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and their surrounding maritime spaces.

During these last six years, I have come to this forum to voice the claims of the Government and people of Argentina in the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands.

It is incomprehensible that while Argentina and the United Kingdom have overcome the sorrow and have left behind their mutual disagreements and distrust and built up a harmonious and constructive relationship — and we see the positive results of this day by day — they have not so far been able to comply with the resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Decolonization Committee and to progress in the dialogue towards a definitive solution to this dispute. We have not even been able to sit down together around a table to talk, even if only to express our disagreement.

In the same spirit that encouraged our two countries to cooperate in the South Atlantic for the protection of its renewable and non-renewable resources, we should advance in our search for a peaceful solution to this dispute.

In spite of our efforts, the lack of direct links with the Malvinas impedes human contacts, trade and tourism, among other possible exchanges, and has slowed down the economic and cultural development of the South Atlantic. The lack of relations between the two areas is inconceivable in today's world.

Argentina is proud of its great cultural diversity. Since the birth of our nation, our laws have preserved and guaranteed such cultural heritage. Our national Constitution establishes the objective of recovering the Malvinas Islands and the full exercise of sovereignty, and ensures respect for its inhabitants' way of life. The only thing lacking is the will to start a new phase together.

Argentina is firmly convinced that a new era should begin in the South Atlantic, as an area free from tensions — a place where different cultures committed to humanistic ideals and with a common wish for progress and well-being may come together.

What in the past has been a negative factor in our relations should become a positive factor and a starting point for a new relationship.

My country has shown its vocation for constructive participation in the areas created by the international system, fostering tolerance and preserving peace. In that respect, we avidly support all efforts to resolve situations

of serious instability and conflict still existing in various parts of the world.

In the Middle East, we welcome the progress made in the peace process, especially regarding the question of Palestine. We add our voice to those calling for the parties involved to maximize their efforts to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. We renew our offer of full cooperation to contribute to the attainment of that objective. The peace process, fostered by this General Assembly, has borne fruits that should not go to waste.

United Nations peacekeeping operations are one of the most effective tools for preventing violence around the world. This explains our full support for peace missions. We have responded promptly and unconditionally to requests of the Security Council, agreeing to participate in operations in our hemisphere and in various other parts of the world by providing large amounts of financial resources.

We deem it vital to ensure an orderly transition between peace-keeping operations and the work of reconstruction aimed at reversing the economic, political and social damage caused by conflicts and to offer effective humanitarian assistance so as to reduce the suffering of the populations affected.

With the objective of complementing United Nations emergency humanitarian assistance, Argentina, inspired by President Carlos Saul Menem, proposed the "White Helmets" initiative. The effective deployment of the "White Helmets" in many humanitarian assistance operations is already proving their political and technical viability.

The United Nations is called upon to play a significant role in the international system of the twenty-first century. Everything indicates that this system will be marked by growing globalization and that problems such as poverty, unemployment, corruption and the lack of education can be more effectively dealt with at a global level. For the United Nations to respond effectively to this increasingly broad and complex mandate, it will be imperative for Member States to renew their political commitment to the organization's political future. At the same time, it will be necessary to strengthen the United Nations through the in-depth streamlining and reform process that has already begun.

With respect to the Security Council, we continue to favour a mechanism that, without affecting its efficiency, reflects new realities, of which Argentina is an active part, and ensures the participation of those who have clearly

demonstrated their commitment to and respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter. It is equally important to ensure that the working methods of the Council guarantee transparency in the debates and in decision-making processes. Only in this way will the Organization become a special forum for nations to channel their resources effectively and successfully face the challenges of a globalized world.

The Acting President (*Interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is His Excellency Mr. Irakli Menagarishvili, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia, on whom I now call.

Mr. Menagarishvili (Georgia) (*interpretation from Russian*): Allow me at the outset to warmly congratulate the President on his election to his post at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. I am deeply honoured to speak from this rostrum for the first time, and would like to take this opportunity to thank all our friends in the world community for the valuable assistance given to us in the construction of a new, democratic Georgia.

In recent years, Georgia has undergone every possible trial in the transition from the old and obsolete to the new and progressive. Overcoming the totalitarian past has been very painful, demanding many sacrifices. In conditions of post-communist chaos, ongoing ethno-political conflicts and a precipitous decline in the economy, Georgia has managed, with the help of the international community, to stabilize the situation. Over the past two years, democratic institutions have been established, economic stability has been achieved, a national currency has been introduced, the process of privatization is being completed and favourable conditions for foreign investment are being created. The presidential and parliamentary elections held last year confirmed the strong determination of the Georgian people to continue on the path of democratic development. All this has been done in order to further the gradual integration of Georgia, and indeed the whole of Transcaucasia, into the international economic system. Georgia has had to overcome a number of obstacles on this course, both subjective and objective in nature.

Today I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to the phenomenon that has become the main obstacle in Georgia's path to recovery: aggressive separatism, which can completely nullify the beginnings of peace and stability not only in Georgia, but in the entire region. Aggressive separatism is not a new phenomenon, but it has only recently come to the attention of the world

community, due to its global nature and its destructive impact on international security. I can say with certainty that the world community has no right to take the position of an outside observer on this question, because countries and entire regions are subjected to separatism, regardless of their geographic location and level of development.

Despite differences in the underlying reasons for the emergence of separatist movements, in their nature and in their scale they have one thing in common: they establish regimes on the ideological basis of terrorism under the banner of "the self-determination of suppressed people". We are certain that everyone present in this Hall considers the principle of self-determination for nations and peoples one of the most important basic principles of international law. Contemporary international law has established a clear framework for the implementation of this principle. Yet it is unacceptable for the principle of self-determination to be exploited by national minorities or small nations that have historically constituted a single society with other nations, within the framework of sovereign States that today are Members of the United Nations.

There is good reason for us to have singled out the problem of aggressive separatism, as we consider it to be the main threat to international peace and security at this stage. Georgia has made enormous efforts to introduce the notion of aggressive separatism into the agenda of the world. Aggressive separatism uses "ethnic cleansing" as the main tool of vengeance against other nations and ethnic groups.

Here I must bring up the example of Abkhazia: 300,000 peaceful Georgian citizens have been expelled from the territory of Abkhazia. Thousands more have been shot, burned, hanged or tortured to death. Furthermore, the persecution of the Georgian population on the basis of ethnic origin was raised by the separatist regime to the level of state policy. This is a most serious crime against humanity.

Analogous manifestations of aggressive separatism are taking place in other parts of the world. Consequently, the stream of refugees increases constantly, and this process has acquired the form of a powerful new global factor fraught with unpredictable social and economic consequences. We believe we need more fully developed measures in order to oppose it effectively.

What can we do about this? As a rule, the response of the world community to separatism as a phenomenon is

nearly always late and consequently inadequate to existing conditions.

The first resolution of the Security Council on the conflict in Abkhazia was adopted on 9 July 1993; the most recent, on 12 July 1996. Comparing them, we can see that it took three years to call something by its proper name: to call an aggressor an aggressor, a criminal a criminal and a victim a victim.

It is obvious that we need a doctrine to contain aggressive separatism. This should include a number of measures directed at revealing the underlying causes and at preventing and overcoming any manifestation of extremist separatist tendencies.

We consider it necessary, first, to define the phenomenon of separatism in terms of international law and, to that end, to establish a corresponding juridical and legal basis, namely, a well-defined system to identify and categorize aggressive separatism in international legal documents.

Secondly, it is necessary to introduce and enforce economic measures. One might respond that the practical implementation of economic sanctions already exists. However, these should be binding in nature and their enforcement fall under the strict control of the international community; moreover, there must be follow-up implementation of sanctions against violators, if necessary. At the same time, in order to eliminate economic incentives for armed hostilities, we should provide economic assistance and other means of support to regions where separatist tendencies are growing in strength.

Thirdly, we must consider measures of a military-political character, such as the imposition of arms embargoes against those regions where separatism takes on aggressive forms.

Fourthly, those who have committed these crimes against humanity must be fully aware that they cannot avoid severe punishment and that, sooner or later, they will have to stand before an international tribunal. It is clear that international terrorism and aggressive separatism are interconnected and that we must combine our efforts in the struggle against both.

The efforts of the countries of the Group of 8 aimed at the elimination of international terrorism give us cause for hope. The Government of Georgia fully supports the

recent initiative of the President of Egypt to establish a new specialized international organization dedicated to the struggle against these evils. We must also work as speedily as possible on the creation of a stable system of regional security, without which the process of aggressive separatism that has contributed to the political and economic disintegration of traditional regional structures of mutually beneficial cooperation and ethno-cultural exchanges will only grow, hastening the division of regions into hostile microsystems under the permanent influence of neighbouring regional Powers.

Once again, let us focus concretely on the prospects for a peaceful settlement of the Abkhaz problem. The current negotiations continue under the auspices of the United Nations and through the mediation of the Russian Federation. The "Friends of Georgia" group of countries is also making concerted efforts. The settlement of the conflict has thus taken on an international scale.

We have repeatedly declared Georgia's position on the settlement of this conflict and the determination of Abkhazia's status. First, it is necessary and very possible to settle the conflict through a peaceful process of negotiation. Through the new Constitution of Georgia, adopted last year, the question of the state territorial structure of our country was deliberately left open. At the same time, proposals were elaborated according to which Abkhazia would be granted autonomy in accordance with the highest possible international standards.

Just over a month ago, the President of Georgia made a statement in which he once again set forth his suggestions regarding the settlement of the conflict in the Caucasus, including his assertion to the authorities in Sukhumi of his readiness to meet immediately for serious discussions.

Unfortunately, these efforts have borne no fruit. The responsibility for that lies with the separatists. It has proven hitherto impossible to achieve progress towards a political settlement. Moreover, the separatist regime, sensing its impunity, has undertaken a new series of provocations, attempting to organize so-called parliamentary elections on the same territory which was ethnically cleansed and on which less than one-fifth of the native population presently resides. The regime has cynically ignored the mediation efforts of the Russian Federation, the United Nations and the world community, numerous resolutions of the Security Council and the decisions of various forums.

The growing concern on this point is also understandable. Has not the perfunctory evaluation of acts

of "ethnic cleansing" and genocide in Abkhazia, by accident or a design, strengthened the confidence of the separatists that they will get away with their crimes and even legitimize the status quo?

In the recent past, Transcaucasia acted as a boundary between two opposing systems, two military-political blocs separated by the iron curtain and implacable ideologies. These confrontational orientations did not allow the innate human and natural resources of the region to be fully exploited, relegating it to a secondary role on the periphery of the world stage.

As a consequence of historic changes that occurred before our very eyes, we believe that the time has come seriously to reappraise the role of our region. Our final aim is to turn it into the very opposite of what it once was. The Caucasus can become and is already becoming a region of multilateral cooperation, not only between the States geographically located within it. The prospects for creating a transportation corridor across our region are gradually becoming reality. The States of Central Asia, the Black Sea basin and Western and Eastern Europe are directly involved in the process of its creation. There has thus been a logical growth in the international community's interest in the fate of the Caucasus.

The Caucasus today is a complicated interlacing of political economic and financial contradictions and interests. Therefore, it is necessary to respond appropriately to these emerging circumstances. Otherwise, we run the risk of creating a new, powerful and large-scale breeding ground for international tensions.

While pondering the creation of a new global and, in particular, European infrastructure of stability, we have in mind very specific elements that will create a single and indivisible unit. In this context, the initiative of President Shevardnadze on a peaceful Caucasus, proposed in the spring of 1996, can serve as the basis for the creation of a regional model that could, in its own right, become a major component in a general and comprehensive model of security for Europe in the next century. The ideas set forth in this initiative were discussed and approved in principle at the summit between the Presidents of the Russian Federation, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, and the leaders of the northern Caucasus Republics within the Russian Federation in June 1996.

These proposals are aimed not only at the peaceful settlement of conflicts currently besetting the Caucasus, but also at post-conflict settlement, insuring the security

and multi-level development of the region. They advocate the application of generally recognized, fundamental principles of international law, the observance of which would guarantee peace and stability in the region.

I am not engaging in wishful thinking. The road to achieving all this will, of course, not be easy, but I am confident that the States of the region possess sufficient determination and political will, together with the active participation of the international community, to make the only correct decision and, like one of Brecht's characters, break out of the "Caucasian Chalk Circle".

I would like to share some of my concerns on the prospects for new United Nations activities. The impending reforms, supported by practically all Member States, testify to a qualitatively new stage in the development of international relations. At the same time, the need for reforms places great responsibility on us. We have no right to take hasty decisions that might result in unforeseen consequences. On the other hand, excessive dilatoriness could also harm our cause.

Given the new realities in international relations, it is clear that these changes should be reflected in the body of the United Nations that is entrusted with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. In order to enable the Security Council to respond adequately to contemporary challenges, new geopolitical realities should be reflected in its structure. I refer to the timely question of increasing the number of permanent and non-permanent members of the Council. We are fully convinced that increasing the number of members would expand the geopolitical base of the Security Council, which in turn would make it more effective and representative.

In considering in this context the candidacy of Germany and Japan for possible permanent membership, we are guided by the hope that we would finally and irrevocably have an opportunity to overcome the psychological consequences of the Second World War and the cold war. In 1992 our President argued, from this rostrum, for the need to expand the membership of the Security Council by including Germany and Japan; and Georgia has repeatedly advocated this since.

Careful consideration should be given to proposals put forward by Italy and other Member States with regard to non-permanent membership of the Security Council. However, the Security Council should remain a comparatively small body, which makes it more dynamic. Most importantly, in considering an increase in Council

membership, due attention should be paid primarily to the degree of participation of Member States in the maintenance of international peace and security.

The changes should also touch upon the practical side of Council activities, especially with regard to conflict resolution. The criteria that guide the Security Council in the use of its discretionary rights, provided for in Chapters VI, VII and VIII of the Charter, should be more clearly formulated and universally applied.

In order to improve the management of peacekeeping operations, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy should be responsible for coordinating the implementation of peacekeeping operations, with the direct participation of regional organizations. We should also note that a significant number of conflicts throughout the world do not fall within the category of threats to international peace and security under Chapter VII of the Charter, although they are characterized by gross and massive human rights violations and are considered to be crimes against humanity.

Thus, in most cases, the initiators and executors of these crimes, which include "ethnic cleansing" and genocide, feel that they enjoy impunity because of the inability of the international community to take legal action. Consequently, we should consider the establishment of a permanent United Nations special international observer institution, which would investigate the facts pertaining to such crimes.

Georgia, having undergone the tragedy of conflict in Abkhazia, and having experienced "ethnic cleansing" and genocide in its own population, is keenly interested in the rapid establishment and effective functioning of an international criminal court. Such a body should become an effective tool for implementing the law on behalf of the international community. We are inspired by the fact that the International Law Commission has already approved the text for a list of crimes against peace and humanity.

We are also happy that the United Nations has already taken steps in laying the foundation for developing peacekeeping contingents of stand-by forces. Georgia has already declared its readiness for active participation in the establishment of stand-by forces. We believe, however, that the United Nations should not take half measures, as the use of stand-by forces cannot completely resolve problems of effective and timely

reaction to conflict situations arising in different parts of the world.

In this connection, we are convinced that we should finally implement the idea of establishing a United Nations rapid deployment force to carry out the tasks prescribed by the Security Council to restrain the escalation of conflicts and deploy the main peacemaking contingents of the United Nations.

In conclusion, we would like to see the world community as a union of free nations that enrich each other spiritually, economically and culturally. Mutual efforts in this direction will inevitably lead to the establishment of a permanent, cooperative peace in a world free of wars and ethnic conflicts.

The General Assembly offers a unique opportunity to elaborate a uniform and coordinated approach to the real, global problems of humanity. This is our chance to reach global consensus, and we should take full advantage of it.

I thank the Assembly for its attention, and express my hope that our pain and our hopes will be taken into account by the entire international community.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Angola, His Excellency Mr. Venancio de Moura.

Mr. de Moura (Angola) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate Mr. Ismail Razali on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, which is being held at a particularly difficult juncture. I am, however, persuaded that his personal attributes as well as his proven diplomatic experience will ensure the success that is expected from this Assembly.

Allow me to express to His Excellency Mr. Freitas do Amaral my congratulations on the outstanding commitment he demonstrated during his term in office. Our best wishes for the future go to him as he resumes his work as an educator and conducts research for peace and progress for all peoples.

Allow me also to express my warm appreciation to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for the dynamic and visionary manner in which he conducted the business of our Organization during a time of great change in the international arena. At this time the United Nations is more and more frequently called upon to

rise to new challenges and is compelled to face tests that are not always peaceful. For this difficult mission the Republic of Angola will continue to render its modest contribution for the successful accomplishment of his mandate.

At the threshold of the new century of the third millennium we are increasingly faced with new and greater challenges, the solutions to which require joint and concerted actions by all States, irrespective of their size, economic potential or military might. In this context, countries that have Portuguese as an official language — Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Portugal and Sao Tome and Principe — have recently decided to establish a community of Portuguese-speaking countries in order better to serve the interests of their peoples. We would like to thank the Government and people of Portugal for fostering a cordial climate for this community of Portuguese-speaking countries.

It is essential, therefore, that a broad and in-depth reform programme be adopted for multilateral institutions, which would make a decisive contribution towards the democratization of international relations on the basis of the primacy of law, the safeguarding of the sovereign equality of States and reciprocity in the comity of nations. It is along these lines that we approach with all seriousness the restructuring of the United Nations and its system.

Our goal is to optimize the functioning of bodies that coordinate the work of maintaining international peace and security and fostering social and economic development. Although innumerable international conferences held by the United Nations in recent years validate this concern, a great deal remains to be accomplished. We must go from words of intention to deeds.

In this context, we believe that the current session of the General Assembly must approach with daring and political resolve all current issues of common concern, including those in the areas of international peacekeeping and security and the healing of the economic and social crisis that afflicts the developing world.

Last year our Organization celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, and there was unanimous recognition by all mankind of its role as the most important forum for concerted action among nations. Although the restructuring of the United Nations has always been an

issue of concern, it is now even more essential if we are to rise to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

In this connection, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity first of all to congratulate the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System for the positive achievements we have witnessed. Nevertheless, there is still a long road ahead before we achieve our final objectives and make it possible for our Organization to play its true role. As a matter of fact, we are quite concerned by the current financial crisis, which is affecting the proper operation of our Organization and even threatening its very survival. In this context, we support proposals that suggest practical action for the correction of the financial situation, such as the revision of the scale of assessments, the downsizing of the Secretariat and some of its bodies, with a view towards rendering them more efficient, less bureaucratic and less burdensome.

By way of example, allow me to point out that several developmental assistance projects or humanitarian aid programmes are entrusted to foreign officials while they could perfectly well be carried out by local officials with similar qualifications, which could cut down the implementation costs to less than one third. This is only one example among the many we could cite that could go far towards assisting with the financial healing of the Organization.

The measures we have alluded to are feasible and could bring about greater benefits and substantially improve the functioning of the Organization and its specialized agencies.

As regards the Security Council, my Government has always supported its restructuring in order to strengthen its role and effectiveness and ensure greater transparency in the decision-making process and in the implementation of its resolutions. Our position therefore is identical to the one adopted by the Organization of African Unity. It would expand the Security Council and provide for fair and equal representation by permanent and non-permanent members, with equal rights and duties. Africa's claim to at least two permanent seats on the Security Council is nothing but its proper and due right. We likewise support the right of other regions to representation on the Council, with the status of permanent members.

Regarding the modes of operation of the Security Council, we believe that the areas concerned will find their appropriate *modus operandi*.

In several regions of our planet, there are still decades-old conflicts, and new sources of tension are breaking out in areas that previously enjoyed a certain peace and stability. This offsets the most optimistic expectations of our peoples, who had hoped that the world would be on the threshold of a new era of peace in this post-cold-war period, paving the way for cooperation and development.

It is therefore with great apprehension that we note a proliferation of regional conflicts, social and economic collapse in some of our countries, environmental decay, and the coming of new scourges such as transnational crime, drug trafficking, a rising wave of criminality, racial disturbances, xenophobia, and religious and cultural intolerance.

It is in the face of this bleak picture that we come together for the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, compelling us to pause in deep introspection and firm resolve to handle this time bomb. In this context, the Republic of Angola urges all Member States to do their very best in the search for ways and means to achieve this. One of the main tools available to us is preventive diplomacy and the political resolve of all those who are in a position to make a decisive contribution to international peace and security.

In the Middle East, recent events are showing dangerous trends, jeopardizing the Washington agreement on the autonomy of the Palestinian people and the first steps towards the joint peaceful settlement of peace issues in that region, all of which are matters of the greatest concern to the Republic of Angola.

The Republic of Angola reiterates the stand adopted on the Middle East by African Heads of State or Government at the thirty-second summit meeting of the Organization of African Unity, in Yaoundé, and appeals to the parties for strict compliance with their commitments, because nothing can resist the resolve of a people to be free. As stated by a great leader of our century, Ho Chi Minh, "Nothing is more precious than freedom and independence".

We are likewise concerned at the grievous situation in East Timor, a non-autonomous territory illegally occupied by Indonesia, in violation of the principles established in the United Nations Charter and applicable resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

My Government reaffirms that the United Nations has a great responsibility *vis-à-vis* the people of East Timor and should not fail in it. In this context, the Republic of Angola supports and encourages dialogue between Portugal, the administering Power, and Indonesia in search of a settlement that will bring self-determination and independence to the people of Timor.

We are, likewise, profoundly concerned by the difficult social and economic situation in the Republic of Cuba resulting from the financial and economic blockade imposed on that member State of the General Assembly.

The Government of Angola supports the General Assembly resolutions appealing for the lifting of the economic blockade in favour of the Cuban people, which is suffering under the negative effects of that measure. We therefore encourage a dialogue with a view to normalizing relations between those two sovereign Member States of the Organization, which we call the United Nations, not the divided nations.

In the course of the next century, one of the greatest challenges to the United Nations will be the protection and promotion of human rights. The Government of Angola has always recognized the indivisible and universal character of the fundamental rights of every human being and the intrinsic correlation between human rights, democracy and development. Thus, at the Commission on Human Rights and other forums, Angola has always categorically condemned selectivity and its politicization.

We condemn human rights violations, wherever they may occur. This attitude, however, should not serve as a pretext for sectarianism, exerting pressures designed to create political instability in sovereign States, or the implementation of hidden agendas. This practice harms rather than fosters the promotion and protection of human rights.

Allow me to take this opportunity to inform the Assembly that, at the proposal of President José Eduardo dos Santos, and in coordination with the United Nations Centre for Human Rights, the 32nd summit meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity decided to hold this year a ministerial-level meeting devoted exclusively to in-depth consideration of the issue of human rights in Africa. The Republic of Angola will have the privilege of hosting this conference, which we believe is of tremendous relevance in the lengthy and difficult process of democratization in our continent.

The crisis that is currently affecting the global economy is mostly structural in nature and results from inconsistency, lack of coordination, and the adoption of macroeconomic policies incompatible with the growth needs of the developing world. Of great concern is the realization that the current growth rate of some of our countries is often negative. This compels whole populations to lead lives of starvation and extreme poverty. It is indeed unfair that, at the threshold of the third millennium, there are still some 800 million malnourished people across the world.

Africa is the continent most lacking in capital and technology and, as a result, its population growth rate far exceeds its food-production capacity. In turn, this increases poverty and starvation and can lead to serious social unrest. These consequences can be avoided if we are able to rely on the understanding and goodwill of our creditors and major international financial institutions, which impose economic management prescriptions without regard for each nation's realities.

In our view, one of the basic keys to the economic and social development of our countries lies in the expansion and reorientation of economic cooperation for development. We must map out as soon as possible a global developmental strategy that will contribute to the solution of the problems now affecting the survival of our economies.

Today, our world has reached such a level of interdependence that new levels of interaction among our economies are required if we are to survive, enjoy stability and avoid the threat of the imminent breakdown suffered by the weaker nations. My Government reaffirms its support for the United Nations special initiative on Africa and, at the same time, underscores the need for greater assurances of success, in view of our experience with similar programmes in the past. Once again, a word of praise is due to the Secretary-General for this initiative, which again demonstrates that the world, and the United Nations in particular, has not turned its back on Africa.

If the African continent is to overcome its social and economic crisis, a broad marshalling of financial and other resources will be necessary before the end of this century in order to meet the social and economic development needs of the continent. Likewise, we are deeply concerned by the growth of the external debt of Africa and other developing countries, as well as by the heavy burden involved in debt servicing, which is one of

the causes of the continuous economic and social deterioration of our standard of living.

We believe that a fair and lasting solution can be found for the African foreign-debt crisis, as long as there is understanding and a strong political resolve on the part of creditors. For certain developing nations, the negotiation of a debt roll-over is a feasible solution. For the less-developed nations, however, the sole viable solution is total forgiveness of the debt and a massive effort in the area of international cooperation for development through partnerships. The strengthening of South-South cooperation and regional economic integration are processes that pave the way for the establishment of a more equitable, new international economic order, free from measures of protectionism that hinder international trade and give rise to discrimination against our nations.

Of equal concern is the deteriorating food situation in Africa due to drought and other natural disasters. This can be addressed only through special assistance from the international community for the development of the food and agricultural sectors and of food self-sufficiency in African countries. We extend our best wishes for success to the World Food Summit scheduled to take place in November in Rome, of which His Excellency Mr. José Eduardo dos Santos will be a sponsor.

My Government has focused special attention on issues of environment and human settlements and we take this opportunity to underscore the positive impact in Angola of the programmes and related activities in our continent sponsored by the United Nations Environmental Programme and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements. In spite of all the difficulties it faces, Angola has spared no effort in combating desertification and drought in Africa. We congratulate those countries that volunteered to host the Convention to Combat Desertification and urge all countries to ratify it, thus enabling it to enter into force as soon as possible.

Illegal drug trafficking and the chemical-precursors trade, together with money laundering, represent another scourge that is destabilizing our nations. Drug trafficking for us, therefore, is an international problem requiring cooperation among all countries worldwide. With the support of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and the assistance of other United Nations specialized agencies, my Government has drafted and submitted to our Parliament updated legislation relating to our struggle against the traffics in illegal drugs, psychotropic substances and chemical precursors. This law

was enacted recently, but we still lack the technical and expert resources to ensure the success of that campaign.

In southern Africa, we have coordinated our policies in this area so as to score significant successes, both nationally and regionally. The results are satisfactory and encouraging.

Today, just as it was 51 years ago, the struggle for peace continues to be one of the fundamental goals of our Organization. We must therefore devote all our efforts and energy to the creation of a better world instead of preparing for new wars of self-destruction.

My Government has signed, and the Angolan Parliament has just ratified, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We support the efforts to ban new nuclear tests. We also reiterate our appeal for respect for and preservation of the African continent and its contiguous areas as a nuclear-free zone, in accordance with the Pelindaba Treaty.

The Republic of Angola is today one of the countries in which the largest number of anti-personnel land-mines can be found. There are over 10 million mines laid in Angolan territory. These mines have inflicted innumerable casualties, and over 100,000 people have been mutilated in my country. My Government supports all efforts towards a total ban on the production and export of anti-personnel land-mines and their use in domestic or international conflicts.

With the Assembly's permission, I would like to address the situation in Africa, which today seems like a corpse on which vultures come to feed.

Some countries of our continent still face serious obstacles due to negative interference in the peace process and in their efforts to promote economic development, the well-being of African peoples and the establishment of peace, security and political stability.

The problem of conflicts in Africa is undoubtedly one of the crucial issues affecting the development and stability of our continent. The Government of Angola would like to praise the efforts of the Central Organ of the Organization of African Unity's Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in various African regions and countries, such as Burundi, Liberia and Somalia.

In this connection, we support the efforts of the neighbouring countries and others that advocate a negotiated political settlement for the crisis in Burundi on the basis of the country's constitutional legal order and in consonance with the legitimate interests of the parties. We believe that if this objective is to be achieved, there must be a global dialogue among the parties concerned.

We would like to pay tribute to the former President of Tanzania, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, for his efforts to reunite our Burundian brothers who have fallen into enmity around the negotiating table. We are convinced that good will on the part of the politicians will help our sister nation of Burundi overcome its critical difficulties.

Concerning Liberia, we would like to congratulate the member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for the significant progress made so far, culminating in the swearing in of Ms. Ruth Perry as Chairperson of the Liberian Council of State and the beginning of the belligerent parties' process of disarmament.

Unfortunately, we are still concerned over the situation of Somalia. We feel that in Somalia, as in the case of other conflicts, there is no other way to find peace than through dialogue between the parties concerned.

We would like to reaffirm our support for the countries in that region, and particularly for the Prime Minister of Ethiopia in his efforts to bring the Somali factions together around a negotiating table. We also feel that the United Nations should not and cannot renounce its duty and abandon that country to its fate.

Finally, we cannot fail to restate our position of principle regarding the issue of Western Sahara — namely, our support for the United Nations and Organization of African Unity resolutions in that regard. We are convinced that the problem can be resolved only through a referendum on the self-determination of that territory.

We support a peaceful solution to the conflict, taking into account the interests of the parties, particularly that of the Saharan people, and we offer congratulations on the resumption of direct talks between the Kingdom of Morocco and POLISARIO.

I would not wish to conclude my statement without apprising the Assembly in general terms of the situation prevailing in my country during the implementation of the

Lusaka Protocol, aimed at restoring lasting peace and reconciliation for all Angolans.

Prior to doing so, however, I would like to express the sincere appreciation of the Government of Angola to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Angola, Maître Alioune Blondin Beye, as well as to the representatives of the troika of observer nations — Portugal, the Russian Federation and the United States of America — for the unswerving efforts they have made, individually and jointly, for peace and national reconciliation in Angola.

Although the peace process has evinced a certain dynamism since the Franceville and Libreville meetings between the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. José Eduardo dos Santos, and the leader of UNITA, Mr Jonas Savimbi, we have been confronted with certain situations that are rather unfavourable for its normal and desirable development.

As the Assembly knows, the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol included a calendar of specific tasks for the Government and for UNITA.

The position adopted by the UNITA leadership concerning the honouring of its commitments has, unfortunately, given rise to deplorable situations in the course of the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol, in spite of the fact that the Government has gone beyond meeting its commitments under the calendar.

As a matter of fact, not only did UNITA fail to honour its commitments and fail to comply with the pertinent Security Council resolutions, but it failed to carry out fundamental commitments in the peace process: it failed to confine all its true military forces to quarters; it did not surrender its light and heavy *matériel*; it did not bring about the induction of all its general officers into the regular armed forces of Angola, in accordance with the agreement; it continued to create impediments and difficulties in the selection and induction of 26,300 troops into the national army of Angola; and, finally, it prevented the free circulation of people and goods, thus delaying the extension of the State administration over the entire national territory.

As members know too, at its Congress, held from 20 to 28 August this year, UNITA rejected the offer made to its leader by the Government of the position of Vice-President of the Republic. By so acting, UNITA created an additional difficulty for the formation of the

Government of National Unity and Reconciliation. That attitude on the part of the leader of UNITA did not come as a surprise to many observers of the Angolan peace process because it is in keeping with Mr. Savimbi's habitual lack of coherence. He has always placed his self-interest far ahead of the interests of the Angolan nation. Consequently, it is more than evident that UNITA is trying to impose strategic delays on the peace process and the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol, to aggravate the social and economic crisis and to distort the Protocol and other commitments assumed.

However, despite the difficulties encountered in the process, the Angolan Government is resolute in its intent to spare no effort to resolve all the country's problems through dialogue and collective commitment. Our Government, working hand in hand with the democratic forces interested in peace and national reconciliation in Angola, has decided that, regardless of circumstances, we will put an end to the cycle of strife that is disrupting the country. We will launch a new era of peace and political tolerance, strengthen democratic institutions and save the Angolan nation from the economic and social chaos into which it has been plunged by the stubborn attitude of those who try to block the wind with their bare hands.

In this connection, I should like to thank the international community for its efforts and understanding in the search for peace in Angola. We are aware of the tremendous costs involved in the operation of United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III), but this is a very sensitive juncture and the perseverance of the international community is of the essence, for victory is certain. Only with the victory of peace and democracy in Angola can we say that the sacrifice of the international community has been worthwhile.

In the achievement of those objectives the participation of UNITA is essential. We therefore urge the international community to continue to exert pressure to compel the leader of UNITA to follow a reasonable course, renouncing war once and for all, and to persuade him to occupy his position in Angolan society.

For more than 30 years the Angolan people have been subjected to successive wars that have caused and still cause indescribable suffering. After the election in September 1992, Angola was once again plunged into a war that forced all Government activities to be directed at an emergency social policy, the sole objective of which was to mitigate the nefarious consequences that afflicted the lives and dashed the hopes of Angolans.

That conflict created over 2 million displaced persons directly affected by the conflict; it drove over half a million refugees into neighbouring countries and maimed more than 100,000 people. In the economic sphere, it destroyed over 70 per cent of the social and economic infrastructure and the agro-industrial base.

Those are only a few of the many indicators that reveal the true dimensions of the catastrophe that has befallen Angolans and that has led to a serious deterioration in the humanitarian situation in the country.

Given the tragic situation we described earlier, my Government is no longer in a position to face this challenge on its own. What is at stake is the survival of millions of human beings.

I should therefore like to take this opportunity sincerely to thank the international community and Governments, as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations, for the assistance they have extended to the Angolan people. I would implore them to continue to assist the needy population without losing sight of assistance for development and self-sufficiency. We peaceful Angolans and our Government will not abdicate our responsibilities.

Once again, I extend our best wishes to the President for success as he presides over the General Assembly at this session and pledge to him my delegation's full and sincere cooperation.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mr. Ali-Akbar Velayati.

Mr. Velayati (Islamic Republic of Iran) (*spoke in Persian; English text furnished by delegation*): It is a source of profound satisfaction to see a diplomat of the experience of Mr. Razali Ismail, representing Asia and the friendly and brotherly country of Malaysia, presiding over the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. I wish to congratulate him on his well deserved election. I am confident that, with his abilities, he will be able to steer the work of this important session in an exemplary manner. I assure him of the full cooperation of the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in discharging his important mandate.

The developments during the last decade on the global scene, particularly the demise of the bipolar international system and the need to replace it with a new

world order, have created many hopes and expectations. Nations around the globe, irrespective of their diverse cultures, customs and religions, expected that on the threshold of the twenty-first century the process for the creation of a new world order characterized by collective participation and human development would emerge in a climate governed by realism and a sober grasp of the essence of the ongoing changes in international relations.

The essence of these international developments was indeed the overwhelming rejection at the national level of totalitarianism and dictatorship, with a profound message for humanity at large: if we desire to construct a world of collective participation and human development we must build international relations on the foundations of justice, tolerance, the rule of law, cooperation and transparency. Human society hoped and expected that justice would guarantee the inalienable rights of all individuals, nations and States through a rejection of hegemony and special privileges for a dominant few; they hoped that, through recognition of diversity of cultures and beliefs, as well as respect for the rights of all States, tolerance would facilitate intercultural communication and mutual understanding, thereby enriching common human civilization and empowering all members of the international community to participate fully and effectively in determining the shape and setting the norms and standards of behaviour in a future world. They hoped that the rule of law would ensure the security and legitimate interests of individuals, groups and States.

Cooperation would replace confrontation, bringing about joint human efforts to resolve common problems and to further common objectives. Transparency, by providing objective and clear explanations and solutions to global issues, would consolidate mutual confidence at the international level.

In such a world, the United Nations occupies a paramount position. It embodies the hopes and aspirations of the entire membership of the international community, and as such, provides a suitable framework for collective, transparent and rule-based international decision-making and implementation geared towards the promotion of the common good and the resolution of common ills. The convening of many international conferences in the past decade to articulate and codify further norms of behaviour for an orderly new system, the relative success of the United Nations machinery in preventing and de-escalating many international and regional conflicts, and the constructive debate on reinvigorating the General Assembly

and reforming the Security Council are positive examples providing hopeful signals in that direction.

On the other hand, amid competition and rivalries for the shaping of the emerging world order, a new phenomenon has surfaced. This phenomenon is so distant and alien from the universally envisaged world of collective participation and human development that its consolidation and persistence would send any hope for a global human society to the oblivion of more rivalries and insecurity. Indeed, concurrent with the expansion of participatory democracy in many countries, a complex movement has emerged towards autocracy or even totalitarianism at the international level, a trend which is founded on hegemony and flouts justice, freedom, participation, the rule of law, tolerance, human rights, pluralism and democracy in a dangerous and unprecedented manner.

The evident behavioural characteristics of this menace, disguised behind appealing facades, can be summarized in the following manner: first, there is unilateralism, which means a total lack of commitment to mutual cooperation and common solutions, and complete reliance on unilateral measures in various fields. Second comes opportunism, in which international forums are resorted to only as mechanisms for the promotion of national self-interest and often in pursuit of a domestic agenda. Third, there is secrecy, which takes the form of an insistence on dogmatic, non-transparent and closed methods and a rejection of transparency, which impedes the abuse of multilateral arrangements. Fourth comes lawlessness, which is the evasion of the rule of law coupled with audacity in breaking the law and universal norms, even in a public and official manner. Fifth we have imposition, which means the promotion of domestic agendas and national priorities through the imposition of policies on others, including through the extra-territorial application of domestic legislation. And sixth there is coercion, the unbridled recourse to the threat and use of force in international political, economic and commercial relations.

The most notable manifestation of the new international totalitarianism surfaces in the cultural sphere. Our world is characterized by a diversity of religions, civilizations, cultures and customs. This diversity has naturally resulted in the emergence of many systems of law and values, with similarities as well as differences. Regrettably, the claimants of world leadership have either failed to grasp this self-evident reality due to their own lack of historical and cultural depth or have found it

incompatible with their interests and therefore attempt to neglect it. More regrettable is the fact that the collaboration of certain other States in this field has exacerbated such opportunistic intolerance.

In this context, the misguided propaganda waged to distort the image of Islam, and the unprecedented intolerance exhibited against the tide of Islamic resurgence among Islamic nations and States indicate a futile campaign to suppress this great divine religion of justice and tolerance, and of defiance against oppression, tyranny and domination. The claimants of world leadership have yet to realize that a people's religious devotion is intertwined with its very existence, and will only draw more strength and resilience in the face of campaigns of external pressure and negative propaganda. The progressive march of the Islamic world, which benefits from the rich heritage of Islamic culture, history and civilization, cannot be halted. Thus this significant and important segment of humanity will certainly occupy an increasingly prominent role in the shaping of the future world order.

The irreconcilability of totalitarianism with the rule of law has had dangerous manifestations on the international scene. The passing and signing of legislation to allocate money for subversive and terrorist activities against the Islamic Republic of Iran is the most dangerous manifestation of this lawlessness, which is no longer confined to the secrecy of intelligence services but has been recklessly made into law by the United States Congress. This law and similar unlawful behaviour, including the infamous decision of the United States Supreme Court approving kidnapping by the United States Government, represent a very dangerous trend. They illustrate a growing tendency to institutionalize and even legalize illegality and disregard for international obligations.

A similar pattern of behaviour that has been manifested in the past several years by the United States Government is the self-arrogation of the right to legislate for the international community by attempting to apply its domestic legislation beyond its borders. Recent unilateral sanctions enacted by the United States against the trading partners of a number of countries not only constitute a grave breach of various norms and principles of international law and many resolutions of this Assembly and other international forums as well as blatant interference in the internal and external affairs of other States, but, indeed, point to a very dangerous trend, which undermines the very foundations of contemporary inter-State relations.

The rejection of such legislation by various Governments and international forums along with universal resistance against their application illustrate the fact that unilateral interference, the imposition of policies and the self-arrogated leadership of one State over the national priorities and external relations of others cannot and will not be tolerated by the international community.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has referred these two pieces of legislation to the pertinent international tribunal. We strongly believe that unless this dangerous trend is arrested at the earlier stages of inception, it will have irreversible implications, including the undermining of the credibility and reliability of international undertakings. If outlaws are left to trample upon the rule of law, peace and security around the globe will be in peril.

The same general tendency of domination has debilitated the Security Council, which has repeatedly fallen prey to the interests of a permanent member. The Council, for example, not only failed to prevent the Israeli attacks against defenceless Lebanese women and children in a United Nations compound, but also turned a blind eye to reports substantiating the deliberate nature of the atrocity, thus putting aside its humanitarian and Charter responsibilities in the interests of the political considerations of supporters of Israel.

Relying on such unconditional support, the Zionist regime pursues with impunity its expansionist policies of occupation in Palestine, southern Lebanon and the Syrian Golan Heights, as well as its routine practice of State terrorism and blatant violation of the most fundamental rights of the Muslim people of Palestine. Israel has neither regard for international law nor any commitment to peace, its only objective being the consolidation and expansion of its occupation of the territories of others. Considering these realities, the only logical conclusion is that peace in the Middle East requires a just and comprehensive resolution of the question of Palestine through the return of all Palestinian refugees to their homeland, the exercise of their inalienable right to self-determination and the liberation of all occupied territories.

It is noteworthy that the mere expression of such realistic analyses by a sovereign State is misrepresented as opposition to peace and provides the pretext for concern, anger and even illegal political pressure. In other words, the new international autocracy, contrary to its proclamations of support for freedom of expression, cannot tolerate the least dissenting view regarding its destructive policies.

The prevalence of such attitudes in the Security Council has clearly shown that the Council needs fundamental and substantive reform and modification, particularly in its rules and decision-making procedures. The realities of today's international scene are so different from those prevailing in the aftermath of the Second World War that the Security Council is weakened by its present structure and prevented from meeting the new challenges.

On the other hand, the General Assembly enjoys greater credibility in view of its relatively universal, democratic and transparent character. This supreme body of the Organization should not become the forum for general and inconclusive discussions. The Assembly, in accordance with the Charter, must assume its rightful place as the primary decision-making body on important international political and economic issues.

In today's world, the imperative of global participation and collective effort in the advancement of common objectives and the resolution of international problems is self-evident because of the mutual interdependence of the members of the international community. One of the most notable areas for serious cooperation involves the challenge of combating all forms of terrorism. Regrettably, the same Government that has engaged in sponsoring and aiding various forms of terrorism — through, *inter alia*, appropriating a budget for subversive operations against Iran, harbouring and assisting acknowledged terrorists, and supporting Israeli state terrorism, mass murders and abductions — has also prevented serious international action in this regard by irresponsibly levelling unsubstantiated accusations against others.

I reiterate in this Assembly that levelling politically motivated accusations against one or a few States, groups or regions cannot and will not help in the resolution of this major international problem. The eradication of this international menace requires serious global cooperation based on the following criteria: condemnation and rejection of all forms of terrorism, regardless of the identity of the victims or perpetrators and irrespective of their political tendencies and objectives; refusal to provide sanctuary to terrorists or terrorist groups and prevention of operations by or on behalf of terrorists; and cessation of all baseless and unsubstantiated propaganda and allegations. We once again reiterate our commitment to participating in any serious, comprehensive and rule-based universal cooperation to combat and eradicate this inhuman phenomenon.

In the field of disarmament and in its efforts to end the nightmare of nuclear holocaust, the international

community has been plagued by unilateralism, secrecy and evasion of the rule of law. Ironically, in recent years, the major arms producers and suppliers have exhibited more concern over their proliferation than have those States that do not possess such sophisticated weaponry. At the same time, the former have been reluctant to accept any scheme of general and comprehensive disarmament under credible international monitoring.

Some nuclear Powers and their allies continue to include the doctrine of nuclear response against non-nuclear threats in their defence alliances. In the International Court of Justice, these very Powers made every effort to prevent the Court from rendering a decision outlawing the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

During the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on the finalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, in contravention of the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal requirement of good-faith negotiations for nuclear disarmament, any reference to nuclear disarmament within a time-bound framework faced strong opposition by a small number of nuclear Powers. In the same negotiations, insistence on unilateral, non-transparent national technical means — as opposed to a multilateral and transparent international monitoring system — created a major obstacle for consensus. Even the commonly accepted principle of negotiations to resolve these and other problems and to attain consensus on this vital international instrument was vetoed. This undemocratic and dogmatic procedure resulted in the Assembly's approval and opening for signature of a defective Treaty that does not reflect an international consensus. We, along with many other non-aligned States, will join the signatories of this Treaty solely because of our commitment to be an active participant in any effort to combat the inhumane weapons of mass destruction, while at the same time redoubling our efforts to achieve a nuclear-weapon free world.

Non-proliferation policies have also been marred by discrimination, shortsightedness and ambiguity. On the one hand, Israel's nuclear-weapons programme has continuously received the direct and indirect political and technical support of one State; on the other, the interventionist policy of coercive deprivation of other countries in the same region of their inalienable right to acquire nuclear technology for peaceful purposes has become a cornerstone of the foreign policy of the very same State.

The dissemination of false allegations to instil fear and anxiety, the depiction of an imaginary enemy and the fanning of division and tension have often been employed as pretexts to justify an external military presence and intervention as well as mind-boggling sales of excessive and unnecessary weapons systems. This behaviour characterizes the United States policy in the Persian Gulf, which has only resulted in the exacerbation of insecurity and instability within and between States of the region.

In spite of obstructions and misinformation campaigns, the Islamic Republic of Iran has continued to articulate and pursue initiatives and measures aimed at fostering greater regional confidence; enhancing respect for principles of international law; bringing about transparency in armaments and reduction of military spending; creating zones free from weapons of mass destruction; strengthening peace and security through persistent endeavours to encourage and facilitate understanding and conciliation; and consolidating economic cooperation.

In Central Asia and the Caucasus, cognizant of the religious, cultural, historical and commercial bonds that exist among member States of the Economic Cooperation Organization, the Islamic Republic of Iran has tried in earnest to expand areas of cooperation among member States of that important regional organization. The expansion of transportation networks, including the revival of the Silk Road, provides the possibility for a dramatic increase in the volume of trade not only among member States but also between them and other countries of Europe, East Asia and the Persian Gulf.

Regarding Afghanistan, in pursuance of our mediation and in view of the fact that the return to peace and stability there requires all States, particularly those in the region, to use their influence in order to convince the warring factions to stop the vicious cycle of fratricide, we plan to convene a regional conference next month in Tehran, with the participation of regional foreign ministers and representatives of the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

As regards the crisis in Tajikistan, we have used every means available to us to bring the positions of the parties to the conflict closer to each other, in the strong belief that these differences cannot be settled through force or by military means. Considering the consequences of the expansion of the conflict, more coordination and cooperation among regional States and between them and the United Nations are imperative.

In Karabakh, we welcome the establishment and continuation of the ceasefire and believe that this conflict can only be resolved through negotiations, withdrawal from occupied territories and the return of refugees to their homelands. The Islamic Republic of Iran, enjoying friendly relations with both Armenia and Azerbaijan, is prepared to continue its efforts towards the resolution of this conflict in cooperation with other States in the region.

In northern Iraq, the policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran has always been founded on maintaining the security of our border areas and the prevention of terrorist infiltration, coupled with consistent emphasis on and respect for Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as on the prevention of tension and conflict between various Iraqi Kurdish factions. Regrettably, obstructionist and monopolistic tendencies, as well as self-serving interventions and indifference, have resulted in a grave humanitarian nightmare and the influx of hundreds of thousands of innocent refugees across Iran's borders.

As a cornerstone of its foreign policy, Iran has always pursued the promotion and strengthening of peace and understanding not only in the region but also in the world at large. During the recent visit of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Africa, our efforts to bring about reconciliation between Sudan and Uganda led to the signature of a memorandum of peace between the two neighbouring States and we hope that, with everyone's cooperation and understanding, a more lasting peace can be attained.

Our world today, more than at any other time, needs and deserves morality, security, mutual respect and confidence, the rule of law, the participation of all and collective cooperation for human development. The new international totalitarianism, notwithstanding its deceptive facade, is inherently antithetical to these values and constitutes the very negation of the recent achievements of human society. The progressive evolution of the international community can be achieved not by replacing domestic dictators with international tyranny, but only through a collective endeavour to achieve common human ideals and aspirations, including, *inter alia*, understanding

through respect for holy values and mutual tolerance for the cultures and beliefs of others; collective participation and cooperation in the resolution of international issues within a free, democratic and transparent decision-making process; security through the rule of law and practical commitment to international norms and obligations; and the re-direction of energies and resources from coercion and the arms race to universal respect for human rights and human development in all of its cultural, moral, social, political and economic dimensions.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.