



General Assembly

Sixty-second session

8th plenary meeting

Thursday, 27 September 2007, 9 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Kerim (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 9.10 a.m.

Address by Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Rwanda.

Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kagame: May I start by expressing to you, Mr. President, my Government's congratulations on your election as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session.

Let me also use this occasion to thank the outgoing President, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for the excellent manner in which she presided over the General Assembly at its sixty-first session.

Every year the General Assembly provides the world's leaders with an excellent opportunity to focus our attention on the challenges we commonly face. While some of the challenges can be addressed nationally, the most critical are often not confined to national borders and therefore require a concerted global effort. Hence the centrality of the United

Nations in providing the leadership and platform to address global challenges.

That is why it is vital that the United Nations continues to undergo comprehensive reforms to render it more versatile, effective and efficient. As the Secretary-General correctly observed in his report on this subject, the United Nations is "not optimally configured".

Some of the ongoing reforms such as the implementation of "one programme, one budgetary framework and one office" at the country level is a good start for rendering this international body more responsive. We are pleased that Rwanda was selected as one of the eight first pilot countries for this reform.

In the same context of the ongoing reforms, the proposal to restructure the gender portfolio is most welcome. We agree with the findings of the High-level Panel that the United Nations contributions to gender issues have been incoherent, under-resourced and fragmented. The proposed reforms will assist in overcoming those shortcomings.

However, we still eagerly await the reform of the Security Council to render it more representative of the world community and more transparent in its operations and decision-making processes. We believe that this would equip the United Nations with greater legitimacy and capacity to maintain world peace and security.

Let me briefly touch on a number of pressing challenges the global community currently faces.

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While our continent has been consolidating peace and security, there are persistent problem areas that need attention. Today in the Great Lakes region, those who committed genocide in Rwanda in 1994 continue their destructive activities. Almost 14 years after their deeds in our country, they are still sowing mayhem in the region. They rape, murder, terrorize and plunder with impunity. Their leaders are active in Africa, Europe, America and other places, where they continue to promote the ideology of genocide. There can be no doubt that those terror groups constitute a threat to international peace and security. The presence of the costly United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has not diminished their activities.

I once again call upon the international community, in collaboration with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to end the threat posed by those negative forces once and for all. Rwandans and the region as a whole need peace and stability so that we can concentrate on the business of economic growth and development.

For our part, we pledge renewed commitment to making our contribution to the restoration of peace and stability in the Great Lakes region and in other parts of our continent. In that respect, we express our solidarity with the long-suffering people of Darfur and commit ourselves to contributing to peace efforts in that part of the world, in close cooperation with the Government of the Sudan, the African Union (AU) and the United Nations. Rwanda welcomes Security Council resolution 1769 (2007) authorizing the creation of the United Nations-AU hybrid peacekeeping force in Darfur, and calls for its speedy deployment. In the same spirit, we urge the international community to support peacebuilding efforts in Somalia. It is critical that resources be made available on an urgent basis to enable the deployment of the pledged peacekeeping forces by African countries.

Through the United Nations, we express our collective determination to promote socioeconomic transformation for greater and more rapid wealth creation, which in turn will permit improved lives. On that note, we also join the many other countries that are putting forward the suggestion of a moratorium on the death penalty as a way of improving those lives and valuing them. That challenge remains daunting in the developing world, where extreme poverty still affects millions of people.

The solutions include increased productive capacities on the part of the developing world, side by side with the opening of global markets to the developed world to permit greater trade and investment. A fair global trading system is central to wealth creation. Improving the quality of development aid would supplement that effort, based on a shared understanding that aid is most effective when it is aligned with national development priorities.

Our ultimate goal of improving lives globally cannot be realized if the challenge of climate change and the associated widespread environmental degradation is not sufficiently tackled. Rwanda appreciates the convening of the high-level meeting on climate change by the Secretary-General earlier this week. We also look forward to the United Nations climate change conference scheduled to take place in Bali, Indonesia, this December, which should provide a clear road map of how we are to consolidate our gains and gather pace in protecting our environment.

The global challenges of poverty, ignorance, terrorism, conflict and climate change require us to act collectively in a manner that the founders of this Organization captured eloquently in the words "We the peoples of the United Nations". As we begin this sixty-second session of the General Assembly, let us recommit to our common aspirations and responsibilities for realizing peace, prosperity and freedom above any narrow interests. Only then can we hope to realize the ideals contained in the Charter of the United Nations "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" and to "promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Rwanda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Stjepan Mesić, President of the Republic of Croatia

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

Mr. Stjepan Mesić, President of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Stjepan Mesić, President of the Republic of Croatia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mesić (*spoke in Croatian; English text provided by the delegation*): When I first took the floor seven years ago to address the representatives of the States of the world on behalf of the Republic of Croatia, I started off with the words “time is running out”. At the time, I did not even imagine that I would have to repeat those very words seven years later, but with a greater sense of urgency. However, current circumstances, the problems facing us and our inability or inadequate ability to deal with them compel me to repeat, here and now: Time is running out.

When we attended the millennial session marking the beginning of the new century and the new millennium, we also formulated our millennial goals. Quite appropriately, we identified our tasks and our aspirations. However, what is not appropriate is the fact that the implementation of the Millennium Goals is not proceeding at the proper rate or in the proper manner if we want them to be meaningful.

We are running late; hence my warning: Time is running out. Among all global organizations, the United Nations is that which has been most sympathetic to the problems of developing countries and where loud and justified requests have been voiced to stop the stratification of the world into the haves and the have-nots. I have also attended sessions and conferences dealing with the issue, and I have repeatedly drawn attention to underdevelopment as a generator of global terrorism, along with inequality in international relations and unresolved regional crises. Nevertheless, underdevelopment and poverty still weigh upon a substantial part of humankind, and the preferred methods for fighting terrorism have so far been shown to be less than efficient, and sometimes even counterproductive. We are also running late in that regard, and time is running out here, too.

We have wanted and still want this Organization, our own Organization, to be fit for better and more functional action in current conditions. In other words, we want to reform the United Nations; we want to

transform the Organization from a reflection of a world long gone into an instrument for safeguarding peace, establishing stability and ensuring development in the contemporary world and the world of future generations.

By declaring its candidacy for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council, Croatia wishes to affirm its commitment to the global Organization and its readiness to take part in its reform. I do not want to misuse the time at my disposal to lobby for that candidacy. Our deeds say more than our words, and our deeds include a successful struggle for national independence, despite an imposed war; the peaceful completion of that struggle through cooperation with the United Nations; a courageous confrontation of the past and of the truth about that past; the establishment of good relations with all our neighbours, including those that waged war against us; the promotion of the peaceful resolution of conflicts, always and everywhere; current participation in 15 United Nations peacekeeping missions, which puts Croatia at the very top of those countries whose soldiers are today maintaining peace under the blue flag. Let me emphasize that they are participating only in those missions that are under a United Nations mandate. In short, we are putting forward our candidacy as a mature European democratic country committed to the goals of the United Nations, and there is nothing more to be said about it.

As I have already said, we demonstrate our commitment by supporting the reform of the world Organization, but even in the realization of that noble and certainly unavoidable goal we are running late. Even among us, there are voices suggesting that we renounce the United Nations. There is less and less time for action. Even in that context, then, I must reiterate: Time is running out.

In recent decades, this Hall has heard many debates on the need to establish new political and economic international relations. Such new relations can be based only on equality. It is true that the high and the mighty have a greater responsibility, but it is also true that no one — no one at all — can or may have greater rights, much less usurp such rights by force, just as nobody’s rights can be denied by force. That holds true for global and regional developments alike. Unfortunately, force is still present in international relations, and on the European continent we are witnessing dangerous signs of a possible

renewal of the arms race. Such a trend should be stopped and such conditions changed. There is not much time. Once again, time is running out.

By complying with the requirements of often uncontrolled development — and not only in the most developed countries — and by giving in to the aggressive needs of capital, guided exclusively by interest and never by social factors, we have agreed to condemn millions of people to death by starvation and for lack of basic medical care, and hundreds of millions to bare survival in poverty, with no prospects. However, by destroying nature, we have also jeopardized everyone's survival. Climate change and global warming are only two indicators, albeit the most evident, of the situation to which I am referring. The summit on climate change proved that we are all aware of the danger we are facing. Those who underestimate and even deny that real danger will simply have to face the truth. We are already living that truth; fast, coordinated and responsible action is called for. That action must serve the interests of all, even if it may momentarily run against the interests of some, because time is running out dangerously.

We have not met yet again in the General Assembly in order to describe our world and our environment from our individual perspectives. Our mandate is not mere diagnosis. Our mandate involves healing, changing and improving. With a foreign policy based on the value of the European Union, which it will enter soon, and with its desire to develop good relations with everyone willing to reciprocate, the Republic of Croatia has shown by deeds that it is aware of the fact that there is no time to be lost. It has also shown the capacity to act and to get things going in a positive direction, both in its own interest and in that of others.

We have only one world. Its destiny is in our hands. There is room for everyone in this world, but this world can, may and must be only a world of equals, of people enjoying not only equal rights but also equal opportunities, knowing that nobody, however big and strong, can live alone and only for his own sake, and that together we can change our world. Even more importantly, however, together we can save and preserve it for future generations. But let us not forget: time is running out.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Croatia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Stjepan Mesić, President of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Boris Tadić, President of the Republic of Serbia

The President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of Serbia.

Mr. Boris Tadić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Boris Tadić, President of the Republic of Serbia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Tadić (*spoke in Serbian; interpretation provided by the delegation*): I welcome the opportunity to address, on behalf of the Republic of Serbia, the General Assembly of the United Nations, the highest body of the world family of sovereign nations.

I congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his election to his very responsible post. I also congratulate the newly elected President of the General Assembly, Mr. Srdjan Kerim, who hails from our region of South-East Europe.

Serbia attaches exceptional importance to the role that the world Organization, and the Security Council in particular, play in maintaining international peace and security and in safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Member States. Proceeding from the Charter of the United Nations as the cornerstone of the current international legal order, Serbia calls for its consistent implementation.

The sixty-second session of the General Assembly is taking place at a very important moment for Serbia as the negotiation process on the future status of its province of Kosovo and Metohija is under way. Proceeding from the firm position that the independence of Kosovo is unacceptable to Serbia, we have offered special rights and competences to Kosovo Albanians for the autonomous development of their community within the Republic of Serbia.

In defence of the State sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia, our negotiating team has offered a decentralization model based on European solutions that would protect the interests of Kosovo Albanians, as well as the threatened interests of the Serbian and other non-Albanian ethnic communities in the province, in an effective way. Serbia offers solutions that would definitively solve, through mutual agreement and with the implementation of European values and rules, an old inter-ethnic conflict and open the prospects of reconciliation and coexistence within a modern, democratic and European Serbia. My country is ready to compromise, yet we wish to point out that the legitimate interests of democratic Serbia and the specific needs of the threatened Serbian community in the province, as well as of other communities that have fallen victim to expulsion, such as the Roma and Gorani communities, must be respected. Let me recall that more than 200,000 Serbs have left Kosovo since 1999; to date, according to the official data of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, only 7,100 have returned.

Today, negotiations are under way under the auspices of the Contact Group, but a legitimate decision on the future status of Kosovo can be taken only by the Security Council. Only a decision taken by that institution can be based on international law.

Persistent in our request that the territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia be respected, we call for the attainment of a compromise solution through diplomatic, legal and peaceful means, and not through war and violence. It is precisely for those reasons that democratic Serbia does not accept that the threat of violence made by the party we are negotiating with is an argument for redrawing the borders of legitimate democracies and for violating the norms of international law. My country is therefore steadfast in warning of the unforeseeable consequences of that unprincipled and dangerous policy, and remains committed to the search for a peaceful and compromise solution through dialogue and in full respect for the Charter of the United Nations.

Serbia would also like to recall that threats have been bandied about of late that the Kosovo Provisional Institutions will unilaterally declare independence on 11 December. We point that out because of the fact that the international legal order would never be the same following a one-sided recognition of Kosovo's independence, while many separatist movements the

world over would exploit the newly established precedent. Many regions in the world would thereby be destabilized. We therefore call on the legitimate representatives of the Kosovo Albanians to proceed to the resumed negotiations without prejudging the outcome, so that a compromise solution acceptable to both parties can be achieved, leading to long-term Serbian/Albanian reconciliation.

This year, Serbia is presiding over the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. In that capacity, we have made every effort to make a maximum contribution to the strengthening of democracy, the protection of human rights and the rule of law — the basic values of the oldest pan-European organization. We have also sought to strengthen synergy between the Council of Europe and the United Nations, especially in the field of human rights.

It is in the strategic interest of Serbia to become a member of the European Union. We are working hard to become a candidate member by the end of 2008. We are engaged in the process of Euro-Atlantic integration through the Partnership for Peace programme. We have thereby clearly evinced our acceptance of European values and our readiness to develop our country in accordance with the highest European standards.

We are convinced that the European perspective on the entire Western Balkans is the most effective way to stabilize the situation and accelerate the development of all countries in the region. Only thus shall we overcome the problems inherited from the past and encourage a spirit of tolerance and commitment to the same goals and values, which will provide a basis for building stable and lasting peace in our region.

Unfortunately, the question of war crimes continues to burden relations among Balkan countries. For its part, Serbia has done everything within its power to track down, arrest and transfer to The Hague those accused of war crimes, thereby demonstrating its commitment to cooperating with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia to a successful end. That is not only Serbia's international obligation; above all, it is our debt to ourselves and to our neighbours. By punishing criminals and building a stable and prosperous region, a common space integrated into the European Union, we can ensure a better future for all citizens.

It is with pleasure and optimism that we note that, step by step, South-East Europe is becoming a region

of good-neighbourliness and cooperation. There are numerous examples of very successful initiatives and concrete forms of cooperation, the contribution of which to the promotion of peace and mutual trust is exceptionally important. There is hardly any field in which we have not yet established a mechanism of mutual cooperation. That proves unequivocally that this is a lasting, strategic orientation of all countries in the Balkans and a reflection of their common aspiration to the full inclusion of our region into European integration.

(spoke in English)

Global problems call for global answers, and all Member States are therefore required to participate actively in their solution. Today, as we face completely new and specific challenges that threaten international peace and security and pose a threat to overall development and prosperity, we are becoming increasingly aware of the great need — perhaps greater than ever before — for the United Nations.

Terrorism is one of the greatest scourges of the present-day world. In order to fight and eradicate it effectively, we must take a global, coordinated approach, as well as vigorous action at the regional and country levels. Last year, Serbia hosted the regional summit meeting on terrorism, organized crime and corruption.

As can be seen, we cooperate very closely with our neighbours in order to forestall threats. An excellent example of that cooperation was the recent joint exercise of the armies of Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria, which provided abundant evidence of our three countries' collective readiness to combat terrorism and any other threat to the security of our citizens. Serbia also initiated the signing of an agreement with neighbouring countries on cooperation in the protection against natural disasters. The recent catastrophic fires that engulfed Greece and the manner in which we reacted provided eloquent proof of the vital importance of mutual dependence and solidarity in the Balkan region.

Numerous crises continue to plague the world. Some are dormant, some are escalating, while others threaten to provoke conflicts that could engender dangerous consequences, destruction and humanitarian catastrophes. Our experience to date makes us believe even more firmly that lasting, just and stable peace and

security can be achieved only peacefully, through dialogue, mutual respect and cooperation.

Serbia believes that the United Nations continues to be an irreplaceable international authority and mechanism for the prevention of crises and the resolution of conflicts. Successful and timely deployment of United Nations peacekeeping forces is an important aspect of the maintenance of international peace and security. We support the efforts of the Organization to further strengthen the efficiency of its peacekeeping capacities. Serbia therefore considers that only gathered together around common goals and objectives and united in action can we make a vigorous stand against such global threats to international peace and security as terrorism, bellicose extremism, mass poverty, organized crime, pandemic diseases and the harmful consequences of climate change.

Global warming is surely a major problem of our age and rightly figures as one of the central topics on the agenda of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly. That phenomenon — which, arguably, may affect all humankind — knows no national borders and circumvents no part of the world. To solve it, therefore, we must address it very seriously, as it brooks no delay and all Member States must get on board. Within the Belgrade Initiative, Serbia has proposed that activities to stop global warming be carried out also at the regional level and that a regional centre for South-East Europe be set up in Belgrade to that end. We also emphasize that plans to reduce harmful emissions must take into consideration the level of the economic development of various countries as well.

The complex of relations among different cultures, civilizations and religions is also a question that deserves to be at the focus of the attention of the United Nations. A truly multi-ethnic, multi-confessional and multi-cultural country, Serbia fully understands all the sensitivity of those questions and treats them with due attention. We are well aware that the world of the twenty-first century must not be based on intolerance on any ground. We, the leaders of the United Nations Member States, are entrusted with a great responsibility to make every effort to ensure that all the diversity of this world be comprehended and accepted as the wealth of all, rather than as the cause of new divisions. Indeed, dialogue and mutual tolerance must prevail as the basic principles of our mutual relations, both within States and internationally.

As a responsible member of the world community and international organizations, Serbia fully respects the Charter of the United Nations and the international legal order established by the Charter. Building a truly democratic society in our own country, we call for the democratization of international relations on the basis of the strict implementation of the Charter and other generally accepted norms and standards.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We firmly believe that only equitable cooperation among countries and peoples, respect for basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, and mutual trust can guarantee stable international peace and security. At the same time, short of the political stability and economic prosperity of States, there is no successful cooperation at the bilateral, regional and global levels. The precondition for stability and dynamic economic development is equal access to new technologies and modern scientific achievements.

(spoke in French)

The Republic Serbia is willing and ready, alongside other countries, to be actively involved in the process of United Nations reform and revitalization in order to make the world Organization capable of effectively facing the challenges of our times. Our historic responsibility is to ensure future generations a much better environment than that in which we live today. The Republic of Serbia remains devoted to achieving the goals of the United Nations and, along with other countries, is ready to work on further strengthening the integrity of the world Organization under its Charter.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Serbia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Boris Tadić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Álvaro Uribe Vélez, President of the Republic of Colombia

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of Colombia.

Mr. Álvaro Uribe Vélez, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Álvaro Uribe Vélez, President of the Republic of Colombia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Uribe Vélez (spoke in Spanish): Allow me to congratulate Mr. Kerim on his election as President of the General Assembly and to wish him the greatest success in his work.

After five years in office, we come to the General Assembly once again to inform members on issues crucial to Colombian democracy.

We have rejected the dismantling of the State and refuse to enter into a statism that would wither private initiative. We have reformed 420 State entities and are determined to work to that end until the last day of our Government. We seek a more efficient State at the service of the community and not owned by political machinations, union excesses or interest groups.

We are committed to the development of an entrepreneurial society, in opposition to State or private monopolies, in a nation with a consensus centred on productivity, discipline and equity. We provide every space for private initiative with social responsibility, which must be expressed in the transparency of relations between investors and the State, in entrepreneurial solidarity with the community beyond the legal minimums, and in labour relations framed by fraternity, contrary to savage capitalism and class struggle.

In sectors such as electricity, metallurgy and health, we have encouraged participatory trade unionism, with simultaneous responsibility in the social field and entrepreneurial management, distinct from traditional entitlement organization. We have increased by 40 per cent the affiliation of workers to social security through the improved performance of the economy and our fight against evasion. In the past five years, the minimum wage has grown by 8 per cent above inflation. Our per capita income has gone from \$1,851 to \$3,517. After adjustment in terms of purchasing power, it has increased from \$6,468 to \$9,456. For the first time in decades, the Gini

coefficient of income distribution has started to improve.

From the first day of my Government, with our democratic security policy we made the decision not to tolerate the murder of any Colombian and to defeat impunity. The security situation has improved substantially. In 2002, Colombia suffered 29,000 homicides, of which 196 were perpetrated against trade unionists, and we closed 2006 with a 40 per cent reduction in general violence and a 70 per cent reduction in violence against trade unionists. This year, there are 6,714 Colombians with individual protection from the State, of which almost 1,200 are workers belonging to trade unions, at a budgetary cost of almost \$39 million.

In our struggle against impunity, between the budgets for 2002 and 2008 we will have increased the resources for the judicial branch and for the Attorney General's office by 76 per cent and 78 per cent, respectively. The budget for the special unit of the Attorney General's office devoted to cases of the murder of trade unionists has increased by 40 per cent. The unit oversees more than 300 cases prioritized by trade union movements.

The fight against impunity for the murder of unionized workers is being carried out under the guidelines of the International Labour Organization (ILO), in agreement between Government, workers and employers. Reports on the progress made, submitted by the ILO office in Colombia, have been positive.

Allow me to affirm before the United Nations that murders and kidnappings have been the work of terrorists. First, it was the Marxist guerrillas who, in introducing their perverse scheme of a so-called combination of all forms of struggle, murdered, kidnapped and penetrated sectors of workers, students, politicians and journalists. Then came the paramilitaries, and they did the same, murdering workers and accusing them of collaborating with the guerrillas, which in reciprocity murdered those whom they believed to be friends with the paramilitaries. In certain parts of the country, the confrontation between the two guerrilla factions that still exist leads to the murder of workers.

Overcoming that scourge once and for all is an inalienable objective of our democratic security policy. In that regard, our three Government objectives are to consolidate democratic security, strengthen investor

confidence, and achieve our social programme, which is more ambitious than the millennium social goals that we hope to meet before the date set by the United Nations.

With regard to democratic security, we are winning, but we have not won yet. With persistence and transparency, Colombia will overcome terrorism financed by illicit drugs. We have a long-lived, respectable and ever-deepening democracy. We are approaching the fifth electoral contest presided over by my Government, and the transparency and effectiveness of the guarantees offered to all contenders are increasingly evident. There are 86,347 registered candidates of 235 different political origins to fill 18,332 posts by direct election. This is happening in a country that, five years ago, was facing 60,000 terrorists, and where about 11,000 still remain. To fight them, we deepen democracy instead of restricting it, protect liberties instead of suppressing them, and stimulate dissent instead of silencing it. Our fight against terrorism is being observed by national and international critics, who can be in the country and say what they please without restriction.

Our democratic practice gives us the political authority to say that those who take up arms financed by illicit drugs are not insurgents against oppression but terrorists against liberty. We will not refuse to negotiate with them if they cease their violent actions, but we will not allow for negotiation to become a trap that enables the destruction of our democracy. We have achieved the demobilization of 46,000 members of different factions and we are carrying out a costly and complex reintegration process with them that requires truth, justice and redress for the victims.

Thus, I now turn to the humanitarian agreement to free kidnapped people being held by terrorists of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC). Most of those were kidnapped before or during the time of the Caguan demilitarized zone, which lasted 42 months. We do not understand why FARC should ask for a demilitarized zone to release the kidnapped when it had that option for so long and did not free them. The country was without law and order for many years, and with no security, which allowed its almost complete takeover by guerrillas and paramilitaries. Citizens do not want terrorists; they plead for the exclusive presence of the State in all regions. We are open to a humanitarian agreement, but we cannot allow demilitarized zones,

which are ultimately concentration camps run by terrorists, nor can we permit those who are released from prison to return to crime, since it would be an affront to the sacrifice of the country's soldiers and police.

We have unilaterally freed 177 FARC members, as well as Rodrigo Granda, a high-ranking member of that organization, who was freed at the request of the President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy. We have given our consent for many people and institutions to be facilitators. The only answer from the terrorists has been the treacherous murder of 11 assemblymen from Valle del Cauca, who were held hostage for more than five years, and the ongoing assassinations of defenders of democracy, such as those perpetrated last Saturday, in which the victim was Julio César Marentes and Alberto Martínez Barbosa, two candidates for mayor in Villarrica and Río Blanco, Department of Tolima, and members of a political party from the Government's coalition.

The options open for the release of kidnapping victims — including a French female citizen who is also Colombian, and three American citizens — are not options for the political positioning of terrorism. Colombia will not permit the recovery of its legitimate and democratic sovereignty to be frustrated by restoring national or international space to the murdering power of terrorism. If terrorists want to be involved in politics, they have to renounce their bloody activities and submit to the Constitution.

Recently, the Government gave its permission to Senator Piedad Córdoba, who is in the opposition to the Government, to play a role as facilitator of the humanitarian agreement. We also accepted the help of President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, who will meet shortly with representatives of FARC. President Chávez has invited some congressmen from the United States to join him at that meeting, with my Government's support and suggestion that the American delegation be bipartisan so as to preserve a bipartisan approach in its relations with Colombia. We celebrate the positive willingness of the Government of the United States.

We have established certain reservations in order to defend our democracy's higher interests, and we encourage both President Chávez and Senator Piedad Córdoba in their tasks because we are committed to the release of those being held hostage. The dismantling of

paramilitarism, the weakening of the guerrillas, the restoration of effective guarantees for democracy beyond rhetoric, and the protection of a free press in a country where 15 journalists were once murdered in a year — this year there has been one case — are results that allow us to look the world in the eye and demand full support for our democratic security policy.

Today there is no paramilitarism. There are guerrillas and drug traffickers. The term "paramilitary" was coined to refer to private criminal organizations whose objective was to combat guerrillas. Today, the sole entity that combats guerrillas is the State, which has recovered the monopoly it should never have lost.

With the backing of the United Nations, we are striving to assist displaced persons and to restore their dignity. We have multiplied by a factor of 10 the budget to protect them. The phenomenon remains, but has shown a significant reduction.

Today, Colombians feel more confident. The investment rate has risen from 12 per cent of gross domestic product to 26 per cent. Deficit and indebtedness are moving towards a net reduction. Unemployment, which stood at around 20 per cent, is now at 11 per cent, and we are struggling to lower it to 7 per cent. We are seeking to reduce poverty, which stood at close to 40 per cent, to a level no higher than 35 per cent in 2010.

We are advancing towards the goal of achieving universal access to basic education. We have built an excellent technical training system. We have gone from 300,000 to 1.5 million families living in poverty that receive a subsidy for their children's nutrition and education. We aim in the next three years to meet the goal of universal access to health services. We are working hard to fulfil, during the current four-year period, the target of providing 5 million microcredits to an equal number of families with scarce resources, as a basic strategy to overcome factors of exclusion. We have gone from 3.7 million to 9 million children who have benefited from our food programmes; we expect to reach 12 million in 2010. Our programme "Together", undertaken to eliminate extreme poverty, combines a variety of social tools to cover 1.5 million families.

We reaffirm our commitment to fighting global warming. We have gone from 37,000 natural gas vehicles to nearly 300,000. We have moved forward in the construction of mass transportation systems in nine

cities to reduce individual transportation. With indigenous communities, we have advanced in the construction of a series of villages that compose a barrier for the complete recovery of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. Our new forest law prohibits the destruction of the rainforest and changes in land use. Colombia has 578,000 square kilometres of tropical forest, which constitutes a lung of the planet. We will soon have 80,000 forest-keeper families, who are remunerated by the State and are committed to abandoning illicit drug production and to supervising the recovery of destroyed forests. One national objective is the production of bio-fuels, for which we have 44 million hectares of savannah, which will allow greater development, initially in sugarcane and African palm, without jeopardizing food security or destroying a single square millimetre of rainforest.

I thank the United Nations system for all its support for Colombia, and I would like to highlight four areas. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has been the guarantor and supervisor of our forest-keeper families programme to protect the rainforest from the destructive threat of drug trafficking. The International Labour Organization carries out excellent work in our workers' protection programme. We have extended the mandate of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to maintain its presence in Colombia for the remainder of my Government's term of office. Furthermore, various United Nations entities provide valuable support in the task of assisting displaced people.

We continue working for a society without exclusion and without class hatred, in permanent constructive debate; one that looks for options, that does not stagnate in insurmountable antagonisms, that is respectful of the Democratic Constitution and guided by a long-term vision, and that sustains itself on an inclusive dialogue every day.

I thank the international community for all its support. I invite everyone to visit Colombia, to talk to our fellow countrymen and women, and to experience the collective spirit to fight for the greater happiness of future generations. Colombia should be known not through bad news, but rather through a great relationship with Colombians themselves. I reiterate the invitation to visit our country.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Colombia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Álvaro Uribe Vélez, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kabila Kabange (*spoke French*): Allow me to join previous speakers from this rostrum in sincerely congratulating Mr. Kerim on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly.

I also pay sincere tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his tireless and laudable efforts to defend and promote the purposes and principles of the Organization's Charter. His visit to our country shortly after he took office reassured us of his commitment and that of the United Nations to the Congolese people in its quest for peace, freedom and development.

The sixty-second session of the General Assembly is taking place in an international context marked by persistent violence throughout the world. The United Nations task is harder than ever; by the same token, it is more noble and inspiring than ever.

For the Democratic Republic of the Congo, this session is unlike previous sessions. It marks our rebirth as a State based on law. It also marks our return to international affairs as a credible actor and partner. Today more than in the past, my country is aware of the evils of war and of poor governance, as well as of a promising future of stable institutions, legitimate authorities and peaceful coexistence among peoples. My country is thus aware of the irreplaceable value of

the United Nations. We are an example of the Organization's successful work.

I should like to pay tribute to our bilateral and multilateral partners, and in particular to the United Nations, for their invaluable assistance. Having received so much, we believe that it is now our turn to contribute to peacekeeping operations. We look forward to playing an increasingly important role; in the meantime, we have made the modest contribution of civilian police officers now deployed in two Member States.

The path to the irreversible end of the multitude of crises that have beset my country for so many years remains strewn with obstacles. From the security perspective, we still need to finalize the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, complete the creation of a national republican police force and army, and operationalize a credible justice system. Attaining that three-fold goal is an absolute priority for us.

Moreover, while stressing the political and diplomatic approach, we must do all we can, resolutely and with a heightened sense of urgency, to resolve the remaining problems of insecurity in North Kivu. Nothing can reasonably justify a situation in which Congolese continue to be the daily targets of every manner of violence and abuse from national and foreign armed groups, and in which masses of our people are displaced by war. Peace and security must rapidly and at all costs be restored to that part of our territory, and they will be.

With regard to foreign armed groups, United Nations support is crucial to their voluntary or, if need be, forced disarmament, repatriation and reintegration.

Despite such difficulties, we have in less than five years successfully met the challenge of organizing democratic elections, establishing legitimate institutions, and relaunching economic growth. Our current priority is reconstruction and development with the aim of rolling back poverty, injustice and social inequalities. It is an immense task; if we are to meet it, the resolve of our people and its aspirations to a great future will be critical, though not sufficient. The unflagging and unreserved involvement of all our diverse partners remains indispensable.

Notwithstanding certain deficiencies, the United Nations remains the conscious of humankind. Its

present and future role must be seen in the context of the world's evolution and ever-changing challenges. The future will be a time of increased competition among nations, particularly in the areas of trade, finance and research, as well as of the universal enjoyment of clean air, drinking water and natural resources — vital commodities that the ever-growing population and economies of the world are making increasingly precious and scarce.

In the face of those challenges and of the ongoing threats to international peace and security, the United Nations credibility will depend on its ability to ensure that all Member States without exception implement its decisions and that commitments they have freely entered into are effectively honoured.

In that respect, turning to the Middle East, the credibility of our Organization will always be in question so long as the Security Council fails to do all in its power to ensure, pursuant to the provisions of our Charter and the relevant resolutions, the effective establishment of two States, living side by side in peace and security.

On another subject, climate change is an undeniable reality today, an eloquent instance of the constantly changing face of collective security. Its effects, unfortunately, will be more harmful in the developing countries, particularly and unfairly in Africa. Africa contributes the least to greenhouse gas emissions and does not have the resources to deal with their terrible consequences.

Making this point is a stark reminder of the need for a responsible, equitable and unified approach to the problems of sustainable development. I therefore welcome the Secretary-General's organization on 24 September of the high-level meeting on climate change. The meeting was an opportunity for us to devote to that crucial subject the attention it deserves and to sensitize ourselves to the consequences of the patterns of consumption that expose our world to the threat of an irreversible disaster.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is the natural habitat of unparalleled biological diversity. Its primeval forests make Central Africa the second lung of the world. We therefore undertake to participate in the design and implementation of an effective strategy to preserve optimum conditions of life on Earth. In the interests of humankind, we are prepared to make the sacrifices required by collective responsibility. In

return, we call for fair compensation to ensure that we do not jeopardize our own development.

In the face of changes on the world scene, our Organization must adjust and espouse an architecture that, while preserving universal values, makes it fit to meet increasingly diverse and growing challenges. Democracy, which today is universally recognized as the best form of Government, should not only permeate our collective action in international affairs, but should also be reflected within our Organization.

Accordingly, the Democratic Republic of the Congo welcomes the process of reforming the United Nations system to create greater coherence and effectiveness of action. We wish to stress that increased representation within the Security Council is a democratic requirement necessary to the harmonious functioning of the United Nations. The continent of Africa must be represented on a permanent basis within that important organ.

We also draw the Assembly's attention to the fact that Security Council reform must not eclipse the need to revisit other bodies of this Organization. Their working methods should be as efficient as possible and their future interaction better defined. As to the General Assembly, its authority must be further reinforced so as to enable its President to play a pre-eminent role in the search for solutions to international problems.

With regard to the new threats and challenges looming on the horizon, I have recalled the respective commitments made by Member States under the United Nations Charter, and I have reaffirmed the commitment of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to that founding text of our Organization. I have also drawn the Assembly's attention to the various scourges that characterize the international context and to the threats relating to climate change. I have thereby stressed the need for us to combine our efforts if we wish to enable our peoples to live in a world that enjoys the best possible living conditions, social progress and international peace and security.

Our political resolve to eradicate those scourges and our decisive, concerted action to do so will be the proof of how genuine our commitment really is to improving the state of the world. That is the only way to bolster the confidence of our peoples in our Organization. It is the only way, and nothing less will do, to safeguard the legitimacy of the United Nations

and to consolidate the effectiveness of its action. Let us meet that challenge together.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. José Ramos-Horta, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

Mr. José Ramos-Horta, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. José Ramos-Horta, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ramos-Horta (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): As I address this body, may I seize this opportunity to extend to Mr. Kerim my sincere and warm congratulations on his well-deserved election to preside over the sixty-second session of the General Assembly.

In view of the constraints of time and in deference to all, I shall take no more than 10 minutes to share some facts and reflections on the situation in my country, as well as on select issues of regional and international concern.

Timor-Leste is encouraged by Secretary-General's organization of the high-level event on climate change, to be followed by negotiations on the United Nations Framework Convention in Bali. The industrialized countries of the North bear enormous responsibility for the damage done to our fragile ecosystems. They, more than anyone else, must reverse the course and lead the effort to save the Earth. However, we in the developing world cannot escape our own responsibilities. The demographic explosion and our own efforts to catch up with the rich North all contribute to the pressures on our lands, forests, rivers,

lakes and oceans. Let us therefore set rhetoric aside and work as one to redress the enormous damage we have done to the common home of humankind.

As to the political situation in Timor Leste, in April and May 2006, less than five years after my country's accession to full independence, we were plunged into our first major crisis. The then President of the Republic, the Speaker of the National Parliament and the Prime Minister jointly agreed to seek the United Nations urgent assistance and the rapid intervention of friendly countries. I wish to reiterate here our sincere gratitude to those who came to our assistance in that time of need. We are forever grateful to Malaysia, Australia and New Zealand, as well as to Portugal, which dispatched a fully equipped company of its elite force, the National Republican Guard. The Security Council approved the deployment of an integrated mission, the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), with a police component of 1,740 police. The deployment of the United Nations police contingent was understandably extremely slow, and the projected force was complete only in January 2007.

We have made significant progress since the dark weeks of April and May 2006. Presidential and legislative elections were held between April and June 2007. The election campaign period was mostly free of violence and there were few reported irregularities. Though we are proud that the two elections were managed by our own agencies, we also acknowledge that the active support of UNMIT and other United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Development Programme, were indispensable and crucial to enable us to undertake such a complex task.

While the result of the presidential election was warmly welcomed by all, including the defeated candidate, the same did not happen when a new Government was announced following the 30 June legislative election. FRETILIN, the former ruling party, won most votes, but not enough to govern on its own; after several weeks of lobbying, it failed to forge a coalition to govern. A post-election four-party parliamentary alliance opposed to FRETILIN secured 37 seats in the new Parliament of 65 seats, was invited to form a Government. There was violence in a number of locations in which local law enforcement elements were implicated, but the swift intervention of the United Nations police and the International Stabilization Force (ISF) succeeded in quickly

controlling the situation. Our own defence force played a constructive role in helping to defuse the violence. I also acknowledge the role played by the FRETILIN leadership in restraining its more passionate followers.

Law and order have been restored. However, the relative tranquillity prevailing in the country is precarious and due in large measure to the effective role played by United Nations police, ISF and our own defence force. That will remain the case until such time as our police force has been reconstructed and turned into a credible and effective force. That will take two to five years at a minimum. I wish to assure all that, in the meantime, the East Timorese will pursue national dialogue so that we can reconcile and heal the wounds of the past.

(spoke in English)

As to the social situation in Timor Leste, the 2006 crisis caused widespread looting and destruction in the capital. More than 30 people died, more than 100 were wounded, and tens of thousands were displaced. We are slowly recovering. However, tens of thousands of people remain in precarious camps in the capital and elsewhere. I thank the international community, the United Nations and its agencies, the International Organization for Migration, and international non-governmental organizations for their generous and prompt assistance. The new Government has pledged to cooperate with all to address the situation of internally displaced persons.

Last year's late rains, floods and a locust plague have caused significant damage to our subsistence agriculture sector. As a result, an acute food shortage is foreseen in the coming months. The Government is planning to purchase significant amounts of food items in the regional markets to make up for the food shortage.

Endowed with some oil and gas resources, Timor-Leste cannot complain of not having enough financial means to turn our economy around and lift the living standards of our people. According to a recent report of the Asian Development Bank, Timor-Leste's economy will see a strong 22-per-cent growth this year due to our oil revenues.

However, all this is not enough to improve the living standards of the people. The vast majority of the people who have been poor for centuries should not wait. I have pledged to be the President of the poor and

I intend to be their best advocate. I am establishing a fast-track mechanism under my personal leadership to provide direct assistance to individuals, groups or rural communities. The idea is that it should take no more than 10 working days for a decision to be made on a project and for the first instalment of a grant to be disbursed. Coupled with public investments in infrastructure — roads, bridges, port and airport — and in the agriculture sector, Timor-Leste should see, in the medium term, a significant reduction of unemployment and a decrease in poverty levels.

Regarding the presence of the United Nations, we are cognizant of the fact that the international community faces a number of critical situations around the world — in the Middle East, Somalia, the Sudan-Darfur, Iraq and Afghanistan, to mention but a few — that are far more serious than the situation in my country and that may be of greater strategic importance and have greater implications for regional and world peace. We hope that as the situation progresses, the Peacebuilding Commission will consider placing Timor-Leste on its agenda as a follow-up to UNMIT.

I now turn to the issues of human rights, the rule of law and justice. At the time that sovereignty was transferred to the people of Timor-Leste, in May 2002, what existed was no more than the sketch — the idea — of a modern, democratic State. We had to build our country from scratch. While we failed in many areas, we succeeded in others. We have succeeded in not abandoning our deep commitment to our human rights and the rule of law. Timor-Leste stands among the very few that have ratified all seven core human rights treaties.

Timor-Leste seeks a seat on the Human Rights Council for the term 2008-2011, and we are particularly pleased and grateful that many countries have so far expressed support for our candidacy. I wish to assure everyone that as a member of the Council, Timor-Leste will favour dialogue on human rights situations and will accord priority to strengthening thematic procedures, promoting the ratification of existing human rights treaties and strengthening national and regional human rights mechanisms.

Next, I shall discuss the Truth and Friendship Commission. In August 2005, the Presidents of Timor-Leste and Indonesia inaugurated a forward-looking policy and mechanism of truth-finding as a means to address the violence of 1999, when the two countries

parted ways. While there were some calls for the establishment of an ad hoc international tribunal to try those responsible for the 1999 violence, the leaders of the two countries opted instead for a binational version of the South African truth and reconciliation process. That was a novel and unique approach to redressing the wrongs of the past, although, being untested, it provoked much criticism and opposition in certain quarters.

With regard to international and regional relations, we are expanding and consolidating our relations with the region and the rest of the world. We are an active member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum and are working towards full membership in ASEAN. We are an active observer in the Pacific Islands Forum and a member of the Comunidade dos países de Língua Portuguesa (CPLD).

I shall now turn to some international issues of concern to Timor-Leste. With regard to the situation in Myanmar, I wish to say that, as a country of the region, Timor-Leste is following the developments there with deep concern and disappointment. As human beings and friends, we are distressed at the deteriorating social, humanitarian and political conditions in that neighbouring country. The leaders of Myanmar must not continue to hold Nobel Peace Prize laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the entire nation hostage to a mindset that belongs to the cold war and to policies that have brought international opprobrium and economic ruin to a country endowed with vast natural resources and a very proud people.

With regard to nuclear proliferation, Timor-Leste commends the six-party talks on North Korea, which have achieved some modest positive results in inducing that country to reverse its nuclear-weapons capability. That modest success shows that patient diplomacy can make progress on even the most intractable conflicts when the parties involved identify common concern and interest.

On the other hand, Timor-Leste is deeply concerned about the climate of mistrust and confrontation regarding the situation in Iran. Iran is entitled to explore all peaceful means to acquire technology that would make it less reliant on non-renewable sources of energy. No one denies that Iran or any other nation has that right. However, Iran must do more to cooperate fully with the International

Atomic Energy Agency and to reassure its neighbours and the rest of the world that it is not seeking to acquire nuclear-weapons capability.

Asia is the most nuclearized region of the world. I do not know that we should be proud of such a status. Mutually assured destruction — MAD — is indeed madness, as the acronym itself suggests. Our scientists have developed Frankenstein's monsters that may well destroy us all — either by design, if the weapons fall into the hands of non-State actors, or by accident.

Concerning the death penalty, Timor-Leste is part of a cross-regional initiative calling for a moratorium. We note that the trend towards the worldwide abolition of the death penalty continues.

As for the situation in Darfur, Timor-Leste commends the African Union, the United Nations, all those in Government and those individuals who have done their very best to end the suffering of the people in that region — suffering that is now compounded by natural calamity. In the midst of such a tragedy, we can find some consolation and inspiration as we see millions of people around the world crossing the boundaries of religions and cultures and joining together in solidarity with the victims of Darfur.

I now turn to the situation in Palestine. As a small and newly independent nation and a friend of Israel, Timor-Leste cannot remain indifferent to the suffering of the Palestinian people, who have many times been victims — victims of Israel's obstinate policies of occupation and discrimination, victims of manipulation by regional Powers and victims of their own sectarian division and violence. While Timor-Leste does not subscribe to the many one-sided anti-Israel resolutions adopted over the years in various United Nations bodies, the facts on the ground show a whole people living on the edge of desperation as a result of decades of humiliation, exclusion and violence. Timor-Leste joins the rest of the international community in calling for the implementation of the Road Map, leading to the formal establishment of a viable Palestinian State.

With regard to Western Sahara, Timor-Leste is encouraged and commends both Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO for the recent talks held on Long Island under the good offices of the United Nations.

Concerning indigenous peoples' rights, more than 500 years ago — long after Chinese navigators and explorers had circumnavigated the globe — European

kings, navigators, missionaries, adventurers and mercenaries began the great European conquest of the world. In the process, tens of millions of people were subjugated and colonized, fortunes and empires were made at the expense of the peoples with whom they came into contact and new diseases were brought into the new colonies. Slavery uprooted at least 10 million from the African continent. Millions of indigenous peoples were decimated by wars and diseases. Their demise and their lands gave birth to new nations that were alien to their sacred birthplaces. This very island of Manhattan was once the sovereign home of Native Americans.

That is all part of the history of the world: the history of European conquest, with its glory and tragedy. Timor-Leste commends the General Assembly for finally adopting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (resolution 61/295, annex). That is the least we can do to redress the grave injustices done to some of the earlier civilizations of the world.

I now turn to the issue of United Nations reform. Negotiations on reform of the United Nations system, in particular of the Security Council, should begin. Rather than seeking dramatic reforms, we may want to adopt an incremental approach. The Council must be incrementally expanded to include major Powers such as India, Indonesia, Japan, Brazil, South Africa and Germany. On the other hand, it is an absurdity that Asia, which contains almost half of the world's population, should be so grossly underrepresented.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste for the statement he has just made.

Mr. José Ramos-Horta, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kikwete: Let me begin by congratulating Mr. Kerim for his well deserved election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. He can count on Tanzania's full support and cooperation as he discharges his mandate. I also commend his predecessor, Sheikh Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for having skilfully presided over the sixty-first session.

We also congratulate Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his unanimous election as the eighth Secretary-General of the United Nations, which reflects his distinguished diplomatic track record, integrity and commitment to international diplomacy. I thank him for the honour and trust he has bestowed upon my country, by appointing an accomplished Tanzanian academic and diplomat to the post of Deputy-Secretary-General. I take this opportunity to once again congratulate Ms. Asha-Rose Migiromu, for her appointment to that high office. I trust that such a combination of diligence and devoted leadership will steer this important institution towards greater heights of success.

I highly commend the Secretary-General for his decision to convene the High-Level Event on Climate Change four days ago. The meeting gave us an opportunity to discuss the state of health of our common planet. It also gave us the opportunity to renew our commitment to take the necessary steps to correct the mistakes we have made. It is indisputable and is attributable, by and large, to human activities.

Unfortunately Africa and many small island States contribute the least to the greenhouse gases that cause this phenomenon and yet suffer the most from the impact of climate change. Climate change can also adversely affect our abilities to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It also threatens to undo the results of many decades of development efforts.

I wish to emphasize that international collective action is critical in developing an effective response to global warming. Indeed, a review process to consider further commitment on the part of the Parties under the Kyoto Protocol beyond 2012 is urgent and necessary. Tanzania promises to participate actively in the Bali Conference.

Tanzania welcomes the recent milestones in the United Nations reform process, namely the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Human Rights Council and the Central Emergency Response Fund. We attach great importance to these new initiatives, and we want to contribute to their success.

In its report of November 2006 entitled, "Delivering as One", the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence made valuable recommendations, including the establishment of a "One United Nations" system at the country level. We in Tanzania believe that the development coordination agenda is best served when we have one programme, one budgetary framework, one leader and one office at the country level. Tanzania is pleased to be among the eight "One United Nations" pilot countries. The One United Nations Initiative is a logical development from the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), a framework that is fully aligned with our national priorities. The efficiencies in aid delivery expected through "One United Nations" will certainly contribute to enhancing our capacity to attain the MDGs.

I call upon Member States to give our Organization, the United Nations, the resources it needs to implement this pilot project. The project should not fail for lack of resources. I also urge the Bretton Woods institutions to take a keener interest in this initiative and join in the efforts to realize its objectives.

The need to make the Security Council more representative is an age-old demand we all share. We need to move from rhetoric to action. Now is the time. Tanzania assures the entire United Nations membership of our wholehearted support and cooperation in this process.

We are now almost halfway through the timeline of 2015 set for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Yet, we are not halfway in realizing the targets as spelt out at the Millennium Summit of 2000. We are in this unfortunate state of affairs because the additional resources expected and promised by the developed countries have not been delivered. I urge this Assembly to renew its appeal to the developed nations to deliver on their promise.

In this regard, we welcome the initiative mentored by the Norwegian Prime Minister, Mr. Jens

Stoltenberg, to launch a global campaign to mobilize resources for achieving Goal No. 4 on reducing infant mortality rates and Goal No. 5 on reducing maternal mortality rates. Tanzania supports the effort and we are happy to be associated with it. I appeal to all Members to support the initiative. It is our hope that developed nations will support the campaign by providing the requisite resources.

In the same vein, we commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for establishing the MDG Africa Steering Group. Africa is excited about it, and we trust that it will give new impetus in assisting Africa attain the Millennium Development Goals.

We also welcome the historic decision taken by the President of the General Assembly to convene a special summit of leaders to discuss the MDGs during this session. We support this wise decision of our President, for we believe it will provide the needed momentum for the timely achievement of the MDGs in Africa. Tanzania promises to participate actively in this important meeting.

We are happy with the tremendous progress made in Burundi. Peace has been restored, and life has come back to normal. Tanzania will continue to work with the region and South Africa to ensure the full operationalization of the peace agreement signed between the Burundi Government and the Parti Libération du Peuple Hutu — Forces nationales de libération (PALIPEHUTU-FNL) rebel group.

We are concerned with the fluidity of the situation in North Kivu. We hope wisdom will prevail on the parties concerned to give peace a chance. The people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo deserve peace; they have missed it for too long. We in Tanzania promise to play whatever part may be required of us.

With peace restored in Burundi and many parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is incumbent upon us in the international community to encourage and assist refugees to go back to their respective countries. That is what the tripartite commissions, involving Tanzania, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the respective countries of Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, have been doing. Our joint commissions have been encouraging the repatriation of refugees on a voluntary basis, and we have been assisting those who have come forward. The results are

encouraging, but things could be better. A word of encouragement from the Organization could make a difference.

Tanzania believes that the return of refugees to their countries of origin, after peace has been restored, is a sovereign right that should not be denied. It is also the ultimate testimony to and guarantor of peace that has been attained. It is not fair — it is not right — for people to continue to live in refugee camps after peace has been restored in their countries of origin.

The progress currently being made with regard to Darfur gives us hope. The adoption of Security Council resolution 1769 (2007), on the deployment of a hybrid force from the African Union and the United Nations, and the renewed political dialogue among the parties to the conflict hold promise for the stalled peace process and for the humanitarian crisis that unfortunately persists there. Tanzania applauds the unique partnership which has evolved between the African Union and the United Nations. We stand ready to contribute troops to the hybrid force.

We are encouraged by the recent developments with regard to internal political dialogue in Somalia. We are equally happy with the attention given to Somalia by the Security Council and the Secretary-General. We welcome the recent Security Council resolution 1772 (2007), which supports the political process in Somalia and the role of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). We commend Uganda's contribution of peacekeepers to Somalia and the good work they have been doing so far. As a member of the International Contact Group on Somalia, Tanzania promises to continue to be proactive and offers to contribute in the training of the Somali military.

The United Nations should remain seized of the issue of Western Sahara. Tanzania reaffirms its support for the inalienable right of the Saharawi people to decide and choose the way forward. We urge the United Nations to intensify its efforts to find an honourable and just solution to this long-standing decolonization issue.

The crisis inside the Palestinian territories is unfortunate; it is a matter of great concern to many of us. Tanzania remains supportive of efforts aimed at creating two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side and at peace with each other. This presents, in our view, the best hope for sustainable peace in the region.

We applaud and welcome the renewed international interest and efforts being expended in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

In conclusion, Tanzania reaffirms its belief in and commitment to multilateralism and the United Nations. The Assembly can count on Tanzania's continued support to this Organization and the ideals for which it stands.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United Republic of Tanzania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, President of the Dominican Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, President of the Dominican Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, President of the Dominican Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Fernández Reyna (spoke in Spanish): On behalf of the Government and the people of the Dominican Republic, it is a pleasure to extend our warmest congratulations to Mr. Srgjan Kerim of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia upon his recent election as President of the General Assembly. We would also like to take this opportunity to greet the members of the General Assembly.

During the four years following the Millennium Summit of 2000, the Dominican Republic went through a crisis, during which our national currency was devalued by 100 per cent. Our working class had to double its efforts simply to meet their basic subsistence needs. Drug trafficking and high levels of crime gained a foothold, and our credibility went down worldwide. According to the statistics of the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme and the

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, more than 1.5 million out of the 9 million Dominicans sank into the lowest levels of poverty. At that time, we were facing one of the most dramatic crises in the modern history of the Dominican Republic.

Since we took the reins of administration in 2004, the Dominican Republic has managed to recover the confidence of investors and entrepreneurs. We have been able to reactivate economic growth. We have been able to reduce inflation. We have increased jobs and improved social conditions and quality of life for the Dominican people.

However, exactly when we began, just like the phoenix rising from its own ashes, a gloomy international picture threatened to darken our prospects for future growth. In recent weeks, for example, the price of oil on the international market has reached an unprecedented rate, and projections point towards continued increases. These price increases are asphyxiating our economies.

Similarly, in recent times, as a result of changes on the international stage, free zone companies in the Dominican Republic, alongside those in Mexico and Central America, have been losing their competitive edge to Asian countries. This drop in competitiveness has resulted in the loss of jobs, production stagnation and a shortage of new investment.

Moreover, while the price of oil is rising, and with the prices of goods in the global economy fluctuating, we also find ourselves unexpectedly affected by price increases for food. All of a sudden we are surprised by the news that owing to the elimination of export subsidies in Europe, the price of milk has increased on the international market. The same has occurred, although for different reasons, with the cost of corn, soybeans and wheat as well as with other products that comprise the basic nutrition of the family. Because of the climbing prices of those products, the cost of chicken, turkey, bread and eggs have also risen.

As will be appreciated, we are facing a dangerous situation which could lead our people towards widespread famine and, consequently, a plunge into extreme poverty. Those factors have led to a vicious cycle that is spreading throughout the global food chain, while, in spite of the plea for free trade, producers in the world's most powerful countries remain protected. As an example, while a United States

farmer has access to state-of-the-art farming equipment, the most modern facilities and technologically proficient staff, that farmer also receives government subsidies of approximately US \$750,000 per year. Furthermore, the farmer might produce a pound of corn for a mere 7 cents.

At the same time, Félix David García Peña, also a corn farmer, who belongs to the Association of Farmers in San Juan de la Maguana in the southern part of the Dominican Republic near our border with Haiti, is struggling alone to make ends meet and to lead a decent life. His farming equipment is outdated. His tractor emits clouds of smoke every morning when he attempts to turn it on. His facilities are dilapidated. He receives no government subsidies since the Government is in no financial position to help him, and his production cost for one pound of corn is 12 cents, almost double the production cost of the subsidized United States farmer. When we asked Félix how we, as the Government, could help him, he stated, "I don't want anything. All I want is fair trade to be able to sell my corn."

The fact is that the challenges of globalization are having a marked impact on countries like the Dominican Republic. What we are experiencing is the interdependent character of current international trends. What seems to be a distant or remote event nevertheless has a direct impact on the daily lives of our peoples.

Another example that illustrates the undeniable interdependence of all nations on earth is climate change. That topic is not new to our discussions in this Organization, but with each year that passes we find ourselves closer to the predicted disasters.

In the Dominican Republic, we are already experiencing the impact of climate change in various ways: an increase in the volatility and frequency of floods, droughts and hurricanes that destroy our ecosystem, our biodiversity and our infrastructures. Also, we are experiencing increased coastal erosion and loss of beaches as well as frequent bleaching of our coral reefs, thus reducing our marine biodiversity and making tourism less attractive.

Given all those challenges presented by globalization, a country like the Dominican Republic asks itself: where is international solidarity, where is cooperation between peoples, how are we going to

address together all of those challenges which affect most of the peoples of the world?

The truth is that there cannot be solidarity when there are those in the world who seek to accumulate wealth even while others suffer. There cannot be cooperation when there are people who think only of conducting business without taking into account the pain and anguish of others.

The United Nations system was created to promote solidarity and cooperation, and it is only fair to recognize that there is no other organization at the world level that has the prestige, capability and vocation of the Members of this world Organization. However, this grand forum of humanity, established after the enormous sacrifices of the Second World War, must also reform itself, if it intends to fulfil the ideals that inspired its creation, as enshrined in the Charter at the San Francisco Conference.

The current structure of the United Nations is no longer adequate today. The structure still corresponds to the cold-war period, even though humankind has advanced beyond an era when all events of importance were determined by the rivalry of two super-Powers.

Now, in the twenty-first century, we in the Dominican Republic do not truly comprehend why the President of the World Bank must be an American and the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, a European and why major global decisions are the responsibility of only five countries.

As one of the founding Members of the United Nations, the Dominican Republic aspires to a position on the United Nations Security Council as a non-permanent member. In that position, we would strive to be a voice in favour of the weak, those without protection or shelter, the forsaken of the world. That is our sole aspiration. The Dominican Republic will uphold, responsibly and with conviction and determination, the values and principles the Organization has pledged to represent, as a beacon for peace, human dignity and the civilized coexistence of all inhabitants of the Earth.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Dominican Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, President of the Dominican Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Ramgoolam (Mauritius), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, I should like to join previous speakers in expressing our support and congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Srgjan Kerim of the Republic of Macedonia on his election to preside over the debates of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly. We congratulate him because his country is an example of freedom and democracy and because, for the United Nations, the sovereign equality of States — whether large or small — is a principle of respect for dignity, justice, equality and peace throughout the world. We are convinced that under his far-sighted leadership the Assembly will ensure that those principles are observed and respected by all.

We also congratulate his predecessor, Her Excellency Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa of Bahrain, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, on her great political skill in serving the interests of the international community at a time dominated by wars, conflicts of interest and natural disasters.

In addition, we commend the laudable work of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who deserves our full support so that United Nations intervention can be effective in conflicts and situations threatening peace, stability and the well-being of nations.

Equatorial Guinea is participating in the present session of the General Assembly with uncertainty regarding United Nations efforts, which are drowning in a vicious circle of good declarations of principle and technical and scientific definitions, which are ethically motivated but which ultimately fail to attain the objectives of the peace, security, development and well-being of humanity, which inspired the establishment of this world Organization.

Indeed, the fact that, despite so many preventive resolutions, we are focusing this year's deliberations on atmospheric degradation, which currently poses a threat to humanity because of nuclear tests; the proliferation of chemical industries with military purposes, which are destroying vital elements of the environment; the use of chemical weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in armed conflicts; and the irrational use of non-renewable natural resources, which is destroying ecosystems — activities that do not seek the common good of humanity, but that have caused the destruction of the ozone layer and the breakdown of the components of the planet's atmospheric equilibrium. This is an obvious sign that our resolutions are being ignored. The tsunami, if it was not the result of a nuclear test, must be the consequence of this atmospheric deterioration, which has now increased the number of floods, hurricanes, fires, cyclones, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions throughout the world.

Nevertheless, for more than 20 years the United Nations has undertaken praiseworthy initiatives to reduce spending on these activities and to use the surplus on development in the poorest countries. Despite that, no favourable response has been made by the countries owning these industries. Nor has the Kyoto Protocol itself — which obliges States to reduce their emissions of harmful gases — been ratified by all the States Members of the Organization.

Equatorial Guinea believes that the phenomenon of climate change must be addressed by the United Nations with the same intensity with which it is currently addressing issues that include, among others, democracy, human rights and the threat of terrorism.

It is correct to say that climate change is a challenge for all States, because its effects are truly harmful to everyone. But we cannot ignore the fact that the primary responsibility lies with those who developed, for their own interests, the technologies that

are destroying the ozone layer. The countries of the tropical forests of the Congo Basin in Africa and the Amazon Basin in South Africa cannot make use of their own forest resources, because they must contribute to the maintenance of the ecosystems that help to maintain the ozone layer. However, there are no compensatory policies to avert the economic resource crisis occurring among the affected peoples.

My Government is now committed, in the spirit of the Kyoto Protocol, to processing the gas produced by the oilfields of my country and its neighbours into liquefied gas for the benefit of humanity. Nevertheless, Equatorial Guinea cannot manage to benefit from the credits offered by the international financial institutions and bodies, because we qualify as a middle-income country, whereas it is known that we have produced oil for only 10 years and have never had any development infrastructure.

Our uncertainty is even greater when we consider the problem of development financing for the least developed countries. In our view, no bilateral or multilateral cooperation policy has shown itself to be capable of meeting the basic development financing needs of poor countries. Because of a lack of political will, everything is reduced to political conditioning factors and requirements that cannot be met by countries seeking to develop. In that regard, Equatorial Guinea has not been informed of the fate of the 0.7 per cent — an insignificant amount — that developed countries were to give from their gross domestic product for the financing of the least developed countries.

Nor has the question of the cancellation of the external debt of least developed countries and their interest been welcomed by creditors, despite their historic obligations. Our experience over many years has shown us that Equatorial Guinea cannot develop if it does not have its own means and if it does not take principal responsibility for it.

Thus, once oil resources were discovered, the Government organized, in 1997, the first national economic conference in order to plan better use of these resources for the short, medium and long term. The programme adopted has been implemented in a manner satisfactory to the people and Government. Now we can organize the second such national economic conference, in order to plan the development of the country for a sustainable economy. From this

rostrum, we would like to invite bodies of the United Nations system and friendly Governments and international economic institutions to participate in this conference in Equatorial Guinea in the first two weeks of November this year, in order to help us by sharing their experiences.

Humanity has never been threatened and frightened as much by terrorism as over this last decade. Terrorism used to be known as a process for the settlement of accounts through violent means by those who felt powerless to see their claims met through legal and democratic processes. It has now reached different dimensions, which do not uphold legitimate claims, nor are their effects directed only against persons or institutions from which rights are being demanded. Any third-party country can be a victim of terrorism today, as if it were a country against which the demand may be lodged.

The result is that today terrorism is a threat against humanity. It violates individual and collective freedoms, impedes the exercise of democracy, violates the peace and security of nations and stands in the way of the development of peoples. All countries of the world that love peace, justice and freedom have the duty and the obligation to combat this phenomenon, which is a form of regression of the human species.

However, there seems to be a tendency to ignore another, similar phenomenon, namely, the use of mercenaries, that practice of resorting to force to destabilize legitimate political regimes for whatever reason. In the case of Republic of Equatorial Guinea, it has been clearly shown that the invasion operation against our country by mercenary groups in 2004 was organized to gain access to oil. The masterminds behind that operation, clearly identified, were leaders of Governments of States Members of the United Nations. Since these facts came to light and were denounced by my Government, we have not had any condemning reaction from specific Member States or friendly countries in criticism of the barriers to bringing to justice the perpetrators of that operation, which means that they would probably be happier had the invasion of my country been successful, with the inherent dramatic consequences.

If we want to combat terrorism and the use of mercenaries, we need to rely on well-developed internal security systems and to exchange information among States. We have to be faithful and show

solidarity with the principles of the equal sovereignty of States, non-interference in internal politics of other States and the resolution of controversies by peaceful means, giving priority to dialogue, consultation and tolerance. We should adamantly condemn any terrorist act of intimidation and destabilization of States and take actions of solidarity against such acts, because they threaten State sovereignty and the free will of people.

Finally, if we are looking at reform of the United Nations today, it is because the objectives that support this world Organization, their very principles, have been and are being systematically violated. The United Nations has gone through many changes: from an organization aspiring to a universal consensus to one comprised of interest blocs; from an organization with universal goals for the well-being of humanity to an organization of the stronger against the weaker. Today, the reason for a veto in the Security Council is not so much the necessity of preventing abuses of power by some against humanity as it is an eagerness to defend the partisan interests of groups or individuals. Thus, although a veto in the Security Council does not mean anything today because resolutions are not much observed, Africa also has its own interests to defend. Thus we want the right of a veto to be conferred on the continent and not a State, because that continent represents a third of humanity.

The future of humanity is in our hands. Each one of us must feel committed to meeting the challenges of our time so that new challenges can become new hopes for people. May God guide us in our deliberations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Óscar Berger Perdomo, President of the Republic of Guatemala

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Óscar Berger Perdomo, President of the Republic of Guatemala, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Berger Perdomo (*spoke in Spanish*): It has been barely two weeks since I initiated in Guatemala an electoral process that will conclude on 14 January, when I will have the honour to bestow the presidential sash on the person elected democratically by my people. That event will have two consequences: first, representative democracy will be strengthened further in Guatemala, based on an electoral process that even international observers have described as very satisfactory.

Secondly, this is my last appearance before the General Assembly, an occasion which I take advantage of in order to attest my support to the United Nations and to greet our new Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and the outgoing President of the General Assembly, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, and the incoming President, Mr. Srgjan Kerim.

Now that we have only a few months before handing over power in Guatemala, I wanted to give a brief account of the main accomplishments of my administration, within the framework of what we consider a successful history, despite the problems that continue to besiege us. After overcoming an internal conflict that lasted four long decades, this story reflects success not only for Guatemala but also for the United Nations, the Organization that is so closely tied to our Peace Accords. It is precisely those agreements that encompass our main objectives, namely strengthening the State's democratic institutions, promoting economic and social development, fighting against poverty and social exclusion, fully respecting human rights and building a multicultural, multiethnic and multilingual Nation.

Allow me to reveal some of the accomplishments of the past years. First, one of the successes of our administration was improving the quality of public management through the creation or strengthening of public institutions, the articulation of coherent policy programmes combined with specific actions and in many instances, updated legislation. It would be tedious to enumerate the multiple areas revamped, including diverse subjects such as food security, the energy sector, administrative and financial decentralization, governmental administration, the revenue administration, trafficking of persons and assistance to immigrants — the last subject is so dear to our concerns.

At the same time, we have progressed in strengthening and creating new democratic mechanisms control institutions, invigorating the direction of ministries as well as enhancing result-oriented management, while all along integrating the main political aims with planning and budgets. In that context, we have built a State where public expenditure and biddings are subject to civil society scrutiny. Having instituted the “Guatecompras” programme and making it mandatory for the public sector, we have reinforced the commitment to work with transparency in all areas of government.

Secondly, in the last four years we have also achieved an economic recovery within a framework of a solid financial stability. We exceeded growth rates of 3.5 per cent in the biennium 2004-2005 by attaining 5 per cent in 2006 and 5.6 per cent in 2007. The overall poverty index fell five percentage points between the years 2000 and 2006, from 56 per cent of the population to 51 per cent, respectively. We acknowledge that ratio is still unacceptably high but the achievement of that reduction must inspire us to continue fighting to fulfil in Guatemala one of the main Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations. For that reason, public policy was redirected completely towards rural development, where the main social underdevelopment and poverty are concentrated.

One of the sources of the increasing dynamism of our economy has been the export sector, whether to Central America or to the rest of the world. All that effort has been impelled by our National Agenda for Competitiveness 2005-2015, and it has been complemented by a marked increase in investment in infrastructure, mainly in the rural areas. The commitment to reach better levels of competitiveness was also translated into the construction of a new international airport and the remodelling of six more, along with qualitative and quantitative improvements to seaports, as well as the rehabilitation, paving and extension of over 2,100 kilometres of roads throughout the country.

Thirdly, we have given an enormous impulse to social expenditure, particularly those destined for education, health and housing. The goals set forth in the Peace Accords of assigning 4.8 per cent of gross domestic product to social expenditures have been surpassed to reach 5.7 per cent in 2006, approximately twice the proportion of ten years ago.

Thanks to that redirection of policy and the strengthening of institutional reforms, particularly in education, the principal social indicators have begun to show significant improvements. For example, the net rate of school attendance at the primary level was raised from 72.6 per cent in 1997 to 95.5 per cent in 2006. At the same time, we achieved a higher rate of health coverage, thanks to the strategy adopted, under which another 4.1 million Guatemalans can access that essential service.

Fourthly, in the area of the inclusion of indigenous peoples, Guatemala enacted the Public Policy for Coexistence and the Elimination of Racism, under the aegis of the Presidential Commission Against Discrimination. Also, we have incorporated multicultural criteria into public policies, planning and projects; we have strengthened bilingual and intercultural education and we have instituted an affirmative action policy in order to increase the proportion of indigenous civil employees in the public sector.

Fifthly, during my administration a human rights approach was promoted in all public sector policies and during the past four years more public policies regarding human rights were enacted than during all the previous governments. In that context, allow me to mention just one aspect: the right of reparations violations has been acknowledged for victims of human rights and for that purpose we devised a National Plan of Compensation with a duration of 13 years in order to respond to all claims.

Finally, we addressed the issue of citizen security in an integral manner, a social phenomena conditioned by multiple economic, social, political and cultural factors, while at the same time insisting on the full observance of human rights. We recognize that there is still much to do in that area, but in practice definite and significant advances have been attained. To address new national and regional challenges that have arisen in regard to citizen insecurity and organized crime, my administration concentrated its efforts on strengthening public institutions and building democratic governance.

I must state that many of these policies should be conceived as State policies rather than those of a particular Government. In this regard, we have put into place a transition programme so as to transfer to the new democratically elected authorities, after the second

round of elections to be held on 4 November, all the information deemed most relevant to facilitate the administration of the new Government.

Logically, our foreign policy was also inspired by the same principles and values as our domestic policy, which I have already outlined. Perhaps the area in which we have best managed to promote these objectives is here in the United Nations, which has worked with us in the negotiation, implementation and follow-up to our peace accords. We have tried to repay that support in a modest way with our contribution to peacekeeping operations in various parts of the world, particularly in our sister nation of Haiti, as well as through our active presence in various United Nations forums.

Given the circumstances, it is in our interest to preserve, to strengthen and to adapt to modern times our Organization, the United Nations, whose ideals we value so much. The United Nations occupies a special place in our foreign policy. We value it not only for its past role — the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala left the country at the end of 2004 — but also for its continued contributions. In 2006, an office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which works with and advises and counsels the State, was established. This month, September, a new concerted effort is being made between Guatemala and the United Nations with the collaboration of a group of friendly nations, through the creation of an International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), whose objective is to improve our investigation capacities and the arraignment and prosecution of criminal activities in our country. This is an unprecedented collaboration between a Member State and the United Nations, with a view to combating impunity, and particularly transnational crime, an endeavour that will surely yield very tangible benefits for my country and valuable experience for the United Nations.

We also reiterate our commitment to the Central American integration process, which has produced remarkable advances in the last four years. We are very close to securing our integration process by means of putting in place a customs union, and we are also embarking on a negotiation process with the European Union aimed at securing an association agreement.

Reviewing some of the other items on our agenda, on Monday of this week I had the privilege to

take part in the high-level event on climate change, where I added our voice of alarm at the irreversible harm that we are causing ourselves owing to global greenhouse emissions. The amount of scientific data proving this phenomenon is unquestionable, and Guatemala has not been spared its effects. But we also have the scientific means to mitigate, and even reverse, recent tendencies, which requires a shared but differentiated effort on the part of all of us. The United Nations offers unparalleled forums in which to tackle this common threat. It is as serious a threat to humanity as are wars with weapons of mass destruction, or transnational terrorism.

I would like in the last part of my speech to talk about some of the items on the General Assembly's agenda. I have the following specific comments. As a multicultural, multiethnic and multilingual country, we are proud to have worked hand in hand with other countries in the negotiations that led to the recent adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

As a member of the Human Rights Council, we have actively participated in its process of institution-building. We believe that the greatest challenge that the Council has to confront is to finalize that building process and to set in motion the universal, periodic review mechanism. Guatemala will be one of the first countries to be reviewed.

We are pleased at the holding of the first annual ministerial examination of the Economic and Social Council, aimed at appraising the progress achieved in fulfilling the targets and the objectives of development, as well as the launching of the Development Cooperation Forum. We support any reform and reorientation of the Organization that will enhance its ability to deliver results, coherence and efficiency. We take note of what has already been done in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, as well as the Secretary-General's ideas for reforming the Department of Political Affairs. We are concerned, however, that the issues of reform relating to the development agenda agreed at the World Summit of 2005 are not being accorded the same priority.

Also, as a country that was a principal actor in the Financing for Development conference of 2002, we believe that the dialogue scheduled for 23 and 24 October will afford an opportunity to review the

current achievements of its goals and to implement the undertakings set forth in the Monterrey Consensus.

In our capacity as a middle-income country, we were pleased at the holding of the Intergovernmental Conference of Middle-Income Countries last March in Spain, and we are committed to the success of the second such meeting to be convened in El Salvador in October.

We continue to await the much-discussed reform of the Security Council, and we note the advances attained during the last session of the Assembly, when we were closer than ever before to a process of intergovernmental negotiation. We trust that during this session those efforts will be pursued.

As I have said, this is the last occasion on which I shall come before the Assembly as President of Guatemala. I therefore reiterate my deep gratitude to the United Nations and to all its Member States for their support for our work and our initiatives during the four years of my mandate.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guatemala for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Óscar Berger Perdomo, President of Guatemala, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cameroon.

Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Biya (*spoke in French*): Let me first of all say that I am happy to see the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, represented by Ambassador Kerim, presiding over the General Assembly at its sixty-second session.

My country extends to him wishes for the greatest success in accomplishing his mission. We would like to assure him of our full cooperation. Please also allow me to pay tribute to Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain for the skill with which she conducted the work of the sixty-first session.

I would also like to welcome the presence among us of Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations. I congratulate him on his accession to this post of the highest prestige in our Organization. The vast experience and the qualities of a diplomat that he is known for are a guarantee of success in this lofty function. I am convinced that he will be able to work for the benefit of our Organization in continuing the efforts of his predecessor, Mr. Kofi Annan, to whom I would like once again to pay tribute.

The general debate in this Assembly is a special moment in international life. Indeed, it is an opportunity every year for heads of Member States to take stock of the world's affairs, to exchange views in this regard and to reflect the aspirations of their nations.

The sixty-second session of the General Assembly opens this year again in a rather troubled international context. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the challenges facing humanity are more pressing and more complex with each passing day, giving rise alternatively to hope and fears.

The first of these challenges to which I would like to refer here today has to do with peace and security. International events today highlight even more than before the paramount need to breathe new life into efforts for disarmament and non-proliferation. Nuclear proliferation is a threat, not only to international peace and security but also to the very survival of humankind. Attempts by terrorist organizations to acquire weapons of mass destruction are also indicative of the reality of this threat. Terrorism, indeed, is a particularly great danger to the international community, a threat that we can only face through concerted and resolute global action.

It is because of this conviction that Cameroon has in the past year contributed to the adoption by the General Assembly of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Once again, I would like to salute this historic accomplishment. For the first time, Member States have decided to take up concrete political, operational and legal measures to coordinate their fight against

terrorism. They have committed themselves to strengthening their capacity to react, as well as the capability of the United Nations in this regard. They have agreed to address situations that could lead to the extension of this scourge. Today, the problem is to apply this fundamental text, both in letter and spirit. My country would like to reaffirm its availability and its determination in terms of taking on commitments in this work.

In many regions around the world, peace and security continue to be seriously threatened. For years now, the unrest in the Middle East has been a serious threat to international peace and security. The evolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict causes deep concern. It is paramount that Israel and the Palestinian Authority resume a constructive dialogue. That is the only way, in the opinion of my country, to move forward toward a settlement. Cameroon is convinced that only the efforts of all concerned parties, supported by the Great Powers and based on the principle of two States — Israel and Palestine — coexisting in peace and security, will make it possible to reach a definitive, fair and just settlement to this conflict.

In Lebanon, as in Iraq, reconciliation among the various communities of these countries is the only hope for a sustainable stability.

In Africa, in spite of initiatives undertaken by the international community, there remain a number of hotbeds of tension. Please allow me to highlight some of these.

The crisis in Côte d'Ivoire seems to be reaching a turning point. We are convinced that, with the firm and sincere commitment of all parties and the support of the international community, this fraternal country will have definitively turned a particularly painful page in its history. The people of Côte d'Ivoire, we are sure, will be able to persevere in their choice of peace and national reconciliation. It is extremely important that they work together in good faith for a full and rapid implementation of the Ouagadougou peace agreement.

The situation in Somalia continues to threaten peace and security in the region. Cameroon is deeply concerned by acts of violence in Somalia. We would like to congratulate the mission of the African Union for the support that it has extended to the Transitional Federal Institutions. We are sure that the speedy deployment of the envisaged United Nations force will

definitely have a positive effect on the stability in that country and on the security of the population.

The human toll of the Darfur crisis causes profound concern. It seems to us of paramount importance that all efforts be undertaken to break the tragic cycle of violence in that region. The effects of the crisis have already been deeply felt by neighbouring States and threaten to extend further. It should be understood that Cameroon welcomes the announcement of the deployment of the hybrid United Nations-African Union peacekeeping operation in Darfur. I am convinced that this operation will make it possible to stabilize the situation in the area and save innocent lives. My country welcomes the fact that the Government of Sudan has unconditionally accepted the deployment of this mission. In our opinion, this is a decisive stage in the resolution of the crisis. At the same time, Cameroon believes it is very important to continue efforts to address the causes of the conflict, by relaunching the political process and by implementing a real programme of development in the region, specifically by ensuring access to water resources.

Cameroon follows with close attention the developments in the situation in Chad and the Central African Republic. Those fraternal countries with which we have long common borders have, for a number of years, been facing instability fomented by various insurgent groups. That situation poses a serious threat to peace and stability in those countries and to the security and well-being of their populations and triggers a true humanitarian tragedy in the region. It also causes cross-border insecurity that affects other countries in the region, including Cameroon. For that reason, my country resolutely supports the upcoming deployment of a multidimensional presence of the United Nations and the European Union on the borders of Chad, the Central African Republic and the Sudan. I wish to reiterate from this rostrum that my country is ready to cooperate fully with the United Nations in the implementation of that operation.

With regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo we welcome the progress accomplished towards peace in terms of establishing democratic institutions in that country. The situation in the eastern part of the country continues to be a source of concern to the international community. It seems to us that seeking a solution to the crisis of the two Kivus should be based

first and foremost on political and diplomatic methods corresponding to the problem at hand.

The challenges we must face in terms of peace and security are considerable. However, they must not eclipse in our minds the equally significant challenges confronting us in other areas. It seems crucial to me that every necessary effort be exerted to reach the Millennium Development Goals. This year we are reaching the midpoint of the timetable we have established for ourselves in that regard. It is very important that States live up to the commitments made, to the extent possible. The reduction in official development assistance in 2006 underlines the need for donors to try to increase the level of their aid so that the goals set for 2010 and 2015 may be reached.

Furthermore, I wish again to state the hope that the negotiations of the Doha Round are completed on schedule and ensure that the interests of the countries of the South are protected and that the globalization of trade retains its significance.

I cannot remain silent about the terrible experience of thousands of young people from Africa who, for a number of years now, have set forth at risk to their lives in their attempts to reach Europe — in their eyes the new promised land. That migration keeps increasing and is of course attributable to the difference in the level of development between the North and the South. In that regard, the countries of origin, the countries of transit and the receiving countries must intervene to seek humane solutions that take into account the underlying causes of that phenomenon. It is indeed clear that neither controls nor repatriation will offer an adequate or sustainable response to the problem.

The issue of climate change is becoming one of the most important and most urgent issues of our time, as has been recognized by all, and it is urgent that we act. The destinies of future generations depend on that. In that context I wish to congratulate the Secretary-General for his initiative in convening the High-level Event on Climate Change, which has just been concluded here.

The holding of negotiations in December 2007 in Bali, Indonesia, on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and on the post-Kyoto regime should also be a focus of our attention. Furthermore, we welcome the intention of the Tunisian Government to organize from 18 to 20 November

2007, an international conference on the effects of climate change and strategies for adaptation on the African continent and in the Mediterranean region. In that domain we should try to reach a global agreement that would be part of the United Nations Framework Convention process and which would tackle the matter of climate change in all its aspects.

The challenges we have just discussed can only be taken up on a global scale. The United Nations should be at the forefront of that struggle and for that purpose needs the active cooperation of all its Members, particularly the great Powers. But it should also constantly adapt itself to the changing realities of our time so as to be in a position to efficiently fulfil its mission.

Accordingly, Cameroon attaches the greatest importance to the reform of the United Nations. It supports a progressive, gradual reform of the current United Nations system which would take into account the changing balances in the world in recent years and the emergence of many new States. It is our intention to continue to cooperate with other Member States for a renewed United Nations, a model of modern and effective governance, in its participation in world affairs.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Cameroon for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

Address by His Excellency Mr. Jan Peter Balkenende, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Mr. Jan Peter Balkenende, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Jan Peter Balkenende, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Balkenende (Netherlands): I would like to begin by congratulating Mr. Kerim on his election as President of the General Assembly. I would also like to wish our Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, every success at his first full session of the General Assembly since taking office. He has been very active in his first nine months. The Netherlands fully supports his efforts to promote peace and development in the world and to make the United Nations more effective.

I am convinced that the success or failure of the United Nations depends on three fundamental factors. The first is how much inspiration we draw from our common values: respect for human rights, for the rule of law and for our planet. The second is how much we shoulder our responsibility as members of the international community. And the third is how successful we are in making the United Nations more relevant and in increasing the impact of the international community. I will deal with each of these three themes in turn — respect, responsibility and relevance.

Next year it will be 60 years since the General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (resolution 217 A (III)). The values contained in that Declaration and in the conventions based on it are our source of inspiration. In its preamble, the Declaration sets out our mission: “the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want”. For the past 60 years, those values have been our moral compass, our common standard of achievement. Whatever our differences of opinion, we must never lose sight of that common ideal. We all agree that every human being deserves a chance to build a good life. Respect for human rights and the rule of law is our deepest motive and our highest aspiration. Our diversity rests on that unity. We should not hesitate to hold one another to account.

As we speak, the situation in one country in particular calls for urgent action by the international community. In Burma, the military are shooting at monks and civilians, who are demonstrating peacefully. We strongly condemn that brutal use of force. Together

with the European Union and the United States, we call on the Security Council to discuss the situation urgently and to consider further steps, including sanctions. Should the Security Council not reach agreement, we will shoulder our responsibility. In that case, I am convinced the European Union and the United States will decide on further measures, together with other well-intentioned countries.

When it comes to human rights and the rule of law, I am not talking about abstractions. Every child that can go to school, every family that can live in peace and freedom with its neighbours and every country that enjoys prosperity and tolerance is a step towards fulfilling our dream.

Values connect us across our cultures and religions. We must not allow cultural or religious differences to create barriers to open dialogue. Asma Jahangir, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, tells us that religious freedom is under threat in many parts of the world. So, we have a lot to do.

The Netherlands wants to join forces with all those who want to promote tolerance and dialogue between civilizations. But we must not allow that dialogue to put the universal validity of our common values in question. We know from experience how fundamental our shared values are. The Netherlands is one country in the world. But in a sense, we are also the world in one country. Our capital, Amsterdam, is home to 177 nationalities. We have learned that only through unity in diversity can we make progress, locally, nationally and internationally. That means that the rule of law must be strictly enforced so that people can feel safe. It also means that we need to be more tolerant and willing to take a critical look at ourselves. Stressing our differences leads to polarization and solves nothing.

We owe respect not only to one another, but also to our planet. It gives us everything we need, provided that we treat its natural resources wisely and do not upset its natural balance. That is why sustainability is one of our most important values. A value is not something that we possess. It is not an achievement that we can boast about. A value is a task, an incentive to action. Cherishing values automatically means accepting responsibility.

Membership of the United Nations goes hand in hand with moral responsibility. It means more than

attending meetings and even paying our dues. It also means keeping our commitments. The treaties we sign must not remain a dead letter. Human rights must be respected. The Netherlands is proud to contribute, for example as a member and a Vice-President of the Human Rights Council.

In 2005 the United Nations adopted the principle of the responsibility to protect. In doing so, we sided with all those suffering from genocide or crimes against humanity. It is now time to put that principle into practice. The United Nations has a key responsibility as a protector of peace and security. Each of us shares that responsibility. In this age of rapid communications and global linkage, nothing is far away anymore. What happens elsewhere affects us all.

We can only secure lasting peace in areas of conflict if we combine defence with development and diplomacy. We are putting that concept into practice in the Afghan province of Uruzgan, together with our Australian partners and other allies. It is a difficult and demanding mission under United Nations mandate. The international community must not abandon Afghanistan to its fate. The hopes of millions of Afghans rest with us. The United Nations needs to broaden and intensify its role in Afghanistan.

The Peacebuilding Commission has a vital role to play in bridging the gap between conflict and development. In the past year, it has worked hard to help several African countries that are on the difficult road of reconstruction after being torn apart by conflict. The Netherlands is actively supporting that very promising approach, which focuses on prevention.

Assembly President Kerim has drawn attention to another responsibility we all share: the need for prompt action to tackle the problem of climate change. The industrialized countries — and that means all of them — should take the lead. But the countries that are now enjoying rapid economic growth are also being asked to develop more sustainably. The future lies with those countries that excel in energy conservation and the use of cleaner technologies. We are not yet making sufficient use of the scope that innovation offers us.

The Netherlands wants to be a front-runner, not only in our ambition to sharply reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but also in developing new strategies to deal with the negative effects of climate change. It is important to take climate and nature into account in all

our investments. The most vulnerable developing countries deserve more support in tackling the problems they face.

In December, at the Bali Climate Change Conference, the United Nations has a unique opportunity to take charge of the situation and create a united global framework for addressing the climate problem. European government leaders would like to see negotiations start in Bali on a follow-up to Kyoto. The Netherlands and its European partners will do all they can to accomplish that.

Responsibility also means ongoing efforts to make the United Nations more relevant. The United Nations is the platform for seeking global solutions to global problems. The world needs an effective United Nations. How can we be more effective, efficient and credible? We need to strengthen the rule of law and put an end to impunity. We are not yet making full use of the instruments we have. I say this as Prime Minister of a country that is proud to have the legal capital of the world — The Hague — within its borders. Without justice, there can be no lasting peace and no reconciliation. We would like to see the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court accepted more widely. We stress the need for cooperation by both member and non-member States with the International Criminal Court in general and with regard to the execution of arrest warrants in particular.

The Netherlands will continue to make a special effort to promote the international legal order. That is why we have responded positively to the Secretary-General's request to host the Lebanon tribunal in the Netherlands. Preparations for that tribunal are in full swing.

Enforcing the rule of law is not enough to make the United Nations more relevant. We also need to keep a critical eye on how we work. Let us resist the temptation to invest too much energy in resolutions we adopt every year. It is better to invest in strengthening confidence between North and South, West and East. People and resources are scarce. We can only spend each euro once. If we want to achieve our common aims, such as the Millennium Development Goals, we need to coordinate our efforts.

Several dozen United Nations agencies are active around the world. We have planted a forest of United Nations flags in various countries. We need a more

unified approach in order to help the poorest developing countries more. We can work far more efficiently if we pool our resources in a single programme in each country. That makes demands on donors. Several countries, including the Netherlands, now fund various United Nations organizations on the basis of multi-year plans. I hope that others will follow suit.

The Netherlands supports the Secretary-General's efforts to reform the United Nations system and the Security Council. Reforms are never easy, but they are essential. In a world that is changing at breakneck speed, we need multilateral institutions that can respond to new developments. A relevant United Nations means a dynamic United Nations with dynamic institutions.

Reforms are sometimes seen as giving up certainties. I am convinced that we need to reform in order to safeguard what we all hold dear: respect for human rights, enforcement of the rule of law and sustainable development for all nations. Those values are the lifeblood of the United Nations. Respect for our values means taking joint responsibility. Responsibility means a constant effort to make the United Nations more relevant. We want our values to take concrete form in the twenty-first century in people's lives and in international relations. That demands unity of purpose, courage and resolution from us all. Above all, it requires ambition, the ambition to make a determined effort — while respecting our differences — to realize our common ideals. What we need in the twenty-first century is united values, united ideals, a united world and the United Nations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for the statement he has just made.

His Excellency Mr. Jan Peter Balkenende, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait.

Mr. Sheikh Al-Sabah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): Kuwait congratulates Mr. Srgjan Kerim upon

his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session, and recalls with appreciation the efforts of his predecessor, Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, and her successful conduct of the work of the sixty-first session.

Despite the fact that two years have elapsed since the 2005 World Summit and seven years since the Millennium Summit, we continue to confront challenges and dangers to international peace and security, such as terrorism, poverty, hunger, the spread of dangerous infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS and malaria, deterioration of the environment and violations of human rights. Recent times have seen a number of outstanding achievements, most important among them the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Human Rights Council, the Central Emergency Response Fund and the United Nations Democracy Fund, and the introduction of administrative and financial reforms of the work of the Secretariat. These were all necessary achievements, but they are not enough to combat terrorism, eliminate weapons of mass destruction, affect climate change and achieve sustainable development in the developing countries, including the least developed among them.

Moreover, the revival of racial bias, religious sedition, incitement of hatred and xenophobia represent a serious threat to international peace and security. The Organization must be strong in confronting that threat seriously and firmly.

The time has come for us to change our method and approach in dealing with these universal challenges and dangers and to move from the phase of determining what should be done to the phase of actual work and the faithful fulfilment of the commitments we have taken upon ourselves at international conferences and in international agreements and conventions that we have signed and ratified.

The State of Kuwait has made good progress in translating the commitments and resolutions of the 2005 World Summit into tangible realities. It has also attained the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in the fields of education, health and advancing the role of women in society. It has designed policies capable of uplifting society and achieving further progress and social and economic development, as well as raising the standard of living of individuals. Such policies contribute to efforts to consolidate the

principles of tolerance, moderation and the rejection of fanaticism.

Based upon the State of Kuwait's absolute belief in the human values of supporting the downtrodden and helping the needy, my country has, since its independence, implemented a generous aid programme for developing countries. In 1961, it established the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, which has financed hundreds of infrastructure projects in more than 100 countries. The value of those projects exceeds \$12 billion.

The State of Kuwait is also committed to providing annual voluntary contributions to numerous international specialized agencies and organizations, as well as to regional organizations and funds that assist developing countries in achieving their development goals. Recently, the State of Kuwait allocated \$300 million to the Islamic Development Bank for the elimination of poverty in Africa. That is in addition to what we contribute in humanitarian and relief aid to many countries ravaged by natural disasters.

It is regrettable that poverty, hunger and disease persist in developing countries. It is even more painful to see that more than half of the world's population is living on less than \$2 per day — a matter that requires serious examination and a real review of the impediments to development in developing countries. In that connection, the State of Kuwait calls upon the World Trade Organization and the Bretton Woods institutions to ease the restrictions imposed on exports from developing countries and to propose a more just and equitable trading system for least developed and poorest countries.

Kuwait is following with concern the developments in the situation in Iraq. We welcome the improvements in security conditions in some areas and provinces of Iraq, as a result of the implementation of relevant arrangements and a security enforcement plan carried out by the international forces in Iraq with the participation of Iraqi security forces. But there is still a dire need to redouble efforts at all levels, particularly on the political track, in order to address the security challenges posed by terrorist operations that target civilians, houses of worship and State institutions and that cost the lives of scores of innocent people daily. It is our hope that the Iraqi Government's efforts to achieve national reconciliation will be successful and produce positive results that can lead to a

comprehensive national consensus in Iraq that takes into consideration the concerns and the rights of all sectors of the Iraqi people. National reconciliation is the only way to build a democratic, free, secure and independent Iraq that is at peace with itself and its neighbours and that respects its international obligations and commitments.

In that context, we welcome the adoption of Security Council resolution 1770 (2007), which consolidated the duties and the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. We look forward to the international community playing its vital role in helping Iraq to fulfil its political and economic obligations within the context of the International Compact with Iraq.

With regard to the issue of the three occupied Emirati islands, Kuwait would like to reaffirm its support for the position of the Gulf Cooperation Council on this issue. We hope that efforts and contacts at all levels will intensify between the sisterly United Arab Emirates and the friendly Islamic Republic of Iran in order to find a solution to this dispute consistent with the principles and rules of international law and good-neighbourly relations, thereby contributing to strengthening the security and stability of the region.

The Middle East crisis has been stagnant since the middle of the past century. The plight of the Palestinian people continues: their rights are violated, their lands are occupied and Security Council resolutions are frozen — despite intensive international and regional efforts to revive the Middle East peace process. The Israeli Government, instead of putting confidence-building measures in place, continues to create obstacles that serve to increase tensions and violence and that hinder the establishment of a climate conducive to moving the peace process ahead. Do continuing settlement activities help to achieve peace more quickly? Do the policies of detention, land confiscation, curfews, closures and restrictions of movement promote an environment of trust and stability? The answer is definitely no. Who could think that this conflict is subject to the principles of a zero-sum game? Anyone who thinks that Israel will achieve security for itself at the expense of the security of the Palestinian people is making a serious mistake. Security must be for everyone. There will be no security except through the implementation of resolutions of international legitimacy.

The State of Kuwait therefore reiterates its support for the convening of an international conference with the participation of all the parties concerned in the peace process. That meeting should follow the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference — including the provisions of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) — the principle of land for peace, the Road Map endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 1515 (2003) and the Arab Peace Initiative. The comprehensive, just and lasting peace that the international community seeks to achieve must ensure that the Palestinian people attain all their legitimate political rights. That includes the establishment of their own independent State on their own land, with Jerusalem as its capital. It must also include Israel's withdrawal from all the Arab land occupied since 1967, including the Syrian Golan Heights.

Turning to Lebanon, we congratulate the Lebanese Government on its success in putting a decisive end to the Nahr Al-Bared sedition. We would also like to express our gratitude to the Lebanese army, which dealt with that sedition ably and firmly. We hope that that accomplishment will contribute to the return of all Lebanese parties to the negotiating table and the resumption of a Lebanese national dialogue to address the issue of presidential entitlement and the political process, in accordance with the constitution.

While we commend the regional and international efforts to achieve national reconciliation among all Lebanese parties, we condemn the political assassinations and the recurrent terrorist bombings aimed at disrupting peace and stability in that sisterly country. We renew Kuwait's commitment to stand by Lebanon and to support it in a manner that will

preserve its security, unity, territorial integrity and political independence.

As for developments on the Iranian nuclear issue, we reaffirm our firm belief in the need to respect internationally recognized principles, including that of resolving conflicts through peaceful means. The State of Kuwait calls upon the international community to coordinate its efforts and to continue to work towards achieving a peaceful resolution of this crisis, so as to safeguard the peace and stability of the Gulf region. We also welcome the recent agreement reached between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as an important step towards dispelling fears and doubts surrounding the Iranian nuclear programme. It is our hope that dialogue and cooperation will resume with total transparency. That would allow us to address all the elements of this issue, so as to foster the conditions conducive to making the Middle East a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

In that connection, we call upon the international community to exert pressure on Israel to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to place all of its nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards. We emphasize the right of all the States of the region to obtain the technology and know-how necessary to peacefully utilize nuclear energy in accordance with the terms specified by relevant international conventions.

Finally, we renew our commitment to work through the United Nations to fulfil the hopes and aspirations of our peoples to live together in a world where peace, justice and equality prevail.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.