



General Assembly

Sixty-second session

84th plenary meeting

Wednesday, 13 February 2008, 6 p.m.
New York

Official Records

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

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

The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m.

Thematic debate entitled “Addressing climate change: The United Nations and the world at work”

Agenda items 48, 54 and 116 (continued)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Sustainable development

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/644)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. Hirsch (Norway): I am delivering this statement on behalf of Ambassador Juul, who had to attend to another matter at this very moment. Let me assure you, Mr. President, that this does not in any way reflect the priority that Norway gives to the issue of climate change, which is at the top of our, as well as the global, agenda.

“The reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have given us the facts, but we can also see them clearly with our own eyes.

“Norway sees this clearly in the Arctic, where ice is now melting three times faster than expected. Furthermore, the extent of the Arctic Sea ice was at a record low last year. The same tendencies can be seen in the Himalayas and elsewhere. Since ice reflects heat while water absorbs it, the melting of ice is a self-reinforcing process that will further accelerate global warming. The melting of the Arctic ice cover will have ramifications for the climate in regions thousands of kilometres away. For example, it is likely that Asian monsoons, crucial for the livelihoods of millions of people, will be affected.

“As many speakers before have already mentioned, we need action now.

“It is a positive factor that we agreed on the Bali Plan of Action, even though we feel we were not ambitious enough. A global agreement on climate change has to have a common vision that matches the scale of the challenge. Norway agrees with the European Union that to avoid dangerous climate change, global temperatures must rise no more than two degrees above the pre-industrial levels. According to the IPCC, that means that global emissions must peak no later than 2015 and must be reduced at least by half, compared to 2000 levels, no later than 2050.

“Industrialized nations such as Norway and the United States have to have cut emissions by 25 to 40 per cent by 2020. We recognize,

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however, that what is most important is that we now need to work together and bridge our differences in order to tackle the significant challenges ahead.

“The fact that the greatest burden of global warming will be on the poor, who have the least responsibility for the current state of affairs, also makes climate change a central issue of justice and ethics in world politics today. Industrialized countries therefore need to take the lead in the efforts to tackle climate change, but all countries must be on board and do what they can in accordance with their capabilities.

“The Norwegian Government is ready to play its part and has therefore decided to cut global emissions by an amount equivalent to 100 per cent of our own emissions by 2030. That way, Norway will become a carbon-neutral nation. Norway believes that being a big exporter of oil and gas gives us a particular responsibility to provide a more climate-friendly option for using fossil fuels, including coal, during the transition to a low-carbon energy system.

“According to the International Energy Agency, the use of carbon capture and storage in the industrial, fuel transformation and power generation sectors can account for 20 to 28 per cent of the CO₂ emissions savings. Norway is therefore strongly committed to developing carbon capture and storage technologies. Hopefully, our efforts will contribute to making that technology commercially viable at a global scale.

“Furthermore, Norway also recognizes the need to bring emissions from deforestation and forest degradation to a halt and has decided to support forestry efforts in this context with more than \$500 million annually. Through effective measures against deforestation, we can achieve large cuts in greenhouse gas emissions quickly and at a low cost.

“We welcome the significant developments at Bali on the need to bring reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation seriously into the negotiations for a post-2012 agreement. This is a difficult sector to tackle, and a comprehensive effort with close cooperation

among all parties involved will be necessary to meet all the challenges we face.

“The world cannot choose between development and environment. We need both. In fact, without tackling the problem of climate change, development will be harder to achieve and definitely more costly. Sustainable development will therefore be a key factor. So will developing mechanisms that reward environment-friendly practices. We will also need a major push for new technologies. Rapid technological progress, as well as the rapid transfer of technology, is vital for achieving sustainable development.

“Let me also take this opportunity to welcome the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/644), which gives a useful overview of the activities of the United Nations. I can see from the report that many things are being done at both the local and global levels, but the report also underlines the need for the United Nations to streamline its efforts.

“The Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Yvo de Boer, has talked about the need for a ‘Climate Change Marshall Plan’. I agree with this idea and the principles behind it, but in this respect it will be important first that the United Nations can deliver as one and, secondly, that it can coordinate and cooperate with international financial institutions, as well as donor and programme countries, so that a ‘Climate Change Marshall Plan’ can deliver results effectively.”

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Jeem Lippwe, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Mr. Lippwe (Federated States of Micronesia): I wish to express my appreciation to the President of the General Assembly for organizing this meeting to discuss the important issue of climate change. It is not only fitting, but indeed appropriate that we do this.

The *Human Development Report 2007/2008* addressed the clear link between human development and climate change. In recent years, the people of Micronesia have had to witness the consequences associated with climate change. More intense storms

with higher wind speeds, higher tides and wave surges have damaged our subsistence agriculture and fishing, as well as endemic marine and terrestrial species, including coral reefs. Increasingly, extreme weather conditions lead to droughts, destroyed crops, contaminated wells, eroding beaches and unprecedented land slides. These effects pose a great threat to my country's culture, livelihood and sustainable development.

If climate change continues at this pace, we might be forced to abandon our islands. Relocation is already happening in several Pacific islands, including my own. That clearly shows that small island States, which have contributed little to the causes of climate change, are the ones now suffering the most. Their inhabitants are strongly affected by climatic disasters, and are therefore victims of the effects created by the intimate relationship between poverty and exposure to climate risks.

The latest Human Development Report traces climate-related risks to the energy consumption patterns and political choices of the major emitters. We therefore ask those who pollute the most to take responsibility and underwrite the cost of adaptation in developing States, particularly in small island developing States.

Fighting the consequences of climate change leads to a growing dependence on technical and financial support from partners. How can countries like ours, which are so reliant on the environment, improve their current situation if there exists so little international cooperation on the issues of mitigation and adaptation?

Micronesia has already adopted mitigation and adaptation measures in its infrastructure and strategic development plans — for example, initiatives that protect mangrove areas and coastal beaches and climate-proofing procedures for infrastructure. But the truth is that that is as much as we can do given our financial resources. What opportunities does a small island developing State like Micronesia have? Being a federation of islands, situated only a few metres above sea level, how can we defend ourselves against rising sea levels? One possible solution — to build sea walls around every island in Micronesia — would not only mean a huge investment, but it would also be impractical.

Investing in renewable sources of clean energy in vulnerable countries will help us to meet our energy needs and combat climate change. Support for development and the utilization and distribution of renewable energy technologies to small island developing States is necessary. In order to facilitate that, it is important to mainstream the Mauritius Strategy into all United Nations processes.

As climate change progresses, basic human rights — such as the right to food, the right to safe water, the right to education, health and development and the right to exist — are in danger, especially for small island developing States. The effects of climate change will slowly remove basic human rights from society. The United Nations must address those interrelations.

Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares that “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person”. Not to act on the threats climate change imposes on us would lead to a violation of those universal human rights. Forcing inhabitants to leave their ancestral homelands because of changes to the climate caused by other nations would certainly qualify as a violation of article 3.

I want to emphasize that we are all responsible for the future of planet Earth. Engaging actively in the prevention of climate change is a moral obligation that all should be willing to fulfil. The attention paid to climate change worldwide is a step in the right direction. But what we all need to do is to collectively find a way to prevent further damage to the planet for future generations through cooperation and communication. I know this debate is part of that process.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Ms. Melanie Santizo-Sandoval, the representative of Guatemala.

Ms. Santizo-Sandoval (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation is grateful for this renewed opportunity to delve into the issue of climate change, especially as it pertains to the United Nations system. Before we do so, I should like to associate Guatemala with the statement delivered by Ambassador Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Instead of once again reiterating what Guatemala and the Central American subregion have suffered as a

result of the devastating effects of this phenomenon, my delegation would like to focus on what the future holds for us as a Latin American country in our struggle to address this problem.

As pointed out by a recent report by the United Nations Environment Programme, the Latin American and Caribbean region as a whole only produces 5 per cent of the world's greenhouse gases. Nevertheless, we face a disproportionate series of threats resulting from the negative effects of climate change and global warming. In the past 12 years, the region has experienced historically high temperatures, natural disasters and desertification — all of which affect and hamper our economic and social development. Our ongoing efforts to eradicate poverty are becoming even more of an uphill struggle.

The efforts of the United Nations system, and any partnership established with the private sector or civil society to be implemented at the local or national level, should of course serve to support the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Today's thematic debate is an opportunity to identify ways to more effectively support the Convention. As we meet to focus on the roles of the United Nations system and partnerships vis-à-vis climate change, we must not forget that Member States themselves have an arduous task ahead.

With the recent conclusion of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention, we now have some good news — for example, the Bali Road Map, the decisions taken with regard to deforestation and the operationalization of the Adaptation Fund. Nevertheless, the negotiations were not easy. The agreements reached are merely the beginning of a more demanding negotiating process — one that will require genuine compromise and the search for serious solutions.

I should like to say once again that the Framework Convention is the appropriate forum to address climate change. The adoption of the Bali Road Map was in effect merely a courageous decision to launch a complicated process. At the end of April, the working groups that were recently established will begin their work. The battle to defeat climate change has barely begun.

In that regard, among other things, my delegation would like to underscore the importance of finally

beginning to address the issue of deforestation in a more comprehensive manner within the framework of the Convention. We must not forget that protecting forests should benefit all those involved — those of us who will benefit from conserving them as well as the peoples who depend on forests for their development and well-being. Finding solutions to such dilemmas will be challenging.

With regard to developing countries, we are working to adapt to climate change. As we said during last September's high-level event on climate change, given Central America's special vulnerability to climate change, a summit of the region's Presidents will be held in Honduras in April 2008 to discuss climate change and the environment. The summit will consider a Central American climate change and environment strategy that integrates efforts to improve information with a regional adaptation plan, together with a programme aimed at promoting the establishment of a new economic sector for climate-friendly goods and services.

As we in developing countries make efforts to adapt to climate change, annex I developed countries have unavoidable commitments in the areas of emissions reduction, technology transfer and financing that they should meet, instead of making them part of their rhetoric or trying to modify or renegotiate them every time we have a debate, a dialogue or a negotiation in the context of the Convention.

On the global level, the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties has charted the path ahead of us. My delegation hopes that, throughout this debate and in subsequent meetings on climate change, there will be real progress towards meeting commitments and establishing agreements that truly reflect the fact that we have common but differentiated responsibilities with regard to climate change.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Tirtha Raj Wagle, representative of Nepal.

Mr. Wagle (Nepal): At the outset, allow me to express my delegation's appreciation to the President for convening this debate on climate change. We also thank the Secretary-General for his useful reports which provide us an overview of the United Nations environment activities. My delegation is confident that this debate will help accelerate the constructive momentum generated by the Bali Road Map since its adoption last December.

Let me also associate my delegation with the statements made by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by Bangladesh on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

It is an irony that the LDCs and small island developing States, which are least responsible for greenhouse gas emissions, are bearing the brunt of the effects of global climate change. These countries are struggling to eradicate poverty, while their scarce resources, meant for development, are swallowed up by unforeseen expenditures as climatic calamities increase unabated along the way.

We cannot overemphasize the importance of partnership and cooperation among government authorities, the United Nations, development agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society and the business community in creating a sustainable climate future. We need to galvanize common efforts under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, by sincerely fulfilling the obligations and commitments made in accordance with the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities”.

Nepal is serious about addressing climate change. We have incorporated a climate change perspective in our national development strategies and country-specific priorities. The expansion of alternate and renewable energy sources has been encouraged. Successful community forestry development programmes and programmes introducing household biogas plants for cleaner domestic lighting and cooking have been carried out with the cooperation of NGOs.

These initiatives have brought social and environmental benefits to rural areas and have effectively contributed to environmental sustainability by steering us onto a cleaner energy path, ending deforestation, encouraging afforestation and preserving biodiversity. We need to foster such local environmental efforts through increased technical support.

As a country with snow-capped mountains and over 2,300 glacial lakes in the Himalayan region, Nepal is dangerously exposed to glacial lake outburst floods due to snow melting and the unforeseen consequences to the people living downstream.

The depletion of Himalayan glaciers means reduced water resources for one fifth of humankind. It will have a detrimental effect on our hydropower potential and agricultural production. Furthermore, it will cause the failure of sustainable mountain tourism efforts.

The urgent adaptation needs of poor and vulnerable countries like Nepal should be addressed before it is too late to avert irreversible damage to human development potential.

We underscore the importance of scientific information and public awareness to improve early warning capacity as well as to build resilience and preparedness in vulnerable communities. In this regard, we urge the international community to support the establishment of a research centre in Nepal with a view to facilitating the scientific assessment of climate change in the Himalayas and adaptation to it.

Nepal appreciates the effective role of the United Nations for adaptation and mitigation efforts at the country level. We emphasize that greater attention should be given to the question of providing sustained, swift and substantial financial and technical assistance to the LDCs, poor mountainous countries and small island developing States.

It is equally imperative that the Global Environmental Facility and its implementing agencies be more proactive in operationalizing technical and funding resources, including the Least Developed Countries Fund. Procedural aspects or any other technicalities should be simplified so as to ensure efficient implementation of national adaptation programmes of action.

Similarly, the clean development mechanism under the Kyoto Protocol should be made more inclusive and should cover small-scale environmental conservation projects at the local level, thereby bringing social and environmental benefits to poor people while promoting low-carbon investments.

Thanks to the scientific evidence presented by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and recent studies on the economics of climate change, and thanks to the placing of climate change at the top of the global agenda, we are all now aware that we cannot afford the cost of inaction.

The international community should stay focused, linking the climate change issue to a sustainable

development agenda and paying special attention to the creation of human development opportunities for poor countries and vulnerable communities.

In closing, let me reiterate that there is no other option but to immediately draw up a concrete multilateral action plan with binding targets on greenhouse gas emissions and a built-in monitoring mechanism. The need to make technological solutions affordable and readily transferable from developed to developing countries is more pressing than ever, as is the need to generate new, additional and predictable financial and technical resources for immediate adaptation and investment in a sustainable development infrastructure.

My delegation is committed to working in concert towards the timely achievement of an ambitious framework for a post-2012 Kyoto world.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Sirodjidin M. Aslov, Permanent Representative of Tajikistan.

Mr. Aslov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I would like to express our appreciation to the President for organizing today's thematic debate on climate change. I also wish to avail myself of this opportunity to express my delegation's gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his tireless efforts in advancing the issue of climate change, thanks to which it has risen to the very top of the United Nations agenda.

Last year, as a result of these particular efforts, States and international organizations attended the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties, which culminated in the Bali Action Plan and the definition of a strategic framework for near-term cooperative efforts in the areas of adaptation, mitigation, technology and financing.

I shall confine my remarks to adaptation. As was affirmed during the High-level Event on Climate Change in September 2007, adaptation has become inevitable, given the ongoing climate changes.

Vivid proof of this statement is the current unfavourable weather conditions faced by my country. In January and February in Tajikistan's valleys, the temperature dropped as low as minus 18 to minus 23 degrees Celsius, which is 8 to 13 degrees lower than usual. This severe cold was followed by heavy snowstorms.

For the past 50 years our weather records have never registered such an extremely cold winter. As a consequence of this cold, rivers were frozen and numerous pumps and water supply networks were damaged. This actually caused an energy crisis, as a result of which the work of a great number of industrial enterprises was suspended. Almost all winter crops were affected, and severe damage was done to fruit trees, vineyards and the like. The estimated economic damage amounted to several hundred million dollars.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the United Nations, the United Nations Development Fund, the World Bank, the World Food Programme and various specialized agencies, as well as to a number of Member States, for the assistance and support given to my country.

We support the thesis that climate change and development are inseparable elements of a common agenda — sustainable development, which is based on three components: economic development, social development and environmental protection.

In that connection, we also believe that another very important component deserves to be specifically addressed — a component without which life on Earth cannot be sustained: water. It is common knowledge that the shaping of climate and the emergence of life are closely connected to this natural resource, which, like the climate itself, must be treated with care. Some areas of our planet are already experiencing chronic shortages of drinking water. Against the background of the ever-increasing effects of climate change, particularly in the dry regions of our planet, the issues of supplying the population with drinking water and developing the many water-dependent economic sectors are becoming increasingly urgent.

A unique natural resource, water is used by humanity for drinking, producing food, manufacturing goods and generating alternative forms of electric energy, which in turn are essential for the success of our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to provide access to electric energy and, ultimately, to achieve sustainable development.

For that reason, we believe it is important to accord special attention to the issues related to water supply and to hold a high-level event or convene a special session of the General Assembly on those issues with a view to discussing current progress, adopting specific measures aimed at achieving the

MDGs and implementing the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", and the International Year of Sanitation.

Finally, I should like briefly to discuss another aspect of climate change: natural disasters, which have been occurring more frequently and on a larger scale in recent years. Water-related disasters account for the majority of natural disasters throughout the world. Floods, mud flows, landslides, droughts and other water-related disasters have a considerable impact on the well-being of countries. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the current trends are likely to produce an even worse scenario, because the scale and frequency of floods and droughts could increase in the twenty-first century as a result of climate change. Moreover, the losses caused by natural disasters are more severe in developing countries than in industrial nations.

We call for enhanced cooperation among Member States and international organizations in this area. To that end, the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan has decided to make a practical contribution to this cause by holding an international conference on water-related disaster reduction in Dushanbe on 27 and 28 June 2008. We hope that the United Nations and its specialized agencies, as well as Member States, will participate actively in the Dushanbe conference.

The Acting President: I now call on Mr. Bature Lawal, representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Lawal (Nigeria): On behalf of the Nigerian delegation, I wish to commend Mr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the General Assembly, for once again convening a thematic debate to address what the Secretary-General has aptly described as the defining issue of our time. This debate is indeed timely, as it affords the international community the opportunity to evaluate and maintain the momentum of the success recorded at Bali.

My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representative of Cameroon on behalf of the African Group and by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Nigeria welcomes the Bali Road Map, which has set the stage for the establishment of a comprehensive and all-inclusive post-2012 climate change regime. The Road Map has thus rekindled hope not only that

negotiations will be advanced, but also that action will be taken on the key issues of adaptation, mitigation, financing, technology and deforestation.

The report of the Secretary-General (A/62/644) offered useful insights into how the United Nations system can assist in addressing climate change. Nigeria, as a strong advocate of global partnerships, is convinced that measures to address climate change should be taken within the United Nations framework. In our view, the daunting challenge facing developing countries is how to address climate change without compromising or impeding the implementation of the development agenda of those countries — particularly the achievement of internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. In that respect, measures to address climate change and sustainable development strategies should be mutually reinforcing.

We believe that the United Nations system is uniquely placed to facilitate the implementation of the commitments set out in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol, particularly the commitments of the developed countries to reduce emissions and to support developing countries with the requisite technology and financing for addressing climate change.

Similarly, the United Nations system could assist developing countries in promoting the use of new and renewable forms of energy, such as solar power and wind energy, at an affordable cost and in promoting research on drought-resistant and saline-tolerant crops. However, we urge caution with regard to the production of biofuels in areas where it could threaten food security. We continue to draw attention to Lake Chad, which is drying up rapidly as a result of climate change, and reiterate our appeal to the international community, and particularly the United Nations system, to complement the efforts of African countries to reverse that trend.

Another important matter in addressing climate change is the promotion of clean energy technology, especially as it relates to the carbon market and to carbon capture and storage. However, these involve highly complex and technical terminologies that are not well understood by the layperson. Moreover, many countries are wary about the safety of carbon capture and storage technology. It would therefore behove the United Nations system, using its global outreach, to

launch a sustained public enlightenment campaign aimed at explaining the relevant mechanisms and allaying the fears of some developing countries as to the safety and viability of carbon capture and storage technology.

One serious impediment to the transfer of new and renewable technologies to developing countries is the issue of intellectual property rights. In that respect, we suggest that, just as we facilitated the Aid for Trade Initiative, we facilitate aid-for-technology transfer, in the form of incentives offered by developed countries to their multinational companies to make the use of patented technologies affordable for developing countries. The United Nations system could also play a vital role in taking stock of the technologies that are in the public domain, free of charge, and making such technologies available to developing countries. We also support the idea of setting up a monitoring mechanism to regularly assess the implementation of the developed countries' obligations on technology transfer.

One important initiative that could be vigorously promoted by the United Nations system is the Strategic Investment Program for Sustainable Land Management in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is being coordinated by the Global Environment Facility and the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment. Through that initiative, about \$1 billion was to be raised to rehabilitate damaged and degraded lands and to prevent new land degradation. One key aspect of the initiative is the provision of funds, expertise and know-how directly to grass-roots organizations, local communities and farmers to combat land degradation. It is pertinent therefore for all the relevant United Nations agencies to work in a coordinated manner to ensure the success of that laudable initiative in Africa.

In a similar vein, we call on the United Nations agencies to redouble their efforts in assisting African countries to garner an equitable share of clean development mechanism projects through the Nairobi Framework.

Finally, we hope the upcoming negotiation process in Poland and Copenhagen will be transparent and all-inclusive, devoid of the selectiveness that was occasionally witnessed in Bali, and will, in line with the Bali Road Map, produce the desired results by the target date of 2009.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Alpha Ibrahima Sow, Permanent Representative of Guinea.

Mr. Sow (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): I wish, on behalf of the Republic of Guinea, to express our full appreciation for the President's welcome initiative in holding this thematic debate of the General Assembly on climate change. I also wish to congratulate the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his report (A/62/644), which provides an exhaustive overview of the work carried out by the United Nations system on climate change.

I wish to associate myself with the statements, at the 80th meeting by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and at the 81st meeting by Bangladesh on behalf of the least developed countries and by Cameroon on behalf of the African Group.

In placing climate change at the centre of the political agenda, the international community reaffirms its determination to meet this urgent and critical global challenge, which calls for both individual and collective responses. In the general debate of September 2007 and the high-level meeting convened by the Secretary-General and supported by the impetus of the Bali objectives and Road Map, the General Assembly provides an irreplaceable framework for action and cooperation on the multilateral level to promote the fruitful negotiation of an international regime on climate change for the period after 2012.

My country welcomes the laudable results of the Bali conference, which succeeded in launching negotiations on climate change in order to reach a general global agreement before the end of 2009.

For the Republic of Guinea, climate change constitutes a challenge to both peace and security and to sustainable development. Rapidly advancing global warming is seriously affecting my country and the region, with considerable consequences in terms of environmental disruption, desertification and effects on natural and water resources. Without multiplying the alarmist, well-known and recognized examples, I can emphasize that if nothing is done right away, our region could be condemned to destitution and poverty, with no real hope of attaining the Millennium Development Goals by the planned date.

In that context, we welcome the active participation of the least developed countries and the

Group of 77 in the Bali negotiations and support the international community's focus on areas of concrete action, namely mitigation, adaptation, capacity-building, technology and financing, sustainable development, et cetera. After Bali, the world needs clear and firm commitments and, above all, action, because the efforts undertaken thus far remain insufficient, even given the modest promises made and what is at stake.

As the President has emphasized, the current debate cannot replace the negotiations launched in Bali, but it could influence the process by encouraging, in a coordinated and effective manner, partnership on all levels — national, regional and global — among Member States, the United Nations system and other participants, including the private sector, civil society, financial institutions, universities, scientists and researchers, et cetera. My country welcomes the inclusive participation of all actors in the area of climate change and development in this current debate. We hope to see the gradual establishment of a global agreement in accordance with the principle of shared but differentiated responsibilities.

We also recall the urgent need to fully mobilize the necessary financial, technical and institutional tools expected under the Bali framework convention, to strengthen the capacity for adaptation of the poorest and most vulnerable countries to the harmful — and often catastrophic and unforeseeable — effects of climate change. In that context, we must undertake to make the Nairobi Framework plan operational, in order to ensure the participation of developing countries in the development mechanism itself.

My country welcomes the launching of numerous national, bilateral and multilateral initiatives to improve the living conditions of populations and to reduce poverty and marginalization while taking the environment into consideration. We therefore express our gratitude to all the countries and partners that have made concrete, measurable and targeted commitments to support in practical terms the efforts of the developing countries in confronting climate change.

Allow me to conclude by quoting the President's words, which were inspired by his resolute commitment to the fight against climate change, which we share.

“What we need is a common vision, a global consensus and a global alliance for action,

shared by individuals, the media, lawmakers, business leaders, Governments, regional organizations and, ultimately, the global community embodied in the United Nations. Only then will we have a chance to tackle this enormous challenge to our way of life.”

The Acting President: I give the floor next to Ms. Paulette Bethel, Permanent Representative of the Bahamas.

Ms. Bethel (Bahamas): At the outset, the Bahamas would like to align itself with the statements made at the 80th meeting by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and at the 81st meeting by Grenada on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, and Barbados on behalf of the Caribbean Community. The Bahamas also welcomes the convening of this debate, finding the subject matter particularly topical, and would like to take this opportunity to add a few comments from a national perspective.

We all acknowledge the import of the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and its conclusion that climate change is a result of human activities. For those of us who live at sea level, the picture is particularly bleak. The Bahamas, labelled among the 100 countries most vulnerable to climate change, is now facing inundation from storm surges, depletion of fragile water resources, erosion and further land degradation, as the sea begins to reclaim the land that rose out of the last ice age. It is this reality that informs our desire for urgent action on climate change.

A short while ago, the infrastructure of the central Bahamas was badly damaged when a little over 50 per cent of our annual rainfall flooded the islands over a two-day period. Tropical storm Noel caused economic loss to our salt industry and crops, and our vital tourist industry was also disrupted. A life was lost. That occurred despite having an advanced early warning system and natural disaster system in place. Clearly, there is much more to do.

The Government of the Bahamas recognizes that the future development of the Bahamian people will depend on the responsible exploitation of the natural and man-made resources available in the country, in the context of a comprehensive policy framework. However, we must acknowledge that climate change presents more complex global challenges, warranting a

reassessment of our collective response to this issue and a renewal of our efforts in support of the broader sustainable development question — the wider context within which climate change should be considered.

In that connection, the Bahamas welcomes the opportunity to add to the debate on how best the United Nations system, in collaboration with Member States, the private sector and civil society, can collectively support the most important work of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) — the primary comprehensive framework for addressing climate change — and the implementation of commitments under the Convention, its Kyoto Protocol and the Bali Action Plan.

In that context, the Bahamas notes with interest the report of the Secretary-General on the overview of the United Nations activities in relation to climate change, particularly as it refers to supporting global, regional and national action on climate change. We agree that the United Nations, given its universality, has a central role in supporting global efforts to meet the global challenge of climate change and in providing policy direction to support the Bali Action Plan. In that connection, the Bahamas would indeed welcome the strengthening of the United Nations system, particularly the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the Small Island Developing States Unit, in its efforts to assist national adaptation activities and national sustainable development activities in general.

It is worth noting in that regard that the Bahamas has initiated policies to respond to climate change at the national level; however, our adaptation options are limited. In fact, in some cases, particularly the case of some of the smaller islands in the archipelago, the only option may be retreat and abandonment of property. The problem for the Bahamas, as with many other small island developing States, is that we are often found lacking with respect to indigenous science and technology capability. There are also many gaps in existing data and information and a lack of tools to assess the physical, social and economic impacts on the most vulnerable sectors of our society and economy.

Access to international assistance, new and additional financial resources and the availability of scientific and technological solutions are critical in our efforts to reduce vulnerability and achieve sustainable

development. In that context, the Bahamas wishes to welcome the decision taken by the parties to the Kyoto Protocol to continue the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol. We anticipate that such a decision would lead to the necessary support to developing countries in the areas of adaptation, mitigation, technology and financing.

The Bahamas also welcomes in particular the operationalization of the Adaptation Fund during the Bali Conference last year. That, together with mechanisms such as the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility, would do much in the way of assisting countries like the Bahamas to access funding for recovery from natural disasters and for other vital adaptation activities. The recent contribution of \$2.5 million by the Government of Ireland to the Facility is most welcome and greatly appreciated. We sincerely thank Ireland for that generous gesture of partnership and support.

As I conclude, I would once again like to thank the President for convening this most timely debate and hope that events such as these will continue to gather the momentum necessary to effect real change.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Somduth Soborun, Permanent Representative of Mauritius.

Mr. Soborun (Mauritius): The journey from Rio to Bali in our quest for a cleaner environment and the preservation of planet Earth has taken us over a decade and a half thus far. Although slow in its progress, this quest has nonetheless been able to generate a consensus that climate change is real and that global warming is caused by human activities.

I should like to commend the President for convening this timely thematic debate on a subject of serious concern to us all. I should also like to commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his tireless efforts to secure top priority for the issue of climate change, which he has rightly described as the defining issue of our time. Indeed it is.

I encourage the President and the Secretary-General to remain continuously engaged with respect to the issue of climate change, together with other equally important issues confronting us, such as the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, financing for development and, of course, the reform of

the United Nations, including Security Council reform. Those issues are not mutually exclusive.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report, which not only provides an overview of the activities of the United Nations in relation to climate change, but also sets the guidelines on what can be done to make United Nations participation even better. Undoubtedly, the United Nations remains the best-placed Organization to deal with the issue of climate change. However, it is important to stress that all United Nations strategies and activities on climate change — and other issues as well — should be coordinated in a coherent manner so as to deliver as one.

Last but not least, I associate myself with the statement made by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by Cameroon on behalf of the African Group.

We are already late in tackling the problems and adverse effects of climate change. Time is running out, and it is imperative that we hammer out an agreement well before 2009 to move the process forward for a comprehensive post-Kyoto agreement. In that context, we should refrain from overloading the agenda of the Bali Action Plan, as rightly pointed out by some of the eminent panellists at the meeting of the working group held on Monday, 11 February 2008.

The Bali Action Plan has called for enhanced national and international action on mitigation of climate change; enhanced action on adaptation; enhanced action on technology development and transfer to support action on mitigation; and enhanced action on the provision of financial resources and investment to support action on mitigation, adaptation and technology cooperation. Furthermore, it has also called for urgent action on, inter alia, the immediate needs of developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, especially the least developed countries and small island developing States.

I should therefore like to emphasize some of the challenges confronting the small island developing States with regard to climate change and global warming. Small island developing States face severe threats from sea-level rise and extreme weather conditions, increasing beach erosion, coral bleaching and sea surges caused by climate change. Those threats seriously undermine the tourism and fishing industries,

which by and large constitute the main economic pillars of most small island developing States. We therefore support United Nations initiatives to assist developing countries and small island developing States in identifying and implementing national mitigation strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while promoting local sustainable development and cleaner economic growth.

We also reiterate our call for the setting up of a special fund for small island developing States to enable the development and implementation of adaptation measures in the same manner as the Least Developed Countries Fund under the Global Environment Facility. Funding should be based on vulnerability and the level of urgency for adaptation.

The initial sum of \$300 million recently pledged to start the Adaptation Fund is a drop in the ocean if we consider the magnitude of the problems caused by the adverse effects of climate change. We are convinced that the international community can do much more, as it has the capabilities and resources to mobilize billions and trillions of dollars for the purpose, given that we now all agree that whatever we neglect to do today in addressing the challenges of climate change may cost us several times as much to remedy in the years ahead.

We welcome the recent initiative of the Government of Japan to establish a financial mechanism called the “Cool Earth Partnership” consisting of \$10 billion in the aggregate over the next five years to assist developing countries that are making efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve economic growth in a compatible way, on the basis of policy consultations between Japan and those countries. We also welcome Japan’s intention to set up a multilateral fund together with the United States and the United Kingdom, and we note its call for other donors to participate in the fund.

We also support the Government of India’s commitment to focus on areas such as natural disaster preparedness, resilience, capacity-building, adaptation and mitigation with regard to small island developing States. We express our appreciation for India’s committed project aid of \$70 million to small island developing States, in addition to its \$350 million in concessional loans and credit lines.

Small island developing States are deprived of mineral and natural resources such as iron ore, coal, gold, diamonds, copper and oil, to name but a few.

However, nature has been quite generous in providing them with an abundance of sunshine year in and year out. It goes without saying, therefore, that at a time when we are putting all our efforts into extracting carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, solar energy should be put to the best and most effective use. In that context, the transfer of technology and know-how to small island developing States in the use, application and development of solar energy — free of charge, or at subsidized and affordable rates — could be highly instrumental in helping them along the path towards cleaner energy and significantly reduced import bills for fossil fuels, as well as reduced dependability on fossil fuels. In that respect, under the umbrella of one of the United Nations agencies, the establishment of joint ventures between small island developing States and countries with advanced levels of technology and know-how in solar energy would be most welcome.

Coming back to the broader picture of climate change and global warming, and acknowledging that the planet is in peril, let me conclude with a more practical approach. Ask not what others can do; ask what I can contribute towards a cleaner environment. That “I” ranges from the most powerful to the least fortunate — from Governments, the most successful business corporations, industries and financial institutions to street vendors, civil societies, non-governmental organizations and many individuals and celebrities, such as Sir Richard Branson and actress Daryl Hannah, who were your chief guests at the luncheon on climate change hosted at the United Nations by President Srgjan Kerim on Monday, 11 February. We need to build bridges and partnerships with all the stakeholders. We all have a stake, based on the agreed principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in making the world a better, safer and cleaner place to live in, for us and for generations to come.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Carlisle Richardson, representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Richardson (Saint Kitts and Nevis): The Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis would like thank the President for convening this debate in the General Assembly on the theme “Addressing climate change: the United Nations and the world at work”.

Saint Kitts and Nevis associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and

Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the representative of Barbados on behalf of the Caribbean Community and the representative of Grenada on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States.

The Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis, being among the smallest independent nations, feels compelled to have its voice heard in this debate. There has been much talk and discussion on the issue of climate change. It is evident that some nations are willing to do much. The picture in relation to others is not yet clear.

Saint Kitts and Nevis joins the many who call for action — not just any action, but meaningful and focused action that will reduce the consequences of climate change. For us it is no longer a question of addressing the threats of climate change; the problem is beyond that. It is a matter of addressing its consequences. As the science in this area has yet to mature, it is the unknown that is waiting to haunt us.

Today, Saint Kitts and Nevis will describe a few of the ways in which climate change presently affects us. We are small. There is a rain forest. Our people live in coastal areas. The rest of the land is used for agriculture. It is not a lot of land. The destruction of our beaches and the damage to our rain forest and topography have begun. Sooner rather than later, rising sea levels could cause us to lose our beaches. Deforestation can soon be a real possibility.

Our rainfall is now unpredictable. We receive less rainfall than before but, when it comes, it is heavy. Rainfall and floods are constantly eroding our topsoil. We depend on the rain to irrigate our crops to feed our people. To irrigate otherwise is expensive. The present patterns are affecting our attempts to achieve food security. Prolonged periods of drought produce no crops. As a result, our bill for food imports continues to rise, using up much-needed foreign currency.

We continue to be affected by some, if not all, the hurricanes that visit the region yearly. Even when they do not hit us directly, we are affected by their outer bands, whether it be in the form of coastal erosion from the activity of the sea or land erosion from the resulting heavy rains, both of which cause us to continually lose our soil.

As a result of the decline in rainfall, our water resources are stretched to the limit. Desalination plants are now considered a necessary part of our planning for

the future to meet water demands. It is an expensive way forward, but we have no choice.

Unfortunately, since tourism is our main engine of growth, the degradation of our natural assets will eventually make us unattractive to tourists. That in turn will have a negative impact on the many jobs that the tourism sector has produced for our economy.

My country agreed to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. That was our way of saying that we are on board with the rest of the international community in setting greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for the world. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is the only way forward if we are to end the overall warming of the planet brought on by human activity.

The significance of the measures taken to protect and preserve our planet should be a concern of all nations — developing nations as well as those that are developed. To ignore the roles that we have to play in the process would have implications for us all. None of us is too large or too well placed geographically to consider ourselves safe from the ravages associated with unmitigated climate change; the historical data attest to that. Therefore, it is necessary and also wise to conclude that we are all in this together and must join in the efforts to protect our planet — which we hold in trust for the generations to come — and to ensure our own survival.

Saint Kitts and Nevis are among those countries contributing least to global warming. In fact, when one applies the principle of *de minimis*, one concludes that we contribute nothing to global warming. Yet, we are also among those who are beginning to suffer dearly as things grow worse.

No matter what the military or diplomatic strength of the victim nation-States may be, there is a moral imperative that the emitters and polluters join in partnership to find a solution. The industrialized countries have created the problem. There is very little that the rest of us can do on our own. The partnership of the industrialized world is necessary for a solution.

There can be no doubt as to the need for financial flows from the developed to the developing world to address the issues of mitigation and adaptation. We do not believe that everything must stand still until the negotiations end; there is much that we can do and much that can be done in the interim.

We are willing to contribute to the solution in our own small way, through the use of alternative sources of energy. In that regard, in our Federation there is evidence of viable commercial sources of geothermal energy. We ourselves are working to gain access to those sources, but there is still a need for financial and technical assistance from the developed world if we are to succeed in bringing them into production.

Therefore, in our response to this multifaceted challenge, we must be nations that are united as partners in the area of climate change. I therefore invite the fullest positive participation of all Members as nations united in efforts to address the issues associated with climate change. We ask that all nations be proactive in the implementation of strategies and solutions to mitigate the impending disaster and misfortune for us all. As a small island State, we are anxious to help ensure that no island is left behind.

The Acting President: I now call on Mr. Peter Maurer, Permanent Representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Maurer (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland very much welcomes the holding of this thematic debate, and we thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/62/644). That document is a very good source of information and of proposals aimed at better coordination of the activities of United Nations agencies to support negotiations and the implementation of measures. Still to be resolved is the important issue of carrying out the process initiated by the Secretary-General to ensure that United Nations agencies address climate change issues in a more effective and consistent manner.

We urge that the priorities related to climate protection in the areas of emissions reduction and adaptation be integrated into the strategies of United Nations agencies. Thus, we support the approach taken by the Secretary-General: identifying sectoral objectives and making concrete proposals aimed at the attainment of each of them. Roles must still be assigned to the relevant agencies to ensure the attainment of those objectives.

The strategies of United Nations agencies must integrate, develop and meet the needs and priorities identified by the two forums responsible for addressing global climate change within the United Nations system: the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol. As the Secretary-General indicated in his report, the scientific

issues of observation, follow-up and research with regard to the climate system and the assessment of knowledge in that area must also be priorities for the specialized agencies of the United Nations system.

However, many sectoral objectives identified in the Secretary-General's report are not only climatic objectives, but sources of broader interest in the area of development. In that connection, we should like issues related to environmental protection to be considered and to contribute to sustainable development. More generally, we believe that adequate resources must be made available to United Nations agencies in order to support national and international processes regarding climate change.

In the immediate future, we should like the United Nations system to effectively meet the requirements of the Bali Action Plan with regard to emissions reduction, adaptation, technology transfer and the mobilization of sufficient financial resources. The Plan sets out objectives for each of those areas, and United Nations agencies can contribute and respond to them.

We recall that the Bali Action Plan identifies disaster risk prevention as an essential element in climate change adaptation strategies. Thus, we urge the United Nations system to systematically integrate risk prevention programmes into climate change adaptation programmes, particularly in national development plans. In that context, we welcome the World Bank's recent innovative initiatives in the field of disaster reduction.

Finally, we underline the importance of the Third World Climate Conference, to be held in Geneva in early September 2009. The Conference was decided upon at the Fifteenth World Meteorological Congress and should be supported by all relevant United Nations agencies. The Conference will include a high-level segment during which important recommendations will be made for the fight against climate change, particularly in the area of adaptation.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Rodrigo Riofrío, representative of Ecuador.

Mr. Riofrío (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Permit me at the outset to associate myself with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. My delegation also congratulates the President of the General

Assembly on the convening of this important debate on climate change, which is a priority issue for Ecuador.

Our country emphasizes the importance of the establishment of the Road Map as a result of the Bali Conference. The Road Map will enable the international community to achieve the necessary agreements to address the effects of climate change by establishing targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and to implement new mitigation and adaptation measures.

The historical responsibility of developed countries in the area of climate change is of great concern to us, given that ever more intense climatic events produce disastrous consequences, especially for developing countries. We therefore call on developed countries to assume their historical commitment and put in place measures that can help developing countries to mitigate the resulting effects.

Ecuador is a marginal country as regards emissions, producing less than 1 per cent of the world's total. However, in recent years our country has suffered from severe natural disasters resulting from climate change. As a result, at this very moment, various areas of our country — especially along our coast — are under a state of emergency following the serious flooding that has taken place as a result of torrential rains. These rains were due to the phenomenon known as La Niña, and have had an unprecedented impact and produced thousands of victims.

Climate change affects us all. It knows no boundaries and has an impact on both developed and developing countries. Ecuador, which agrees with the principle of shared responsibility, therefore proposed an initiative to the international community several months ago that would involve leaving the crude oil contained in the Ishpingo Tambococha Tiputini (ITT) oil fields of Ecuador's Yasuní National Park in the ground. By exploiting the ITT-Yasuní fields Ecuador could produce more than 100,000 barrels of crude oil per day, with a value of \$720 million annually. Production would continue for approximately 13 years, during which 107,000 barrels on average would be produced daily.

The proposal we have made would obligate Ecuador not to exploit the almost 920 million barrels of oil in the highly biodiverse Yasuní ecological region. In return for that economic sacrifice, our country would ask the international community to assume

co-responsibility in this initiative by establishing the ITT-Yasuní trust fund and contributing \$5 per non-extracted barrel. To that end, a technical secretariat has already been established to implement the project. The total amount that the international community would have to contribute to the compensation fund would be approximately \$4.6 billion, which we would use to carry out our national development plan. That plan includes provisions for diversifying our energy supply, developing our capacities and investment in ecotourism and implementing a comprehensive agenda covering the areas of health, education and environmental restoration.

This is an initiative by a small country, whose economic resources depend upon exploiting oil resources. However, because we are aware of the devastating effects of climate change, we are willing to make the necessary efforts to mitigate that phenomenon, even if it means forgoing a significant amount of revenue. Ecuador therefore once again calls on the international community to support our initiative to leave the ITT-Yasuní oil in the ground as an innovative, creative and humane proposal to mitigate the effects of climate change.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Hugo Siles Alvarado, Permanent Representative of Bolivia.

Mr. Siles Alvarado (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to congratulate the presidency on the time and effort it is devoting to addressing such an important issue as that of climate change.

The Mission of Bolivia associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77.

I do not want to repeat all the arguments and facts that have been set out in a very detailed and exhaustive manner by the representatives who have spoken before me. Nevertheless, I should like to refer to some issues of importance to the Bolivian Mission.

It seems that, in our determination to promptly address the potential disastrous consequences looming on the horizon as a result of climate change, we are forgetting the fundamental causes that led to the current situation. As a result, we are dealing only with short-term problems and forgetting those that may arise in the medium and long terms. We should remember that climate change is the result of a long process of

environmental pollution, which began, as is well known, in the 1850s with the industrial use of the steam engine and the internal combustion engine. The accelerated process of industrialization was accompanied by a huge demand for natural resources and energy. In many cases, this led to armed conflicts that continue to this day and are preventing humankind from living together in peace.

Industrialization, although it made unquestionable contributions to the improvement of the living conditions and quality of life of millions of human beings, was unfortunately accompanied by very detrimental consequences for the preservation of the human race, of nature and of the planet in general. Let us hope that finding a solution to the problems of climate change does not take as long as environmental pollution took to create climate change. Because if it does, we shall need something like 150 years to bring climate change under control.

Industrial overproduction in consumer societies and their irrational and insatiable demand for sources of energy have led to the unbridled overexploitation of non-renewable resources, the pollution of rivers, seas, air and land and the ongoing depredation of natural forests. The excess demand for energy is today forcing some countries to convert millions of hectares of arable land, which could be used to grow food crops to alleviate the hunger of millions of human beings, to the production of corn, sugar cane and other crops for biofuels, which are beginning to be used in millions of cars that generally do not fulfil an essential need. Cities such as London and New York, however, are beginning to search for disincentives to curb the lavish use of cars.

We sometimes wonder what poses the greater threat to the survival of the human race; climate change or the insensitivity of those who have everything. Climate change, leading to climate disasters today, is actually the result of excessive demand and the waste of energy and consumer goods in developed countries.

Countries like Bolivia, which have never benefited to any significant amount from scientific and technological development and which have never contributed significantly to environmental degradation, have to pay the consequences of climate change. Paradoxically, countries which have caused the greatest amount to the grim picture facing our planet are those who decide that now we all have a shared

responsibility to confront the challenges of adapting to and mitigating climate change.

At this point in time, Bolivia is going through a very difficult period as a result of the devastating rains and floods that threaten the personal safety, security and health of thousands of people. All of this is the consequence of the sudden cold or warm air masses that have in recent years fundamentally affected the South American continent.

Last year, following the floods in the city of Trinidad in Bolivia and with the help of our Venezuelan brothers and sisters, we built a dike in order to prevent even more floods. Building the dike on the basis of pre-flooding water levels seems not to have proven adequate: water levels have now risen above that containment wall. This tells us that adaptation measures may be insufficient and that it is not possible to predict the actual scope of climatic changes.

More economically developed countries, which are responsible for the ecological changes that we are now experiencing, have put forth two strategies to slow down ecological and climatic collapse: adaptation and mitigation. In both cases, less developed countries lack the technology necessary to implement these policies of adaptation to and mitigation of climate change. This technology must be made immediately available to all countries and at no cost for all of the least developed countries (LDCs): this is the least that countries which have contributed most to environmental degradation over the last 150 years can do to help us to confront the challenges of adaptation and mitigation. Furthermore, policies of adaptation and mitigation are only palliative measures. They cannot guarantee the effective control of climate change, as long as developed countries continue to maintain and increase their energy consumption.

The future of the LDCs over the next 50 years is very uncertain in terms of energy resources. The voracious demand for natural resources seems to have ensured the exhaustion of those resources. The new types of energy production that are being developed today carry with them costs that put them beyond the reach of the poorest and least developed among us.

The point, therefore, is to decrease the per capita energy demand in all countries of the world and especially in those countries whose energy consumption is excessive. The United Nations has the

obligation to propose educational policies that will change consumption habits, slow down deforestation of natural forests and eliminate pollution in rivers and seas. All of us must commit ourselves to working to save our planet from the voracious appetites of the insatiable.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Christian Wenaweser, Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): We value this opportunity to offer our view on climate change once again and are grateful for the high-quality and stimulating discussions of the day before yesterday in the framework of the panels organized by you, Mr. President.

Clearly, climate change is an exemplary challenge for global cooperation, since the need for multilateral action can hardly be more obvious. It therefore constitutes a unique challenge to the United Nations system.

The leadership that the Secretary-General has shown on this topic ever since he took office is thus crucial. Tremendous momentum has been created on the issue of climate change in recent months and the Bali Road Map on climate change was the first step in translating this momentum into concrete action. More must follow, of course.

In tackling climate change, we must realize that this is not merely an environmental issue, but predominantly one of sustainable development. Since climate change can also exacerbate existing security threats, it also has a strong security dimension and thus contains elements of the priorities of United Nations work in general. It is also highly relevant for another priority topic that we will address later this year, namely, our ongoing work on the Millennium Development Goals.

The report of the Secretary-General before us today illustrates the impressive range of activities related to climate change in which different players within the United Nations system are already engaged. It also shows that the response to the challenge of international environmental governance that is under discussion can make an important contribution to targeting our response to climate change. The key areas for action of mitigation, adaptation, technology and financing, as well as deforestation, must be carried out

in a manner based on an inclusive and coherent approach, as reflected in the report of the Secretary-General.

We therefore support the statement made by the two Chairpeople in charge of the institutional framework. We also look forward to the continued leadership of the Secretary-General in shaping a coordinated United Nations approach, in particular the work under way with the Chief Executives Boards.

Financing and technology rightfully occupy a central place in the framework we have agreed in Bali. Clearly, the resource side is one aspect where much thinking is yet to be done, and we hope for creative proposals on mechanisms for financing. At the same time, we must not be led to believe that there is a technological answer to the complex challenge that climate change poses.

An indispensable element of our success is sustained political will, as well as the promotion of a global consciousness of the magnitude of the problem we are facing. In this respect, partnerships between all the stakeholders can have a strong catalytic effect.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Martín García Moritán, representative of Argentina.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, let me begin by thanking the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, for convening this singular event, as well as Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the commitment he has shown in bringing a multilateral focus to bear on the scourge of climate change. The Argentine Republic strongly emphasizes the importance of negotiations within the relevant major forums and reaffirms the key role of the United Nations system in relation to this topic.

We believe that the natural arena for negotiations on this issue is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, without minimizing the possible contributions of efforts made outside the climate change system. We are, therefore, not convinced as to the benefits of a possible proliferation of forums for efforts to address the issue. If it is dealt with outside the framework of the Convention, that could have negative implications for ensuring the active participation of developing countries in the discussions.

We consider the report of the Secretary-General on this issue (A/62/644) to be extremely important, and we believe that the United Nations system should assist in the two-year-long negotiation process set out in the Bali Action Plan, with a view to reaching an agreement that will improve the multilateral regime dealing with climate change, without compromising the legitimate right of non-annex I parties under the Kyoto Protocol to sustainable development.

An improved international response requires that all industrialized countries adopt stricter commitments than those set out in the Kyoto Protocol. To that end, we must also find ways to promote the participation of developing countries, including by establishing criteria that will make it possible to differentiate between them, taking account of each country's national circumstances and capacities.

The countries not included in annex I of the Protocol could adopt sustainable development policies and measures contributing to mitigation and adaptation. However, there are difficulties with implementation, which are due in part to a lack of sufficient resources. Activities by developing countries should be appropriately encouraged through international cooperation in the areas of investigation, observation, technology transfer and financing.

Some entities of the United Nations system are already assisting in the climate change regime in these areas, but they should be encouraged to focus their efforts on developing countries. Improving multilateral cooperation is essential in carrying out mitigation and adaptation efforts. Under the Convention, developed countries are obligated to help developing countries to meet their commitments, through financial resources, capacity-building and technology transfer. The time has come to honour that commitment.

As former President Néstor Kirchner stated in this Hall at the 2007 High-level Event on Climate Change:

“Everyone recognizes that the developing countries have contributed the least to the creation of this imbalance known as climate change, one of whose causes has been identified as the impact of human activity. On the contrary, it is the developed countries that have received a virtual environmental subsidy from our countries for a long time — a subsidy that has enabled

them to enjoy the high consumption levels that have caused this situation.

“That has clearly caused the world and the developing countries to become the environmental creditors of the developed countries. This situation has created a moral and environmental debt that must be duly repaid to eliminate the inequities caused by the adverse effects of climate change. For too long, adaptation to climate change has been the unfulfilled promise of the international regime created for that purpose.”

The activities of the United Nations system to promote the implementation of mitigation and adaptation measures and the transfer of financial and technological resources could be strengthened if the parties to the climate change system reach agreement in the primary forum and in negotiations to help it move forward. Otherwise, our efforts could be fragmented. Far from promoting an effective response to the challenge, that would compromise the coherence of the regime.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol are fully valid areas for immediate national action and international debate. With all our political will, we must focus on meeting the obligations already established and must reject any initiative aimed at undermining those forums, those goals and our future.

The Acting President: I now call on Mr. Jean-Marie Ehouzou, Permanent Representative of Benin.

Mr. Ehouzou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): My delegation expresses its great appreciation to Mr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the General Assembly, for his initiative to invite eminent personalities to enliven our panel discussions on mobilizing the international community to respond to the terrible effects of climate change.

Benin associates itself with the statements made by the representative of Cameroon on behalf of the Group of African States and by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Climate change is no longer in the realm of the merely imaginary or possible; it is already a tangible reality affecting the basic necessities of life for peoples throughout the world. It is shown in the increased

frequency of natural disasters, which are causing enormous damage in the countries affected. Climate change is jeopardizing the very existence of many coastal and island States and could lead to a dwindling of available living space, by considerably reducing the area of habitable land and making environmental conditions more difficult for life and human activity. In fact, we are already facing coastal erosion and flooding in many regions of the world as a result of sea-level rise, in addition to falling groundwater tables, the drying up of watercourses and lakes, the salinization of rivers and many other phenomena, which are complicating access to natural resources essential for the survival of humanity.

The fruitful panel discussions that we have had on this issue have certainly benefited the quest for ideal and innovative solutions to the challenges confronting humanity in all fields of activity. Such solutions must be collective and based on international solidarity and the principle of shared but differentiated responsibilities. That is the only way to ensure not only that we can make the necessary behaviour and lifestyle changes, but also, and in particular, that we can limit the damage through mitigation and adaptation efforts. To that end, we must swiftly mobilize the financial resources required to ensure the transfer of appropriate technologies as well as capacity-building.

The President took the Chair.

In addition to systematic measures set out within the framework of conventions on the environment aimed at addressing the human factors contributing to climate change, our societies must make sweeping changes to stave off the threat of major climate shocks. The most recent report of the United Nations Environment Programme, which is devoted to the fight against climate change, is based on, inter alia, the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). It highlights the mostly positive cost-ratio advantage of proactive action as compared with the cost of natural disasters caused by climate change.

The technological progress of recent years has made it possible to introduce and promote the use of new and renewable sources of energy in order to reduce the constantly increasing pressures on finite natural resources. For example, giving a solar oven to a poor family in my country would contribute to the fight against desertification by considerably reducing the use of firewood, and thus would assist in the fight against

deforestation. That is a proven fact. Solar panels are another alternative to providing abundant energy, especially in Africa, where there is sunshine 365 days a year. Unfortunately, solar panels are not within the reach of our peoples, who are too poor to buy them. The time has come to end market speculation in this type of product, and to make them accessible to the poorest segments of populations in need.

We have at our disposal both the financial and technological resources necessary to adapt to climate change. What is needed is more political will and vision to be able to bequeath a liveable world to future generations. Any mitigation and adaptation strategy must necessarily incorporate the element of sustainable development, which includes eradicating poverty and enabling individuals to lead lives that are healthy, decent and respectful of the normal order of things. We should maximize existing synergies in order to activate all potential actors of change, by reorienting existing frameworks for traditional cooperation.

Along the same lines, we should also maximize the benefits that could be derived from the convergence and complementarity of international conventions on global environmental governance. Also in that framework, the international community, especially donors, must understand that the successful implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification requires financial resources at the same level as other conventions concluded during the Rio period.

Benin calls for the synergetic implementation of the programmes of action to combat the negative effects of climate change — as regards both policy and, above all, resources. In the same vein, the resources allocated to the Adaptation Fund to combat climate change — which must be increased — should also be utilized to finance projects to combat degradation of the land and to support a massive reforestation and soil-protection programme. Those efforts will contribute to improving both the health of the world's environment and that of its inhabitants by generating revenue. The Convention to Combat Desertification should be the basis for efforts to adapt to climate change and mitigate its effects, as well as to strengthen the resiliency of countries in which soil degradation is a critical problem.

In that connection, the Commission on Sustainable Development should further dedicate itself

to issues related to climate change. There is room for improving the existing limited capacities in monitoring and analysing phenomena associated with climate change in Africa. There is also a need to establish a global databank that can provide statistics and scientific information of equal accuracy for all the world's regions, so as to ensure that we have at our disposal effective surveillance that can bolster our forecasting capability. Above all, the United Nations should help low-income developing countries to incorporate the climate change situation into their national investment strategies, so as to make those strategies more rational in the light of climate change.

With regard to the mobilization of resources, the United Nations could, in addition to fulfilling the commitments already undertaken, consider the possibility of a solidarity levy on resources generated by activities involving production factors that have been declared to be the common patrimony of humankind — such as the seabed and historic sites — in order to provide resources for the Adaptation Fund. The United Nations is in the best position to find innovative formulas for the mobilization of additional resources to combat climate change. We should carefully consider the various proposals to which I have referred.

The President: I now call on the Permanent Observer of the Holy See, Archbishop Celestino Migliore.

Archbishop Migliore (Holy See): The ongoing debate on climate change has helped put into focus the inescapable responsibility of one and all to care for the environment, thereby building consensus around the common objective of promoting a healthy environment for present and future generations.

The recent United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali has shown that through increased concern for our neighbour, in particular those most vulnerable to climatic change, we are better equipped to adopt strategies and policies that balance the needs of humankind with the urgent need for a more responsible stewardship.

The Holy See assures the General Assembly of its collaboration in achieving the objectives set in Bali. To that end, the personal commitment and numerous public appeals of Pope Benedict XVI have generated awareness campaigns for a renewed sense of respect for, and the need to safeguard, God's creation.

Individuals and communities have started to change their lifestyles, aware that personal and collective behaviour impacts the climate and the overall health of the environment. While such lifestyle changes at times may seem irrelevant, every small initiative to reduce or offset one's carbon footprint, be it the avoidance of the unnecessary use of transport or the daily effort to reduce energy consumption, contributes to mitigating environmental decay and concretely shows commitment to environmental care.

On a more practical side, the Holy See has already taken certain measures to reduce and offset the carbon emission of the Vatican City State, such as the use of solar panels and the planting of trees. Through its involvement in a reforestation project in Hungary, it will provide environmental benefits to the host country, assist in the recovery of an environmentally degraded tract of land and provide local jobs.

The interrelated issues of environmental preservation, economic development and climate change can have competing demands on our priorities and concerns. It is incumbent upon every individual and nation to seriously assume one's share of the responsibility to find and implement the most balanced approach possible to this challenge. Sustainable development provides the key to a strategy that harmoniously takes into account the demands of environmental preservation, climate change, economic development and basic human needs.

The use of clean technologies is an important component of sustainable development. To help industrializing countries avoid the errors that others committed in the past, highly industrialized countries should share with the former their more advanced and cleaner technologies. The pooling of resources makes initiatives of mitigation and adaptation economically accessible to most, thereby assisting those less equipped to pursue development while safeguarding the environment. Moreover, markets must be encouraged to patronize green economics, and not to sustain demand for goods whose very production causes environmental degradation. Consumers must be aware that their consumption patterns have a direct impact on the health of the environment.

Indeed, the challenge of climate change is at once individual, local, national and global. Accordingly, it urges a multilevel coordinated response, with mitigation and adaptation programmes simultaneously

being individual, local, national and global in their vision and scope. My delegation therefore commends the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change for providing a global framework for concerted international action to mitigate climate change and to adapt to its impacts. The almost universal membership in the Convention will not fail to facilitate the launching of national strategies — starting with those most vulnerable, such as small island States and coastal, low-lying populated areas — and will promote a more equitable pooling of resources and technology to help vulnerable countries with lesser resources to better understand and assess the risks they face.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2, of 19 October 1994, I now call on Mr. Raymond Forde, of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Mr. Forde (International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) congratulates you, Mr. President, on your decision to convene this thematic debate on climate change. For us, the issue of partnerships is particularly appropriate because of its vital relevance to the fulfilment of commitments in the Hyogo Framework and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) contexts.

This same theme was addressed at the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, held in late November 2007 in Geneva. That conference brought together all the world's Governments and their partner Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and resulted in the adoption by consensus of a declaration entitled "Together for Humanity". One of the four major challenges identified in the declaration is the humanitarian consequences of environmental degradation and climate change, with an emphasis on adaptation.

The debate at the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference was driven by exactly the same realizations as those which underpin the discussions here. The first is that there can be no argument about the impact today of climate change and global warming on tens — no, hundreds — of millions of people all over the world.

We are an organization composed of 186 National Societies functioning as auxiliaries to the public

authorities in every country. Our “Together for Humanity” declaration envisages each Government meeting with its National Society to establish what they can do together to combat the challenge of climate change. Our Societies are committed to their part of this initiative, and some have already engaged their Governments on defining roles and responsibilities. We urge all Governments to take up the opportunity that our Geneva consensus provides to make a real difference, especially in fields such as adaptation.

In anticipation of that, we worked with the Netherlands Red Cross Society to establish the Red Cross and Red Crescent Climate Centre on Climate Change and Disaster Preparedness in The Hague in 2002. Since then, we have utilized its expertise and resources to contribute to a large number of international meetings and events all over the world and have used that experience to build national actions on humanitarian consequences in selected countries.

We have also established partnerships between the IFRC and global and regional organizations to address disaster risk reduction. One such organization, in my own region, is the Association of Caribbean States. But the diversity of our interest is also illustrated by our intention to work more closely with the Sustainable Development Working Group of the Arctic Council. We also pay tribute to the work of the Alliance of Small Island States for the priority its members are undertaking to give climate change and its consequences the priority it deserves.

We in the Red Cross and Red Crescent are profoundly committed to ensuring that all Governments fully appreciate the humanitarian consequences of climate change. To address this, and in fulfilment of the consensus achieved at the November 2007 International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, we will use all means at our disposal to ensure that climate change is fully integrated into disaster risk reduction and disaster management policies and plans at the national level. We will continue giving the highest priority to those with the greatest needs, especially in the small island developing States, land-locked countries and least developed countries.

One of our key messages that we delivered in Bali and will be delivering again in Poznan and in Copenhagen is that adaptation to climate change must be prioritized in all countries and in all programmes.

Despite the support the concept always receives, it has yet to become truly embedded.

I repeat this message today: adaptation must receive its own funding support. It must not be seen as a competitor for development funds. It requires its own resources, and unless serious commitments to new funds are made, we will have to face the prospect of an annual cost to the planet of one trillion dollars by the year 2040 — the figure published by the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative in 2006.

I hold this topic of climate change most dear to my heart. I am from a small island developing State, Barbados, in the Caribbean archipelago and am naturally worried that if various aspects such as rising sea levels are not fully addressed, my own country — to which other nations refer to as a paradise — might not exist as I now know it in 2050.

I implore the General Assembly to fully endorse the conclusions of this conference and commit to concerted action.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/2, of 13 October 1980, I now call on Ms. Diane Jumet, of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization.

Ms. Jumet (Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization): Although climate change has come to the forefront of global attention over the past few years, we should note that the United Nations has been addressing this issue since 1986. More recently, however, the growing competition among populations for natural resources, the desires and indeed the rights of increasing numbers of people to have access to the benefits already enjoyed by the most developed world, and the availability of information about the state of the environment in all parts of the planet have propelled the climate change issue to the top of the agenda.

There is a general acceptance by most Member States, if not all of them, that climate change is no longer a controversial issue. There is no impasse. All States, by now, are cognizant of the threat not only to the Earth’s ecosystems but also to the quality of life of all humankind. Therefore, we must avoid setting up a false dichotomy between those States that have the moral will to address this issue and those that wish to

develop at any cost. We understand that we must either work to meet this challenge together or fail separately.

The dire predictions and pessimism about our capability to deal with climate change should be contrasted with some of the commendable steps that have been taken by Member States and those in the private sector. For example, the comprehensive energy policy recently adopted by the European Commission demonstrates a willingness to set targets and promote innovative solutions, even if policies must be modified as more is learned about their actual effectiveness. In addition, many corporations are discovering that becoming environmentally friendly is not only beneficial for the planet but also cost-effective and is positively received by consumers.

The policy of reducing consumption is an important and necessary measure, given that technological advances have not kept up with the incremental growth in exploitation of the resources of the planet. However, investment in research and development may well lead to technologies that will allow more people to have more benefit, whereas reduction measures leave an ever-greater number of people to divide up an ever-diminishing share of resources. Therefore, we should increase our commitment to expanding and refining technology that can help us to use what resources we have in the most efficient way possible.

The sharing and transfer of technology is a moral imperative and a laudable goal. At the same time, we cannot share what does not yet exist. For example, there is an urgent need for more efficient and safe renewable energy sources and for clean coal-burning technologies. There is also a dire need for an improved internal combustion engine that will meet transport requirements while minimizing harmful emissions. The recent introduction of a very low-cost automobile designed for first-time owners in one of our member States has raised outcries among some who fear that its mass production will add dangerously to the level of greenhouse gases. The implication is that the sum total of allowable pollution has been reached and no new members may be added to the club.

In the absence of acceptable technologies, we cannot expect that developing States are morally bound to put development on hold until science catches up with present-day needs. Reduction must be shared by all, but with regard to the proportion of the Earth's

resources being exploited by each. In addition, technology development and transfer must be a priority and the special responsibility of those who have the capacity to undertake it.

The United Nations, as the world's most representative intergovernmental forum, can make its most effective contribution to the debate on climate change by identifying areas of agreement among Member States and promoting cooperation and information-sharing among the parties. The goals that are set must be attainable, for setting the bar too high may become a reason for procrastination or failure.

The Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization believes that, as a starting point, Member States, working through the United Nations system, can address climate change by working on the implementation of existing treaties. States have already agreed on rules with respect to adaptation to, and mitigation of, climate disruption. However, there has been too little follow-through in the enactment of national and local legislation.

An example of the effectiveness of existing agreements can be found in the cooperation and adherence to obligations by the parties to Ramsar Convention. The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer is another example of successful partnership and the benefits of technology-sharing.

Member States can also address climate change by promoting the dissemination and sharing of information. The Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters guarantees the rights of citizens to information from public authorities and encourages democratic engagement in environmental decisions.

All those examples indicate that attention and adherence to existing agreements can do much to move the process forward.

Finally, AALCO would like to note that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the relevant body for dealing with the climate change issue.

The President: In accordance with resolution 57/32, of 19 November 2002, I now call on Mrs. Anda Filip, Permanent Observer for the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Mrs. Filip (Inter-Parliamentary Union): The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) welcomes the opportunity to address this thematic debate today.

For several years now, IPU has concerned itself with the environment. During recent Assemblies it has debated climate change, energy security, environmental degradation, natural disasters and the protection of biodiversity. Its members have negotiated and adopted resolutions that in many cases have served to mobilize parliamentary action on the respective issues.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the one hundred and sixteenth IPU Assembly, which was held in Bali in April last year, that when it comes to climate change, the cost of inaction far outweighs the cost of action. Parliaments have a contribution to make in ensuring that the necessary resources are made available, and their legislative role is particularly important, since in their hands lies considerable power to forge the laws, guidelines, frameworks and incentives that will allow business, industry and other actors to play their part in achieving the deep emissions cuts that are needed.

The IPU Assembly in Bali closed with the adoption of a declaration on climate change. The declaration called on parliaments to reinforce climate change policy and legislation with a view to achieving the ultimate objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol. Parliamentarians pledged to raise the issue of climate change in their respective parliaments and to engage with Government ministers on preparations for the Conference of Parties to the Framework Convention held in Bali last December — with results that we can only welcome.

Different examples may be quoted of reactions within parliaments in follow-up to the Bali parliamentary declaration. The parliament of Chile has started to look at ways to make the national budget more environment-friendly. The German Bundestag committee on the environment, nature conservation and nuclear safety recently debated several motions on proposed climate protection measures introduced by parliamentary groups. The Bundestag also sets an example for climate protection and energy efficiency in the operation of its own buildings. In Israel, the Knesset committee for internal affairs and the environment is currently preparing the second and third readings of a clean air bill. At a recent session the

Japanese Diet enacted a law relating to the promotion of Government contracts that pay due consideration to environmental concerns, assessing the environmental load of each project rather than simply looking at price competitiveness. In the United Kingdom, the parliamentary joint committee on the draft climate change bill, which aims to reduce that country's net carbon account by at least 60 per cent from the 1990 baseline by the year 2050, expressed its concerns recently about the legal enforceability of targets and budgets and proposed a system of annual milestones and a compliance mechanism to create a strong legal framework. In Belarus, the Parliament is currently debating two bills designed to mitigate climate change, one to amend the environmental protection law on compensation for environmental damage and the other concerning a draft code on Earth resources. I could quote many other examples.

Parliaments alone will not save the world from its own extinction by greenhouse gases. That will be done by the right partnerships being forged between Governments, civil society and the private sector, putting the interests of the general public before more narrow concerns. What parliaments can do, however, as the Secretary-General has suggested, is to lay the legal foundations that are necessary for such partnerships to really work in practice. They can also play a useful role in explaining to the public why radical action is in their best interests. To do that as effectively as possible, IPU has identified three main areas of focus that constitute the pillars of the global parliamentary campaign on climate change.

Under the heading of leadership, parliaments are called upon to promote a more robust national commitment to global cooperation in climate observation and research. They can engage national stakeholders, civil society and local industry in discussion of national action plans. They can initiate work to estimate adaptation needs and to include them in social, economic and development planning. They can also monitor the publication of regular Government green accounting reports and make sure that parliaments are places in which innovative financial mechanisms and new technologies are amply discussed.

Under the heading of knowledge and its dissemination, parliaments can better foster understanding within communities of the threat of climate change and the action needed to avert

dangerous human interference in the climate system. They can also draw on their countries' experts from the most recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to promote a better understanding at all levels of society of the climate change issue; disseminate a better understanding of the socially optimum level of mitigation; and monitor local news for misinformation about climate change and respond publicly where that is needed.

Under the third heading — technology transfer and capacity-building — parliaments can strengthen national support for the transfer of greenhouse-friendly technologies to developing countries and support capacity-building for adaptation to natural climate variables and humankind-induced climate change in developing countries.

In the international arena, the IPU campaign will seek to compile good practices, pin-pointing case studies where legislators have been instrumental in plans and projects that have proved their worth. Members of parliament will meet regularly to talk with the scientific community, so as to forge a shared understanding of what is practical and workable in societies, especially poor ones. Finally, they will channel those findings into the international arena in order to better inform international organizations of how progress can be made and how win-win solutions can take real shape.

The President: In accordance with resolution 47/4, of 16 October 1992, I now give the floor to Mrs. Anke Strauss of the International Organization for Migration.

Mrs. Krauss (International Organization for Migration): The International Organization for Migration (IOM) appreciates the opportunity to participate in this thematic debate on climate change to underline the issues of climate change, environmental degradation and migration.

As we have heard throughout this debate, discussion of the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on human mobility is not entirely new. As early as 1990, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) had noted that

“the greatest single impact of climate change could be on human migration — with millions of people displaced by shoreline erosion, coastal flooding and agricultural disruption”.

Yet, until recently, comparatively little attention has been paid to the long-term migration consequences of predictable environmental forces. Therefore, it is an important and timely development that the discussion on climate change, including environmental degradation and its nexus with migration, has been revitalized and stimulated by the IPCC reports and the debates held here at the United Nations.

Both gradual climate change and great natural disasters will put at risk the inhabitants — particularly indigenous peoples — of coastal regions, low-lying islands and areas susceptible to drought, and may force them to move to safer areas. While no consensus exists thus far as to whether or not migration can be considered as a way of adaptation or as a failure of adaptation strategies, it is indeed often a survival mechanism for those affected. The implications of the climate change and migration nexus for human vulnerability, including its potential for sparking new, and reigniting old, conflicts, have yet to receive sufficient attention, both from policy makers and researchers.

IOM is currently promoting policy dialogue and research on that nexus. First, to establish effective policy approaches for managing the migratory causes and consequences of global environmental change, Governments and other stakeholders need to address a number of broad policy challenges, namely, by entering into a multi-stakeholder and multidisciplinary dialogue and cooperation, commencing early planning to address migratory consequences and the causes of environmental change, leveraging the development potential of migration as an adaptation strategy, and improving capacity-building and awareness-raising.

To advance that multi-stakeholder and multidisciplinary dialogue on policies and related issues, and in the context of the Greek chairmanship of the Human Security Network, IOM and the Government of Greece are organizing a conference, to be held next week in Geneva, to address the nexus of climate change and human security and its impact on vulnerable groups.

Secondly, research is another urgent priority. To advance this debate among researchers, the United Nations University, IOM and the Munich Reinsurance company are organizing an expert group meeting among multidisciplinary researchers on the theme “Towards a global agenda for research on migration

and the environment”, in order to define the research agenda on environmental migration. The experts aim at three primary goals, namely, assessing the existing knowledge base on environmental migration, promoting a new agenda of policy-oriented research on migration and the environment, and identifying key questions, research themes and innovative research methods needed for more accurate data collection and cross-cutting approaches to migration and the environment.

Recognizing that policy, research and operational activities need to be consistent in order to ensure the necessary coherence at all levels, IOM, along with humanitarian partners from the United Nations system and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, is addressing the operational aspects of supporting environmentally displaced persons.

As the Secretary-General stated in his opening remarks at the September event,

“We know enough to act; if we do not act now, the impact of climate change will be devastating; and we have affordable measures and technologies to begin addressing the problem right now. What we do not have is time.”

As we speak, environmentally induced migration resulting from both climate processes and climate events is already uprooting communities and transforming cultures at an alarming rate.

The President: In accordance with resolution 54/195, of 17 December 1999, I now give the floor to Mr. Narinder Kakar, Permanent Observer of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

Mr. Kakar (International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources): The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) applauds your initiative, Mr. President, to convene this thematic debate on climate change, which is very timely given the urgency of dealing with the issue. The debate also provides an opportunity to discuss ways to address climate change collectively.

It is important to realize that, although climate change will affect all, it is the poor and vulnerable who will be affected most severely. The international community’s actions must therefore be rooted in sustainable development and equity, while recognizing

the vulnerability of poor people, the need for economic growth and poverty alleviation, and a comprehensive approach to sustainable development, with its economic, social and environmental pillars. IUCN’s own work on climate change focuses on links between climate change, equity and biodiversity, and the opportunities and challenges that those links present for mitigating and adapting to climate change.

We are pleased that the need for collaboration between Member States, the private sector and civil society in efforts to address the challenges posed by climate change is being realized. IUCN fully supports efforts to develop such partnerships in order to respond to the key areas described in the Bali Action Plan.

IUCN works towards preventing biodiversity loss in support of human well-being. In that regard, we wish to highlight the value of biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides in reducing the impacts of climate change. Activities aimed at increasing adaptation to climate change and resilience will secure livelihoods and reduce vulnerability to disaster. We therefore hope that biodiversity-related action towards climate change adaptation will be fully integrated into the development programmes of United Nations agencies.

In that context, partnerships at the local level are essential in order to ensure adaptation to climate change. IUCN highlights the crucial role of forest and water resources in climate change adaptation and the importance of capacity-building in sustainable ecosystem management to enhance adaptive capacity. In collaboration with the International Institute for Sustainable Development, the Stockholm Environment Institute in the United States and the Swiss Foundation for Development and International Cooperation, IUCN has developed a community-based risk screening tool for adaptation and livelihoods, which could be used by United Nations agencies in developing their programmes.

It is important that all stakeholders be engaged in the design of the new framework for reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation in developing countries. IUCN welcomes the decision adopted at the thirteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Bali, regarding the integration of reductions into a post-2012 agreement. IUCN believes that the new framework should, among other things, be

integrated into a broader strategy focused on securing deeper reductions of emissions from the use of fossil fuels, rather than on simply offsetting carbon emissions.

IUCN welcomes the decision adopted at the thirteenth Conference regarding the establishment of the Adaptation Fund, with equitable representation from developed and developing countries alike. As the Secretary-General emphasized earlier, significant new investments need to be made in financing for adaptation, including resources from multilateral institutions, together with the World Bank, the Global Environment Facility and other sources of multilateral and bilateral financing. Increased adaptation resources could also be raised through a more robust Clean Development Mechanism and philanthropic support.

It is very encouraging to see that the United Nations system is making efforts to harness the capacities of the system to the fullest and intends to align its strengths in a coordinated approach to climate change in order to support the efforts of Member States at the national, regional and global levels in tackling the multifaceted challenge presented by climate change. It is also commendable that efforts are being made to explore ways of making the United Nations more climate-friendly and environmentally sustainable and of developing a climate-neutral approach to United Nations premises and operations that would reduce its own carbon footprint.

Before closing, we would like to commend the work that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has done — and continues to do — to assess on a comprehensive, objective and transparent basis the latest scientific, technical and socio-economic literature relevant to the understanding of the risk of human-induced climate change, its impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation.

IUCN hopes that the United Nations will aim for a comprehensive and equitable post-2012 regime by 2009, with the inclusion of specific mitigation targets with the ultimate objective of preventing dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. We also hope that the necessary support will be provided to all stakeholders for equitable and effective participation in the negotiations that will take place at the 14th Conference of parties to the UNFCCC in Poznan, Poland, this year and at the 15th Conference of parties in Copenhagen in 2009.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/265 of 24 August 1994, I now call on Mr. Robert Shafer, Permanent Observer for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

Mr. Shafer (Sovereign Military Order of Malta): The Sovereign Military Order of Malta recognizes the link between environmental health and social well-being and the implicit responsibility of the current generation, the United Nations community included, to secure the health of the planet for future generations. We are not merely consumers of a once seemingly boundless supply of natural resources, but stewards of an environment, which not only is limited in the fruits that it shares, but also sensitive to the way mankind uses those gifts.

As noted by the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, during the informal thematic debate in July and August 2007, climate change is an issue of economic development as much as one of global justice and equality. Inaction on climate change would have serious social and economic implications and would magnify the existing inequalities between developed and developing countries. Projected climate change will exacerbate the occurrence of infectious diseases, such as malaria and dengue fever, and further strain the natural resources necessary for our survival. Widespread prevalence of infectious diseases leads to increasing levels of poverty. Poverty in turn is strongly associated with infectious diseases not typically associated with climate change, such as HIV/AIDS, and in many situations leads to civil unrest.

Members and volunteers of the Order, who live in the service of others, of the poor and the sick, regardless of their race, origin or religion, bear daily witness to that painful cycle and understand that all three aspects must be addressed. The United Nations must strengthen public health planning capacities, including through improved monitoring and evaluation of climate and health impacts; strengthen health systems to enable them to provide protection from climate-related health risks; and adopt a more forward-looking preventative approach to health protection.

The most important cause of the current climate change crisis is human activity and its energy requirements, which is at the heart of this climate agenda. We have allowed it to become an extraordinary crisis, and it therefore demands an extraordinary

response from all of us, individually and collectively. True stewardship requires a keen awareness of the environment and challenges us to use our intelligence, ambition and ability to adapt and innovate to discover the Earth's productive potential in an environmentally sustainable way while satisfying our needs. The United Nations must facilitate and motivate that reform of human activity by drawing on its strengths; providing a neutral forum for brokering negotiations; establishing trust and galvanizing high-level political support; and securing participation, engagement and ownership of a broad constituency of Members.

To conclude, sensitivity to the fragility of the only place that humans can call home must be cultivated and nurtured through renewed education in solidarity. Such teachings exalt the principles of respect for one another, for the recognition of that which is great within all of us, even if unseen, and for understanding and patience. With those beliefs, the prospect of delving into a difficult task, such as stemming the tide of environmental destruction brought about through climate change, will be seen as necessary and right in order to preserve a viable home planet for future generations.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 3208 (XXIX) of 11 October 1974, I now call on Ms. Maria Spatolisano of the European Community.

Ms. Spatolisano (European Community): 2008 is a crucial year for addressing climate change. By convening this debate of the General Assembly, Mr. President, you offer to all of us a timely opportunity to contribute to making progress in the right direction, for which we thank you.

We know climate change is happening. The evidence is irrefutable and has been piling up for some time. We know that climate change can only be tackled on a world scale and the window of opportunity for action on climate change is closing. The longer we wait to act, the worse the impact of climate change and the greater the challenge.

It is time to move from words to action. A new framework for action must be agreed before the current international commitments under the Kyoto Protocol come to an end in 2012. That requires, first and foremost, a strong political will to tackle this global challenge from the world's largest emitters of greenhouse gases.

The European Union's objective is to limit the rise in average global temperatures to two degrees above pre-industrial levels. To send a clear signal to partners around the globe, the European Union took on an independent commitment to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions relative to 1990 levels by at least 20 per cent by the year 2020 and by as much as 30 per cent as part of a global agreement, in which all developed countries commit to comparable efforts and developing countries also contribute.

On 23 January 2008, the European Commission presented the legislative climate action and renewable energy package, which will be instrumental in shaping a response in line with our commitments. The climate action and renewable energy package will enable the European Union to achieve sharp cuts in greenhouse gas emissions and a major increase in renewables through a combination of cost-effective action through the carbon market and a fair sharing of the effort between member States.

Those proposals could make an important contribution to strengthening climate action globally. Allow me to briefly explain how.

First, a new international agreement on climate change is essential. Only global action — under the leadership of developed countries but with a meaningful contribution by emerging economies — can deal effectively with this global challenge. The United Nations climate conference in Bali in December 2007 brought the breakthrough we needed by deciding that a global agreement for the period after 2012 should be reached by the end of 2009. I believe the European Commission's climate action and renewable energy proposals will help the forthcoming negotiations in two main ways.

First, the political importance of leading by example is considerable.

The EU is responsible for approximately 14 per cent of worldwide emissions and this share is falling. Our package has a role to play here. It shows that making the deep emissions cuts necessary to avert dangerous climate changes is fully compatible with continued economic growth and prosperity.

The second way the European Community package could make a useful contribution to an international agreement is through its approach to effort-sharing among different countries. Currently

within the EU, there is a 23-fold difference in the average wealth per person between the richest member State and the poorest. The mechanism we devised for our package allows poorer member States to continue growing while they reduce or keep their emissions below the usual level for businesses. We are, in fact, giving practical effect to the international principle of “common but differentiated responsibility”.

Let me add that the stakes could not be higher. With world temperatures rising at an accelerated rate, the challenge is not just to reach a post-2012 climate change agreement. It is to ensure that we are ambitious enough to prevent climate change from reaching devastating levels over the coming decades, which could put the lives of millions in danger and impose a crippling burden on our economies.

This brings me to the second point I want to highlight. The climate action and renewable energy proposals of the European Commission take as their starting point the cut of at least 20 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions relative to 1990 and this commitment is unconditional. But it has also put in place the arrangements for scaling up the emissions reduction to as much as 30 per cent, once a global agreement is reached.

We believe that a 30 per cent cut in collective emissions from developed countries is needed by 2020, if we are to have a chance of stopping global warming before it reaches dangerous levels. It is with this responsibility in mind that the EU leaders have endorsed the 30 per cent cut that the EU has argued for in Bali. We will continue arguing for it, as the next necessary step towards an ultimate reduction in global emissions of at least half by 2050.

The package of the Commission foresees that emission reduction targets will be scaled up automatically and proportionally in line with a higher international target. This means we are fully prepared to make a cut of up to 30 per cent by 2020. We also create a strong incentive for third countries to join the future global agreement by proposing that only emission credits from countries that ratify it should be accepted by EU Governments.

My third and final point concerns the European Union’s emissions trading scheme. By adopting our independent commitment, the EU is also sending a clear signal to the business community, namely, that the carbon market will continue without interruption.

In fighting climate change, we will need to make better use of markets. Emissions trading is the key tool for achieving emission reductions at the lowest cost.

For us, there is no question that the global carbon market must play a central role in a post-2012 climate agreement so as to limit the costs of the deep emission reductions that will need to be made globally. In this respect, public-private partnerships have a major role to play. Public authorities can facilitate the creation of a framework and long-term incentives to attract private investment towards activities that contribute to low-carbon economic development. In fact, the largest share of investment and financial flows for addressing climate change comes from the private sector, namely, 86 per cent, according to the report of the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Climate change affects everyone on this planet. For some, it is their very survival that is in question. We are talking about their home, their livelihood, their food and the water they drink; all of that is at stake and the human dimension of the impact of climate changes must be taken into account. But climate change is a worldwide phenomenon. It cannot be overcome by one country or group of countries, no matter how rich or powerful. All major emitters must take action, and all nations must participate in the effort by adopting the right policies in a timely way.

The United Nations has to lead global efforts to address this global challenge. No organization is better suited to dealing with these issues. Climate change is a global problem and requires global solutions. The United Nations family of agencies, funds and programmes is best placed to act in an increasingly coherent manner to support Member States, during both the negotiation and the implementation phases of a new climate change agreement. We welcome, in this respect, the work led by the Chief Executives Board.

We would like to conclude by reaffirming the active support of the European Commission for the multilateral negotiations under the UNFCCC and the United Nations role in this area.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in this thematic debate. At this very late hour, I am afraid I can offer you no more than my closing remarks.

Let me begin by saying how grateful I am to Member States for powerfully articulating a clear

message that climate change must remain one of the top priorities of the United Nations. The number of delegations that have spoken, 115 in total, is a testament to the importance of taking immediate practical action to address climate change.

Over the past three days we have heard some compelling reasons why the United Nations should promote integrated partnerships and approaches with all interested stakeholders, in particular the private sector and local authorities, so as to successfully overcome the threat that climate change presents to our way of life.

But this does not mean that, as individuals, we should feel disempowered by the scale of the challenge. Small contributions add up. Many of our speakers, indeed, made the case that we can all make a difference through simple changes in our daily behaviour.

There is a general conviction that has emerged from this debate and the panels. This is, that the actions necessary to address climate change are so intertwined that they can only be tackled through combined efforts.

Long-term targets to reduce carbon emissions must go hand in hand with adapting to the global warming that is already taking place and which could accelerate. We need to do this because we want more growth, more development, but, at the same time, we must also secure our planet and safeguard our future. In support of this approach, there is no doubt among Member States, as demonstrated during the debate, about the nexus of the relations between climate change and sustainable development.

The United Nations Secretariat must now respond by developing policy solutions that can help Member States answer some of the questions that I and others have posed during the debate. For example, we need a better understanding of how to mainstream climate change into nationally owned development strategies; we need clearer advice about how to prepare for a strengthened United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change regime, in particular, clearer guidance to facilitate access to financial resources and investments; we need more comprehensive proposals on how to achieve coherence and promote synergies within the United Nations system in order to close the implementation gap; we need to know how the United Nations can most effectively stimulate financial flows for adaptation, mitigation and climate-resilient

development; finally, we also need to know how the United Nations system can best support developing countries in adapting to the inevitable impact of climate change.

The challenge for us now is to implement policies globally that can create low-carbon economies and promote sustainable economic growth and provide incentives for individuals to change behaviour. Member States, regional and multilateral organizations must therefore develop stronger, more mutually supportive partnerships with the private sector. The United Nations, through the Global Compact, already has made a head start to promote more ethical, global corporate leadership.

It is clear that, when leading global businessmen, like Sir Richard Branson and Mayor Michael Bloomberg of New York City are willing to throw their weight behind the United Nations General Assembly, the private sector and local government take this issue extremely seriously. Moreover, they recognize the contribution that we can make.

By bringing in business creativity and innovation, we have a real opportunity to create a virtuous cycle whereby Member States — providing market incentives and a clear enabling framework for the private sector — bolster confidence in green investment over the long term.

Increasingly, many developed countries are demonstrating their willingness to provide fresh financing and to enhance the critical roles played by international financial institutions and the private sector to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. That is key, because the importance of accelerating technology transfers to developing countries and securing sufficient financing for adaptation and mitigation cannot be underestimated.

In that regard, the General Assembly has sent a clear signal to the World Bank and the donor community to scale up investment in developing countries to support national and international efforts to address climate change. The United Nations system also has a significant role to play in facilitating those goals and Member States' own initiatives on climate change.

Member States recognize that the United Nations is best placed to provide an integrated response to the complementary challenges of addressing climate

change and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The system also has an important role in raising awareness globally, generating broad-based support and providing technical cooperation to ensure the full implementation of existing and future agreements under the UNFCCC. To support that process, it is extremely important that Member States work speedily and cooperatively to agree on the principles of a strategic policy framework to steer the United Nations system's activities on climate change.

Finally, I would like to thank all Member States for their insightful contribution to this thematic debate, "Addressing climate change: the United Nations and the world at work". We have heard various comments on the Secretary-General's report. There appears to be a general understanding, however, that further work is necessary.

Given the sense of urgency expressed by many, I propose that, in due course, the Secretary-General provide the General Assembly with a more detailed briefing on efforts to strengthen and coordinate the United Nations activities on climate change. Furthermore, and in order to give continuous consideration to climate change within the General Assembly, I intend to convene two meetings so that we have the opportunity to consider specific aspects of the climate issue in more detail. One will focus on the needs and concerns of vulnerable countries, and the other on corporate responsibility and sustainability.

The General Assembly has concluded its thematic debate entitled "Addressing climate change: the United Nations and the world at work". The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 48, 54 and 116.

The meeting rose at 8.55 p.m.