



General Assembly

Sixty-fourth session

6th plenary meeting

Thursday, 24 September 2009, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Address by Mr. Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Chávez Frías (*spoke in Spanish*): I greet all the citizens of the world who have come here — as they do every year — for this gathering of such great importance for the world. I am very pleased to be back in New York and at the United Nations following a few years' absence. I am very grateful for all the cooperation and the manner in which our delegation has been received.

Last night we visited Lincoln Center to see a film made by Oliver Stone during the past year. The title of the film already stirs your thoughts. It is called "South of the Border". In this film, you can see President Evo Morales chewing coca leaves, together with Oliver Stone. And, as President Morales says, coca is not the same as cocaine. You can see Cristina, the President of

Argentina, and the automobile of General Perón. You can hear what she has to say about events in South America, in Latin America. And you can see Lula, the President of Brazil, in the Guajira region of Venezuela, working with us to help the indigenous peoples, who were exploited for centuries, through core industrial projects. You will see President Fernando Lugo, a bishop and liberation theologian, living today in the residence occupied for many years by Stroessner. And you can see how a bishop became a president.

You can also see Rafael Correa, the President of Ecuador, in Havana with President Raúl Castro. You can see Fidel. You can even see Obama, in Trinidad, chatting with a group of us, with his hand held out to us and an open smile.

I think it is an interesting film, one of the many made by this great filmmaker of the United States, Oliver Stone. He had already made two films about Fidel, "Looking for Fidel" and "El Comandante". There is a lot in this film, many messages that could help us to decipher the enigmas of the times in which we live.

We stayed behind after the film was over last night, chatting with a group of people from the United States and other parts of the world. And this contact was very instructive and very symptomatic of the importance of what Fidel calls "the battle of ideas". A lady in her fifties came up to me and said "I am very happy". She was a North American, very white; a typical United States citizen, born in this country, but she spoke some Spanish. She told me, "I am very

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

09-52425 (E)



Please recycle

happy”. And I asked her why. “Because, now having seen this movie, I realize what you are. I thought you were a very bad person”.

This person was a victim of the hostile media bombardment, the ideological bombardment, of the United States and of the entire world, whose aim is to turn reality inside out and to turn the world upside down, as Eduardo Galeano put it.

The film is called “South of the Border” and I am taking advantage of this opportunity and that title to tell you that, south of the border, a revolution is under way. A revolution is under way in South America. A revolution is under way in Latin America. There is a revolution in the Caribbean. The world must see this, it must truly realize this and accept it, because it is a reality and it is not going to change. What is more, this is a revolution that goes beyond ideology. It is a geographical and geopolitical revolution. It is a historic revolution; it is part of our times. It has very deep roots. It is a total, moral and spiritual revolution. And we believe that it is a necessary revolution. This revolution is great in both spirit and magnitude, and it is going to keep growing as the days, months and years go by. And why is it great? It is great because it has been a long time coming: centuries of history have led up to this moment in time. It is great in terms of the space that it covers.

I am not going to speak any longer than Mr. Al-Qadhafi. Al-Qadhafi has said everything there is to say. This applause is for Al-Qadhafi and his speech. But nor will I speak any less than Mr. Obama, or Lula.

I was explaining why this revolution is great. First, because of time, the accumulated time that has gone by. It is centuries, centuries of battles, of struggles, of hopes, of suffering of millions and millions of human beings in Latin America and the Caribbean. This revolution is great in the area it covers. This revolution is great in the depth of its foundations. This revolution is great in the masses of people that are joining it. No one seeks to slow it down and no one will be able to.

Yesterday, it was said by President Morales here (see A/64/PV.5), by this great companion and indigenous leader of the Aymara, Evo Morales. He also said it in the film, which you should not miss, “South of the Border”. Oliver Stone told me last night that pressure is already being exerted to prevent the

American people from seeing it. Where is their freedom of expression? It is just a movie. How can they be afraid of a movie? But there is already pressure from the monopolies that run the film industry, that operate the theatres — these are all monopolies and they are putting on pressure. But the movie will be shown elsewhere. Fortunately, we are in the age of computers and telecommunications. We no longer depend on movie theatres run by monopolies.

In the film, Evo, speaking with Oliver Stone, recalls a phrase pronounced by a great leader of the Aymara, an ancestor of his who was murdered, just one of the many millions that were murdered by the Spanish, Portuguese and English invasion, by the European invasion of our continent. I know that all present are aware that when the European ships arrived at the American shores there were approximately 90 million indigenous people living here.

Two hundred years later only four million survived. This is one of the greatest genocides in history — the genocide of the continent itself, of the Abya Yala, as our indigenous people call it. So Evo in the movie repeats the sentence uttered by this great Aymara leader, who was drawn and quartered — he was tied to four horses by the arms and legs and he was torn apart, and as he died the Indian uttered a prophesy: “Today I die,” said Túpac Katari, “today I die, but one day I will return as millions.” Túpac Katari has returned, and we are millions. We are millions.

Nothing and no one can hold back the great South American, Latin American, Caribbean revolution. And I think the world should support it. The United States should support it. Europe should support it, because this revolution — some brothers and sisters may not have noticed — is the start of the road to salvation for this planet, and to salvation for the human race, threatened as it is by capitalism, imperialism, hunger and war. This is the necessary revolution. For centuries this has been called “the New World”. Now we can truly call it “a new world”.

Years ago — as we recalled last night — I was invited to a conversation — a large group of important leaders. They were important in their own right. They were trade union leaders here in the United States. Some workers were complaining about a biscuit factory that was not paying them. They were striking, and one of them asked me, “Why don’t you buy that factory?” And I said, “I’ll see. Maybe we can make it a

socialist biscuit factory, if Obama gives me permission. Maybe we could do that — buy it, give it to the workers, let them make the crackers and distribute them. Why should there just be one or two capitalists exploiting a lot of people?” That is socialism and that is the path to salvation for this planet.

Yesterday a journalist asked me — after the movie there was forum at which he asked me — “Do you defend socialism even though the Soviet Union failed?” The reply is very simple. The Soviet Union lost its way early on. There was never real socialism in the Soviet Union. But this century, the twenty-first century, will be the century of socialism — the socialism of the human race.

I’m sure everyone listening to me has read Einstein. Albert Einstein convinced the American President to build the atomic bomb — to begin the research before the Nazis did. Then later he regretted what he had done when he saw the disaster of Hiroshima and the disaster of Nagasaki. But Albert Einstein, after all his years of study, the great scientist, among the greatest scientists ever to have walked the Earth, came to the conclusion — and this is written in his own hand — “Why socialism?” Einstein came to the conclusion that the only way for the human race to live on this planet is socialism. Capitalism is the road to extinction of the human species. We as a species have only been around for what? This is Castro territory, he knows these figures. But, whereas life first appeared here at least three billion years ago, we the human species only appeared maybe less than 300,000 years ago, hardly 0.01 per cent of the time that life has existed on this planet. So we appear after so long and we’re going to wipe out life on this planet?

We’ve heard it from everybody — Obama, Lula, Cristina Fernández, Al-Qadhafi, Sarkozy — everyone said the same thing. They have all clamoured for change. And what is the change? Capitalism allows no change. Let us not fool ourselves. It’s only through socialism that we can bring about genuine change. And the revolution in Latin America has it all and it has a strong socialist element. As Mariátequi, the great Peruvian thinker said, it is an Indian-American socialism. It is our own socialism. It is a Bolivarian socialism. It is a José Martí socialism. It is a new socialism. It has not been copied from anybody else. There are no manuals for socialism, said Mariátequi. It is a heroic creation that has to be constantly reinvented.

Yesterday we were remembering what a North American President, that is to say a United States President, said shortly before he was assassinated, and this is on the record, in a speech before the United States Congress. John Kennedy spoke of a revolution in the South, saying that the principal cause was hunger. Only a few days later he was assassinated. John Kennedy was not a revolutionary, but he was an intelligent man, just as I think President Obama is an intelligent man. And I hope God protects Obama from the bullets that killed Kennedy. I hope Obama will be able to look and see — genuinely see — what has to be seen. It does not smell of sulphur here anymore. That smell has gone. It smells of something else — it smells of hope. And you have to have hope in your heart and believe in the hope.

We cannot destroy this planet. What about our children? What about future generations? Come, let’s take on the challenge. Lula was saying yesterday that there was no political will. Those words were whips. I know Lula’s will. I am deeply aware of his humane attitude. He is a true brother of mine, and he was right to say what he said. But I would not exactly say that there is no political will. I would say rather that some political will is lacking, because Lula has it and we have it, but it has to be increased. It has to continue to grow in the leaders, in society, among the people, among the youth — particularly in the hearts of the young — and the workers, everywhere in the world.

Kennedy said it: there is a revolution in the South. And he added, “Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable”. Jack Kennedy said that. You can find it on the Internet; you can find everything on the Internet.

My dear Maria Fernanda Espinosa, once ambassador from fraternal Ecuador, whom I have not seen for days. We’d like to say hello to President Correa. The ambassador was Minister for Foreign Affairs at the beginning of the citizens’ revolution, with Correa leading the people of Ecuador, the people of Manuela Saenz and Bolívar and Eloy Alfaro, the noble and great people in Bolivia and that whole area.

Some are trying to block the path to our peaceful revolution. And there’s another brave woman, Patricia Rodas, the Foreign Minister of Honduras; please, a hand for this brave Central American woman, from the people of Morazán. Long live Honduras! Long live Morazán! And long live the dignity of the people!

At 1 p.m. exactly, I was jotting down these notes — I don't have much farther to go, Mr. President; don't anybody throw a shoe at me. The Cuban Minister has taken off his shoe to throw it at me. He had some rubber shoes — if you are going to throw me a shoe, throw one of those. I spoke to Manuel Zelaya at 1 p.m. sharp; I remember it was 1 p.m. sharp — we started at 1 and finished at 1.13.

While we are here, comrades of the world, there is a President, firm, dignified, who with a small group of people, almost martyrs, was able to escape those trying to carry out a coup d'état. The perpetrators of the coup had brought repression to the Plaza Morazán in Tegucigalpa and had taken every single road. They had an entire army; it was as if they had invaded Honduras with their own army — what an indignity. From here I make an appeal — I, who am a revolutionary soldier — to the soldiers of Honduras, to the sons of Morazán to not continue to repress an innocent people.

While we are here, Manuel Zelaya, the President of Honduras, is in the Brazilian embassy, which has given him refuge. According to what the President has told me, there are more than 200 soldiers surrounding the embassy in the most brutal fashion. Were they trying to go back to the Stone Age? It will not work. Is that what the perpetrators of the coup d'état had in mind? They will be swept away by the wind of the new age. The coup cannot succeed, these regressive forces cannot have their way, not in Honduras, not in any of the countries of the Americas. These people have been out in the streets for 90 days, resisting, resisting, resisting.

So, there we have a President, firm in his conviction, with a group of compatriots, with his wife, the First Lady. Apparently they are not letting food through; the water is cut off every now and then. Luckily there is a cistern with water. This morning they were able to get some of the most up-to-date telephone interception equipment, which the President told me is an Israeli brand. Israel has recognized the coup d'état Government; I think it is the only country in the world that has. They have all kinds of equipment to block signals and jam communications, and they are also trying to create panic among the few people inside the Brazilian embassy, threatening them with incursion into the embassy. Does the Assembly realize how retrograde this is? It is like some kind of trolls or dark

giants or magicians, something from the age of the cavemen. But they will not return.

The people are in the street, protesting. The airport is closed now. Who is behind the coup d'état? It is the Honduran bourgeoisie; the State is taken over by the bourgeoisie, by the rich. Four or five wealthy, powerful families own the State. I think we have to pull out our copies of Lenin, his *State and Revolution*, where he talks about the bourgeois State, the control of everything by the bourgeois State including the national congress, the judiciary, the army.

The people are in the street, but they are being fired on. Yesterday the President told me that he knows of at least three people in the vicinity of the Brazilian embassy who were killed. And the President is asking for dialogue, so as to return to the road to democracy. So let us send the expression of our strongest solidarity to the people of Honduras and President Zelaya, and let us ask that the United Nations resolution be complied with, and the resolution of the Organization of American States.

The United States Government — and this is strange — has not recognized that a military coup d'état has occurred. President Zelaya told me today that there is some friction between the State Department and the Pentagon. Yesterday I was reading *Pentagonism*, a book by the great Dominican author Juan Bosch, who was overthrown by imperialism. The Pentagon is the imperial cave. They do not want Obama. They do not want change. They want to dominate the world with their military bases, with all their threats, their bombs, their soldiers and bases.

The Pentagon is behind the coup in Honduras. President Zelaya was dragged out of his home, out of his bed, at dawn on 28 June, taken to a plane, bundled up by Honduran soldiers under command from the United States base there, in Palmerola. The plane took off from Tegucigalpa and landed at the Palmerola base. They held the Honduran President there for some time. Then they decided to take him to Costa Rica. The American military in Honduras knew about the coup; they supported it. They supported the Honduran military. Hence the contradictions that Obama has to face.

At times we wonder if there are two Obamas — the one who spoke here yesterday and the other — a double? The one who supports, or allows his military to support, the coup on Honduras? I want to present

this question for thought. Is there one Obama, or are there two? Let us hope the one we heard yesterday will prevail. That is what the world needs; that is what the world is calling for.

What is the backdrop of the coup in Honduras? It has to do with everything we are talking about here — it is the revolution of the South. It is not the kind of revolution where there are columns of guerrillas, heroes such as in the Sierra Maestra, heroes of the high mountains of Bolivia, where Ernesto Che Guevara was.

But this is not that kind of revolution. This revolution is different. It does not break out in the mountains with guerrilla groups. No, it starts in the towns among the masses. It is a mass revolution, but it is peaceful and wants to remain peaceful. It is democratic, deeply democratic.

Do not be afraid of democracy. Here, I am paraphrasing Noam Chomsky in another wonderful work that I did not know until I obtained the book in Madrid a few days ago. I went to visit my friend, the King of Spain, mainly because an Ibero-American summit was coming up in Portugal, and I said that I would go if he did not tell me to shut up. He told me that he would not. So, I am going. King Juan Carlos and I are great friends. I went to a recommended bookshop — La Casa del Libro — in Madrid, and I got Chomsky's book *Fear of Democracy*. We should all read that book, *Fear of Democracy*.

The elite are afraid of the people. They are afraid of true democracy, which Abraham Lincoln, another martyr, defined very clearly in three ideas: democracy is government of the people, by the people and for the people. It is not government of the bourgeoisie or of the elite when the people rise up and the thugs are pushed out. That happened in Honduras, and in Venezuela in 2002. It happened in Brazil with João Goulart, and in the Dominican Republic. Why were the peoples of Latin America and of the Caribbean not allowed to build their own future in the twentieth century? They did not let them.

This century is ours. This century, in Latin America and in the Caribbean we will build our own way and no one can stop it. No one can stop it. Imperialism must end. At times, one wonders. I was once asking Lula what America, our Latin America, would be today if the Governments of the United States had not dug their claws into our America to impose a

model by violently cutting off the hope and the struggle of millions of people, extinguishing the dawn.

I was born in 1954. Fidel was already in prison, and they were dropping bombs in Guatemala. They invaded the Guatemala of Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán; and then the Bay of Pigs, although they failed there; then this revolutionary Cuba — admirable, but blockaded.

I call on Obama to lift the blockade on Cuba. What is he waiting for? Let him do what he says. Or are there two Obamas? Yesterday, Obama said, and I noted it — here, I noted down Lula, who spoke before Obama, and then I noted Obama's words — that a political system cannot be imposed on any people and that each people and its sovereignty must be respected. Then what is President Obama waiting for to order the lifting of the brutal and murderous blockade on Cuba? Does anyone have doubts about that? Does anyone think that it is rhetorical? No. There is persecution against businesses in any part of the world that provide even food to Cuba, and now also to Venezuela.

Not long ago, Fidel Castro mentioned in one of his reflections that a company known throughout the world that manufactures and supplies medical equipment did not meet its obligations to the Governments of Cuba or of Venezuela this past year or the one before. They did not send the spare parts for hundreds of pieces of medical equipment that the two Governments had bought to bring free quality health care to our peoples. These include 64-row CT scanners and electrocardiogram machines that are now in the poor areas of Caracas. Where the indigenous people live, there are medical facilities. We have 30,000 Cuban doctors there and a free, good health-care system for the people. We tried to quietly find solutions with the company — Philips — but the company has refused to send the spare parts for that high-tech equipment. Why? Under pressure from whom? From the Government of the United States? Is it this Obama or another Obama? Is it Obama one or Obama two? Who are you, Obama? Who are you? I want to believe in yesterday's Obama, whom I saw here, but these things keep happening, and they affect the lives of millions of human beings. Why? In whose name? Why does the United States continue to do that?

It is fear of democracy, just as happened in Honduras. It is the fear of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas that rises up as a new and innovative mechanism of solidarity, and we have brought into line

the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our Americas and the Governments and the countries of Cuba, Nicaragua, Honduras, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. They attack us and try to stop us, but they will not succeed. The Common Market of the South and the Union of South American Nations are being set up and are all part of the great historic Latin American geographic and geopolitical revolution.

Along the same lines are the seven military bases that the United States is going to establish in Colombia. Yesterday, Obama spoke — I have it noted here — about four pillars. Everyone remembers that. So let us accomplish that. I take him at his word. We take the President of the United States at his word: nuclear non-proliferation, agreed? They could begin by destroying all the nuclear weapons that they have. Then go ahead and destroy them.

Obama's second pillar — the first was non-proliferation — is the pursuit of peace. So, President Obama, let us pursue peace in Colombia, in dear sister Colombia. There is a civil war in Colombia. That some do not want to acknowledge it is another matter. There is a long-standing, historical conflict in Colombia. The United Nations must acknowledge it and consider it, and we all should extend a hand to Colombia, while of course respecting its sovereignty, to pull it from and help it out of that tragedy that that brother people is experiencing.

I remember that I mentioned that peace to Obama in front of Lula in Trinidad and Tobago at the Summit of the Americas. Let us seek peace in Colombia. If only peace were achieved in Central America, in Guatemala. When I was an active soldier, I was in Guatemala. That was war. It was war, with thousands and thousands dead and disappeared. Look at El Salvador and Nicaragua. And now Daniel Ortega is back in Government after almost 20 years. The Sandinista people brought him back.

What is good for the goose is good for the gander. Farabundo Martí and the people of El Salvador brought President Funé to the presidency of that sister republic. Peace was achieved — I know President Arias is here — and if peace was achieved in Central America, my God, why can peace not be achieved in Colombia? This is one of the greatest desires of my life. I am Venezuelan, but I feel like a Colombian —

the Colombia of Bolívar, the Colombia of Miranda, our Colombia.

Is President Obama thinking of seeking peace — his second pillar — with seven more military bases in Colombia? These seven bases are a threat, not only for the possible peace in Colombia but for peace in South America. We are right — we the Governments of South America — to have said, each in our own way and in our own degree of intensity, how concerned we are about the installation of these seven American military bases on Colombian territory. I would like to denounce it and point it out. I ask President Obama to think about it and that he apply his pillars.

Let us promote peace. The United Nations could set up a peace commission in Colombia or Venezuela. Naturally, we would cooperate, I am sure, all countries that want peace. We do not want any more war among ourselves.

I will skip some pages. There is another topic that Fidel touches upon in his 21 September thoughts. It has to do with climate change. I am going to take another two minutes, Mr. President, to insist on this point. Some people think this is a metaphysical concern, it is for intellectuals. No, we are destroying our planet. As a reputable Venezuelan journalist has said, this rocket we are travelling on — because this planet is like a rocket ship — we are destroying it.

Fidel says, in his piece entitled “A species in danger of extinction”, from 21 September 2009, “At the international environmental conference held by the United Nations in Rio de Janeiro” — that was in 1992; I remember because I was in jail at the time — “I stated, as the then head of the Cuban State, ‘A species is in danger of extinction — man’”. Fidel goes on to say:

“When I uttered and backed up those words, received and applauded by the heads of State in attendance — including the President of the United States, a Bush less dismal than his son George W. — they still believed that they had several centuries to confront the problem. I myself” — Fidel — “did not envision a date any closer than 60 or 80 years.

“Today we are dealing with a truly imminent danger and its effects are already visible.

“Average temperatures have increased 0.8 degrees centigrade since 1980.”

That is scientific data, according to the NASA Institute for Space Studies — 0.8 degrees in the last almost 30 years. Fidel continues,

“The last two decades of the twentieth century were the warmest in hundreds of years. The temperatures in Alaska, the Canadian west and eastern Russia have gone up at a pace that doubles the world average. Arctic ice has been quickly disappearing and the region can experience its first completely ice-free summer as soon as the year 2040. The effects are visible in the 2-kilometre-high masses of ice melting in Greenland, the South American glaciers, from Ecuador all the way to Cape Horn, fundamental sources of water, and the gigantic ice cap covering the extensive area of Antarctica.

“Current carbon dioxide concentrations have reached the equivalent of 380 parts per million, a figure surpassing the natural range of the last 650,000 years.”

We are destroying our planet. We must be aware of this, and we must act, as Lula stated at the 3rd meeting yesterday. With respect to climate change, Lula said there is no will. The most developed countries do not want to take decisions. But Obama says they do. But we are told that the United States is going to take some decisions. Please do, Mr. President, do that. But now is time to move from words to action. Let us save this planet. Let us save the human race.

Let us hope that the summit in Denmark in December will produce decisions, truly forceful ones. Venezuela is willing to accept those decisions. Venezuela calls on everyone to take decisions proportionate to the extent of their responsibility.

Now, what is the basic cause of this contamination? It is hyper-consumption. We are exhausting the petroleum, gas and other fossil fuel reserves. Reserves that accumulated over millions of years are being burned in a single century, in less than a century.

And that of course has to do with the economy. I shall not read this document, Mr. President; I shall merely refer to it. It is the Stiglitz report. I invite the Assembly to analyse it. Yesterday the President of France also invited the Assembly to analyse it. It is

thanks to him that the report of the Stiglitz Commission exists. But it is nothing more than a mere gesture.

The report contains 12 recommendations of the Stiglitz Commission. Let us assess them. I think that they address the substance, although they do not question the capitalist model. We socialists do question that model, but let us talk about it, let us find consensus solutions for the circumstances and later for the medium and long terms.

In its recommendations, the Stiglitz report says, first, that we should look at income and consumption to assess material well-being. Second, it recommends prioritizing the family perspective; third, taking into account the heritage; fourth, giving more importance to redistribution of income beyond the average. Fifth, it recommends expanding indicators of non-commercial activities. For example, certain services such as child care, bricklaying, plumbing and carpentry appear in national accounts only if they are carried out by a salaried person.

Delegates know that this has to do with accounting for gross domestic product (GDP). These are merely capitalist mechanisms. According to the report, the following is certain: the GDP rises with traffic, while the anxiety of the people also rises, just as the unhappiness of passers-by and passengers in traffic rises as they lost precious time in the traffic.

The GDP rises. Why is it rising? It is rising because more gasoline is consumed. Moreover, pollution increases. We know why. The capitalist world has created measuring methods for the economy that are destructive. That is why I think the Stiglitz report offers important considerations. Here, in its second point, it says that we should establish a battery of indicators for the environment and for climate change.

Turning to the economy, this report is very timely. Let us now adopt it, and above all, Governments, particularly Governments of the most developed countries — I think they are meeting in Pittsburgh today, not as the Pittsburgh Pirates, but as Presidents of the Group of 20 — should discuss it. Tomorrow I will ask Lula and Cristina how the meeting went, because they are coming to Caracas on their way to Margarita Island for the Africa-South American summit.

The economy, the economy, the economy. We are in favour of socialism, but let us discuss it and talk about indicators and methods and modes of production. As President Obama said yesterday with regards to his fourth pillar, we need an economy that serves human beings. Well, President Obama, that is called socialism. Come over to the side of socialism, President Obama, come join the axis of evil and we will build an economy that truly serves human beings. It is impossible to do that with capitalism. Capitalism only benefits a minority and excludes the majority. Besides, it destroys the environment and destroys lives. That is capitalism.

Finally — and I think I have now been speaking for my allotted 10 minutes — I will end with a phrase of Lula's. He was the first speaker in the Assembly yesterday. He said there is no political will. I have already commented on that, and I would add to it because I know Lula and I know exactly what he said to us. He is calling upon all of us to strengthen political will.

Unlike other Governments elsewhere, which have doubts and do not want to change despite the terrible crisis in which we are living, we in southern America have a lot of political will — here I am speaking for Venezuela and, I know, also for South America, for Latin America — a tremendous political will for true change.

I recommend this book by István Mészáros, a great Hungarian philosopher and thinker who has been a professor at various universities in London for many years: *Beyond Capital: Toward a Theory of Transition*. I think the book is among the greatest writings of the twentieth century. It is a complete renewal of socialist theory. In one of the interesting chapters Mészáros quotes another great person, Karl Marx. We must not be afraid of Karl Marx — he was the Einstein of politics. Yes, he was demonized, but Karl Marx was right about so many things.

Quoting Marx, Mészáros says in this book that crises act as a general threat and thus urgently lead us beyond presuppositions towards a new historic paradigm. We need a new historic paradigm. For years we have been hearing about a new world, but what actually exists is this old, moribund order. We need the new order to be born, the new historic paradigm, the new political paradigm, a new global paradigm. Yesterday Al-Qadhafi said here that we need a new

institutionalism, a new economy, a new society, but truly new — a world that is new.

Now, I think Lula said yesterday — he finished speaking at 10:10 in the morning — that we must become the midwives of history. I agree. I would add to what Lula said. Has the birth already started? The birth is not a future event; it is here. Let us be, as Comrade Lula said, midwives of the new history, prevailing over those who would bury it. Let us struggle on the planet for the birth of this new history, this new time, this new multi-polar, free world, this economy at the service of all people, not of minorities, this world of peace.

I am a Christian. One day Christ said, “My kingdom is not of this world.” It is of a future world, the reign of love among us, where we can truly live as brothers and sisters.

Last Sunday in Havana — and I will put my little books away and I will wind up now — on the Plaza de la Revolución there was a great concert, the “Concert for Peace”, with Miguel Bosé, Juanes, Olga Tañó and Cuban singers. Silvio Rodríguez was there — the Great Silvio — and they sang to the whole world. Some people in Miami went crazy and tried to destroy Juanes' CDs — that great Colombian — just because he had gone to sing on the Plaza of the Revolution. How crazy can you get? Fortunately they are a minority. Silvio was there with his guitar, and I am sure he sang, “This era is giving birth to a heart”. He ends his song, *Cita Con Angeles*, like this: “Let us be a tiny bit better and a little less selfish.”

Cheers!

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

Mr. Hugo Chávez Frías, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Danilo Türk, President of the Republic of Slovenia

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

Mr. Danilo Türk, President of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Danilo Türk, President of the Republic of Slovenia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Türk: Yesterday and today we have heard many inspiring words. We heard powerful words, words of hope. A few moments ago we heard words about salvation. Although most of us would not agree that salvation is around the corner, at the same time I believe all of us will agree that improvement is possible and that the reason we are here is to make that improvement a reality. But in order to do that, we must do what the peoples of the world legitimately expect from us as representatives of United Nations Member States: to make this institution, the United Nations, effective and to work for it with a sense of common purpose, truly as united nations.

I express full confidence in your experience and wisdom, Mr. President, congratulate you on your election and wish you every success in your work for the improvement of humankind's situation.

At the same time, I would not wish to miss the opportunity to thank the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session, Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, who guided this Assembly with great determination and an ethical commitment to fairness and justice.

I also wish to pay tribute to our Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his guidance in these trying times.

In the past few days, many of us were engaged in an effort, spearheaded by the Secretary-General, to generate the necessary political will to seal the deal in Copenhagen. We all appreciate this example of international leadership. Humankind must take resolute steps towards a new and effective system to mitigate the effects of global warming and to ensure our necessary adaptation.

Our responsibilities are common and differentiated. Today, we understand that each of the Member States of the United Nations must do its share and that, together as united nations, we can save the

planet. Let the Copenhagen Conference be the turning point.

We also need to broaden the front and fully include civil society and the business sector in broad action for this needed technological and social transformation. Action starting now to mitigate the consequences of climate change will have to lead to profound societal change — a change in the way we produce, the way we consume and the way we live. Let us not be afraid of these changes. These changes may not amount to a revolution, of which President Chávez Frias of Venezuela spoke, but they will have to be real and, if guided in a wise and timely manner, they can improve our common future.

Now the world needs a comprehensive strategy in order to fulfil this task. Such a strategy needs to address all the main challenges of our time in a consistent manner. The food crisis, climate change, the energy crisis, the spreading of infectious diseases and other problems may have different roots, but they produce a single, communicative effect. They hobble global development and make the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals only a distant possibility. Therefore, clear responses are called for.

Mr. Grauls (Belgium), Vice-President, took the Chair.

And what is the role of the United Nations in this context? Some of the answers have already been provided. They are enshrined, inter alia, in the Outcome of the United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development, which was held in New York in June. Results of that Conference should be further elaborated. Specific priority tasks for global development must soon be defined.

These days, many expectations are linked to the G-20 summit meeting in Pittsburgh. Much needs to be done to bring greater discipline and responsibility to the global financial system. This is an important and immediate priority. Moreover, it is necessary to increase resources and to adjust the Bretton Woods institutions with a view to the proper maintenance of global financial stability and of development financing. The restarting of global trade negotiations has become an urgent priority.

But even more is needed, including the improvement of official development assistance, with a

particular priority on development in Africa. Issues of global development represent a large part of the agenda of the current session of the General Assembly.

However, we must also think about the fate of human rights in current global circumstances. Human rights and development are closely connected. The current recession has already increased global levels of poverty. Unemployment is growing. The faith of many young people is becoming ever more uncertain. All these are serious challenges to global social stability and may turn into the serious security concerns of tomorrow if left unattended.

I welcome the efforts of the International Labour Organization and the Global Jobs Pact adopted in June. Today, there is no challenge to human rights more pervasive, more strategic and more pressing than the challenge of poverty and unemployment. Policymakers need to ensure that economic policies and human rights policies alike are coordinated and that mechanisms are put into place at the national and international levels.

Slovenia was one of the first Member States to sign today the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Protocol will give individuals an additional and potentially significant implementation mechanism. This is a small step, but one which demonstrates our awareness of the problem and our commitment to action.

We are also looking to the Human Rights Council as the main body of the United Nations to devise strategies for human rights. Slovenia has been an active member of the Council and we remain optimistic. The progress achieved so far in developing new methods of work in the Council is encouraging, albeit not yet sufficient. We welcome the election of the United States to the Council and believe that only an inclusive forum for human rights can be an effective forum for human rights. Members of the Human Rights Council must realize that they bear a special responsibility to lead.

But there are problems which exceed the potential of the Human Rights Council itself. The failures to protect human beings from mass atrocities and from gross and systematic violations of human rights should not be repeated. We still have not found the right tools to respond in a timely and effective manner to such situations. I therefore welcome the debate on the responsibility to protect that took place

in the General Assembly in July this year. Continued engagement of the General Assembly on this subject has proved to be necessary, and I hope that this discussion will yield results.

Issues of environment, development and human rights represent today the bulk of the current United Nations agenda, but it is in the area of the maintenance of international peace and security that some of the most urgent thinking and action are necessary. Four areas of work are of special importance.

The reform of the Security Council is long overdue and progress made at the sixty-third session of the General Assembly is insufficient. However, negotiations so far have generated a positive momentum. It is apparent that the expansion of the Security Council in the permanent and non-permanent categories of membership has gained broad support among United Nations Member States. Exactly a year ago from this rostrum, I suggested a specific model for Security Council expansion. It was one of many proposals that were made. Now the time is right for that and other proposals to be put on the table and to be addressed head on.

In addition to structural change, such as Security Council reform, we need to strengthen the United Nations practical role in the maintenance of international peace and security. I welcome the thinking expressed in the report of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations entitled "A New Partnership Agenda: Charting a New Horizon for United Nations Peacekeeping", published in July this year. The report highlights many of the most pressing and subtle needs for improvement. Member States must give careful consideration to the report and to such concepts as expanding the peacekeeping partnership, the purpose of which is to strengthen the operational capacity and political sophistication of United Nations peacekeeping.

Let us not overlook the fact that progress in peacekeeping would strengthen all other United Nations activities linked to the maintenance of international peace and security, including preventive diplomacy and post-conflict peacebuilding.

The third area which needs to be addressed is disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, where we have come up against far too many stumbling blocks in the past. United Nations action needs to be energized now, and the forthcoming review

of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons has to be a step forward.

Fourthly, the United Nations will continue to be an indispensable forum for political consultation and policy advice. The experience of the United Nations is irreplaceable. The situation in Afghanistan can be cited as a case in point. For three decades now, the United Nations has been seized with a variety of problems affecting Afghanistan, a Member State. No one should doubt that Afghanistan belongs to the Afghans or that the Afghanization of security is the only real path towards security in the country. There can be no military solution to the country's variety of problems. It is becoming ever more apparent that the international community will have to assist in an Afghan process of transition that will decrease and eventually phase out the international military presence in the country.

Let me emphasize the role of the United Nations in that context. Sometimes, matters such as the situation in and around Afghanistan are discussed at specialized international conferences, but wisdom and common sense suggest that the experience of the United Nations be put to use. Let us not forget the unique success of the United Nations, of the United Nations-led 2001 Bonn Conference and of the subsequent Constitutional Loya Jirga. The time has come for a broad look at the entire experience since that period, an assessment of what exactly went wrong and why, a sober assessment of the current situation, and the careful definition of further steps that will make international political, economic and administrative assistance more effective and the international military presence no longer needed. The assistance of the Security Council and the General Assembly will be valuable in that regard.

Let me conclude by saying something very obvious. The agenda of the United Nations today is heavy, but that is not news. The United Nations has always been the forum for addressing the world's most intractable problems. At the same time, however, the United Nations has always represented hope and promise to the world. Let us live up to that hope and that promise. Let us make this the era of the United Nations and the Organization's finest hour.

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

Mr. Danilo Türk, President of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana

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

Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

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

President Jagdeo: I extend our gratitude to the Secretary-General for continuing to spearhead the work of the United Nations at a time when our membership is beset by historic challenges.

I am told that it is only what one says from the rostrum that is reflected in the record of the meeting. I hope that perhaps in the future, we can change the system. If we do so, we may be able to say more without spending a lot of time at the rostrum. So I shall circulate the full text of my speech and focus on only two areas that I think are important at this point in time. The first has to do with the financial crisis and its impact on the Caribbean, and the second concerns the climate change crisis.

In the case of the prevailing financial crisis, the small, vulnerable economies of the Caribbean have had to bear the brunt of global recession. That has manifested itself both through depressed prices for primary exported commodities, such as bauxite, and through depressed demand for services, such as tourism. The result has been losses in export and foreign currency earnings, with attendant dislocation of exchange rates and Government revenues, exacerbating an already tenuous fiscal and debt situation and causing the loss of jobs and welfare and a reversal of gains previously made against poverty.

Even as we seek long-term solutions to bolster the resilience of our economies, the need for relief and support is immediate. The capacity of the small countries of the Caribbean to respond with

countercyclical measures is virtually non-existent, with no available fiscal space and levels of indebtedness that are among the highest in the world. The case is therefore compelling for the global community to relieve and restructure the debt of these heavily indebted vulnerable small countries, including those that were not previously considered for debt relief because of their income levels, but whose debt ratios are clearly unsustainable by any standard.

The case is equally compelling for new additional flows of development assistance to be delivered to these countries by both multilateral and bilateral development partners. Despite injections of large amounts of additional resources into some of the multilateral institutions and the approval of new facilities by those institutions, very little has actually materialized in terms of additionality in disbursements to smaller States. This needs to be corrected urgently if we are to avoid the perception that there is an absence of concern at the global level for the needs of smaller countries.

My fear is that, as the crisis abates, so too will the will to change the global financial architecture. Therefore, we are advocating urgent action in this area, and we are also saying that this solution — a new global financial architecture — must involve smaller countries in its articulation. Our fear is that, if we continue along the same path, we will have a new architecture that caters only to the concerns of the large countries — now expanded to the Group of 20 — and that the smaller countries will not see their concerns reflected in it. That is why, last year, I called for a new Bretton Woods-type conference at which all the countries in this Hall would help to create that architecture.

The second crisis that I wish to mention is that of climate change. This week, there has been much talk about the urgency of tackling climate change. Thanks to the vision exhibited by the Secretary-General and the work of leaders and citizens from countries across the world, the level of understanding about the nature of the climate challenge is increasingly clear.

But we need to move beyond simply understanding the challenge. We need to work as a global community to shape a solution that is in the interests of all countries, and many of the building blocks that will enable us to do this have been identified. The challenge for the Copenhagen meeting

is to turn these building blocks into an agreement that can start to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In doing so, we should be guided by science and by the need for solutions that treat all countries fairly. But we also need to recognize that the challenge now is as much about political will as it is about scientific, economic and institutional considerations. In addressing the politics, we need to recognize that in all countries — developed and developing — there are concerns about the commitment of others to the long-term global partnership we need. Many developing countries question whether the international community will commit to the scale of financial transfers that all major analyses agree are needed. Others are worried that acting on climate change now will stymie their national development, precisely at a time when many are poised for historic levels of economic growth and social advances.

On the other hand, many developed countries are worried that the financial transfers needed will be an excessive burden on their budgets during extremely challenging economic times. Domestic constituencies in the developed world are also fearful about transferring significant sums of money abroad, and they worry that jobs or investment will be driven away from their economies. There are also fears from individual countries that they will be expected to carry a greater burden than other developed nations. These political concerns could be a recipe for a stalemate that the world cannot afford. Failure to overcome them now will mean misery for future generations, and the eventual costs of tackling climate change will be even greater than they are now.

We therefore need to find a way through. This will require leadership from all nations. I welcome the proposals laid out by Gordon Brown, and subsequently supported by the European Union, to generate funding in excess of \$100 billion per annum to address climate change in the developing world. For the first time, there is a proposal that starts to square up to the magnitude of funding that is required for adaptation and mitigation.

Having spoken with many of my fellow leaders this week, I am confident that, with the right signal from the developed world, developing countries are ready to play their part. Of particular urgency will be finding ways to work together to address the 17 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions that result from

tropical deforestation and forest degradation globally. As with climate change in general, we now have a large degree of clarity around the nature of this specific problem. We know that it causes more emissions than the entire European Union, and we know that this is because the world economy makes trees worth more dead than alive. We also know that the only sustainable way to address the problem is national-scale action in forest countries coupled with international incentives that place a value on trees to make them worth more alive than dead.

We now need to rapidly move from constantly rearticulating this problem towards putting in place workable solutions. In Guyana, we remain ready to play our part, and we have launched our low-carbon development strategy, which sets out how we can place our entire forest under long-term protection, not only to provide the world with badly needed climate services, but also to move our economy onto a long-term, sustainable low-carbon development path, where jobs are created across our country in sectors that do not threaten our trees.

Thanks to the visionary leadership of the Prime Minister of Norway, our two countries are also working together to provide a functioning model of how low-deforestation and low-carbon economies can be created in countries such as ours.

In parallel, Guyana continues to play its part in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process, which must provide the long-term framework for combating forest-based emissions through the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD) or the REDD+ Programme. But we also believe that the world can move quickly to slow down deforestation starting now, not in 2013. Guyana was pleased to participate in the April G-20 side meeting that addressed how this can happen. We support the proposals made by the informal working group on interim financing for REDD, which was set up after the G-20 side meeting. We support its report, which lays out how the world can achieve a 25 per cent reduction in global deforestation rates by 2015 with an investment of less than €25 billion in total.

Using highly conservative estimates of forest carbon, this could lead to seven gigatons of greenhouse gas emissions being avoided between now and 2015. If

this occurred, it would be the single biggest contribution to averting climate catastrophe over this period. And it can be done. Rainforest countries representing the vast majority of the world's tropical forests have worked with the informal working group and are willing to act. The question now is: Will the developed world understand the enormous potential this offers our world, and will it act to generate the finances that are needed?

The sum of money needed for this interim period may seem large, but it does not only represent a very good value for money abatement solution; it can also generate significant financial flows for developing countries, it can create alternative livelihoods for indigenous peoples and other forest-dependent communities, and it can preserve the enormous biodiversity present in the world's forests.

Twenty-five billion euros over five years represent less than 1.5 cents per citizen per day in developed countries. It is a fraction of what the world has generated to save the financial system from collapse, it provides a bridge to a long-term REDD+ solution under the UNFCCC, and it buys the world badly needed time in the race to defeat climate change. To turn away from making this proposal a reality would be a mistake of historic proportions.

I have just said to President Chávez Frías that I wish I could conclude by singing, but I do not have his wonderful voice. Instead, I will confine myself to saying that we all have an important role to play in solving this crisis, but the developed world has a moral obligation to play a greater part in solving both the financial crisis and the climate change crisis, because it is due to its actions that we are in this situation. I hope that the developed world recognizes this obligation and the urgency to act upon it now.

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

Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Óscar Arias Sánchez, President of the Republic of Costa Rica

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

Mr. Óscar Arias Sánchez, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Óscar Arias Sánchez, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Arias Sánchez (*spoke in Spanish*): Let me begin by sending a warm greeting to Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, President of the Assembly, on behalf of a country 35 times smaller than his native Libya and infinitely different in scenery and geography. Instead of desert sandstorms we have torrential rains. We know not the waves of the Mediterranean, but the capricious tides of the Caribbean. Its dunes are our forests, its mosques our cathedrals. But I believe that such differences are at the very heart of the United Nations. Aristotle posited that things are distinguished by what they look like. Here, within this haven, nations are similar precisely in that they are distinct, because each is irreplaceable in the vast catalogue of the planet. From the far reaches of this variety that makes us brothers, I wish him the greatest success in this Assembly.

Twenty-three years ago, I spoke for the first time at this rostrum — a rock of reason amidst seas of insanity. At that time, I came here bearing the cries of millions of Central Americans who sought a peaceful solution to the civil wars that were lacerating our region. I came to ask powerful nations to stop the flow of arms fuelling the procession of coffins in our territories, and I came to defend the right of the peoples of Latin America to build their own destiny freely and democratically.

The second time I visited this Hall, I came seeking support for the peace plan that the Presidents of Central America had signed. In those days, no one thought that little Central America would defy the world and choose life in the face of all threats. No one thought that we would have the strength to confront the Powers of the cold war and find our own solution to all

our problems. No one thought that we would be able to sow the seeds of democracy in our lands and go on to work for the human development of our peoples. We gave the pessimists and the sceptics a lesson. We refuted with dreams the nightmares that many prophesied for us. Today, I come here to recognize the distance we have travelled and to warn of the risk of backsliding.

Since the last time I spoke before this Assembly, a Central American nation has seen the demon of the coup d'état awaken once again. Our region's armies have received nearly \$60 billion to combat imaginary enemies, while our peoples have struggled empty-handed against the economic crisis. Some leaders have defied democratic rules in the most imaginative ways, while everything that was wrong with our continent has carried on the same, or worse. Poverty has continued to afflict more than a third of our inhabitants. One in three young Latin Americans still has never seen a high-school classroom. Hundreds of thousands of people have died of preventable diseases. The toll of violent death in some of our countries has exceeded those of countries at war, despite the fact that, with the exception of Colombia, there are no armed conflicts in our region. And millions of trees have been felled in territories responsible among them for two thirds of the worldwide forest cover loss in the twenty-first century.

This scenario is not a hopeful one. For those of us from Latin America, it is difficult not to feel that we are always rescuing our future from the clutches of our past, and that we are always trying to take off on a runway where some foolish person spilled oil, long ago. We have not achieved greater development. We have not made our democracy stronger. We have not driven from our reality the shadow of militarism and oppression. These problems recur endemically, to varying degrees, in the majority of developing nations — the very nations that will to a large extent bear the weight of the course of humanity over the next 50 years.

It is the developing nations that will shoulder the worst of the struggle against global warming, that will carry the heaviest burden of population growth on the planet, and that will be responsible for accelerating the growth of a global economy to which the rich cannot contribute much more than they already generate. We do not yet know how the leading role we have been given will play out. Our success or failure will depend on whether we have the courage to take on at least

three fundamental challenges: the strengthening of our democracies, the encouragement of human development for our peoples through the reduction of military spending and cross-border arms trafficking, and the creation of a new international order for the transfer of aid, information and technology to combat climate change.

Developing nations, and middle-income nations in particular, live simultaneously in the medieval and postmodern eras. In our race to emulate the experiences of developed countries, we have skipped past fundamental steps. There is no doubt that one of these steps is the patient construction of democratic institutions, on which developed countries have spent centuries, while we, if we have been lucky, have spent decades.

As a result, beyond superficial appearances, we lack a true civic culture. We have democratic structures that in many cases are no more than empty shells. We have free elections, but lack the open social forum to allow all citizens freely to make political or ideological contribution. We have formal separation of powers, but in many places power remains a single monopoly disguised in multiple public entities. We have rule of law, but the reach of the law is tested every day by Governments incapable of applying it, when not determined actually to weaken it. We have political constitutions and international treaties that reaffirm our belief in democratic values, but populations still prone to toss those values aside for material gain.

Paraphrasing the great Argentinean writer Jorge Luis Borges, we can say that most inhabitants of developing countries do not identify with the State, which seems to them an abstract concept, removed from their immediate concerns. That is why they allow a Government to end before its constitutional period has elapsed or to continue in power beyond that period. That is why they expect the Government to offer social welfare and public services, but do not recognize the reciprocal obligations of citizens.

That is why they prefer caudillos to political parties, messianic leaders to democratic institutions. That is why they boycott the approval of new taxes in countries whose tax burden is half or even a third of that of developed countries. That is why they so easily fall for a discourse that blames national problems on others instead of assuming responsibility for designing mechanisms that confront them. And this is the best-

case scenario, because in the worst there is no democracy at all.

As long as we continue on this path, placing our hopes in developing nations will be like pouring water into a sack. As long as we fail to dedicate more international attention, and more international aid, to strengthening and perfecting democracies in this world, we will watch again and again as our countries try to take off on a slippery runway.

This challenge is even more urgent in the face of an arms race that, year by year, moves \$1.3 trillion globally. The combination of strong armies and weak democracies has proved harmful in every corner of the planet, and above all in Latin America, which, during the second half of the twentieth century was a showcase of dictatorial horrors, fuelled by the existence of an omnipresent military apparatus. I will never tire of repeating it: in Latin America, and in a substantial portion of the developing world, armies have served no purpose other than to carry out coups d'état. They have not protected the people; they have oppressed them. They have not safeguarded liberties; they have trampled on them. They have not guaranteed respect for the will of the people; they have mocked it.

What is the threat to our nations? What, for example, is the great enemy of Latin America that compels it to waste \$165 million a day on weapons and soldiers? I assure the Assembly that such threats are far less significant than that posed by the mosquito that carries malaria, for instance. They are less significant than the threat posed by the lack of opportunity that pushes our young people into crime. They are less significant than the threat posed by the drug cartels and street gangs that survive thanks to an unrestricted market for small arms and light weapons.

And so what we have to do is order our priorities. Costa Rica was the first country to abolish its army and declare peace on the world. Thanks to that visionary decision, thanks to the liberating army of Commander José Figueres, who renounced arms forever, we have the opportunity today to invest our resources in things that matter. And while we know that not every nation is ready to take such a radical step, we believe that a gradual and progressive reduction in military spending is not only a good strategy for allocating resources, but also a moral imperative for developing nations.

For this reason I ask the Assembly once more to make the Costa Rica Consensus a reality. This

initiative would create mechanisms for forgiving foreign debt and using international financial resources to support those poor and middle-income developing countries that are investing more in environmental protection, education, health, housing and sustainable development for their people and less in arms and soldiers. And I also ask the Assembly to approve an arms trade treaty, which is known to this Organization, and which seeks to prohibit the transfer of arms to States, groups or individuals when sufficient reason exists to believe that those arms will be used to undermine human rights or international law. I assure members that these two initiatives will make us safer, and certainly more developed, than the costly machinery of death that currently consumes our budgets.

What is more, spending on arms deprives us not only of economic resources. Above all, it deprives us of human resources. At this moment, the greatest arsenal of genius in the world is working on refining the weaponry and defence systems of a few nations. That is not where this genius should be. Its place is in the laboratories where medicines are being created that will be accessible to all humankind. Its place is in the classrooms where the leaders of tomorrow are being formed. Its place is in the Governments that need help in protecting their harvests, their cities and their populations from the effects of global warming.

We have included sustainable development in the Costa Rica Consensus because we believe there is a connection between arms and the protection of the environment. This is, first, because arms and wars generate more environmental devastation and pollution than any productive activity; and secondly, because the very existence of military spending constitutes, in and of itself, a negation of resources available to combat global warming. Every armoured helicopter, every tank, every nuclear submarine represents, in practice, forests that are not protected, technologies that are not becoming less costly and adaptations that are not being made.

Only a few weeks remain before the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, where every country will have to undertake commitments much greater than today's. My small nation, Costa Rica, will attend the conference with its head held high, because unilaterally, and at great sacrifice, we have set ourselves goals that are ever more challenging. We have launched an initiative called Peace with Nature,

through which we propose, among other things, to become a carbon-neutral country by the year 2021. This is possible, in large part, thanks to the nearly four decades we have spent protecting our land, replanting our forests and safeguarding our natural species — and also because, at the same time that we abolished our army, we created pioneering institutions devoted to the search for renewable energy sources. Today, more than 95 per cent of our electricity comes from water or wind, from the depths of the Earth or the rays of the sun.

Infinite challenges remain, for Costa Rica as for any other middle-income country. The world's rich nations, which developed in the most unsustainable way possible, cannot now place limits that choke the development expectations of every other country. Efforts must be directed instead at forming a global platform that allows us to transfer international aid, information and technology efficiently from one nation to another; a platform that will only make sense if the member States of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development increase their official development aid, which today stands at \$120 billion per year. When it comes to mitigating and adapting ourselves to global warming the world must share, not compete.

These three challenges — strengthening democracies, reducing military spending and cooperating to confront climate change — perhaps constitute the most ambitious agenda humanity has ever had to take on. Neither I, nor my Government, nor Costa Rica, will ignore this historic call; for we simply cannot fail. We cannot falter. We cannot turn back when we are standing at the vanguard of 6.8 billion human beings.

Like Adam and Eve, we are still living in a heavenly Paradise minutes before being expelled due to our own arrogance. Our sense of responsibility, our humility and our courage will determine whether we waste our opportunity on Earth and squander the miracle of life that has brought us heartbreak and pain yet has also allowed us to know happiness. The greatest of the Costa Rican poets, Jorge Debravo, said that hope is as strong as bone and more powerful than imagination or memory. May that still-present hope give us the strength to embark on the last journey of an unsustainable civilization and the first of a civilization that will survive and outlast us all.

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

Mr. Óscar Arias Sánchez, President of Costa Rica, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

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

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

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

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

President Kikwete: It is indeed an honour and a pleasure for me to extend my very warm congratulations to Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki on his well-deserved election to the presidency at the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly. I hope that during his presidency he will help advance the revitalization of the General Assembly, reinforce multilateralism and promote dialogue among civilizations. I promise Mr. Treki my personal cooperation as well as that of the Tanzanian delegation in the discharge of his responsibilities.

Allow me also to use this opportunity to pay tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, for a job very well done. I thank him for the honour he recently bestowed upon the late Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, the founder President and Father of the Tanzanian nation.

Our deep appreciation also goes to our illustrious Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his diligent service to the United Nations and to humankind. His exemplary leadership and commitment to action in addressing the global challenges we are facing are appreciated by many of us. We wish him and his entire team great success in the future.

For over five years now, a number of countries in Eastern Africa, including Tanzania, have been experiencing unprecedented drought. We have never seen anything like this before. Maybe the effects of climate change are taking a toll. As a result of this, agricultural production has been affected severely causing acute food shortages. There is an acute shortage of pasture and water for our livestock and wildlife in the game parks that is resulting in the deaths of many of our animals. Rivers have been drying up frequently thus causing interruptions in hydropower generation.

The effects of the drought are threatening to reach catastrophic proportions if the shortage of rain continues for the next few years. It is important for the United Nations to be aware of this growing danger and to look into ways of assisting us. We should not wait to act until graphic pictures of emaciated and dying children dominate TV screens and newspapers.

History has taught us that the greatest successes in the development of nations began with agriculture. No doubt, therefore, the low levels of development in Africa today are indicative of the underdevelopment of our agriculture. Indeed, African agriculture is backward and productivity is low. It needs to be transformed, it needs to be modernized. The African green revolution has taken too long to happen.

Concerted efforts by African Governments and Africa's development partners are required. Unfortunately, there is not as much interest on the part of our development partners to support agricultural transformation in Africa as there is for other sectors. This is an unfortunate omission which needs to be corrected. We look to the United Nations to take the lead in this regard.

Allow me to pay tribute to President Barack Obama for demonstrating keen interest in assisting the transformation and modernization of Africa's agriculture. African leaders were humbled by his commitment at the meeting he held with leaders from sub-Saharan Africa on 22 September of this year. I appeal to other leaders to emulate his example.

Another issue that I would like to raise for discussion and action is the problem of youth unemployment in Africa. Africa faces one of the biggest unemployment challenges on the planet. African youth make up 37 per cent of the working age population in Africa, but they are 60 per cent of the

unemployed. In some nations youth unemployment is up to 80 per cent. Africa has the fastest-growing and most youthful population in the world. Over 20 per cent of Africa's population is between the ages of 15 and 24. As a result, a constantly rising number of young Africans has been entering, and will continue to enter, a labour market that has not been fast-growing.

Beyond economic costs, high rates of youth unemployment have had negative consequences in our continent. We have seen how some youths with no job prospects, and little hope of getting any, have become the fuel being added to the raging fires of conflict in many parts of our continent. They simply fall prey to the machinations of war lords, criminal gangs and political manipulators, to the detriment of peace and stability in their countries.

Creating job opportunities for Africa's youth is an enormous task that Governments of our poor economies cannot carry out alone. Friends of Africa in the international community, both from Government and the private sector, have an important role to play in that regard. Allow me to commend the Danish Government for showing the way. In April 2008, it formed the Danish Commission for Africa to address youth unemployment challenges on the continent. The Commission, on which I was fortunate to serve, came up with five bold initiatives that I believe, if strong international partnership can be forged to implement them, can turn the large youth unemployment problem from a challenge into an opportunity. I humbly ask this body for the opportunity for the Commission's report to be presented to the General Assembly. At the same time, I propose that the Assembly consider declaring a decade to focus on youth employment in Africa, possibly 2011 to 2020.

Two days ago, we held the fruitful high-level Climate Change Summit. I would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and commend him for his leadership on this important and challenging issue of our time. The event will go a long way towards paving the way for a comprehensive agreement in Copenhagen in December 2009.

It was heart-warming indeed to hear President Barack Obama assure this world body that the United States will join other nations in the joint endeavour to save our common planet. We are also happy that, under the leadership of Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom, consensus has been emerging on

making additional resources available to assist developing nations in their efforts at adaptation, mitigation and the pursuit of clean development.

Allow me now to talk about three side events that have taken place during this session of the General Assembly.

The first one was the panel discussion on accelerating the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which was organized by Ms. Helen Clark, the new Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, together with Mr. Douglas Alexander, the United Kingdom's Secretary for International Development. At that meeting, important impressions were made about successes and shortcomings with regard to the implementation of the MDGs to date. The meeting was a curtain-raiser for next year's MDG summit. I hope all of us will take seriously the observations and conclusions that were made, so that there will be no default come 2015.

The second was the meeting on maternal and child health convened by Prime Minister Gordon Brown with the support of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and World Bank President Robert Zoellick. The meeting was a great success. I was impressed and encouraged by the commitment made by Prime Minister Brown and by the support of the World Bank to save the lives of millions of innocent mothers and children who die of causes that can be prevented. While I applaud and thank Prime Minister Brown for his leadership, I appeal for unqualified support for the outcome of the meeting, for the sake of saving the lives of many women and children in Africa and elsewhere in the developing world.

The third was yesterday's launch of the African Leaders Malaria Alliance. That was a landmark event at which African leaders made an unequivocal declaration of commitment to end malaria in their respective countries. The Alliance provides the mechanism for advocacy, collective action and follow-up on measures to build capacities to eliminate the number one killer disease in Africa. Malaria can be prevented, cured, controlled and eliminated in Africa. Many countries in the world have done so; why not us in Africa? I would like the General Assembly to acknowledge that historic event and render support to the work of the African Leaders Alliance against malaria. Once again, I would like to thank Mr. Ray Chambers, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for

Malaria, for successfully organizing that event. I would also like to thank all African leaders for their support and commitment.

The gains made in the area of development can easily be eroded if the foundations of peace and stability are threatened. It is a matter of great comfort and pride that peace reigns in most parts of Africa, except for one or two hot spots — Somalia in particular and, to some extent, Darfur. There is calm in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Burundi is enjoying peace after many years of civil war and instability, which has facilitated the return of many Burundi refugees from Tanzania. However, there are more than 160,000 Burundi refugees who have chosen to remain in Tanzania and are applying to become Tanzanian citizens.

We have in principle accepted their request and are now finalizing the procedures to grant them citizenship. However, I want this body to know that my Government has decided that, if accepted, they will be moved from the refugee camps in which they reside at the moment and will be resettled in various places in the country. We do not want them to remain with the refugee mentality. We also do not want Tanzanians to continue to consider them refugees. That is going to be a very expensive exercise for which the support of the United Nations and other friends will be necessary.

Tanzania remains committed to contribute to peace in Africa and the world. I promise that we will continue to play that historic role to the best of our ability. In that regard, we are making good progress on our promise to scale up our participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations. We have peacekeepers in the United Nations mission in Lebanon, and we are ready to increase their number. We are also in the final preparations of deploying a battalion of peacekeepers in Darfur. We are going to honour the request made by the United Nations to work with the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) in the training of the armed forces of that country, under the Mission's security sector reforms for the country. My message today is that we are ready to do more whenever requested.

Let me add my voice in support of the two-State solution for an Israel and a Palestine living together side by side at peace with one another. Tanzania is of

the strong opinion that that is the best way to sustainable peace in the Middle East.

With regard to Western Sahara, we call upon the Security Council to expedite the process of giving the people of Western Sahara the opportunity to decide on their future status. That matter has dragged on for too long, namely, since 1975. The time has come to end the impasse.

I would like to reiterate that the reform of the United Nations will be incomplete without the structural reform of the Security Council. That reform should include Africa's attainment of two permanent seats in the Council. Giving seats to Africa is not a matter of favour; it is a matter of correcting the historical injustice against the continent and its people.

Let me conclude by echoing Africa's appeal to the United Nations and the international community to support Africa's position with regard to unconstitutional changes of Government in Africa. In recent years, the ghosts of unconstitutional changes of Government have again haunted Africa — through military coups and so-called mass action instigated by insatiable demagogic politicians. There are people who want to get into leadership by using undemocratic shortcuts. The African Union has taken a strong position, which is enshrined in its Constitutive Act, not to recognize such Governments and to suspend them from membership of the organization until democracy is restored.

Such decisions of the African Union would benefit so much from, and actually would be strengthened by, the support of the international community and in particular the United Nations. Africa has young polities, and its democracy is still fragile. What the African Union is trying to do is to entrench a culture of democratic values and governance. The support of the United Nations and the international community is very critical in that regard. A decision to the contrary would undermine the African Union's good intentions. Africa needs the United Nations to support that historic position.

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

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

Address by Mr. Valdis Zatlers, President of the Republic of Latvia

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

Mr. Valdis Zatlers, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

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

President Zatlers: I wish to begin by congratulating the President on his assumption of the presidency at this session of the General Assembly. I pledge Latvia's full support to him.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of a unique peaceful demonstration, namely, the Baltic Way. On 23 August 1989, more than 1 million people joined hands in a 600-kilometre-long human chain across the three Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. That event was dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between the Stalinist Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. The Pact was another mile marker leading to the Second World War and the occupation of the three Baltic States.

The Baltic Way served as a powerful symbol of the drive for democracy and freedom in our three States. The importance of the Baltic Way was so substantial that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization added it to the Memory of the World Register. The message of the Baltic Way is very clear, namely, that if people and countries truly commit to a common goal, and if they join their efforts, even the most difficult challenge can be met successfully.

A look at today's world reveals that never before has international cooperation been so important. Never before have we faced such a multitude of simultaneous critical challenges of global significance. Many phrases have been coined to describe the most severe problems: the "three Es" crisis, for energy, economy and

environment, and the "three Fs" crisis, for finance, food and fuel. But no matter what name we use we must remember that those global issues require urgent and concerted action at the global level.

Since we met here last year, the financial crisis has turned into a global economic crisis. It has struck the world with its full strength. Consequences are being felt by every State and by every economy. They have an effect on international policy and make us reconsider domestic policies as well. Latvia has undertaken painful but necessary adjustments to the downturn. We have learned our lessons. I am confident that our economy and the entire global economic system will come out of the crisis stronger than before.

Current realities are serving to underline the values of inclusiveness, tolerance and compassion, not only domestically but also in the international arena. It is self-evident that we can tackle the challenges only by joint efforts. We should use the crisis as a catalyst for looking beyond our individual gains. We should therefore use it to look at how we can promote an open international trade system. We hope for the prompt conclusion of the long-overdue round of talks on the Doha Development Agenda.

Development is hard in times of crisis. Developing countries are particularly severely affected by its negative effects. We are well aware of the risk of jeopardizing what has been done in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. We must not give up. Latvia is honouring its commitments to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Climate change is a global challenge that needs to be tackled at the global level. The United Nations Summit on Climate Change has demonstrated that it is important to reach a comprehensive and fair agreement on future global climate policy at the Copenhagen Conference, to be held in December of this year. Such an agreement should follow the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Every country should contribute according to its capabilities, but the political will of every nation is what matters most.

The stability and security situation in a number of countries and regions of the world is of particular concern to the global community. Afghanistan is certainly one of them. The holding of presidential elections in a fragile security situation was a significant achievement by the Afghan people. It is crucial to pursue balanced international involvement in

Afghanistan, which should include both a civilian surge and military efforts. We must continue our assistance to Afghanistan and other countries in the region in order to prevent the threat of festering terrorism. It is important to understand that the value of local knowledge of the situation and of regional involvement cannot be overestimated. We remain committed to the rebuilding process in Afghanistan while paying special attention to upgrading its infrastructure and strengthening its economy. Latvia has contributed both military and civilian assistance to the development of Afghanistan.

Achieving peace in the Middle East is another issue that remains at the top of the international agenda. The two-State idea will become a reality only when the Israeli Government sincerely works to make it one. It will become a sustainable reality only when Palestinian leaders settle their own differences in the interests of their people. This year, Latvia provided a rehabilitation programme for 18 Palestinian boys and girls. They came to Latvia to participate in our rehabilitation programme for traumatized children from the Gaza Strip. Those children came to overcome the psychological impact of the conflict they experienced earlier this year.

Latvia would like to reiterate its firm support for the security and stability of Georgia, which must be based on full respect for the principles of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity as recognized by international law. The security situation in and around Georgia is still very fragile. We regret that the Security Council failed to agree on the continuation of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia. Unfortunately, despite all the efforts by the international community, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was forced to close its Mission in Georgia.

As a result, this year we lost two important international instruments for promoting stability and peaceful conflict resolution in Georgia. Latvia strongly believes that the international community should continue to look for a solution. We should work to secure a full and effective United Nations and OSCE presence in Georgia, including in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Meanwhile, it is ever more important to strengthen the only remaining international mission, namely, the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia, which has convincingly proven its pivotal role in stabilizing the situation on the ground. We would

also like to stress the importance of the resolution on the status of internally displaced persons and refugees from the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The resolution is an important show of commitment to fundamental humanitarian principles.

Choosing leadership is the right and the responsibility of the people. We recently witnessed the post-electoral crisis in Iran. We are concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation and the violent crackdowns there. If the Iranian Government seeks recognition as the representative of its people, it should respect human rights. If the Iranian Government seeks the respect of the international community, it should comply with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. By doing so, Iran could become a genuine contributor to peace and stability in the whole region.

Latvia has been steadfast in the global efforts to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We are sure that the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will be an important milestone in that process. Latvia is convinced that it will promote the aims of non-proliferation, disarmament and the use of nuclear energy for exclusively peaceful purposes.

This fall we will celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the four Geneva Conventions. The character of armed conflict is constantly changing, and new challenges, such as terrorism, arise. Still, the Geneva Conventions remain the bedrock of international humanitarian law. Unfortunately, the political will to fully implement the Conventions remains insufficient. Violations of the provisions of the Conventions and the norms of human rights law still occur.

Latvia therefore strongly supports the International Criminal Court. It is a mechanism designed to fight impunity and to promote compliance with the norms of international law. Latvia commends the work of the Court. We also call on all States to fully cooperate with it.

Mr. Gomes (Guinea-Bissau), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The concept of the responsibility to protect was agreed upon at the 2005 World Summit. Latvia supports that concept. It is important to work towards its implementation. It would help us to create a world

order where inactivity in the face of mass atrocities becomes a thing of the past.

Three years ago, the General Assembly decided to establish the Human Rights Council. The Council has already achieved some results. The Universal Periodic Review mechanism is one of its most notable successes. However, we believe that that process can be further improved to avoid abuse of its shortcomings in methodology and practice. The Human Rights Council will undergo a review in 2011. We believe that the Council can become even more credible, as well as an effective body for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Latvia has a long-standing commitment and experience with promoting human rights. We are ready to share our experience in that area with the international community. Latvia has therefore put forward its candidacy for the Human Rights Council for the year 2014.

Latvia has always supported the strengthening of the United Nations. The reform of the Security Council, aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and legitimacy of its work, is an important part of the overall reform of the United Nations. The composition of the Security Council must reflect the realities and dynamics of today's world. Latvia welcomes the beginning of intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform. We also emphasize the importance of continued progress in that area.

We note with concern that, at a time of global recession, the United Nations budget is increasing considerably. It is important to prioritize activities and to continue the reform of the United Nations. We would also like to see more transparency and budgetary discipline in the process of budget planning and implementation.

Latvia is a candidate for next year's elections to the Economic and Social Council. We are willing to share our experience in addressing global challenges, such as sustainable development, poverty eradication, the implementation of good governance and the rule of law, fundamental freedoms and environmental stability.

Latvia is already building up its expertise on the functional commissions and activities related to the mandate of the Council. We are an active participant in the United Nations Forum on Forests, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the

Statistical Commission, and the Commission on Sustainable Development.

The United Nations is the only truly universal forum for dialogue and action. All States, big and small, have the responsibility to contribute to the fruitful work of the United Nations. Let me assure the President that Latvia is ready to work closely with him and all Member States to make the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly a successful one.

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

Mr. Valdis Zatlers, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi

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

Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

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

President Mutharika: I wish to add my voice to those who have spoken before me on the need for effective responses to global crises and for strengthening multilateralism and dialogue among civilizations for international peace, security and development.

I believe that there is no longer an excuse for world leaders to be reluctant to move closer together and stimulate debate on how multilateralism and dialogue could be strengthened. We need to strengthen collaboration so that the international community responds effectively to such global challenges as climate change, the financial and economic crisis, food and energy crises, armed conflicts, terrorism and, above all, poverty reduction.

The first item on the multilateralism agenda is to reach a global consensus on reforming multilateral institutions, including the United Nations, to ensure the equitable and geographical representation of developed and developing countries alike. It is imperative that developing nations have an effective voice on matters that concern them. Therefore, the United Nations should promote dialogue that ensures the inclusiveness, transparency and accountability that are needed to attain genuine global peace, security and development.

The Security Council must be made flexible to allow the countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East to have fair representation in that body. The continued monopoly of that body by the super-Powers is no longer justifiable. Developing nations cannot continue to be silent spectators in matters that affect them. Every sovereign nation is an integral part of the global village. Gone are the days when conflicts, wars and economic crises in Africa, South-East Asia, the Middle East and Latin America were the concerns only of the peoples and Governments in those areas.

The second agenda item for multilateral dialogue is the attainment of world food security. Food shortages threaten the foundations of democracy and good governance. The United Nations cannot sustain a world system where huge populations live permanently with hunger and starvation. This world body must find a formula whereby the world can produce enough food for all at affordable prices. I believe that it is possible under the auspices of the United Nations to achieve global food security.

Malawi has a well-organized agricultural development strategy and can contribute to United Nations efforts in this matter. Malawi has, within a short period of time, transformed itself from being a food-deficit and hungry nation to a food-surplus nation. Malawi now produces enough food for all its people, and we are able to export to neighbouring countries.

The key factor behind this success story is that Malawi has allocated huge budgetary resources and heavy investment to the agricultural sector. We have also successfully introduced an agricultural input subsidy programme that enables poor and low-income households to buy fertilizer, seeds and chemicals at a heavily subsidized price. As a result, poor smallholder farmers have become more productive. At the same

time, there are visible signs of improvements in the standard of living of the people, particularly in rural areas.

The third agenda item for multilateral dialogue is to manage climate change. Malawi is happy that this matter will be fully discussed at the Copenhagen Conference later this year. At the national level, Malawi is responding to the challenge of climate change through intensive irrigation farming and by moving away from dependence on rain-fed agriculture. The Government has introduced the Green Belt programme that will irrigate up to 1 million hectares of land for small-, medium- and large-scale farmers by harnessing water sources from the rivers and lakes to provide extensive irrigation. We shall grow a broad range of food crops, such as rice, wheat, maize, beans and lentils, as our way to contribute to resolving the world food crisis.

The threat of climate change is real. I believe that the price of complacency will be much higher if we fail to act today. For Africa and developing countries elsewhere, we need to adequately address the issue of deforestation, environmental degradation and agricultural productivity. We need to act now.

Let me conclude by stating that we also need a global dialogue on democracy, good governance, human rights, the rule of law and the fight against terrorism in all its manifestations. We also need a new understanding of how developing nations can cope with the shocks of global financial crises and escalating fuel prices.

I believe that, working together, all nations of the world, rich or poor, powerful or powerless, can strengthen multilateralism and dialogue for lasting international peace, security and development. We live in one world. We have the same destiny.

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

Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Jalal Talabani, President of the Republic of Iraq

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

Mr. Jalal Talabani, President of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

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

President Talabani (*spoke in Arabic*): Permit me to congratulate our brother and friend Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. Let me assure him of our delegation's assistance and support as he discharges his task. Given his wisdom and experience, we are certain that he will successfully fulfil the tasks assigned to him and further the objectives of the United Nations. I would like also to thank his predecessor, Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, for his presidency of the General Assembly during the previous session.

The current political process in Iraq, ongoing since the collapse of the former regime in 2003, has produced radical political change, pushing towards building a unified, independent and democratic federal Iraq with respected constitutional institutions. Realizing these objectives has not been easy and has not been without challenges, chief among which were domestic and regional forces attempting to return Iraq to the period prior to the change. These forces have used various means to attain that goal, including committing the worst of crimes, allying themselves with organized crime and joining with networks of international terrorism to disrupt the security and stability of Iraq.

Significant developments have taken place in Iraq since I stood here last year. The most important of them were the signing of the agreement with the United States on the withdrawal of its troops, organization of the American forces' temporary presence in Iraq and the signing of the Strategic Framework Agreement with the United States. Based on that agreement, United States troops withdrew from

Iraqi cities at the end of last June, and Iraqi forces assumed responsibility for security throughout Iraq. The security situation has greatly improved under the Government of National Unity, thanks to its tireless endeavours towards national dialogue and national reconciliation projects. These efforts seek to include all political parties and social groups, within the political process and outside it, that believe in the peaceful transfer of power. The Iraqi Government is also continuing its policy of imposing law and order in confronting terrorist groups, armed militias and outlaws, including those working to sabotage the political process and undermine security and stability in Iraq and the region.

The year's great successes for Iraq have brought progress in its external relations. This year witnessed high-level visits from Arab, regional and other international Powers, many of which reopened their embassies in Baghdad. This has taken place within the framework of the Iraqi Government's efforts to restore its international standing. The Iraqi Government will continue to deepen its good-neighbour policy of friendship and cooperation in order to restore its role in the Arab, regional and international communities, and to promote security and stability in the region.

The economic situation also saw significant improvement through a number of economic and financial laws enacted by the Iraqi Government, which led to increased personal income, purchasing power and social welfare services for our citizens. The Iraqi Government prepared an ambitious budget for this year, aiming not only at reconstruction, but also at building a sound and healthy economy to promote progress and general prosperity. The Iraqi Government has reviewed this budget and its economic programmes in the light of the financial crisis facing the world.

Improvements in the economic sphere have encouraged a significant number of internally and externally displaced Iraqis to voluntarily return to the country. The Iraqi Government has taken a series of practical measures and decisions aimed at facilitating the voluntary return of displaced Iraqis because it believes that the best solution for them is to return to their homeland. We therefore call upon States hosting Iraqi refugees and on international and civil society organizations aiding refugees to help promote a culture of voluntary return, because Iraq needs the capacities of all Iraqis to help build the future of their country.

The most important challenge we face in the near future is the round of legislative elections scheduled for January 2010, for which the political parties have already started preparations. Successful elections will solidify the current political regime's basis in democracy, pluralism and the peaceful transfer of power. Successful elections will move the political process forward from this initial stage to one of permanence and stability and will promote stability and security in Iraq. They will also help us build national institutions strong enough to support a State that is based on law and order, that is at peace with its own people and its neighbours and that is a solid force for security and stability in the region. This in turn will improve Iraq's Arab, regional and world relations and foster its active return to the international community.

The real danger currently facing Iraq is outside interference in its internal affairs. The forces of such interference have committed the worst crimes against innocent Iraqis from many segments of society — men, women, children and the elderly. In an attempt to derail the security and stability achieved in Iraq during 2008 and 2009, they have recently engaged in a series of criminal bombings and terrorist attacks, the most recent of which were the Bloody Wednesday explosions of 19 August 2009, which targeted the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Finance — sovereign institutions of the country. These attacks killed many innocent victims, including many Government employees, as well as foreign administrators and diplomats.

These criminal acts claiming such large numbers of victims have reached the level of genocide and crimes against humanity, which are subject to punishment under international law. We believe that acts at this level of organization, complexity and magnitude could not have been planned, funded and implemented without the support of external forces and parties. Indeed, preliminary investigations and evidence indicate the involvement of external parties in these attacks.

Therefore, the Government of the Republic of Iraq wishes to place this important matter before the Secretary-General. Because of the nature and scope of the crimes committed, which require an investigation beyond Iraq's jurisdiction, we request the Security Council to form an international independent investigation commission to refer those responsible to a special international criminal court. The Iraqi

Government found itself obliged to turn to the United Nations to protect its people and stop the haemorrhaging of innocent Iraqi lives. We seek the international community's support and assistance in establishing an independent international commission to investigate the crimes of terrorism against the Iraqi people and to label those crimes as genocide.

We look forward to improved cooperation and coordination with neighbouring countries and other concerned States to protect Iraq's borders, exchange information, coordinate efforts, and to thwart groups that support terrorism and work against Iraq under any cover.

We are currently working towards the settlement of issues regarding Iraq vis-à-vis the Security Council; these were inherited from the former regime and led to commitments which we are attempting to meet. Iraq will continue to work with relevant parties and stakeholders at the United Nations to reach a settlement satisfactory to all parties and without prejudice to our obligations under Security Council resolutions.

As a result of major positive developments that have taken place in Iraq since the fall of the former regime and the removal of the dictatorship, the current situation is fundamentally different from the situation that existed when the Security Council adopted resolution 661 (1990).

Along with the adoption of Security Council resolution 1859 (2008) and the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 5 of that resolution (S/2009/385), this shows that the time has come for the Security Council to act in response to the Secretary-General's report pursuant to the aforementioned resolution, and on the basis of its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It should review resolutions relevant to Iraq adopted under Chapter VII, starting with resolution 661 (1990), with a view to restoring Iraq's international standing.

Here, I must point out that since the collapse of the former regime in 2003, Iraq has been eager to respect international legitimacy and to deal with Security Council resolutions relevant to Iraq and to the situation between Iraq and brotherly Kuwait with the highest degree of responsibility and respect.

The current Iraqi Government inherited political and financial burdens and difficult commitments from

the former regime through dozens of resolutions issued against the former regime because of its domestic practices and foreign policies. The Iraqi people are still bearing the consequences. After more than six years of hard and continuous work with the United Nations and its agencies, and within the framework of international and bilateral cooperation, Iraq has proven its desire and determination to return to the international community with all its resources and capabilities.

Therefore, because the situation which necessitated the adoption of the aforementioned resolutions no longer exists, we request a clear resolution by the Security Council to terminate all resolutions issued under Chapter VII which affected the sovereignty of Iraq and gave rise to financial obligations that are still binding on Iraq.

We and the Iraqi people look forward to the day when Iraq is released from Chapter VII sanctions. In this regard, I must point to the positive role of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in providing advice and assistance. The promotion of mutual endeavours and cooperation between Iraq and the United Nations, and improved results of that cooperation in many fields, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1770 (2007) and other resolutions, require that the United Nations agencies and institutions step up their presence in Iraq, undertake field activities and re-open their offices in Baghdad, as other diplomatic missions have done.

The Iraqi Constitution sets the basic principles of Iraq's foreign policy, which focus on good-neighbourliness, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, the peaceful settlement of disputes and establishing international relations based on common interests and respect of Iraq's international obligations. These are the established principles of Iraq's foreign policy.

On this basis, we seek to establish the best possible relations with other Arab and Islamic countries and are committed to the decisions of the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Accordingly, we endorse and support the struggle of the Palestinian people to uphold their inalienable rights, including the right to establish the State of Palestine on the land of Palestine.

We are also working to implement the legitimate international resolutions concerning the return of occupied Arab land. We consider the Arab Peace

Initiative to be a practical step in the right direction towards resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict in order to achieve security, peace and stability in the Middle East. We call for the Middle East to be made a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, so as to promote opportunities to achieve peace and security in the region.

In this context, we call upon all States that have not yet acceded to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to do so and to be bound by its provisions. Following years of isolation during the previous regime, Iraq seeks to form a new integrated economic partnership with the international community through the International Compact with Iraq. The Iraqi Government, in cooperation with the United Nations, is working towards convening the second review conference, to be held in Baghdad next November. We will seek the greatest degree of international participation at the conference, following on from the success of the first review conference, held in Stockholm last year.

The current political process in Iraq is aimed at building a federal, democratic and unified Iraq where the Iraqi people work under constitutional institutions, the rule of law, protection of human rights and full respect for all segments of society. We attach key importance to our ability and potential, as a country rich in natural and human resources, to achieve these goals.

However, at this most critical stage, we need political and economic support and international cooperation to gain firm footing that will enable us to move towards a future where we will be able not only to develop our country and our people but also to cooperate with the international community in achieving peace, security and sustainable development for all peoples.

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

Mr. Jalal Talabani, President of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Al Hadji Yahya Jammeh, President of the Republic of the Gambia

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

Al Hadji Yahya Jammeh, President of the Republic of the Gambia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Al Hadji Yahya Jammeh, President of the Republic of the Gambia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Jammeh: I would like first of all to thank almighty Allah for granting us yet another opportunity for a gathering of world leaders. My delegation would like to thank President Obama, the Government and people of the United States of America, and the leadership of the United Nations for their warm welcome and the facilities placed at our disposal since our arrival.

Permit me also to congratulate Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann on his inspiring leadership and on conducting the affairs of the sixty-third session so well. By the same token, I extend warm felicitations to Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this important sixty-fourth session. He has the full support of my delegation. Our special thanks go to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his stewardship and the commitment he has shown to the welfare of humanity, particularly of Africa.

"Effective responses to global crises: strengthening multilateralism and dialogue among civilizations for international peace, security and development", the theme adopted for this year's session, is indeed apt and relevant. It calls on every nation, big or small, to adopt multilateralism and dialogue in fostering international partnership on all matters of common concern surrounding global peace and development.

The complexities of today's world are such that no nation can successfully confront them alone. Some issues cannot even be resolved by regional groups acting independently. Much can be achieved only when we all collaborate and work together within the framework of multilateralism based on mutual

understanding, respect and, above all, sincerity, strong commitment and universal justice under the same rule of law and equity.

Our global body, the United Nations, has indeed adopted countless resolutions, which, if implemented to the letter, would have made this world a better place for all humankind and indeed other creatures on our planet. Unfortunately, there are some Member States that block well-meaning resolutions necessary for the maintenance of world peace and even question or disregard with impunity resolutions adopted by this body.

As long as this continues to be the order of the day, the United Nations will remain united in name only, unable to achieve in full the fundamental objectives for which it was established. The modus operandi of the Organization therefore needs urgent reforms to ensure that such impunity is eliminated and that the principle of equality among nation States, irrespective of their geopolitical size, location, economic circumstances, race or religion is safeguarded. Double standards have no place in the United Nations.

There cannot be peace and security in the absence of justice for all. There cannot be justice in the face of abject poverty characterized by hunger, starvation, disease and a lack of basic social services as a result of exploitation. There cannot be justice if there is merciless exploitation, suppression and criminal invasion of sovereign States. There cannot be peace if there is no development as a result of marginalization, injustice and racism. Unfortunately, injustice, racism, merciless exploitation and marginalization, especially as inflicted on developing nations by developed nations, are the order of the day.

Africa and Africans are the poorest of the poor, despite the fact that the African continent is the world's richest in terms of mineral and other natural resources. The sad truth is that, despite the fact that the African continent is the source of 90 per cent of the precious minerals, gemstones and strategic raw materials for the industrialized North, we Africans are the poorest of the poor.

It is no fault of ours if we Africans are poor today. This situation has been brought about by the perennial invasions of the locusts and their permanent presence in Africa. They devour 90 per cent of our useful resources, from agricultural and mineral to flora

and fauna. These locusts are present in all resource-rich African countries today. This devastating permanent invasion is exacerbated by another destructive phenomenon — the permanent drought that affects all African countries without exception. We cannot do anything about these two deadly scourges of the African continent. In the case of the locusts, they are protected by a one-sided international treaty imposed on all third-world countries, not only Africa. As for the drought, it is even worse, since no irrigation system in Africa can eradicate it.

The locusts I am talking about are the multinational Western companies that exploit our natural resources and agricultural produce, taking 95 per cent of their financial value and leaving us, the owners of the resources, with 5 per cent or less at most. Is it not interesting that, with respect to the mining of African mineral resources, only four African countries receive more than a 3 per cent royalty from these multinational mining companies? The rest receive only a 3 per cent royalty or even less. In the case of petroleum exploitation, few African countries receive above a 15 per cent royalty.

There is nothing African countries can do about this because these locusts have an absolute monopoly of the technologies used in the extractive industries. The treaty that makes it impossible for us to do anything about it is called globalization, which means the exploitation of poor third-world countries' resources by the rich first-world countries. With regards to the drought — that is, the debt burden — very few rich countries have cancelled the debt owed them by third-world countries. This excruciating burden of debt consumes 80 per cent of the 3 to 5 per cent left by the multinational companies.

Our agricultural produce, such as tea, coffee and cocoa, is bought at prices fixed by the buyers, in most cases at an average price of less than \$1 per kilo. The same produce is then sold at more than \$15 per kilo when processed. Thus, for every kilogram of our agricultural produce worth \$15 on the Western market, we get only \$1. How can Africa develop and emerge from this abject poverty?

African resources have been looted continuously from the eleventh century to date. Everything in Africa that the locusts set their eyes on is looted even today. Even dead bodies have not been spared by the locusts. Graves were and are being desecrated and human

bodies called mummies have been stolen from Africa. In such a situation, where even Africans in their graves are not spared by these rampaging locusts, who in his right mind could expect us in Africa to develop and become rich? In Africa, "R.I.P." on a tombstone, which normally means "Rest In Peace", has never been respected. "R.I.P." really means "Respected If Poor" — that is, the body in the tomb will rest only if it was not buried with any precious jewellery.

The United Nations must come to the rescue of Africa. Otherwise, we Africans stand ready to liberate ourselves from this eternal bondage at any cost. From now on, the African Union will work towards ensuring that African nations and our farmers receive their rightful share of our God-given natural and agricultural resources. We will no longer accept less than 65 per cent of the proceeds from our natural resources.

We Africans have been suffering for too long at the hands of Westerners and we will put an end to this. It is African sweat, blood, tears and natural resources that have built the North throughout almost five centuries of merciless and racist exploitation that continues today. Enough is enough. Instead of being respected, we are being called all sorts of names and given all sorts of unsolicited titles — dictators, corrupt leaders, failed States and even rogue States.

We, the new generation of African leaders, will seek to put an end to this humiliating, degrading and racist treatment by any means necessary. The world will not live in peace and security as long as this dehumanizing and racist status quo continues to prevail with regard to the continent of Africa and to Africans. We have been forced to endure this for far too long and now we are going to put an end to it, as we have ended apartheid in South Africa, by force if necessary. We will defend our humanity, our dignity, our resources, our interests and our culture from this moment forward.

HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis are killer diseases. While I would like to reiterate my delegation's support for the work of the Global Fund in fighting these diseases, I wish to call for concerted efforts to mobilize resources to support international research on traditional medicine and alternative disease treatment programmes. These traditional systems are in most instances more cost-effective, yet they have been abandoned due to the sort of criticism that come from multinationals threatened that certain traditional

breakthroughs would be detrimental to their corporate existence and interests. These multinationals value their monetary gains more than human life. They should not be allowed to hold humanity to ransom. Their insatiable appetite for massive wealth at any cost has pushed them to the point of blindness, insensitivity to human suffering and the loss of human life in the developing world, especially in Africa.

With regard to international peace and security, my delegation calls once again for stronger and more honest international cooperation and dialogue in addressing conflict prevention, the peaceful resolution of disputes and respect for the cultural values, norms and ways of life of others. We must respect the fact that humanity was created to be diverse, just as planet Earth has different regions, each with its own diverse climatic and ecological system. Therefore, there is bound to be diversity in the colour of our skin, diversity in the way we live and differences in our beliefs. Diverse as we may be, we are part and parcel of the one human family created by the one and only God, Allah. If we accept the principle that we are all human beings equal before the only God that created us, and that differences in religion and skin colour do not make one person less human than another, then we will all live in perfect peace and harmony in this global village called the world.

The problem is that some play God and believe that, by virtue of the colour of their skin, they are better than the rest of humanity and therefore should dictate to them how they should live and how they should worship God. They impose their value systems on the rest of humanity. This unacceptable dictatorship is the source of all the world's major conflicts and a contributing factor to persistent threats to world peace.

Racism is on the rise. Extremist hate-mongers are increasing in number and rising in rank. Instead of being condemned as criminals and terrorists, they are labelled the far right, neo-Nazis or supremacists, and tolerated and even encouraged by the same Powers that would happily bomb them back to the Stone Age if they were Muslim, black African or Asian. As long as this status quo persists, peace and security will continue to be an elusive dream as people, rich or poor, Muslim or non-Muslim, black or Asian, are bound to defend their human dignity at any price.

My delegation therefore calls for a united front against this dictatorship of a few over the rest of

humanity. And in the interest of our collective security, the United Nations should see to the total elimination of racism and hatred in all their forms, whatever it takes, so that we can bequeath to the generations of humanity yet unborn a very peaceful and prosperous world devoid of destitution, exploitation and marginalization.

In this context, my delegation would like to see a speedy resolution of the plight of the Palestinians. We call on the State of Israel to accept and respect the two-State solution that the international community has so clearly articulated without preconditions. We also urge the Security Council to ensure that its resolutions are respected by all States and enforced to the letter and spirit by the United Nations, and not to allow certain States to choose not only to ignore these resolutions, but to violate them with impunity, while other States face drastic and devastating military action if such resolutions are adopted against them and they so much as ask for clarification.

The State of Israel has ignored and violated all United Nations resolutions and conventions with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, not only with impunity, but also with the support and protection of certain world Powers, while other countries have paid a very high price merely for not having fully complied with a Security Council resolution. The Council should stop employing these unfortunate double standards. The United Nations must not be turned into an "animal farm".

Secondly, there is also the lingering issue of the Republic of China on Taiwan. My delegation holds the position that Taiwan should be invited to participate in all meetings and activities of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the International Civil Aviation Organization, among other bodies. Taiwan has a legitimate right to full membership of all United Nations specialized agencies, since even non-governmental organizations have either full membership or observer status in those agencies. Taiwan, a democratic State with a population of 23 million, is still being denied this fundamental human right, which the United Nations is supposed to uphold and protect in the first place.

My delegation also hereby calls on the United Nations to urge the United States of America to immediately and unconditionally lift its embargo on Cuba, in accordance with the wishes of more than

98 per cent of the membership of this body. That trade embargo continues to hurt Cuban women and children. The Cuban children born into those extreme hardships have committed no crime. The punishment of women and children because of political differences is a very serious violation of their rights.

Thirdly, my delegation renews its full support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Kingdom of Morocco. On the question of the Moroccan Sahara, we remain convinced that the proposal of the Moroccan Government to grant substantive autonomy to the Saharan region on the basis of the negotiations initiated by the Security Council and conducted and agreed by the parties would lead to a lasting and peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Finally, my delegation has been following keenly, but with deep dismay, the protracted negotiations on reform of the Security Council and a seeming connivance to prevent such reform. Africa would like to see Council reform undertaken, with balanced representation of all continents in the Council. My delegation therefore urges the President of the General Assembly to make more effort on the issue during the sixty-fourth session and to ensure that the continent of Africa has at least two permanent seats on the Security Council with full veto powers; if it does not, any resolution adopted by the Council will not be binding on Africa or any African Union member State by the end of 2010. Africa, a continent 10 times the size of Europe, does not have a single permanent seat on the Security Council, while Europe has more than one.

Africa has been subjected to discrimination, marginalization, exploitation and humiliation for a very long time. We Africans are no longer going to accept that status quo. We will put an end to it very soon. Members should take my words seriously.

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

Al Hadji Yahya Jammeh, President of the Republic of the Gambia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Fernando Lugo Méndez, President of the Republic of Paraguay

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

Mr. Fernando Lugo Méndez, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

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

President Lugo Méndez (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like at the outset to express my sincerest congratulations to Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. I also wish to express the thanks of the delegation of Paraguay to Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, President of the Assembly at its sixty-third session, for the progress made during his tenure.

I wish to begin by discussing what is most important: life. I cannot forget that, while the first paragraph of the preamble of the Charter of the United Nations states that our peoples, gathered together, are determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, the murderous onslaught of warplanes has continued to kill, mutilate and traumatize children in many civilian populations; in national coffers, amounts allocated to the death budget, glibly labelled "defence expenditures", continue to swell; and the military industries of the world's most powerful countries continue to reap the most lucrative benefits without any questions from politicians or any outrage on the part of the international news networks, in a game of perverse hypocrisy that is undermining our future with lies disguised as imposed truths.

We are very rigorous in estimating the high global costs of containing and providing public health insurance for pandemics such as H1N1 influenza. But we forget that our "defence expenditures", promoted by the great weapons industries from high, snow-covered summits of complacency, end up exchanging a container of vaccine for a rifle or a significant part of the public health budget for a warplane.

The United Nations was born to promote peace and to eradicate war. However, the voracious traffic in

arms continues to pass through our countries with its convoys of machine guns, missiles and grenades. Select regions of the world continue to be opportunistic enclaves for the trade of the merchants of death. Conflicts that mutilate, destroy and kill neighbours and condemn them forever to disgrace are at the same time opportunities for those who profit by, foment, create and manage the business of war.

Who questions the bloodstained bank notes that lie untouched in the vaults of the most powerful bank? We are face to face in this Hall, but truly we, the Governments of the countries of the world, rich, poor and very poor, are face to face with history. If we could just for one minute believe in the great tenets of equality and the shared rights of the human race, it would be time enough to ask ourselves the question: How much longer will the warlords continue to maximize their future income on the physical elimination of human beings?

My country, Paraguay, declares before the world that we are absolutely committed to peace. My Government is not prepared to spend the cost of a loaf of bread on weapons or war machinery. Any investment in defence must be the bare minimum compared to the social expenditures of the Government. Paraguay will not pawn its daily bread to dance the blind waltz of the warlords.

We believe that, in the context of globalization, there should be a call for the creation of a new world economic order capable of eliminating the sharp contrasts of the present and the clearly unequal access to the benefits of contemporary development. In that respect, I should like to describe the reality of life in Paraguay today. Our situation is essentially very similar to that of other countries that are also at the mercy of serious socio-economic problems.

A little more than a year ago, a historic transition occurred in Paraguay that left our economy in tatters — with backward and obsolete production mechanisms, weak democratic institutions rife with corruption, barely credible political parties and a lack of channels for civic participation in the decision-making process. Society was riven by serious contrasts, including about 40 per cent of the population living in poverty, tens of thousands of unemployed, high levels of migration, and unscrupulous minorities who lived well and sought to perpetuate their illegitimate privileges.

Those traits are shared by the majority of countries represented here, which, over and above their individual circumstances, like Paraguay are facing the threefold challenge of modernizing their economies, strengthening their participatory democracies, and eliminating serious and severe social inequities. As in Paraguay, in all poor countries the causes of the scourges we have suffered can be traced to the entrenchment of systems without justice or equality that ultimately widen the gaps between the rich countries and the poor.

We have sought in vain to mask the failures of the policies of recent decades with ostensibly technical terms that do little to describe the pathetic global reality. For example, we speak of least developed countries, middle-income countries and developing countries when the simple fact is that today we live in a world where there are countries that benefit until they can benefit no longer from world growth, while others are left behind and condemned to poverty.

Since the United Nations was established, our unavoidable obligation has been to proceed fearlessly to change that reality. We must give serious thought to a new world economic order with simple and specific aims. First, we must promote and strengthen small economies based on the fair and equitable distribution of the benefits of the production of wealth. We must put an end to inequitable trade relationships and develop effective policies of solidarity with those countries that endure adverse geographical or climate conditions.

Secondly, we must promote the healthy political development of all nations of the world and ensure that the most powerful countries do not interfere in local affairs, above all when these interventions seek to destabilize genuine democratic processes. I would like to clearly reaffirm my concern over events in the brotherly Republic of Honduras following the savage coup d'état that opened a gaping wound in the heart of our regional democracy.

Thirdly, we must promote peaceful solutions to international conflicts, firmly resolved to reduce the alarming levels of militarization and armament.

Fourthly, we must advocate an end to the harmful criminal attacks on the environment, including global warming and the natural disasters that occur with increasing frequency. We the peoples of the South are paying the growing and unsustainable social,

environmental and financial costs of climate change. In the meantime, those States that bear greatest responsibility for global warming are not shouldering their obligations or the growing socio-environmental debt that they generate. They are perpetuating and aggravating a clearly unjust situation that must be reversed. As a matter of justice and urgency, we must heed the calls of the most vulnerable people on the planet.

Fifthly and finally, we must promote gender equality and put an end to discrimination of all kinds based on sexual, political or ideological preferences or racial, ethnic or religious differences. In sum, it is a matter of developing a better and more humane world on the way towards a kinder living environment that is more supportive and much more in keeping with the future of humankind.

I am fully aware of the scope of the challenge that I am suggesting. I am also completely aware of the difficulties that we will encounter in this epic fight, but in the twenty-first century we cannot continue to overlook an in-depth and open debate on realities of concern.

I do not in any way underestimate the relevant role that the United Nations has played in its relatively short existence in promoting world peace and equitable social development, but we must not ignore the decades of failure with regard to comprehensive modernization, much less fail to creatively and resolutely make use of the greatest world forum of today.

There is no time to lose. Historical justice and redress of the rich countries to the poor ones must be a priority on the agenda of the United Nations. In order for the United Nations to meet that important goal, we must support the General Assembly's adoption of the necessary reforms, so as to reaffirm its inherent nature as a representative, democratic and equitable organ. We must uphold the precedence of its bodies over other internal organs of the Organization, such as the Security Council, in order to underscore the processes that will help build that greatly desired social justice.

The Security Council, as the organ entrusted with the maintenance of world peace, must also be reformed, not only so as to give it greater legitimacy by increasing its representativeness, but also so as to adopt new working methods to reflect a new multi-centred world order, founded on relations of

cooperation, solidarity and peace, in which the community and human dignity are at the centre of every decision.

It is difficult to say this in such a hallowed Hall but it is worth recalling that, at this very moment, thousands of people are dying of hunger in the world that we shape. The ease with which television news switches between pictures of pitiful children overpowered by appalling hunger and figures for the brutal arms business of the industrialized countries exposes human indifference.

Once and for all, we must believe in — and create — a different planet that is able to retrieve its vast natural wealth, having put an end to the terrible havoc wrought by petty interests. We must believe in a fairer and more balanced international economic system, in which the huge discrepancies are a thing of the past. I believe in the great solidarity of human beings. I believe in the dreams of great leaders who defiantly changed the world. I believe in Jesus Christ, in Gandhi and in Martin Luther King.

Before ending my comments, I would like to take this opportunity to set out some clear positions on pressing matters that affect us.

First, I would like to say that the economic crisis that began in the major Powers and spread worldwide has had serious consequences in all countries. It has brought about a rapid destruction of accumulated wealth. Unemployment has risen to unprecedented levels. The number of poor has increased. The crisis has jeopardized dozens of democratic political processes.

Secondly, I would like to resolutely state that the violent rupture in the constitutional process in Honduras is a tremendous setback for the re-democratization of Latin America. Those involved in the coup who dealt a resounding blow to the honourable face of the continent's democracy are responsible for the human sacrifices and the tremendous social unrest that is taking place. I would like to state my explicit solidarity and that of my people with Manuel Zelaya and the people of Honduras, who are bravely standing up to the effects of the coup.

Thirdly, I would ask the peoples and the Governments represented here to vigorously condemn the trade embargo that the largest economy in the

world imposes on Cuba — another intolerable chapter that, while it lasts, undermines the credibility of any discussion on pluralism, tolerance and humanism in these forums. We have complete faith in a new vision that breaks with the past and its uncompromising divisions. We believe that the hopes of Latin America and the Caribbean with regard to the humanistic approach towards Cuba of the new leadership of the most powerful country on Earth will be met sooner than later.

Fourthly and lastly, I would like to state open concern about the sinister currents circling in the world with the unbridled arms race that can in no way be justified and can only be welcomed by the industries of death and barbarity. We must defuse the tensions that foster that interest in weapons and we must urgently clarify the elements that obscure the prospect for peace throughout the world.

I reaffirm the commitment of my small and humble country to supporting any and all initiatives that seek to build a better world for future generations.

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

Mr. Fernando Lugo Méndez, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mohamed Nasheed, President of the Republic of Maldives

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

Mr. Mohamed Nasheed, President of the Republic of Maldives, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

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

President Nasheed: I should like to begin by extending to His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki my delegation's warmest congratulations on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its

sixty-fourth session. I assure him of the full support and cooperation of my delegation. I also take this opportunity to express our most profound appreciation to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, for the exemplary manner in which he guided our work at the sixty-third session.

I should also like to record my delegation's heartfelt gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his inspiring leadership and dedication in promoting the noble principles and ideals of this Organization.

This is the first time the General Assembly has been addressed by a democratically elected President of the Maldives. I am extremely pleased to be here. I have spent many of the past General Assembly sessions locked in a hot, humid, damp cell with my hands shackled and my feet bound, imprisoned for my conviction that the 300,000 people of the Maldives should be free from fear, free from want and free to live their lives in liberty and in dignity.

I would like to thank the international community for its invaluable support in securing our democratic transition. Reformers in the Maldives and our friends in the United Nations should feel justifiably proud that our island home was able to mark last year's first International Day of Democracy in the best possible way: by throwing off a 30-year-old autocracy and securing a smooth, peaceful and democratic transfer of power.

Just as the international community played a key role in securing the Maldives' democratic transition, so, I hope, will it play a role in the even more difficult task of making sure our democracy becomes a permanent feature rather than a passing illusion. All of us who care about the Maldives and believe in democracy bear an enormous responsibility to ensure that the beliefs we fought for are set in stone rather than written in sand.

There are three areas in which the Maldives seeks the help of the international community. The first is continued collaboration in democracy-building. We must work together to strengthen the various pillars of a democratic society, namely protection of human rights, good governance, independent oversight bodies, a free press and civil society. The Maldives has made enormous progress on all of those pillars, but much remains to be done. My sense is that the necessary foundations are now in place. The separation of powers

has been established by constitutional reform. A range of independent agencies and commissions have now been set up. We have a thriving independent media. Nevertheless, several crucial challenges still remain, and we look forward to the support of the international community as we move to meet these challenges. In particular, I would like to stress the importance of ensuring the equality of women and men, not just in name, but in practice.

The second way in which the international community can help consolidate democracy and the rule of law in the Maldives is by promoting a conducive economic environment. As a small, open market economy that is heavily dependent on tourism and fishery exports, the Maldives has suffered badly from the current global recession. Moreover, since assuming office, we have come to understand that, in the run-up to last year's election, the former regime engaged in highly irresponsible economic policies in the hope of buying their way to victory. Add to this picture our continued efforts to recovery from the 2004 tsunami, our impending graduation from the least developed country category and the high oil and food prices of recent years, and the scale of the economic challenge facing the new Government becomes very apparent.

The new Government is determined to confront this challenge with honesty and with vigour. In consultation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, we have embarked on a programme of major economic reform designed to reduce the bloated public sector, privatize public utilities and promote private enterprise and trade. Yet the scale of the problems we face means we cannot succeed on our own. We therefore look to our friends in the international community to help us get back on our feet. We are very grateful for the support extended to us by the IMF and the Indian Government, to name but two of our partners. However, more is needed if democracy and human rights are to coexist with economic stability and prosperity.

The third way in which the international community can and must help the Maldives consolidate democracy and establish a secure, prosperous and equitable society is by taking urgent and effective action to tackle climate change. The threats posed to the Maldives from climate change are well known. Every beach lost to rising seas, every house lost to storm surges, every reef lost to increasingly warm

waters, every job lost as fish stocks dwindle and every life lost to more frequent extreme weather events will make it harder and harder to govern the country, until a point is reached when we must consider abandoning our homeland.

I therefore call on you, the leaders of the world, to protect the future of frontline countries like the Maldives by reaching an ambitious and effective agreement at December's United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) conference in Copenhagen which seeks to limit average global temperature increases to less than 1.5 centigrade degrees above pre-industrial levels. To do otherwise would be to sign a death warrant for the 300,000 Maldivians.

But the Maldives is determined to do what we can to survive. We are going to be the first country to go carbon neutral, in 10 years' time. In order to do that, we are determined to formulate a survival kit: a carbon-neutral manual that would enable others to replicate our actions, in order that all of us together might just about save ourselves from climate catastrophe.

As part of our efforts to achieve a unified voice, I will be inviting some of the most vulnerable States affected by climate change to the Maldives. We hope that that November summit will reinforce our determination to leave no stone unturned to ensure our survival.

I should now like to touch on a number of other important issues which are of enormous concern to us. The Maldives abhors terrorism in all its forms and is determined to stand shoulder to shoulder with all countries in facing down this menace. Events over the past year in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, our neighbours and partners in South Asia, show us that victory in this fight will not be easy to achieve. They also show us that to effectively tackle terrorism we must reaffirm and not dilute our commitments to human rights, democracy, the rule of law and good governance.

While we applaud recent efforts to reform and revitalize the United Nations, we believe that such reforms cannot be successful or complete without the much-anticipated and much-needed reform of the Security Council. We strongly believe that the third round of intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform must produce tangible results. I call

upon the Assembly to complete this task during the sixty-fourth session and come to agreement on increases in both the permanent and non-permanent membership of the Council. In terms of composition, we believe that the geo-political realities of the contemporary world must be duly reflected in the membership of the Council. Therefore, we support the inclusion of India and Japan as permanent members.

The new Government of Maldives is determined to pursue friendly and mutually respectful relations with every country represented in this Hall. However, any friendship must include a willingness to be frank with one another and to object to behaviour not befitting a sovereign State.

We believe dialogue and constructive engagement serve the cause of peace better than ostracism and isolation. The new Government in Maldives will look to renew relations with Israel and to use the relationship to reiterate our support for an independent and sovereign Palestinian homeland, in conformity with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

Maldives is seeking election to the Human Rights Council during the current session of the General Assembly because we firmly believe in the universality of human rights and their critical importance to achieving the noble goals of the United Nations Charter.

Standing at this rostrum, I must admit how, as a prisoner, I was inspired by the courage and vision of Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma. Today I would like to echo the call of the Secretary-General for her immediate and unconditional release along with all other political prisoners. I also reiterate my strident support for the work assigned to Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, the United Nations Special Envoy to Burma, and say a prayer for political prisoners everywhere.

In conclusion, I must say that the most critical test so far of the resoluteness of the international community to save itself will come during Mr. Treki's watch as President of this Assembly: the Copenhagen meeting in December. We must prime ourselves to succeed at that conference. Between now and then, we must all use every opportunity, every debate, and every encounter to achieve that goal. It is imperative that we succeed. If we want to save the world, I suggest that saving Maldives is a very good starting point.

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

Mr. Mohamed Nasheed, President of the Republic of Maldives, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Álvaro Colom Caballeros, President of the Republic of Guatemala

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

Mr. Álvaro Colom Caballeros, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

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

President Colom Caballeros (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to salute Mr. Ali Treki, our President and a distinguished diplomat. I wish him much success in leading the deliberations of this session. At the same time, I would like to express our admiration and respect for Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, who led the Assembly at its last session.

My presence highlights our commitment to multilateralism in general and to the United Nations in particular. I salute Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and reiterate to him our appreciation for his management. Allow me to say how the Guatemalan people appreciate and value the presence of the United Nations. We try to reciprocate, in part with our participation in various peacekeeping operations.

I would like to touch briefly on some topics that are at the heart of our concerns but that at the same time have an important international dimension.

First, like the other countries of our region, Guatemala has been strongly impacted by the international economic and financial crisis. This fact is reflected in the value and volume of our exports, in the level of family remittances and especially in the level of economic activity, employment and tax collection.

In more general terms, the crisis has made it more difficult for us to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

To make matters worse, our efforts to mitigate the impact of the crisis have been partially annulled by an irregular climatic event, as we are suffering the worst drought in the last thirty years. This phenomenon has affected the harvest of basic grains and has had a serious impact on the poorest regions of our country. Because of this, I decided to declare a state of emergency. The disaster is not just because of the drought, but also an historic disaster, striking the poorest people in our country, whom our Government is aiming to lift from extreme poverty.

This situation illustrates one of the manifold manifestations of climate change occurring in diverse regions, and it comes on top of the burden of the regressive effects we experienced during the first half of 2008, in the double crises of energy and food, followed by the aforementioned effects of the economic crisis. Unfortunately, the adverse effects of this situation disproportionately affect those sectors of the population with less capacity and less income. The picture is complicated by the fact that the imperative of the State to address the people's needs is severely restricted by fiscal considerations.

Nevertheless, we are not sitting on our hands, far from it. We have surged forward with a dynamic and strong social cohesion programme. Today, more than half a million families are covered by programmes in the poorest and most excluded regions of the country. Today, I note with real satisfaction that in only 18 months since our Administration began, our health indicators — all of the health indicators — have improved to an extraordinary extent.

Education indicators have improved. For example, this year enrolment increased by 37 per cent in secondary education, by 9 per cent in primary education and by 27 per cent in preschool. Now we have the problem of schools that cannot cope with the number of children, but we prefer that problem to not having children in school. This means that there is an urgent need to build more than 14,400 classrooms over the next 14 months, but we prefer that to having children on the streets or working.

The international cooperation that we have received in this effort is important, and we would like to recognize here the support of the Inter-American

Development Bank, the World Bank and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration, which have helped us with our efforts to build social cohesion and to support the indigenous people who constitute our population.

I wish to sincerely express our total conviction with regard to the change that we all must make. It is a change of attitude, a change of will, as President Lula said yesterday. It is important that we see the birth of this new international order, this new order of justice and equity.

The drought in Guatemala exacerbated abject poverty, but a solution to drought will not resolve the poverty situation in the country, because it is structural and historical, resulting from 50 years of neglect of rural populations and our indigenous peoples.

We will follow with interest the deliberations of the Group of 20, which is meeting this very day in Pittsburgh. We trust that that exclusive forum will also take into account the concerns of countries with small and medium-sized economies. In addition, we support the efforts being promoted within the multilateral international financial institutions and the United Nations to improve their capacity to help developing countries and to address the crisis. That is why our country is seriously promoting the capitalization of the Inter-American Development Bank and our regional financial organization, the Central American Bank for Economic Integration.

I should like to mention the lack of security in our country. Our country is being assaulted by organized crime, and our Government, within the space of a year and a half, has begun a merciless war against it. In this forum, I wish to express my appreciation for the magnificent cooperation and support that we have received, particularly from Colombia, Panama and Mexico, to attack and staunch the scourge of drug trafficking and to begin a process of eliminating it.

I also wish to inform the Assembly with great satisfaction that, in terms of seizures of cocaine alone, we have seen a 700 per cent increase compared with the same period under the previous Government; seizures of marijuana have risen fifteenfold, and poppy eradication has increased by 300 per cent during the same period. Our efforts against drug trafficking are definitive and resolute, but we recognize that it is a phenomenon that must be attacked at the regional level. That is why we are working closely with the

fraternal country of Mexico and our Central American brothers to address it directly and regionally.

The problem of drug trafficking has had a serious impact on Guatemala. For more than eight years, the country was handed over to organized crime — specifically, drug trafficking — leaving territories and trafficking corridors more unprotected than ever before. The national army was reduced beyond the level mandated by peace agreements, and territorial control was suspended. The National Civilian Police were seriously compromised by drug traffickers, becoming corrupt and dishonest.

However, thanks to the United Nations and the presence of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala — a United Nations exercise in Guatemala, unique in the world — we have support and advice for our Public Ministry, and our prosecutors and are making significant progress. For the first time in Guatemala's history, one of the drug-trafficking bosses is a fugitive, and we will capture him very soon. The notorious drug-trafficking families have never been sent such a strong message.

We have also imprisoned 10 murder suspects connected to the 10 May crisis. I take this opportunity to thank this forum, the United Nations, for the unrestricted support provided to my Government during the crisis. I am confident that the efforts of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala will reach the masterminds of that despicable crime and that the truth will be found and justice done. What could have become a technical coup d'état has become a genuine example of justice and truth. I am sure that my Government, which has ensured the total independence of this investigation, will get to the heart of the matter and that the truth will soon be found.

We have worked hard on the security of our citizens, and I recognize that it is a long and complicated process. Here again, the assistance of the International Commission is essential, and we believe that this experience will be effectively used by our Public Ministry, which has already begun the process of re-engineering and restructuring itself.

I should like to mention the case of Honduras, our fraternal neighbouring country. From the very beginning, Guatemala has supported a return to democracy and the rule of law in Honduras. Nowhere in the world, much less in Central America — where

democracy has cost us so many lives and where so many deaths and, in the case of Guatemala, massacres, have affected us — can we allow a President to be deposed at gunpoint and fail to use democratic and legal mechanisms. We will accept nothing less than the return of President Zelaya to power so that the elections in Honduras can be carried out legitimately and our Honduran brothers can soon live in peace and tranquillity. Our Government has been unsparing in its support for President Zelaya, and I am sure that we will see Central America return to its natural rhythm of integration, democratic development and democratic security.

I should also like to highlight our adherence to nearly all human rights mechanisms, principles and norms within and outside Guatemala. We are a multi-ethnic, pluri-cultural and multilingual nation. We have a beautiful 108,000-square-kilometre country with 23 cultures and 23 peoples sharing the blessed land that God gave us. That is why we are committed to promoting the strengthening of the participation of all the indigenous peoples of Guatemala in terms of our daily life, development, peace and security.

We have adopted a law on free access to information, with very few problems, which has guaranteed free access to all State information except that related to security matters and foreign relations. That is why we wish to stress the need to strengthen the mechanisms for human rights and arms control. I believe that countries have the freedom to arm themselves for defence, but I do not agree that our countries should be arms-trafficking corridors. I also believe that countries exporting armaments should be more careful and have more controls and standards with regard to the entire weapons trade. Our country, my Government, has increased its seizures of illegal weapons almost tenfold, but we still have much work ahead of us. Meanwhile, many innocent people are dying as a result of drug trafficking, smuggling and organized crime.

Let us make progress in the definition of the concept of the responsibility to protect our respective populations from genocide and war crimes, which we have already endured; ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, from which Guatemala suffered greatly for 36 years.

I wish to express my total conviction that the United Nations must be constantly renewed and

adapted to today's needs. Our civilization is changing. This is a crisis not just of energy or finance or climate; it is a crisis of values, of principles. The financial crisis is a crisis of values and principles, and we are paying for it with the poverty of our people. That is why we need better adaptation of the United Nations mechanisms so we can really get to the bottom — *al grano*, as we say in Guatemala — of the problems of poverty and inequality, to strengthen democracy and the rule of law.

I have the honour to be familiar with the Mayan cosmic vision, and I am quite sure that in 2012, the transformation of civilization it prophesied will begin. This is a very ancient prophecy and it will be fulfilled, just as all the others have been. We will enter an era of great humanity and great human strength. And America is also changing. If you look at the Americas today, they have nothing to do with the way they were 10 years ago. Democracy, although it has problems, has improved and been strengthened, thank heaven.

We support United Nations and Organization of American States (OAS) resolutions with regard to Honduras, and I am also happy to affirm that we have made very concrete progress in honourably ending our historical dispute with our brother nation of Belize. In December, under the good offices of the OAS, both Governments signed a special agreement, which, prior to complying with the domestic ratification processes of our Congresses, commits us to seek a juridical settlement through the International Court of Justice. We hope that, through these internal procedures, we will be able to proceed to plebiscites in both countries, in order to put an end to the dispute with our brother country of Belize.

I would like to conclude with some very brief reflections on our Organization and its agenda for the future. I would like it to continue to give priority to the poor, those with limited incomes, children, young people living in the mountains of our countries who do not have access to health care, education or drinking water. The drought and the malnutrition we are seeing among our children in Guatemala are nothing more than the product of historical injustice. If all of us in the United Nations share in this fight to help those who have so little, I am sure that we will have more for everyone. The more we support those who have less, the more we will all have in the end. I hope that this Assembly session reaches a fruitful conclusion.

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

Mr. Álvaro Colom Caballeros, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. René Préval, President of the Republic of Haiti

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

Mr. René Préval, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

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

President Préval (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to convey my congratulations to the President of the General Assembly and to wish him very fruitful work.

Can you imagine a General Assembly where the representatives of States and Governments who follow one another on this rostrum would bring us only good news, inform us that our world is doing better and that most development indicators are at their best level ever? We are very far indeed from such an ideal.

It would even seem that, in addition to numerous crises of all kinds — food, energy, financial and so forth — that are already exacting a very high toll on our populations, some of us must now get used to recurrent upheavals resulting from natural disasters. Each time, we have to rebuild the same ruined infrastructure; we have to restore the same productive capacities that have been swept away by cyclones and floods. And, for lack of sufficient resources, the reconstruction process is never launched in time. We find we are having to prepare for the return of these disasters even before our communities have recovered from the previous ones. This, evidently, is the new life cycle that vulnerable countries such as ours must be prepared for. With, of course, insufficient resources at their disposal.

This situation is no accident. It is the direct consequence of a development and governance model that nations recognized as powerful have imposed on the rest of the world for centuries: a development and governance model that is largely concerned with the welfare of money and too little with the welfare of people; a development model that, even in very rich countries, imposes a precarious existence on major sections of the population, which lack health care, decent housing and even a good education.

Why should the whole of humankind accept that half the inhabitants of our planet should live with these privations, in hunger and misery, with no prospect of improvement in their situation? Why should the whole of humankind accept that our planet should be endangered irresponsibly, that species should be condemned to extinction or that, through climate change, our populations should become more vulnerable to natural disasters merely because of selfish economic choices by a small minority of polluters?

What substance can we give to our membership in this human community that the United Nations seeks to champion? To paraphrase George Orwell, beyond a certain level of inequality, there is no common world anymore. The glaring inequalities that characterize our countries' situations are an obstacle to the formation of the great family that the United Nations should be.

The time has come to oppose the globalization of profit at any price, which has become the new credo, and to replace it with the globalization of solidarity, which alone will ensure the eradication of poverty, as required by this Assembly.

Here, I should reiterate to members that the true vehicle for peace, stability and security is development. The aid received by our countries will be ineffective and a source of great frustration for donors and beneficiaries unless it is part of a plan to create and develop the productive potential of our countries. That is the only way to put an end to the cycle of poverty and dependence.

Haitians, like many other peoples of the South, are a hardworking, clever and entrepreneurial people equipped with great resilience forged by dealing with daily setbacks and able to utilize to the extreme and optimize the scant resources made available to them. Our peoples yearn to mobilize that potential and that capacity to take the path of sustainable development.

Developing our countries is thus a possible endeavour. However, all the efforts under way could remain ineffective unless we are able to develop a new paradigm for international cooperation — a paradigm requiring that we transcend the logic of human assistance and recognize the capacity of poor peoples to engage in business and produce wealth, using the means and opportunities afforded them to strengthen their productive capacity. Without such a new vision, which breaks with the culture of perpetual humanitarian assistance, peace and stability will remain precarious and fleeting achievements.

Permit me to add a few words about Haiti, because my country is the focus of particular attention by the Security Council. Over the past three years, despite the negative effects of numerous international crises on our economy, significant progress has been made, in particular in the areas of security, respect for human rights, the investment climate, eliminating corruption and building a friendly society in which dialogue occupies a central place, supported and reported on by totally free and independent media. That progress must be deepened and expanded. That is why United Nations support is necessary for us.

In his report to the Security Council, the Secretary-General recommended that the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) be extended for another year. That proposal is most welcome, and we fully endorse it. We are convinced that the right balance among its military, police and administrative components will best place MINUSTAH to assist our country more effectively in consolidating an atmosphere of peace and stability, without making it indifferent to our struggle to rebuild and to reduce poverty and vulnerability. I thank the Secretary-General for having chosen Bill Clinton as his Special Envoy to our country. I also thank the former President, a friend of Haiti, for having agreed to help us.

Many summits organized under United Nations auspices produce resolutions and commitments that are consigned to oblivion or indifference when the time comes to implement them. It is our shared responsibility to work to ensure that this general debate is not pure ritual in which, from this lofty rostrum, we use rhetoric to share our ideas about major international issues, express our good intentions, make tempting promises and leave again without any real

desire to take appropriate measures to keep our commitments.

For example, will we accept the fact that the President of Honduras, José Manuel Zelaya, legitimately elected by his people, has been deposed by the military and that the many resolutions adopted by various regional organizations condemning that coup d'état remain dead letters? Similarly, every year for more than 15 years now, the General Assembly has adopted a resolution condemning the embargo against the Cuban people. The continuation of that embargo runs counter to all the values that we promote to make international trade a tool for human development. When will rhetoric be replaced by action?

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

Mr. René Préval, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal

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

Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

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

President Wade (*spoke in French*): We are meeting once again, but this time at a moment when humankind is facing many problems, each as difficult as the others, as if they had been planned to coincide: the agriculture crisis, the financial and economic crisis, environmental peril and tenacious, deadly diseases. Be that as it may, we are destined to prevail. There is simply no other option. We must and we can succeed. The numerous deliberations about these problems at all levels illustrate our increasing awareness of the dangers to us and succeeding generations.

Believing fundamentally as I do in the genius of humankind and its capacity for imagination and creativity in extricating itself from the most difficult situations, I am both optimistic and aware of the price that will have to be paid. This is what we are called on to do here and elsewhere. The only question is how to coordinate the numerous elements required to expedite the rescue mission.

Before going any further, however, I should like warmly to congratulate Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, who has been charged with guiding the work of this sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly. I have known Mr. Treki for a long time, and Senegal is delighted by his election and expresses its confidence in his human and professional qualities, which will bolster the success of his mission.

I also pay tribute to Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session, for his contributions to the effort to revitalize the Assembly. His commitment and dynamism are well known. I have admired his intelligence, his lively wit and the sensitivity he shows in his relations with others. To Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Senegal reiterates its support for his delicate task in the face of the many and urgent issues facing the Organization.

This sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly has begun at a time of multifaceted turmoil. The economic and financial crisis, the scale of which has surprised many observers, reveals above all the deadlock in contemporary economic theory. In highlighting the inadequacy of our analytical and predictive abilities, it calls for a broader sense of shared responsibility both for the management of its immediate effects and for the search for long-term responses. In seeking solutions, let us be careful not to make the mistake of falling back on received wisdom and ready-made answers. Be it in the sphere of the environment, political and economic governance or development, the world must find a new way of thinking and acting, and thereby address the need to change our outlook.

Having myself argued, often strongly, for the full participation of Africa in the conversation on world governance, I welcome the progressively expanded cooperative framework of the Group of Eight (G-8) and the Group of 20 (G-20). I only regret that my proposal to establish a shadow G-20, made up of the

world's greatest experts but open to all those who bring new ideas, has not yet been put into practice.

The President returned to the Chair.

Clearly, the world's heads of State, elected on the basis of political criteria, cannot miraculously transform themselves into universal polymaths. They must hold to their political and even strategic role, and rely on the superior knowledge of experts. It is through dialogue open to all that we will be able to grasp the diversity of our respective situations and apply real-world answers to real-world problems. It is therefore fitting that the theme of this sixty-fourth session should be "Effective responses to global crises: strengthening multilateralism and dialogue among civilizations for international peace, security and development".

The current challenges, both complex and global in nature, call strongly for innovative and concerted solutions if we are to succeed. That is especially true for problems of agriculture and food security. If we are to achieve on schedule Millennium Development Goal 1, to halve by 2015 the number of people suffering from hunger, we must put into practice a different approach to international cooperation, one based on support for agriculture instead of food assistance, which should be used only as an emergency response to exceptional circumstances.

The development of agriculture to promote sustainable food security in Africa necessarily involves water management, the availability of equipment, producers' access to inputs and a sound organization of chains of production, storage, processing and sales of agricultural products. That is why Senegal hopes that these essential questions — and others, such as the regulation of agricultural markets and scientific research to increase productivity — will take a prominent place on the agenda of the Summit of the World's Regions on Food Security, to be held in January 2010 in Dakar, and of the Global Partnership for Agriculture and Food Security proposed by the G-8.

Once the right conditions are in place, there is no reason why Africa should not be able to ensure its own food security. Better yet, its enormous land and water resources predispose the continent to become the world's breadbasket. To that end, however, we must avoid the vicious trap of ceding land to foreigners bearing millions of dollars. The G-8 quite rightly expressed its concern on this subject at its most recent summit in Italy. According to recent estimates, between

15 and 20 million hectares have changed hands over the past three years, primarily in Africa. We Africans should make it our vocation to become farmers tilling our own land rather than being agricultural labourers working for capital-rich foreign planters.

For its part, Senegal, as I have often said, cannot accept such a course, which would without doubt empty our countryside of newly impoverished millions, who would swell our slums and the ranks of those ripe for illegal emigration. On the other hand, if we exploit our mutually complementary circumstances, we of the North and the South can promote a win-win partnership in which investors and local communities join to develop African land without dispossession. Senegal has succeeded, in record time, in responding positively to the food crisis. For the second year in a row, our home-grown agricultural campaign for food and abundance, known as GOANA, has rewarded us with excellent results.

We intend to strengthen this food self-sufficiency option with the unionization of rural producers, on the model of Québec. To this end, we are currently setting up a green bank for farmers, fishers and livestock farmers, which will support financing of these sectors. This is a bold innovation, a green revolution that we want very much to see succeed.

At the global level, I believe that, beyond its adverse impacts, the current crisis has a silver lining insofar as it stimulates creativity, initiative and a fighting spirit. If the Secretary-General had not launched his emotional appeal at World Food Day in Rome two years ago, I might not have felt a challenge so great as to demand the invention of GOANA. And because the fate of our people is at stake, it is our primary responsibility to establish on our own the conditions necessary for a brighter future.

Internal efforts will continue to be futile without a healthy global environment rid of the speculative practices of the virtual economy and unjust asymmetric programmes, such as subsidies and other inequitable practices. In this context, non-oil-producing African countries continue to feel the full brunt of the increase in oil prices resulting from speculative practices that we cannot mitigate because they are controlled by the oil oligarchy. Economies such as ours, which had hitherto posted average growth rates of 5 per cent, have been brutally weakened by imported inflation.

For that reason, Senegal supports and encourages the dialogue between producers and consumers initiated by the International Energy Forum to improve transparency in the oil market and take effective measures against speculative practices that devastate the economies of importing States.

In implementing the “Wade formula”, I proposed a fund to fight poverty funded by voluntary contributions from African oil-producing States and oil companies working in Africa, based on the principle of shared social responsibility. The fund could be managed collectively or entrusted to the World Bank. Similarly, I welcome the extension of the Exogenous Shocks Facility to countries benefiting from the Policy Support Instrument.

The summit meeting on climate change confirmed a broadly shared conclusion. If we do not change our methods of production and consumption, the future of mankind itself will be in peril. We must admit that we have not taken sufficient action to reverse these negative trends. Nature subjects us daily to the adverse consequences of our own attacks against it in different ways, including floods, droughts, desertification and coastal erosion. These upheavals foreshadow even more devastating phenomena. International consensus is therefore urgently needed to save the planet. In order to survive, each of us must strive to behave more respectfully towards the environment and to create a world with fewer greenhouse gas emissions. According to the hopeful statement of the Secretary-General, we now find ourselves on the threshold of a new era — that of the green economy. Let us have the courage to cross the threshold for ourselves and for succeeding generations.

Africa for its part wishes to assume its share of responsibility in this necessary environmental rebirth. That is the essence of the Great Green Wall project that runs from Dakar to Djibouti. Shared by all countries it runs through, the Great Green Wall is 7,000 kilometres long and 15 kilometres wide, and Senegal has the responsibility of coordinating it on behalf of the African Union.

With the assistance of experts from all over the world, we have selected plants adapted to the fairly arid conditions prevailing in the Sahelian-Saharan zone. At the same time, we have decided to build water-collection basins along the entire length of the Great Green Wall, based on the model that we have

implemented in Senegal with some 250 basins. Every African State involved in the construction of the Great Green Wall organizes its implementation at the local level through a national agency. At the continental level, national agencies are coordinated by a pan-African Great Green Wall agency under the auspices of the African Union.

I cherish the hope that the United Nations will become involved in this project, which contributes to protecting the global environment, by mobilizing what might be called anti-desert soldiers along the lines of peacekeeping troops. Here, I pay tribute to the participation of Ivorian boys and girls who, although not directly impacted by desertification — Côte d’Ivoire being a country of forests — spontaneously participated in building the Senegalese section of the Great Green Wall in Senegal. They worked voluntarily, side by side with their comrades from Senegal. These young people, transcending the artificial borders created by colonization, are using self-determination to take ownership of the struggle for Africa’s future. This experience could serve as a prelude to the creation of a broad movement of “youth without borders” that unites young Africans from throughout the continent. They could be the heralds of various causes, such as the fight against HIV/AIDS, early marriage and female circumcision, as they in Senegal.

While we await foreign assistance, Senegal has already built nearly 527 kilometres of the Great Green Wall. The project is also under way in Mali, and Chad will follow in the near future.

Through the progressive restoration of the Saharan ecosystem, the Great Green Wall will contribute through greenhouse gas sequestration to the global fight against global warming. I thank the European Union for its pledged support, and I welcome in particular President Sarkozy’s initiative to deploy to this front — the only worthy front — soldiers to plant trees and build water-collection basins. I cherish the hope that this initiative will serve to inspire other States with the necessary human and material resources to support the Great Green Wall.

Given the severity of the situation, the environmental threat, in my opinion, should be considered a threat to international peace and security. If it were, we might consider allocating new international missions to national armies. In the manner of peacekeeping operations, Senegal proposes

the creation of a mechanism to save and restore the environment based on the voluntary commitment of armies through modalities to be determined.

In the framework of civilian and military activities, countries wishing to do so could mobilize contingents for specific periods to assist in implementing major environmental projects, such as the Great Green Wall, or what is referred to in Senegal as the Atlantic wall against coastal erosion.

In Senegal, we are currently creating along our coastline a concrete wall 3 to 4 metres deep and 40 centimetres wide built on an impermeable foundation to stop the maritime erosion that threatens many African countries. Its effectiveness is guaranteed. The only problem is the cost — \$1.5 million per kilometre. From Casablanca to Cotonou, representing some 5,000 kilometres of vulnerable coastline, the overall cost would be \$7.5 billion. Compared to expenditures often seen at the global level, it certainly is not much. Moreover, if mankind were to stop building lethal weapons for only three months and allocate the money thus saved to building the Atlantic wall, the threat to that part of Africa would be permanently removed.

For 16 years now, Security Council reform has been an important item on our agenda. It is a paradox that an Organization, universal in its mission, should remain deadlocked 64 years after its creation by the elitist nature of its principal body. The leader Al-Qadhafi summarized our position on that issue (see A/64/PV.3). As Africa is the only continent not represented among the permanent members, despite the fact that it's the focus of 70 per cent of the Council's work, that historic injustice must be corrected by granting the continent here and now, outside the context of overall reform, one seat with the right of veto that could be held by the Chairman-in-Office of the African Union. Let us ensure that this session is the one at which we finally solve the issue of Security Council reform so that we can focus our efforts on other important issues.

Those important issues still unfortunately include the tragic situation in the Middle East. While it recognizes the Israeli people's right to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders, Senegal resolutely supports the just and legitimate claim of the Palestinian people to a viable, free and

independent State. That claim is morally consonant with the right of peoples to self-determination.

However, in general, Senegal rejects violence in all its forms, whatever its origin. Israel's pursuit of illegal activities on Palestinian territory is counterproductive. The settlement, expropriation and lockdown of the territories are a serious obstacle to the negotiations process and delay the prospects of an era of peace for all peoples of the subregion. Senegal supports the vision of two States, Israeli and Palestinian, as recalled here yesterday by President Barack Obama (see A/64/PV.3).

Turning to the situation in Africa, Senegal welcomes the considerable progress made in the peaceful settlement of disputes and in the integration process towards establishing the United States of Africa. The accomplishment of African unity is the only viable answer to the challenges of globalization, the creation of large groupings and the redefinition of the rules of governance. It is also an essential condition for the establishment of lasting peace and stability on the continent.

Senegal continues to contribute to the settlement of disputes in Africa on the basis of that ideal of peace. I therefore welcome the normalization of the situation in our sister Republic of Mauritania following the Dakar Accord of June 2009. We should remember that the Accord was concluded with the support of the International Contact Group throughout the negotiation process. I reiterate my congratulations and my appreciation to all.

In the sister Republic of Guinea-Bissau, I welcome the gradual return to stability after the presidential elections, recognized and acknowledged by all as free and transparent. As a neighbour, Senegal reiterates its call for the convening of a donor conference in support of the courageous stabilization and development efforts of the people of Guinea-Bissau, through their new authorities.

On the other hand, the situation in the Republic of Guinea seems to me of greater concern. That country merits our full attention because it could fall into violence at any time. Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of Liberia, and I, in our capacity as goodwill neighbours, were in Conakry only two weeks ago. I reported back to the African Union, stressing the need for an ongoing presence in the field and for a dialogue with all stakeholders, including the army. In my view,

that is the only way to help restore the constitutional order in Guinea.

The ideal of peace, the primary *raison d'être* of our Organization, remains seriously threatened by extremism of all stripes, fuelled and perpetuated by ignorance, mistrust and the manipulation of religion. The need for dialogue between cultures and civilizations is all the more urgent on that account. The challenge today, in particular for the three revealed religions that share the same God, is to build on that common monotheistic pedestal a bridge of brotherhood that brings us closer and teaches us to live together again by sharing our common values and with respect for our differences.

As Chairman-in-Office of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, I reiterate once again the dedication of the Islamic ummah to dialogue for the mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence of peoples because Islam, in letter and spirit, is a religion of the happy medium and of peace that teaches, in all things, knowledge, moderation, reasonableness and respect for the freedom of worship.

Let us all agree to strive to learn to better understand each other, overcome mistrust and fight the obscurantist ideas that give rise to tensions and confrontation. A world living in peace in the twenty-first century will be one in which all peoples enjoy an equally dignified existence.

In that spirit, Senegal will host the Third World Festival of Negro Arts from 1 to 15 December 2010. That artistic and intellectual event, with Brazil as guest of honour, will provide the opportunity for Africa and its diaspora to celebrate the values of culture and civilization of the black world. For us, that is a way to fight the prejudices that still haunt some malicious minds and fuel the re-emergence of revisionist ideas.

Africa is ready to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century in a spirit of openness and dialogue with all peoples for a world of peace and human brotherhood.

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

Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland

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

Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Halonen: Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly. I assure you of our full support in your important functions.

As many colleagues have already underlined, the international climate negotiations are at a crucial stage. The Copenhagen Conference is a real possibility for change. We need political determination and solidarity to reach a new climate agreement that is global, effective and fair. The responsibility lies with all of us — industrial countries, emerging economies and developing countries alike — to take the decisions that will so profoundly shape the future of humankind.

I thank the Secretary-General for convening the Summit on Climate Change at the beginning of the current session of the General Assembly. We had a good discussion on issues that still need to be addressed before December. The meeting delivered a clear message that we are committed to working hard to seal the deal.

A global climate agreement is a precondition for comprehensive sustainable development. The poorest are the most vulnerable when struggling with the adverse effects of climate change. The new agreement must include elements of solidarity and international support in coping with the needs of adaptation. Climate change will affect especially seriously the lives and livelihoods of women, but women are also powerful actors in combating it. We need to ensure their full participation in the negotiations and in the implementation of the new agreement.

Gender, food production and climate change are all interlinked. We know that 70 per cent of the world's poor are women and girls. We also know that the

majority of agricultural labourers are women. If we really want to combat climate change and avoid a global food crisis, we need to pay close attention to the role of women, especially in least developed countries.

While the negative consequences of climate change are universal, their impact on small island developing States and countries with low-lying coastal areas is particularly grave. Those countries are threatened by the rise of sea levels and by extreme weather conditions. They need particular attention and assistance.

In September 2000, we committed ourselves here to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty and to reach the Millennium Development Goals. We reiterated that pledge at the 2005 World Summit. Now, in 2009, we have to demonstrate our resolve to live up to that commitment when faced with a contracting world economy as well.

The solution of the current financial and economic crisis should be based on the concept of fair globalization. Our action, while striving to achieve sustainable economic growth, must address the goal of decent work for all. It is really essential that we honour our commitments to development in spite of our budget constraints.

In the world economy, the tectonic plates are in motion and new actors are emerging. We need to develop a new global consensus on business ethics, integrity and sustainable economic growth. We must work together so that trust in international financial institutions can be re-established. Let us make them more transparent, accountable and sustainable.

I sincerely hope that the Pittsburgh summit of the Group of 20 will agree on further measures for global recovery. But we should also make full use of the United Nations to promote inclusive and equitable cooperation on issues that are truly global.

While climate change and the global economic downturn cause problems in many parts of the world, Africa is the continent that suffers the most. The international community must remain attentive to Africa's needs. I am glad to note that positive developments have also taken place in Africa. During this decade, the number of conflicts in Africa has decreased. The African Union is committed to strengthening the organization's capacity in conflict prevention. Finland is contributing to that important

effort by supporting the build-up of the peace mediation structures of the African Union.

The latest developments in the Middle East peace process provide a reason for cautious optimism. It seems that the parties are willing to take some steps. Countries outside the region are committed to supporting those efforts. It is my belief that, with that broadening consensus, we can reactivate the peace process soon.

Finland values highly the United Nations Charter and the central role given to the Security Council. We actively participate in efforts to make that body more representative and efficient. Finland is a candidate to become a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the period 2013 to 2014. At the same time, we hope that progress on the Council's reform can be made during this session of the General Assembly.

Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security were important achievements. Their implementation in all countries and in all situations is urgently needed. The international colloquium on women's empowerment, leadership development and international peace and security, which was held last March in Monrovia, adopted a call to action on resolution 1325 (2000) and a call for action on gender and climate change. As a follow-up to the colloquium, Finland and Liberia convened a side event today here at the United Nations. In a word, it was a success. I hope that the next success will be in Copenhagen, and that women will make a contribution to it.

Security Council resolution 1820 (2008) strongly condemns sexual violence in conflicts. We must treat systematic rape as a forbidden weapon of war. Victims of rape and sexual abuse must have access to legal processes, and rapists must be prosecuted and condemned. In our view, the appointment of a special representative of the Secretary-General on women and armed conflict would enhance the implementation of those resolutions. We hope that all Member States will support that proposal. I want to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for bringing up the question of violence against women in his opening address to the General Assembly yesterday.

Civilian populations need protection in conflict situations. At the United Nations World Summit in 2005, the responsibility to protect was accepted as a general principle applicable to genocide, crimes against

humanity, ethnic cleansing and war crimes. Further efforts are urgently needed to save civilians from violence.

This morning, the Security Council held a debate on nuclear security issues. I am sure that we are all pleased that disarmament is now strongly returning to the international agenda. I sincerely hope that that will lead to real progress.

Finally, I would like to underline that we have to try to find things that unite us — and not things that divide us — if we want to be midwives of the future and not guardians of the past. Lasting peace can be built only through open dialogue between cultural and religious communities, in our countries and worldwide. Finland supports all initiatives, such as the Alliance of Civilizations, to stimulate intercultural communication. I wish those efforts the best of success in promoting mutual understanding and peace. I promise that Finland will support them.

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

Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Rupiah Bwezani Banda, President of the Republic of Zambia

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

Mr. Rupiah Bwezani Banda, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome His Excellency Mr. Rupiah Bwezani Banda, President of the Republic of Zambia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Banda: Let me join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency at the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly. I should also like to extend Zambia's sincere appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann for his able leadership during the sixty-third session.

The theme for this session provides us with an opportunity to evaluate existing multilateral approaches to address the challenges arising from globalization. Those include threats to socio-economic development and international peace and security. There is a need to develop innovative approaches and responses to those challenges, which include HIV/AIDS and influenza A(H1N1), terrorism, climate change, nuclear weapons and, more recently, the global economic and financial crisis. In this globalized and interdependent world, no country, however wealthy or powerful it is, can resolve all those challenges single-handedly. Common solutions are therefore required through a strong United Nations.

This session is taking place against the backdrop of the adverse effects of the recent global economic and financial crisis, which has spared no one. In my own country of Zambia and in other African countries, the economic growth achieved from 2000 to 2007 is now declining as a result of the global economic and financial crisis. We are faced with serious financial constraints, lower commodity prices and weak external and domestic demand for our products, high inflation and rising unemployment. Manufacturing and construction activities have also slackened. As copper accounts for about 70 per cent of Zambia's exports, the effect of the collapse of international copper prices — from \$8,985 per metric tonne in August 2008 to \$2,902 at the end of 2008 — has, among other things, resulted in greatly reduced revenue collections.

Zambia's experience from the recent global financial and economic crisis is a timely reminder of the consequences of overdependence on a single economic sector. My Government has therefore developed a diversification plan to shift the economy from dependence on copper. That is being done through policy interventions in the agriculture, tourism and manufacturing sectors, coupled with programmes aimed at improving the business environment in Zambia.

For those efforts to succeed, however, there must be an expeditious conclusion to the World Trade Organization's Doha Round of negotiations. Zambia considers the aid-for-trade component of the negotiations as critical, as it will develop our country's capacity to overcome supply-side constraints and encourage value addition in its commodities.

Zambia's response to the global economic crisis needs the support of its international development partners. We appreciate that our cooperating partners have also been affected by the global economic crisis. Nonetheless, we urge them to fulfil their pledge to increase their contributions to official development assistance to 0.71 per cent of gross national income. That is necessary if the global development agenda is to help vulnerable economies, such as Zambia's, meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

Zambia believes that there is a need to reform international financial governance systems in order to avoid future global financial crises. The changes, which must be inclusive, should respond to the needs and concerns of all nations, regardless of status. It is essential that there be an increase in the voice and power of developing countries at the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The reform process should aim to improve the predictability of aid flows and emphasize reforms that promote faster aid delivery and fewer conditionalities.

Zambia roundly applauds the leadership that the United Nations provides in tackling climate change, as was illustrated only two days ago by the hosting of the high-level Summit on Climate Change. Our efforts to raise the standards of living for the world's poor people in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals are being frustrated by the effects of climate change.

Scientists have spoken. We have seen with our own eyes, in just one generation, how great an effect climate change has had on our environment. On the eve of the Climate Change Summit, just a few days ago, unprecedented floods hit the state of Georgia in this country, as if to rebuke any of us who still doubt the evidence. Let us just look around us. We do not need science to tell us that deserts have expanded, that forests have drastically shrunk, that rivers have dried up and that it rains less and less in many places, and yet so much more in others. Nature has lost its balance and humankind has lost its footing.

In our own short lifespan, in my own country, I remember a time when forests were within a child's walking distance, teeming with a profusion of animals, birds, plants, insects and fruits. Today my grandchildren would be lucky to name the indigenous fruits of our country on the fingers of one hand. So many species of our countries' flora and fauna have

become extinct — forever lost to the world — in such a short time.

Our children have spoken. Our citizens have spoken. If we go to Copenhagen to question the science yet again, or to make more speeches justifying inaction, if we still believe that we can only act after our competitors act, then we as leaders will have failed our peoples and consigned the world to utter destruction. Copenhagen is the precipice, either we step back and let live or tip over into the abyss. We must act, and act now.

With regard to mitigation, Zambia's view is that the shared vision should be based on shared responsibilities for climate change; and that there must be an equitable burden-sharing mechanism that requires developed countries to commit to reducing emissions to legally binding levels, while developing countries take actions to ensure a substantial reduction from environment-degrading development programmes.

As the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference draws near, Zambia expects an agreement that will balance climate change concerns with development. The Copenhagen agreement must provide increased and predictable support for the implementation of the adaptation programme, which must be established within a binding legal instrument under the United Nations Framework Convention.

Speaking in my capacity as the Chairman of the International Conference on Great Lakes Region, I am happy to report to the Assembly that the Great Lakes region of Africa is now more stable and peaceful than it has ever been in the past 15 years, albeit with challenges. The improved relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, and their joint efforts to tackle the problem of negative forces in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, has opened up opportunities for achieving sustainable peace and stability in the region.

However, the region is still faced with the threat posed by the continued presence of illegal armed groups and negative forces, namely, the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR)/ex-Forces armées rwandaises/Interahamwe, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Allied Democratic Forces. Although the recent joint military operations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda succeeded in dislodging FDLR elements from most of their strongholds, the continued atrocities

committed by the remnants of that group against civilians remains a great source of concern.

We applaud the role of the international community through the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in providing support for the Government of that country in its efforts to build military capacity to neutralize the negative forces in the eastern part of its territory. The international community needs to exert more sustained pressure on the leadership of those negative forces living within and outside the region, so that they are brought to justice.

The Lord's Resistance Army, which fled to the north-eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic after the Juba talks failed, continues to commit atrocities against the innocent civilian population. The Great Lakes mechanisms allowed for a joint military operation against the LRA, which, challenges notwithstanding, achieved some progress in dislodging rebel forces.

There is a need for sustained military and diplomatic pressure to bring Joseph Kony back to the negotiating table. There is also a need for more logistical support from the international community to protect the civilian population and, at the same time, put an end to the atrocities and brutality committed with impunity by the LRA.

The Great Lakes region is organizing a round table conference in Bujumbura, Burundi, to be held from 5 to 6 November 2009, at which we expect renewed support from the Group of Friends and other partners to finance the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region.

Prior to the global economic downturn, Zambia's economic growth was on course to meet all but one of the Millennium Development Goals, namely, ensuring environmental sustainability. However, the effect of the global financial and economic crisis, coupled with the effects of climate change, threaten the prospects of meeting the MDGs on poverty, agriculture and environmental sustainability.

The United Nations remains the central principal organ for coordinating international cooperation in socio-economic development, peace, security, human rights and the rule of law. There is a need to reform the United Nations in order to make it more effective and efficient. Zambia believes that the reform of the United

Nations will not be complete without meaningful reform of the Security Council. Making the Council more representative, democratic and accountable to all Member States, irrespective of status, is essential if its decisions are to be acceptable to the entire international community. The Security Council must adapt to the realities of the new geopolitical situation that characterize the world.

Given that Africa constitutes the second largest bloc of United Nations membership, proposals to reform the Security Council should heed Africa's call for two permanent seats with veto power and two additional non-permanent seats. That would address the historical injustice against Africa while responding to the need to democratize the Security Council. Equally important in that regard is the need to reform the working methods of that important United Nations body.

Human rights issues are an important component in the maintenance of peace and stability in any country. I wish to inform the Assembly that, since Zambia was elected a member of the Human Rights Council, in 2006, it has continued to advocate for the promotion and protection of human rights. In May 2008, Zambia extended an open invitation to all mandate holders on special areas of focus relating to issues of human rights to visit and evaluate the extent to which Zambia observes its obligations under the various United Nations conventions. We urge other countries to follow suit.

Even in the post-cold-war era, nuclear arms pose a threat to international peace and security and the very existence of humankind. It is for that reason that Zambia stands for general and complete disarmament in a time-bound manner, to include biological, chemical, nuclear and radiological weapons. The demand of the time is that we compete for peace, not war, for development and not armaments.

There is no doubt that the United Nations continues to be the only multilateral institution capable of addressing the challenges of our one world. This session's theme attests to that fact. The world looks up to this body to encourage dialogue among civilizations on all global challenges in an inclusive manner as the only practical way to ensure meaningful and effective international cooperation.

Allow me to conclude by quoting Jonathan Rauch in the January 2001 issue of *The Atlantic* magazine, in

his article entitled "The New Old Economy: Oil, Computers and the Reinvention of the Earth", as quoted by R. A. Bisson and Jay Lehr in the preface to their book entitled *Modern Groundwater Exploration*. In the article, which looked at future oil supply, Mr. Rauch predicted that demand for oil will peter out well before supply runs out because, he argued, something cheaper and cleaner would come along. He concluded by stating that "knowledge, not petroleum, is becoming the critical resource in the oil business" and that, although the supply of oil is fixed, the supply of knowledge is boundless.

Thus human ingenuity holds the secret to resolving problems confronting humankind. So it is with all the issues facing us and this United Nations of ours today. The resolution of our problems of climate change, the economic and financial crisis, peace and security and human rights and democracy depends upon human ingenuity. The United Nations must therefore first — and most important — work to create an environment where ingenuity can indeed flourish, that is, a peaceful world where all feel they belong and are treated with dignity.

Before I conclude my remarks, let me just say a word or two about the embargo that has been imposed on the people and Government of Cuba since 1959 by the United States of America. Those unfair and unjustified sanctions have greatly hurt the people of Cuba. The time has come for those sanctions to be lifted. I join those who are calling for the lifting of sanctions.

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

Mr. Rupiah Bwezani Banda, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Stjepan Mesić, President of the Republic of Croatia

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

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

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United

Nations His Excellency Mr. Stjepan Mesić, President of the Republic of Croatia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mesić (*spoke in Croatian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): We have assembled once again to discuss the situation in the world, outline the problems our countries face and present our views on the world we live in. The President of the General Assembly has offered a topic for discussion, one which, I would say, perfectly reflects current circumstances and the tasks arising from them.

What kind of world are we discussing here? A globalized world? By all means. An interconnected and interdependent world? Without any doubt. A world of great discrepancies and major threats? Certainly. In brief, our world is such that there are practically no longer regional problems and crises, since each and every issue, no matter how much it may appear to be regional, reveals itself as global in terms of its consequences.

Our world is still dominated by developed and most developed countries; while developing countries are desperately lagging behind, struggling with hunger, the inability to educate their citizens and the lack of even the most basic health care. Can we be content with such a world? Without any hesitation, I respond that, no, we cannot.

Mr. Viinanen (Finland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In our world there are many States as well as groups that are united in their inclination to use terror as a means of action and to resort to force to achieve their goals. Admittedly, confrontation between the blocs no longer exists. A balance of fear between super-Powers is non-existent, but our world has hardly become more secure, while peace has hardly become more stable. Can we be content with such a world? Again, without any hesitation, I respond that, no, we cannot.

Our world is ultimately still dominated by an economic model that is self-evidently exhausted and has now reached a stage where it is itself generating crises and causing hardship to millions of people. If one attempts to save that already obsolete model at any cost, and if one stubbornly defends a system based on greed and devoid of any social value worth

mentioning, there can be only one result: social unrest harbouring the potential to erupt into social insurgence on a global scale.

Can we accept such prospects? I respond with the utmost resolution that, no, we cannot, and must not. It is up to us to embark now upon the enormous task of creating a new world order — not returning to anything that existed before, but creating something new: an order that will in the end provide a life worthy of humankind for each person and equal chances for all, and not one that writes off those who are in dire need through no fault of their own and those who at the end of their lives are viewed as useless and therefore unworthy of any support.

It is up to us to dispel prejudices more resolutely than ever before, to stand up to discrimination on whatever grounds, to say no to intolerance and to promote not only the idea but also the practice of multilateralism and dialogue among civilizations. That is the only way towards building global peace, security and development as vital preconditions for lasting and stable peace.

Fortunately, the world has emerged from a potentially very dangerous period of unipolarism and is now on a path towards multipolarism. However, the world is still in the process of learning that only dialogue can help us to build mutual trust and understanding. It is not yet ready to face the fact that it is not a crime to be different and that our future can be found only in unity through diversity — of course, under the condition of full equality and strict observance of human rights and in line with the United Nations conventions.

With the simultaneous drift from unipolarism and a shift towards multipolarism, we have to understand and accept that though we have established a set of universal values, we have not, will not and cannot establish a single model of social and economic relations applicable to all. The specific features of individual nations and civilizations must be respected, since there is no reason why anyone should renounce something that is part of his cultural or traditional heritage.

Finally, a world characterized by international peace, security and development is not possible without disarmament, in particular without renouncing nuclear weapons. This was the topic of my address in the Security Council this morning. I would like to

mention in addition the notorious fact that problems of development would become minor if the huge funds currently allocated for armament were channelled into development.

I reiterate: the task before us is enormous. Let us show courage and political will to grapple with it. The Republic of Croatia, although a small country, is ready to make its contribution. Although my ten-year term is nearing its end and this is the last time I stand at this rostrum, I will just say that I shall continue to place my skills at the service of achieving this noble goal.

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

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

Address by Mr. Litokwa Tomeing, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands

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

Mr. Litokwa Tomeing, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Litokwa Tomeing, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Tomeing: I bring the greetings and best wishes of the people of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. I congratulate the President on his election to chair the Assembly at this session. He has our confidence and support.

I offer my gratitude to the United Nations for its continuing role in coordinating and leading the world's efforts to meet challenges affecting the interests of all nations. The United Nations Joint Presence Office in the Marshall Islands has brought the ideals of the Organization closer to our people and country. Our hope is that other United Nations agencies — including the World Health Organization, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Food and Agriculture Organization and the United Nations

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific — will follow suit and make their presence felt more prominently, producing concrete results on the ground.

I wish to acknowledge the personal commitment of the Secretary-General to meeting the challenges of climate change. His reminder to take our best to the table in Copenhagen in service of a higher calling to save the planet is well noted. His call for a clear moral imperative for bold and decisive urgent action and his recognition of the duty of the larger economies to the most vulnerable have not gone unnoticed by us small island States. Although some may consider as insufficient the Group of 8 commitment in Italy this year, I believe it is an encouraging and a necessary step forward.

We cherish the hope that the increasing participation of the United States in debates on issues relating to climate change is a signal of its intention to take its rightful place at the forefront of the global war against climate change. Likewise, we are encouraged by Japan's bold and new commitment to address the adverse effects of climate change.

Let me express my appreciation to the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) for its leadership in assisting small island developing countries to prepare for negotiations in Copenhagen. We assure AOSIS of our unwavering support.

Full of expectation, the world has its eyes on Copenhagen. It will be an event of historic significance where, despite our differences, everyone can now view the entire planet through a common perspective.

Now, a few weeks away from Copenhagen, I feel moved to ask what it is that we want to see happening in there. What kind of outcome do we expect? How should we and future generations judge the success of Copenhagen?

The answer, it seems to me, is a matter of perspective. Major economies will no doubt be watchful that Copenhagen does not disturb too much an established way of life and all its benefits. I ask these nations to consider the implicit moral obligation that comes with their privileged and affluent status.

For the small island States, however, the question is whether Copenhagen will diminish or enhance their security and their chances of survival, whether the populations of the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu, Tokelau

and others should make haste to evacuate and head to safer regions, as foreshadowed in a recent warning from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Therefore, our message to the leaders in Copenhagen is clear: we appeal to them to strive with every fibre of their being to increase their level of commitment to combating climate change, to show the world by their deeds — not words — their unbending commitment to secure an effective post-Kyoto global agreement. We appeal to them to be as unrestrained as the wind and set the limit on the increase in global average temperature above the pre-industrial period at a level that will ensure our survival. We appeal to them to be fair-minded and to act with determination to reduce global emissions from 1990 levels by at least 85 per cent by 2050. We appeal to them to ensure that global emissions peak no later than 2015. Finally, we appeal to the leaders of all nations to construct in Copenhagen the ark of salvation in which all nations and peoples will find shelter.

I believe that the success of Copenhagen will be ultimately judged by the extent to which small, low-lying island States — the most vulnerable — will feel a sense of guaranteed safety and security. For, in our interdependent global community, the moral duty of the collective must always be the protection of the weak and the most vulnerable.

Short of that, however, Copenhagen will be no more than the continuation of the law of the jungle, the survival of the strongest. It will be a moral and political failure. For Copenhagen is not about mathematics. It is not about raw power; it is not competition for the survival of the few. It is about unleashing the moral and political forces and synergies inherent in the collective body of nations for the good of all. What else does political will mean but this?

Failure in Copenhagen will make a mockery of the Millennium Development Goals, for their achievement will be beyond our capacity to attain. It will question the ability of the Charter of the United Nations to safeguard our pre-existing sovereign rights. In short, the world and the most vulnerable in it cannot afford the cost of failure.

Closer to home, even though the rate of emission of the Marshall Islands is insignificant in relative terms, we have set for ourselves a reduction target of 40 per cent by 2020. Over the years, and subject to

accessibility of funding, we have been pursuing a systematic programme of solar power use. Nearly 40 per cent of the households in our outer islands are now drawing on that power as one of their main sources of energy. We intend to pursue this initiative until all 33 islands in our country are fully covered. On the Micronesian subregional front, we are committed to the goals of the Micronesia Challenge.

Our efforts to adapt continue to suffer from the lack of adequate funding, compounded by the sheer complexity in accessing it from the sources. Simplifying the process by direct access to those sources could enable us to fast-track some of our adaptation priorities, such as seawalls, coastal management and safe water projects.

I now turn to a matter that is very dear to the heart of every Marshallese. We are deeply encouraged by the Security Council meeting today, moderated by President Obama, on the use and testing of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear weapon testing was conducted on our islands between 1946 and 1958, at the time when we were a ward of the United Nations trusteeship system. Our first-hand experience as victims of nuclear weapon testing on our islands, and the painful memories that continue to haunt us after six decades, are nightmares we would not wish on anyone. The toll in human suffering and environmental damage has been devastating. Now, sixty years since the detonation of some 67 nuclear bombs, the Marshall Islands is still grappling with the after-effects. Complete recovery in terms of restoring affected islands to full economic productivity and adequate compensation of the victims remains uncertain.

We have not come here to condemn or to point fingers. However, we are compelled by our moral duty to humanity to raise our voice in gatherings such as this and to appeal to the conscience of the world community. We call for the formulation of a new perspective by which the spectre of war and of the use of nuclear weapons may forever be dismissed from the surface of the Earth.

Banning nuclear weapons will not by itself remove the root cause of war. Important as it may be, it does not exert an enduring influence. People are too ingenious not to invent still other forms of warfare. Political agreements or good intentions alone are not enough. The world craves something much more deep-

seated than pure pragmatism. It yearns for permanent peace that springs from an inner state supported by a moral attitude.

There is no lack of recognition by national leaders of the nature of the problem, but there is a paralysis of will. The stark realities of the experience of the people of the Marshall Islands have deepened our profound conviction that, in a world irreversibly moving towards a global society, it becomes imperative that we recast our perspective, a perspective in which national impulses and interests will find their fullest expression when subordinated to the needs and interests of the planet, our collective homeland, a perspective that does not regard that subordination as being disloyal to the nation.

Amid our deepening economic and financial woes, the Republic of the Marshall Islands continues to remain buoyant through the generous support of our friends and partners. Our special relationship with the United States within the framework of the Compact of Free Association provides a unique partnership that is enduring and stable.

We express our firm support for the efforts of the United States and its allies in combating terrorism, and we are proud of our young Marshallese men and women serving in the armed forces of the United States. The support also provided by Japan, the Republic of China (Taiwan), the European Union, Australia and our other donor partners is sincerely acknowledged.

The increasing complexity of the management of evolving global affairs demands a reconstitution of the membership of the Security Council. Japan's distinguished leadership and achievements in the area of human security match its aspirations to seek a permanent seat on the Council and thus deserve favourable consideration. Evidence of progress in the confidence-building process between China and the Republic of China (Taiwan) deserves praise and encouragement from the international community. Taiwan's membership in the United Nations specialized agencies will enable its 23 million people to play an active part in the affairs of the family of nations.

Not a single nation can escape the powerful grip of the challenges of climate change. Its deadly virus is here already. The remedy is clear: collective and resolute action, now more than ever. The choice is

ours. We implore Almighty God to give us courage and wisdom.

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

Mr. Litokwa Tomeing, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

Address by Mr. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister of Malta

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

Mr. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister of Malta, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister of Malta, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Gonzi (Malta): I would like to congratulate Mr. Ali Treki on his unanimous election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. His election is a deserved tribute to his personal qualities as a seasoned politician and diplomat and also to his country, Libya, with which Malta has long-standing ties of friendship and cooperation. I am sure that under his wise leadership and experience this august Assembly will be guided throughout his term to a successful and fruitful outcome.

My delegation's thanks and appreciation are extended to his distinguished predecessor, Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, for the dedicated manner in which he presided over the work and activities of the sixty-third session.

Malta would like to take this opportunity to commend and thank the Secretary-General for his unstinting efforts in guiding our Organization in the maintenance of international peace and stability worldwide. Under his leadership the United Nations has made important strides in raising awareness and in many instances responding effectively to the critical situation of the poor and more vulnerable. It was

therefore of great satisfaction to my Government and the Maltese people that we had the honour and privilege to welcome him to Malta last April.

This year Malta is marking three important anniversaries. The first is the forty-fifth anniversary of our country's independence, on 21 September 1964; the second is the fifteenth anniversary of the coming into force on 21 March 1994 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; and the third is the fifteenth anniversary of the coming into force on 16 November 1994 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Over the past 45 years, Malta has made good on the pledge it made when it joined this Organization. In this regard, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to renew today, on this forty-fifth anniversary of Malta's United Nations membership, our pledge and our unwavering faith and trust in the ideals and purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

One of the issues which in the coming weeks will be at the top of the international agenda is the Copenhagen Summit. Two days ago, this Hall witnessed one of the largest-ever gatherings of Heads of State and Heads of Government to debate the future of our planet Earth. During this unique summit we all agreed that the challenges posed by climate change have become the most urgent and critical faced by humankind.

It will be recalled that in 1988, when Malta took the initiative to formally submit the issue of climate change as a political item on the agenda of the forty-third session of the General Assembly, few of us would have thought at that time that this issue of climate change would become in the span of two decades one of the principal critical issues dominating the international environmental concerns of this new century. Throughout these 20 years, Malta has been in the forefront of those ensuring that climate change continues to be one of the top-priority issues of our times. Our commitment of 20 years ago remains steadfast and as strong as ever. As we have heard during the past few days, the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit must signal a turning point. Malta strongly believes that it is the duty of all countries, large and small, rich and poor, to contribute their fair share to this concerted effort, which must be global if it is to succeed.

On 16 November of this year, Member States will commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the coming into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which has been described as the constitution for regulating humankind's activities relating to the oceans. It was 42 years ago that, in this Hall, Malta once again called on Member States to undertake a reform of the law of the sea, which eventually culminated in the adoption of the current Convention on 10 December 1982.

It is also necessary to see the 1982 convention in the light of some pressing and contemporary problems which are either being addressed inadequately or not being addressed at all. Among these deficiencies are the provisions dealing with piracy, illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, the rules relating to the protection and preservation of the marine environment and the rules dealing with submarine cables and pipelines. Examples of omissions are the trafficking of human beings, the safety and security of navigation, the transportation of weapons of mass destruction, and climate change.

In the light of the issues I have just mentioned, Malta feels that the time has come for the General Assembly to examine possible approaches to a review of the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea. In this context, Malta would like to propose that the General Assembly, through its relevant bodies, undertake appropriate consultations among its Member States to revise the Convention in view of the passage of time and the emergence of new and critical issues over the years. My delegation will be ready to enter into consultations with other interested Member States to advance this proposal further.

Just as it was necessary in 1948 to recognize the need for a universal declaration of human rights as a fundamental condition for the enjoyment of freedom, justice and peace for all men and women around the world, so it has become vital now to have a concomitant declaration on human duties of the present generation, including our responsibilities towards future generations. We have the overall task of conserving the human species in the sacredness of its life and in its continuity, as well as of preserving the environment, in all its manifestations. We believe that such a declaration emanates naturally from that doctrine of the common heritage of mankind, which my country first mooted before this Assembly in 1967

and which eventually led to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Malta believes that human duties are intrinsic to the personality, oneness and uniqueness of the human being, and are as inalienable as human rights. Those duties do not arise from laws or obligations but are inherent to the human being. Such duties relate to human beings themselves and to their fellow beings, and in a special manner to their family, to the community at all levels and to the natural and cultural environment in which their life evolves. The envisaged declaration, strengthening and fulfilling the thrust of the 1948 universal instrument, should mark the work of this Assembly as a consummate service to the international community. It should stand out as a major achievement of the United Nations at the beginning of the third millennium of our era. It is in this spirit that Malta proposes that consideration be given to the drafting of such a declaration on human duties and responsibilities.

Conflicts around the world have continued to affect the political, economic and social development of many countries and a large part of our societies. It is tragic that in the past decade more than two million innocent children were killed and six million seriously injured in conflicts. The role of the United Nations in preventive diplomacy and support to peace processes must enjoy strong and sustainable political backing from Member States.

A number of hotspots, from Somalia and Afghanistan to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Middle East, continue to challenge our collective search for peaceful and long-lasting solutions for these war-torn countries and regions. Malta therefore welcomes our Organization's engagement through its peacekeeping missions and peacebuilding mechanisms to foster political dialogue and reconciliation among the warring parties. We believe that assisting countries emerging from conflict in the rebuilding of the lives of their populations would contribute in no small way to providing the necessary support to nationally driven efforts in the achievement of sustainable peace and development.

One of the long-standing issues of which the United Nations has been seized since its inception is the question of the Middle East. Indeed, peace in the Middle East continues to evade our ongoing efforts. Malta reiterates its vision of a two-State solution, with

both States living in secure and guaranteed frontiers, each recognizing the other's sovereignty, and the right to peaceful coexistence. Malta calls in both parties to engage fully in resumed negotiations to this end, resulting in a viable Palestinian State on the basis of the June 1967 borders. This is not a view which we have adopted today. It is a vision that has been ours for decades, believing as we do that peace in the Middle East determines peace in the Mediterranean and beyond.

Malta's strategic geographic location in the Mediterranean has placed it in the privileged yet responsible position of building bridges between the two continents. In fact, Malta's vocation towards peace and security in the Mediterranean continues to occupy an important place of my Government's foreign policy priorities. During the past 12 months, Malta has continued to build on the achievements made so far by enhancing the dialogue between countries in the Mediterranean region and the European Union and also with the League of Arab States. It is with a strong sense of political commitment and direction that we in Malta bear the responsibility of hosting the liaison office aimed at strengthening cooperation between the European Union and League of Arab States, which is due to be opened this coming October. Malta believes that the liaison office will render a major contribution to deepening mutual understanding through practical cooperation between Europe and the Arab world, as well as enhancing intercultural dialogue.

Members will recall that last year I raised the issue of the influx of illegal immigrants who risk their lives in crossing the Mediterranean to seek a new beginning. I had indicated that our size and our financial and human resources, which are very limited, make it extremely difficult for Malta to cope with the large number of these unfortunate people arriving on our shores on their way to mainland Europe. Malta has always dealt with this situation with great responsibility, humanity and benevolence, paying due respect to every human being without any exception. And we will continue to do so. At the same time, the problem of illegal immigration is an international phenomenon driven by external factors which cannot always be prevented or even mitigated by the countries directly affected by the problem. We therefore strongly feel that the United Nations should address the issue of illegal immigration in a holistic way so as to find solutions to a humanitarian problem that Malta and

other like us, especially in the Mediterranean, are currently facing. Much more needs to be done, and all of us, including countries of origin and countries of transit, need to step up our efforts in order to deal with this challenge.

My Government is deeply appreciative of those countries that have come forward to assist us in coping with this phenomenon, including the United States of America, France, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovenia and Slovakia. My Government also hopes that other countries will come forward to assist in alleviating the burden which Malta carries — a burden so acutely disproportionate to the country's population, wealth and land area.

In his report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General has laid emphasis on the need to embark on a multilateral effort of immense magnitude "that draws upon the strengths and contributions of all the countries of the world, as well as their citizens" (A/64/I, para. 4). Malta believes that such an effort must find its foundations in this Organization where all Member States are equal and where the many challenges facing humankind can be addressed in a cohesive and coherent manner. The global challenges which the United Nations faces are our challenges. We, as Member States, have an obligation and the responsibility to ensure that our Organization lives up to the commitments and decisions that we, as heads of State and Government, solemnly undertake to implement in the best interests of our constituencies and societies.

Allow me to conclude by stating that Malta continues to strongly believe that together, as Members of the United Nations, we can and should continue to support the Organization, our Secretary-General and all those who contribute to making our world a better place for present and future generations. I know that Malta intends to do so.

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

Mr. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia

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

Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Saakashvili: I am grateful for the opportunity to address the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session.

Each year, we gather here to confront our common challenges and to express our vision for the world we share, the world for which we are common stewards. And each year we promise to do more and to do better to live up to and defend the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

This year, we meet on the twentieth anniversary of the most successful triumph of those principles. Twenty years have passed since Europe and the rest of the world were liberated from one of the cruellest episodes in modern history. The fall of the Berlin Wall brought an end to an artificial line that separated nations, divided families, strangled freedom and imprisoned millions. Remarkably, that formidable wall crumbled without a single shot being fired. It yielded to the will of those millions who yearned for liberty and it yielded to the determination of a united West.

Twenty years ago, a universally feared military force was defeated by the force of a universal truth — the call for freedom and the simple desire to live a dignified life. When the Berlin Wall was dismantled 20 years ago, it did more than free the captive nations of the Warsaw Pact. It unleashed the hopes, dreams, aspirations and talents of millions of citizens living under the tyranny of the Soviet Union — including my own nation's people.

Today, these citizens make up more than a dozen diverse nations, linked together by the common desires and ambitions to live in a world free from spheres of influence — free from external control — and to be able to choose their own destiny. Today, as we look back at that historic chapter and the impact it has had

on our world, we can rightly be proud of what was achieved, the tremendous progress that has been made, and the prosperity that a lasting peace has brought.

But if we are to evaluate the past honestly, we must admit that the present remains bittersweet. For there is a real danger that, rather than build on this great chapter of idealism and progress, States and leaders will allow a return of the dull complacency and cynical power politics that led to so many of the worst moments of the past 100 years.

And the moment is bittersweet because, regrettably, not everyone drew the same lessons of hope and inspiration when that wall came down. Indeed, 20 years ago, when freedom's spirit swept that wall away, few imagined the repression and threats it represented would so soon reappear and that the hopes unleashed in 1989 would so quickly founder. Yet today, a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace remains a goal still to be achieved — a project not yet accomplished and a challenge, unfortunately, unmet.

Today, I stand before the Assembly as the democratically elected leader of a proud and sovereign nation. But, tragically, Georgia today, like Germany a generation ago, is a nation with a deep wound running through it. As Václav Havel and other leading voices of Europe's conscience declared earlier this week, Europe is today divided by a new wall built by an outside force — a wall that runs through the middle of Georgia.

This wall has been built by the same people who miss the Berlin Wall, who regret its fall, who did everything so that the wall would not fall. This wall cuts off one fifth of our territory and, once again, divides Europe from itself, creating new lines of repression and fear, artificial dividing lines inside the internationally recognized borders of a European nation.

It may be unpopular, but I am obliged to speak the truth. And the truth is that this wall's existence mocks the progress we seemed to have made since that bright, shining day in Berlin 20 years ago. This new wall tells us that, once again, the rule of force has trumped the rule of law and the rule of reason.

I see no irony — only tragedy — in the fact that this wall is being built by the very people whose ideas were collectively and decisively defeated and rejected just 20 years ago. I take no comfort in the fact that

those who thought the wall's destruction was the single greatest tragedy of the twentieth century now lead these deplorable efforts.

One year ago, my country was invaded. Tanks, warplanes, warships, bombs and State-directed cyber-hackers descended upon our towns, villages, cities, infrastructure and economy. Hundreds of our people were killed within days and thousands were wounded. Tens of thousands of innocent civilians were forced to flee in the face of ethnic cleansing, which independent human rights organizations have documented very well.

Today, these acts of brutality have gone unaddressed, in direct contravention of international law, the norms of this institution and internationally signed agreements designed to reverse these wrongs. These are the facts that confront us as we gather here today, and these facts have a name: armed aggression, ethnic cleansing, mass violation of human rights and continuing illegal occupation.

Those who unleashed war in our region and in my country and led ethnic cleansing campaigns in Georgia said yesterday — in this very Hall, from this very rostrum — that they had to do it to “implement the principle of the indivisibility of security” in order to “move beyond the legacy of the past” (A/64/PV.4). This is *la langue de bois* — very classical *langue de bois* from the old days.

The only thing that they stepped over in reality was our sovereign border. They said they had to do it, just as their predecessors had to invade Poland — because of Poland's reckless desire to be free — in 1939, Finland in 1940, Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Afghanistan in 1979. The same people had to erase a capital of 400,000 inhabitants — Grozny — to destroy and exterminate the proud Chechen nation and kill tens of thousands of innocent women and children. And I am saying on the record that the clock is ticking, and they will have to do it again, and they will do it again unless they are stopped by all of us. Recent history indeed is a powerful guide to understanding what kind of actions these leaders undertake in order to bring what they call security and stability to my nation.

But I want to say clearly today that the people of Georgia cannot and will not accept a new dividing line in our country. That is an unchangeable commitment. Under these daily menaces, military provocations and

all kinds of lies directed against us from many different sources, my nation will not crumble and we will never surrender to this brutal force.

The wall across Europe is not a matter of concern to Georgia alone. Indeed, in this matter the very values of this institution are under threat. The protection of human rights, respect for the dignity and equality of all persons, the inadmissibility of ethnic cleansing and the recognition of the inviolability of sovereign borders — all these are values that form the bedrock of this institution.

We certainly did not choose this course of action, but it is up to us to recognize and reverse its illegality. As a community of responsible nations, it is our collective responsibility to uphold international law and to insist that borders cannot and will not be changed through the use of force. It is up to us to tear down this new wall peacefully with the power of our ideas and the strength of our convictions. I want the world to understand clearly how we view this new wall and our strategy for tearing it down.

To start with, let me state outright that we do not expect it to disappear overnight. We understand that it is a very, very hard process, but the history of the Berlin Wall teaches us that patience must never be passive. We should never become resigned to the idea that this situation should be accepted or tolerated. The Berlin Wall fell only because passionate, disciplined, energetic partisans of freedom, both behind and outside that wall, worked with focus, discipline, courage and determination to remind the world community of the illegitimacy and illegality of that wall, and to take action to hasten its demise.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those States Members of the United Nations for their votes recognizing the right of return for all who have been displaced and for all the victims of ethnic cleansing. I would like to thank all those nations across the globe that resisted illegal pressure — and in many cases attempts at bribery — by standing firm in their non-recognition of those territories of Georgia now occupied by a foreign force. I want to thank all those nations that have been so generous in pledging and providing the vital economic support that has proved invaluable in helping to build shelters for and rebuild the dreams of those the invasion has made refugees and internally displaced persons. On behalf of all my fellow citizens, I wish to thank them for their

generosity, especially at a time of such extreme hardship around the world.

Beyond the comfort provided by their material support, I want to thank all of Georgia's friends who have defended not only our sovereignty, but our right to forge our own path in the world, to choose our own alliances and to reject the nineteenth-century notion of spheres of influence, which led to so much warfare, repression and hardship in the world's history. I want to thank those nations and leaders of the European Union who today have committed their monitors to Georgia for the promotion of peace. The Georgian people are also grateful to United States President Obama for his unyielding words and very strong declarations of support for our sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as to Vice President Biden for visiting Georgia this summer and for underscoring, in meeting with refugee children, America's commitment to our democracy and our right to choose our own future. In particular, I want to thank the United Nations for more than 16 years of contributions to peace on the ground in Georgia through its presence in our country — a presence recently and abruptly halted by the unilateral actions of one single Member State.

Our future depends on us, and so today I also want to report to the United Nations on the progress Georgia has made, through our own efforts, in the year since we suffered Europe's first invasion in the post-cold war era. One year after losing hundreds of our sons and daughters and after seeing hundreds of thousands of our people displaced, the Georgian people have regrouped and made real progress down the path of peace, freedom and individual liberty.

I would like to pay tribute to their courage. Just a few days ago, in a refugee camp outside Tbilisi, I saw young children demonstrating their unstoppable will to have a normal and free life. These were children of all ethnic backgrounds. Indeed, most of the refugees from South Ossetia are ethnic Ossetians, and they fled from so-called liberators or were forced out. The children I saw in that refugee camp were seizing the opportunity to learn how to compete in the modern age using new computers, mastering English and advancing their pursuit of knowledge, despite the odds. These children are the future of my country. These children symbolize the path Georgia took after the invasion.

We are following through on the promises I made at this rostrum last year to strengthen our democracy, foster pluralism and expand individual liberties. Already, we have set reforms in motion that within the next year will advance the progress of the Rose Revolution and irreversibly deepen our identity as the freest State in our region. Already, we have permitted nearly three months of opposition protests to proceed unhindered, even though they closed down the main streets of our capital and paralysed Government buildings. Our actions reflect our deep commitment to pluralism and our respect for dissent and freedom of speech.

In a situation where enemy troops are just two dozen kilometres from the capital, with their artillery pointed at the city centre, we have already given opposition-controlled broadcast stations license to transmit across the nation. Already, we have brought opposition parties into the meetings of our national security council, basically keeping no secrets from them and giving full access to all State information, so as to ensure that our security policies reflect the unified will of the nation, beyond faction and beyond party. Already, we have committed to the direct election of all mayors in a few months' time, and we have begun the development of new electoral rules, based on consensus and the agreement of different political parties, in order to ensure the greatest possible legitimacy of the next local, parliamentary and presidential elections.

Along with all these efforts and our commitment to democratic reforms, our biggest imperative today is to continue to integrate all different political interests and groups in promoting a better everyday life for our citizens. We are also doing everything we can to rebuild our economy.

The Georgian people are skilled and hard-working, but they are enduring the double punishment of the global economic downturn and the economic consequences of last summer's invasion. Our biggest imperative at home is to create more employment, and we are pursuing that goal every day. Indeed, we are heartened and proud that the World Bank recently ranked Georgia as the eleventh most attractive country in the world for doing business, when only a few years ago we ranked 122nd. We also rank first in Eastern and Central Europe, just one year after the invasion. And we will continue to take steps to strengthen our economy and create more employment.

We are resolutely committed to our vision of a sovereign and unified Georgia. Together with all of Georgia's diverse ethnic groups and religions, we will prevail over the illegal occupation and reverse the results of ethnic cleansing.

Abkhazia is the birthplace of Georgian civilization. Since the days of the ancient kingdom of Colchida — which was the birthplace of one of the most interesting and ancient European cultures, beginning with Jason and the Argonauts — it has been a valuable and vibrant part of our journey through history. Just a few years ago, it remained a very vibrant part of Georgia. And that most vibrant and successful part of Georgia has now been emptied of more than three quarters of its population. Gardens, hotels, theatres and restaurants have been replaced by military bases, minefields and graveyards. It will take time, but I am sure that Abkhazia will once again be what it was — the most wonderful part of Georgia — and that the occupation will be merely a part of history.

I came here today to deliver a simple message. We believe that Georgia is winning the peace, and here is how the Assembly can measure our commitment. Did we crumble in the face of the brutal invasion? No. Did we crack down on dissent? No. Did we reduce freedom in the face of recession? No. Even in the face of adversity, we continue to contribute to the common goals established by our friends and the international community at large.

I am proud to say that Georgia is in the vanguard of the battle against climate change, producing 85 per cent of its electricity from green and renewable sources. That percentage is growing, and within the next three years we will cover 100 per cent of our needs. Meanwhile, we are on the front lines in confronting terrorism throughout the world with our allies, including in Afghanistan, where our troops will serve side by side with others from around the world.

We are winning the peace because, every day, the nations of our region become more and more independent from our common imperial legacy. Every day, regional States increasingly reject the tremendous pressure generated by our common past. Every day, the idea that we can resist revanchist tendencies is spreading further, and every day the arc of independent nations — from Ukraine to Moldova and from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan to Mongolia — is telling

the world that spheres of influence are a thing of the past.

Georgia is not only a country; the new wall that cuts across our territory has transformed Georgia into an idea and a test. It is an idea of freedom and independence and a test for the world — a test that the world must not fail. If the world passes the test, then everyone will be amazed at how quickly the region will develop its tremendous potential. An active, patient victory over this new wall would be a crucial step in the effort to build energy security for free nations and a united front against lawlessness and terrorism. Georgia is a place where all cultures, influences, religions and traditions meet, providing an antidote to the threat of a clash of civilizations.

Yesterday, President Obama said clearly that new walls should not divide us, that the future belongs to those who build and not to those who destroy, and that cooperation and values must prevail against division and cynicism. Today, I want to stress how much we share that vision and how vital that vision is to my country, my region and beyond.

Twenty years ago, the velvet revolutions opened a new era of international relations and a new journey began towards a free and cooperative world. I am confident that we will prevail on that journey, but only if we are not complacent or passive and only if we support and defend our deeply held values. After all, only this week, the clarion voice of those velvet revolutions two decades ago — the voice of Václav Havel — offered us a solemn reminder about the dangers that we have yet to overcome. Speaking about the new wall that now divides Georgia, he wrote, together with other prominent Europeans, that

“the failure of western democracies to respond to the dismemberment of a friendly nation, albeit a small one, can have very serious global consequences ... The European Union was built against the temptation of Munich and the iron curtain. It would be utterly disastrous if we were to appear in any way to condone the kind of practices that plunged our continent into war and division for most of the last century. At stake is nothing less than the fate of the project to which we continue to dedicate our lives: the peaceful and democratic reunification of the European continent”.

We must not fail to hear Václav Havel's call, President Obama's call and the call of one of my personal heroes from Russia, Anna Politkovskaya, who was so brutally silenced. I remember my conversation with Ms. Politkovskaya just a few days before she was murdered. She was my friend and my hero, and I remember the hopes that she expressed. Their calls echo across two decades of progress — progress that has inspired the greatest hopes but that remains very fragile. Today and together, we must provide answers. Today and together, we must show leadership and vision. Today and together, we must demonstrate our

common resolve. And most of all, today and together, we must provide an example, showing that the power of our values and ideals will finally unleash the tremendous human potential within all of us.

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

*Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia,
was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

The meeting rose at 10.10 p.m.