



General Assembly

Sixty-eighth session

15th plenary meeting
Friday, 27 September 2013, 9 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

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

The Acting President: 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: 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: We praise the almighty Allah for making possible yet again this gathering of world leaders. I would like to congratulate President Ashe on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. His impeccable credentials and extensive experience in multilateralism will undoubtedly enrich the debates and proceedings of this session. He has the full support of my delegation. In the same vein, I wish also to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, for his sterling leadership during the sixty-seventh session. Our special thanks go to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his stewardship

and for the commitment he has manifested to the welfare of humanity, particularly of the third world.

I take this opportunity also to convey our heartfelt condolences to the President, the Government and the people of Kenya, who have suffered one of the most heinous crimes against humanity. Our hearts go out to the families of the victims. This is a clear manifestation of the fact that terrorism in all its forms cannot be accepted. This also has nothing to do with our noble religion, Islam.

As we gather for the sixty-eighth session of the Assembly, we must pause and take stock of our collective record in responding to the many different global challenges with which mankind has had to grapple. Our global body, the United Nations, has indeed adopted countless resolutions, which, if implemented to the letter, would have made the world a much better place for the whole of mankind and, indeed, for all other creatures on our planet.

Unfortunately, some Member States continue to disregard resolutions necessary for the maintenance of world peace and even question or disregard with impunity resolutions adopted by the Assembly. The United Nations continues to be incapacitated as a result. This certainly calls for an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses, with a view to rendering it more effective. Civil strife and terrorism caused by the negative behaviour of some world Powers are undermining human security and even the viability of States. Poverty, hunger and disease still decimate countless communities, while our capacity to respond

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to these man-made humanitarian crises remains discriminatory and inadequate.

This is demonstrated yet again in the case of Syria. We believe that this Organization was established in the first place to find lasting solutions for peace and the protection of human life. Informed and honest decisions should be made instead of those driven by the interests of a few self-appointed gods, thereby causing irreparable damage to the social fabric and economies of countries in conflict. My Government supports the view that the regional organizations in the Middle East should take the lead in the negotiations towards the resolution of the crisis in Syria. The tragedy unfolding in Syria has become a scar on our conscience as civilized people, and that war must be stopped by any means necessary.

All that we hear is the talk about chemical weapons and the need to ensure that they are not used by anyone. This does not make any sense as long as this barbaric war lasts. Whether or not chemical weapons are used, thousands of people will continue to die in the most horrific manner. It is the same horrific and senseless death in both cases, and our duty is not to choose which form of death is acceptable and which not. Our duty is to stop the senseless and barbaric killings in Syria. We, the United Nations, must end that war immediately; otherwise the people of Syria will continue to perish at the hands of satanic and sadistic forces. The Security Council and all the Powers behind the war in Syria must not only prevent the use of chemical weapons but must also bring this brutal war to an immediate end without preconditions. The Syrian war must be stopped and stopped now.

The 2013 report on Africa's performance towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) reveals mixed results. Africa's substantial progress towards many goals, targets and indicators is beyond doubt, but serious challenges still remain, especially in translating economic growth into decent job opportunities, improving service delivery and minimizing income, gender and spatial inequalities. Violent conflicts and economic shocks in some countries, as well as unprecedented natural disasters over the decade induced by climate change, have caused setbacks in the achievement of the MDGs in many countries.

Despite such challenges, some African countries, and the Gambia in particular, are making impressive gains towards some of the established goals. My Government is on track to achieve the education MDG

target for net enrolment in primary education and literacy rate among the population aged between 15 and 24 years. My Government has made serious and informed policy reviews to prioritize basic primary education, while expanding access to secondary, higher and tertiary education, with an emphasis on improving quality in all areas. We are working diligently to ensure that the gender disparity gap in enrolment is closed by 2014 and to provide free education and an equitable chance for all to be literate by 2015 and beyond.

We must ensure that the post-2015 development agenda builds on the important progress of the MDGs and is expanded to cover broader sustainable development issues, as agreed in Rio. Therefore, the choice of the theme for this session, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage", is indeed apt, timely and thought-provoking. Clear, time-bound, targeted and measurable global benchmarks are crucial if we are to realize our desired objective.

Protecting African livelihoods requires international, regional and country approaches that recognize and act on the overlap of conflicts orchestrated by foreign Powers and severe weather hazards. The Gambia firmly believes that mitigating the adverse effects of climate change and putting an immediate end to the massive looting of African natural resources by Western multinational companies call for a timely and decisive global response. It is a challenge that should unite us, not divide us. The Gambia is of the firm opinion that Africa should play an active role in shaping the goals based on its own development priorities and common interests.

The greatest threats to human existence are basically three and are a consequence of human behaviours which are ungodly attributes. They are: excessive greed, and therefore addiction to accumulating material wealth by any means, mostly through violent or immoral schemes; an obsession with world domination by any means, including the resolve to use nuclear, biological and chemical weapons to achieve that fanciful dream; and homosexuality in all its forms and manifestations, which, though very evil, anti-human and anti-Allah, is being promoted as a human right by some Powers.

None of the three threats, which are more deadly than all natural disasters put together, has anything to do with climate change. The first led not only to colonization and the plundering of African and Asian human and material resources but also to two devastating wars among the Western Powers, which

were unfortunately wrongly termed “world” wars. Colonialism was maintained by subjugation and massive looting of resources in the colonies, leading to the impoverishment and destitution of hundreds of millions of colonial subjects.

From the thirteenth century until the middle part of the twentieth century, the notions of human rights, good governance and democracy were philosophies forbidden to Africans. Any African under a colonial Government who advocated for them ended up either at the gallows, in a mass grave or rotting in colonialist-built dungeons called prisons. This was during the colonial era, when the African continent was treated like an abandoned game park and Africans were treated worse than animals.

Today, after fighting for our freedom and liberating our continent, we are being prescribed a new religion — democracy, human rights and good governance — by descendants of the same colonial Powers. Present-day Africans cannot be hoodwinked by anyone, any more, and we are determined to defend our independence and dignity, and to take control of our own natural resources at any cost and by any means necessary.

In regard to the second threat, the obsession with world domination, we are seeing the unprecedented development of deadly nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, as well as other weapons of mass murder, by the same Powers. We all agree that all forms of human tragedy and catastrophe emanate from the West. They have spent more money on killer technologies than on medical and agricultural technology up to today. If they unleash a third world war, God forbid, that would put an end to human existence on planet Earth, including the United Nations itself.

As for the third threat, we know for a fact that all living things need to reproduce for posterity. They become extinct when they can no longer reproduce. Therefore, the Assembly will all agree with me that any person promoting the end of human reproduction must be promoting human extinction. Could it be called promoting human rights when one advocates for a definitive end to human reproduction and procreation? Those who promote homosexuality want to put an end to human existence. It is becoming an epidemic, and we Muslims and Africans will fight against such behaviour in our countries. We will never accept it. We want a brighter future for humankind and the continued existence of humankind on the planet; therefore, we

will never tolerate any agenda that clearly calls for human extinction.

Peace and security are inextricably linked to development. The Gambia continues to abide by and live by that principle, which has warranted my Government’s relentless commitment to peace initiatives under the auspices of the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, one of which successfully culminated in a democratically elected Government in Mali a few weeks ago. I seize the opportunity, therefore, to congratulate the brotherly people of Mali for giving peace a chance by electing a Government through democratic means.

With more concerted efforts through consultations and dialogue, we shall also soon witness a lasting solution to the political impasse in Guinea-Bissau. I am also happy with the work currently being undertaken by the African Union High-Level Panel for Egypt, which seeks to achieve an inclusive and peaceful transition through dialogue, compromise, reconciliation and tolerance. My Government will continue to use its membership in the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to propose peaceful measures that will facilitate enhanced engagements aimed at achieving the desired results in our common quest for lasting stability in the African continent.

However, the present trends across the world cast serious doubts about the effectiveness of the conflict -prevention and management mechanisms adopted by regional organizations and, most importantly, the United Nations. Instead of acting as an effective mechanism for conflict prevention and resolution, as well as advancing global security, the Security Council has become a barrier to progress, peace and security in some instances where lopsided decisions can only be classified as racist and misguided and therefore unacceptable.

Africa’s legitimate quest for full representation on the Security Council continues to be a strong warning that needs to be urgently heeded. International peace and security are the business of all, and Africa, a continent whose resources, ranging from material to human, have helped to bail the West out of poverty to reach affluence from the thirteenth century up until today, cannot be expected to continue to play second fiddle in the Security Council or in any international organization from now on. The Gambia remains resolute in its stance that the permanent and non-permanent membership categories of the Security Council should

be equitably distributed regionally and expanded to conform to current geopolitical realities. The Gambia stands by Africa's demand for two permanent seats as well as two non-permanent seats, as clearly articulated in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration.

How long will the international community continue to ignore the legitimate right and aspirations of a continent of 53 States, all members of the General Assembly? The calls have been very loud and very clear, but some Western Powers continue to ignore them. That must end, or the Assembly will see a very dignified, determined and independent Africa assert its legitimate rights worldwide in its own way.

My delegation strongly condemns the application of unilateral and degrading coercive measures as a means of settling disputes. Such measures have an adverse impact on the lives of innocent people, who lack any means of defending their legitimate sovereignty in the face of massive military might. We find the continued application of such measures against the peace-loving people of Cuba to be inhumane and unjust and a blatant violation of the basic human rights tenets of the Charter of the United Nations, which, ironically, were promulgated to prevent such behaviour in the first place.

It is in that spirit that the Gambia shares the views expressed by the international community in its continued unequivocal opposition to the United States of America's sanctions against Cuba. The embargo against Cuba contravenes the fundamental principles of international law, international humanitarian law, the Charter of the United Nations and the norms and principles governing peaceful relations among States, violating the sovereign equality of States and the principles of non-intervention and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other Member States. The embargo has no legitimate or moral justification, given the fact that it continues to undermine the fundamental basic rights to economic emancipation and the development aspirations of the Cuban people. As a responsible member of the international community, the Gambia therefore joins other Member States in calling for the immediate repeal of laws, measures or policies that impede the free flow of international trade and navigation against Cuba.

We also reiterate our call for a serious and decisive reassessment of our policy towards the Republic of China on Taiwan. The concerns of the 23 million hard-working and peace-loving people of that great

country continue to be ignored. The Republic of China on Taiwan has a democratically elected Government, which is the only legitimate Government that defends the interests of the people of Taiwan in the conduct of world affairs and in its many serious interactions with each and every nation of the world. The Taiwanese people have the same concerns as all of us with regard to global problems. Yet they are not a member of the vital organs of the global body to contribute their share in the search for solutions to those problems.

The situation in the occupied Palestinian territory remains pathetic as a result of decades of collective punishment, fraught with the glaringly degrading and inhumane treatment of innocent civilians and the gross denial of access to humanitarian assistance and basic services, and essential medical supplies and construction materials, which has become the daily rule rather than the exception for the Palestinians. The pattern and frequency of those human rights abuses, as well as the disproportionate use of force perpetrated by the occupying Power, continues unabated.

The Gambia is of the conviction that the ongoing seizure of Palestinian lands and properties to make way for illegal settlement activity is morally and politically unacceptable. Such uncalled-for behaviour on the part of Israel is in blatant disregard for international law and casts serious doubt on Israel's intention to seek genuine and lasting peace with its brothers and sisters, the Palestinian people. How can the international community and the United Nations continue to watch such glaring injustice and protracted human rights abuses in silence, without feeling an iota of guilt for not taking bold and appropriate steps to bring them to an end? How long should we allow such blatant disregard for international law to continue unpunished?

While we welcome the resumption of peace talks between Israel and Palestine, we hope that this time around the brokers will be decent and honest enough to ensure that both sides are genuinely committed to a two-State solution that would eventually usher in permanent peace and security in the Middle East and beyond.

We live in a world of new and evolving threats — threats that could not have been anticipated when the United Nations was founded in 1945. Unilateral bullying and the criminal invasion of resource-endowed sovereign States under the pretext of strengthening democratization, combined with terrorism, organized crime, poverty and disease, will remain a serious threat

to global peace and security unless appropriate steps are taken to eradicate them. Meeting such challenges today calls for sincerity and honesty to mount well-coordinated and concerted global efforts.

The Gambia firmly believes that socioeconomic development and respect for the sovereign rights of countries to control their own natural resources, especially minerals, should be the collective line of defence for a collective global security system that takes the sovereignty of each nation seriously. Combating poverty will not only save millions of lives but also strengthen States' capacities to combat terrorism, organized crime and intra-State conflict. We need renewed and genuine global partnerships and commitments that are binding and based on respect for the sovereign right of each individual State to choose a way of life that is based on its religious and cultural values, as no administrative system is better than the way prescribed by the almighty Allah.

It is also necessary to increase the credibility and effectiveness of the Security Council by making sure that selective justice is abandoned and rejected by all Members of the United Nations family. From all indications, there is an imperative need to inject new ideas and impetus into the Security Council and to expand its membership to reflect current geopolitical realities. Moreover, respect for the principle of equal sovereign rights of peoples and the need to promote and respect peaceful relations among all States, rich or poor, black or white, should be the overriding considerations for the peaceful coexistence of Member States — that is, if 2015 and beyond is to bequeath a peaceful and prosperous world to future generations of the human race.

The Acting President: 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 His Majesty King Tupou VI, King of the Kingdom of Tonga

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Majesty the King of the Kingdom of Tonga.

King Tupou VI, King of the Kingdom of Tonga, 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 Majesty King Tupou VI, King of the Kingdom of Tonga, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

King Tupou VI: As this is my first time addressing the General Assembly as Head of State, I wish to sincerely congratulate Mr. John Ashe on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. I assure him that the Tongan delegation will be fully supportive and cooperative under his very able leadership. I also wish to commend the stewardship of his predecessor, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, during the sixty-seventh session. I express my gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his persevering guidance and energetic leadership in further enhancing the profile and work of the United Nations in the face of unprecedented global challenges.

Tonga welcomes the timely theme for the general debate, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage", and the inclusion of a set of six thematic issues of focus for high-level events and thematic debates during the sixty-eighth session. Indeed, Tonga joins other small island developing States (SIDS) in affirming that priorities in the outline of the post-2015 development agenda should, with increased cooperation among Member States, reflect the outcome of the 2014 Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, to be convened in Samoa.

Tonga supports the proposed high-level event that would address the needs of women, youth and civil society and contribute to development goals. It applauds the high-level event on the contribution of human rights and the rule of law to the post-2015 framework and hails the twentieth anniversary of the Vienna Conference on Human Rights. Earlier this year, Tonga submitted its second universal periodic review, which was adopted by the Human Rights Council. The next review for Tonga is scheduled for 2017-2018.

The high-level event, centring on South-South and triangular cooperation, including information and communication technology, is appreciated as adding value to the realization of development targets. Tonga hosted the annual Pacific Islands Chapter of the Internet Conference earlier this month to celebrate the emergence of high-speed Internet connectivity in Tonga. The Conference showcased the achievements of the Pacific region in accessing opportunities for Internet users and demonstrated how Tonga can best

develop its own investment strategy for the new cable submarine Internet system.

The thematic debate on partnership deserves high praise, in particular with the aforementioned Samoa Conference focusing on the overarching theme of the sustainable development of small island developing States through genuine and durable partnership. The second thematic debate, on the establishment of stable and peaceful societies, is also welcome, given the current chaos we are experiencing in the international community. The third thematic debate, on the roles of water, sanitation and sustainable energy, is equally crucial to the development agenda for the post-2015 period.

Energy is the golden thread that connects economic growth, increased social equity and an environment that allows the world to thrive. Sustainable energy is central in order to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including many development goals that extend far beyond the energy sector — eradicating poverty; increasing food production; providing clean water; improving public health; enhancing education; creating economic opportunity; and empowering women — as well as an integral part of creating sustainable development, including environmental sustainability. A shift towards more sustainable energy sources is also essential in addressing environmental sustainability while tackling climate-change challenges.

The concept of establishing a Pacific Regional Data Repository for Sustainable Energy for All is aimed at focusing on all energy-related projects to be sourced, including all projects implemented in the Pacific, reflecting best practices as well as those that have not been so successful.

The lack of bankable data in the region causes a disconnect from the true value of assistance from our development partners, whereby 60 per cent of project financing is absorbed by technical assistance, pilot projects, pre-feasibility studies and only 40 per cent, and in some cases less, on hardware. The Pacific Regional Data Repository for Sustainable Energy for All has an ambitious goal of implementation whereby the Pacific small island developing States, with the assistance of their developing partners, will gift to the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, to be held in 2014 in Samoa, a documented process under which this has been achieved and which

may be shared by all regional groups of the United Nations.

I therefore urge all relevant stakeholders to work together to develop and establish a common global goal on sustainable energy for all as part of the post-2015 development agenda.

A set of related targets and indicators supporting the goal should encompass all three dimensions of sustainable development. The three objectives of the Sustainable Energy for All Initiative — universal energy access, increased efficiency and renewable energy — can provide a solid framework to build on further, while keeping them fully adaptable to different circumstances and priorities at the regional, national and local levels.

Tonga commends the Secretary-General for his laudable initiative to convene a high-level summit meeting on climate change in 2014 and joins other SIDS in urging the leaders of developed countries to enhance their mitigation ambition to bridge the pre-2020 gap in a timely and effective manner. Furthermore, Tonga joins other SIDS in calling for the inclusion of climate change as a cross-cutting issue in terms of sustainable development goals. Oceans are a thematic priority and should also be prominently featured in the context of sustainable development goals and the post-2015 agenda.

The Government of Tonga has adopted the United Nations Development Programme Millennium Development Goals Acceleration Framework and has chosen to apply it to MDG 6, on combating non-communicable diseases, with applications to MDG 1, on poverty, and MDG 3, on gender equality.

The following five key interventions have been prioritized in Tonga to combat non-communicable diseases: increase the local food supply and create income-generating opportunities for women and vulnerable groups; provide curative health services in hospital settings, screening for disease-specific risk factors; review legislation, subsidiary legislation and policies affecting food, tobacco, kava, alcohol and physical activity; advocate healthy lifestyles through churches and workplaces; and support resources.

Tonga's Millennium Accelerated Framework report is completed and ready for launching and, moreover, is aligned with the call of SIDS for non-communicable

diseases and other emerging health issues to be highlighted in the post-2015 development agenda.

Tonga joins other delegations of the international community in urging a swift and peaceful resolution to the situation in Syria.

With respect to pertinent regional issues, Tonga endorses the views expressed in the Marshall Islands communiqué, that is, the outcome document of the annual meeting of Pacific Island Forum leaders, held earlier this month.

May God continue to bless and guide the States Members of the United Nations as they take their crucial work forward.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank His Majesty the King of the Kingdom of Tonga for the statement he has just made.

His Majesty King Tupou VI, King of the Kingdom of Tonga, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali

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

Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali, 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. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Keita (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to convey to President Ashe the heartfelt congratulations of the delegation of Mali on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. His election is quite clearly a recognition of his qualities as a seasoned diplomat, as well as a tribute to his country, Antigua and Barbuda. He may be assured of the full readiness of my delegation to work to ensure the successful outcome of our efforts.

I should like to take this opportunity also to congratulate his predecessor, Mr. Vuk Jeremić of Serbia, for the outstanding manner in which he led the work of the Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. Allow

me also to reiterate to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, our deepest appreciation for the praiseworthy efforts he has made to achieve the lofty objectives of our Organization.

A few weeks after my accession to Mali's highest office as the third elected President of the Republic since the advent of democracy, it is for me a badge of honour to address the Assembly.

At the outset, let me assure the Assembly of my unshakeable determination to defend the ideals of our Organization, which are based on the values of peace, security, justice and development, all values contained in the oath that I swore to the people of Mali.

I come here before the Assembly to express the gratitude of my people to the whole of the international community for the invaluable support it showed to my country, Mali, which today has recovered its sovereignty over the whole of its territory. From this lofty rostrum, and on behalf of all the people of Mali, I pay tribute to the work of the United Nations, and especially to the Security Council, which through four resolutions and a number of statements condemned the jihadist terrorist aggression suffered by my country and reaffirmed its attachment to the unity and territorial integrity of my country. The Council authorized the deployment of international forces to assist the armed forces of Mali in the difficult task of recovering the areas of its territory that were controlled by terrorist groups.

Allow me to convey my gratitude to UNESCO for formally condemning the destruction of the global heritage sites and mausoleums in Timbuktu and Gao. At that time, Morocco was President of the Security Council. I would therefore like to thank His Majesty King Mohammed VI for the very significant contributions made by the Kingdom of Morocco, which right from the start of the occupation of Mali condemned the act of aggression to which we had fallen victim, and offered our people emergency humanitarian assistance. This is also the right time and place to thank France and its President, François Hollande, for launching Operation Serval, a life-saving operation, that halted the advance of jihadists towards the south of Mali. Had it not been for that intervention, I would not be standing here before the Assembly today.

Allow me to also convey my gratitude to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union and to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation for their concern and continuing

commitment to seeking a lasting solution to the Malian crisis. In particular, I would like to commend the leadership of Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte D'Ivoire and current President of ECOWAS, for his ongoing commitment to supporting the Malian people. I also thank President Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso, mediator during the Malian crisis, as well as Mr. Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria, co-mediator during the crisis, for their ongoing efforts aimed at finding a solution to the crisis that struck our country. We also thank President Boni Yayi of Benin, who during his mandate as head of the African Union devoted all his energy to resolving the Malian crisis.

I would also like to thank the President of Chad, our brother Idriss Deby Itno. His country deployed 2,000 men in Mali, many of whom died. Our thoughts and sympathy are with all the sons and daughters of Chad who died in Mali. They sacrificed their lives for Mali. I would also like to pay tribute to President Mahamadou Issoufou and the brave people of the Niger for extending a fraternal welcome to our people, which eased a great deal of suffering. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay my respects to the memory of all of our Nigerien brothers who died in the battlefields during savage attacks on Agadez and Arlit in the Niger.

I also pay tribute to the President of Algeria, Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, and to our brothers the people of Algeria, who have always stood by Mali. There is a long-standing history of friendship between our peoples, something that was confirmed again when Algeria recently helped Mali during the humanitarian crisis. I would like to take this opportunity to state that Algeria and Mali are two brotherly States. They are linked by a solid friendship and a shared history.

To the people of Mauritania and President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, I would like to express my gratitude for their troops, who stood by us in our pursuit of the jihadists who ran amok in the north of Mali for so long. To Mauritania, which has also been in mourning because of jihadist attacks, I would also like to extend our heartfelt condolences and our sympathy to those who perished fighting for our country. Many of our Mauritanian friends and brothers died in the Timbuktu region.

Finally, to the European Union and all bilateral and multilateral partners, I would like to say that the people of Mali are grateful for the wonderful international mobilization to help our country, which enabled us to

overcome the crisis, making it possible for me to stand here today. I also believe that the restoration of peace in Mali today allows us to look to the future in a calm, reasonable and confident way. Furthermore, I would like to assure them that the fight against drug traffickers and jihadists, in all their guises, is an ongoing struggle, one to which we are committed. I thank you very much for standing by us in this continuing fight.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thoughts to all those friends of Mali who perished on the battlefields to safeguard the future of our country and the future of our children. There were many heroes, anonymous civilians, men and women alike, who suffered in Mali. Our thoughts are with all the injured, the women who were raped, those who were maimed, those who suffered under the yoke of barbarity, enduring endless months of suffering yet remaining steadfast, standing up for Mali despite all the intimidation rained down upon them.

It would be heartless of me to move on without a thought of compassion for all the families of the Algerian, French and other hostages still held by jihadist groups in the Sahel region, including northern Mali. I can assure the Assembly that we will spare no effort in working to speed up their release, in close cooperation with the States concerned, of course.

Mali is back. Yes indeed, with the support of friendly States, Mali stands tall, ready to turn a page on the darkest periods of its history, one marked by nine months of grave human rights violations, looting, the destruction of unique historical and cultural monuments and sites, and its cultural heritage. Mali has recovered its sovereignty and national integrity, backed by its cultural diversity, and now is setting off on the path towards national reconciliation.

A process of dialogue for peace and national reconciliation has been launched through the preliminary Ouagadougou Agreement signed on 18 June. The transition, which was launched in March 2012, following the coup d'état, ended last August, following presidential elections that were deemed credible and transparent by the entire international community. Through that exemplary election process, Malians recalled and demonstrated their commitment to democracy and constitutional order. To finalize that process, my Government has made a commitment to holding, without any further delays, the first round of legislative elections on 24 November and the second round on 15 December.

As a President who enjoys the trust and confidence of the Malian people, I understand the huge scope of the challenges. Malians have a deep-seated yearning for peace and national reconciliation, as well as economic and social development. As soon as I became President, I took the initiative to meet with the heads of armed groups from the north of the country in Bamako to remind them of the sacrosanct principles of respect for the territorial integrity of Mali and the secular nature of our State. I made them aware of our readiness to organize candid, inclusive political dialogue where everything, except for any form of independence or autonomy, could be discussed openly. Our message has been heard, and we will commit to dialogue in the future in order to find a lasting solution to the crisis in northern Mali.

At this point, we would like to revive the inter- and intracommunitarian dialogue to recreate conditions conducive to enabling all Malians to live together. A general meeting for decentralization will be convened to create the conditions necessary for an effective transfer of governance and resources to local authorities throughout the country. Thereafter, the Government will hold a national review conference on the north of Mali.

In preparing for future decisions with the armed groups and in order to create the conditions for pacifying the situation, confidence-building measures have been taken, as called for in the preliminary Ouagadougou Agreement. In that connection, it is hard to understand why the rebel elements have decided to suspend negotiations, which represents a flagrant violation of the Agreement. We will have to discuss that. In that regard, the Dialogue and Reconciliation Commission will be turned into a commission for dialogue on truth and reconciliation to deal with the remaining wounds of war within Malian society.

The cyclical crisis in the northern regions of Mali is rooted in the precarious living conditions of the local population and poverty. I established the Ministry for National Reconciliation and Development of the Northern Regions upon my arrival at the helm in order to accelerate development in the areas of health, education and infrastructure.

I am pleased to note that the international community has understood what is at stake, and I take this opportunity to express my deep-seated and heartfelt gratitude to all the friends of Mali who committed themselves on 15 May, in a wonderful show

of exceptional solidarity to backing the implementation of the plan for the sustainable economic recovery of Mali.

With the support of the international community, Mali is working resolutely to address peacebuilding, national reconciliation and the reform of the national defence and security forces, to rebuild the northern regions devastated by the terrorist and jihadist forces, to improve institutional governance and to launch the economic recovery of our country. Within the framework of good governance, pride of place has been given to our national justice system. After the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice is the most senior Minister in my Government, which clearly shows our dedication to turning Mali into a State where the rule of law truly prevails.

Mali has come a long way, but it has arrived. It is here and it wishes to play its full role. However, the situation that our country is facing, I must say, is symptomatic of the challenges that all the countries of the Sahel region are facing, including the worst possible forms of transnational organized crime, including trafficking in drugs, human beings and weapons of all kinds, of which some very sophisticated types have come from the Libyan arsenals since the fall of the Al-Qadhafi regime. Despite the hope raised following the successful military operations through the combined efforts of Operation Serval, the troops of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali, now the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, and Malian armed security forces, small armed terrorist groups continue to make themselves felt in our subregion and to move from one territory to another — we know that they are present in the southern territory of one of our neighbours — which represents for us and the international community a serious threat to the stability and territorial integrity of Mali and to peace and security in the Sahel region as a whole.

It is in that context that the United Nations Mission for the stabilization of Mali was deployed. That Mission was successful, and we wish to congratulate the United Nations, especially the Security Council, for that outstanding initiative.

Our country stands at a crossroads. Just a few months ago, no one could have thought that I would stand in this Hall before the General Assembly. I take this opportunity to reiterate our commitment to working unstintingly for the implementation of the United

Nations strategy for the Sahel region. We familiarized ourselves with the strategy yesterday at a high-level summit on the situation in the Sahel. As a result of the complexity and seriousness of the situation in the Sahel, my delegation welcomes the report presented in June by Mr. Romano Prodi, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General (S/2013/354), which we believe accurately reflects the regional dimension and should enable us to extricate ourselves from the situation prevailing throughout our country.

This is the right time for me to forcefully underscore that finding a lasting solution to the Sahel crisis will require a strengthened and dynamic cooperation between all the States in the Sahel and Saharan regions to fight against religious extremism and organized crime. Under my leadership, Mali is determined to work to give a new impetus to the subregional cooperation mechanisms that we have. In that regard, the assistance of the international community will be indispensable in the fight against transnational terrorism in the Sahel region as a whole.

The stakes are high and the terrorist threat is of alarming proportions, to the point that no country is safe from violent and barbarous acts. The attacks that took place in Nairobi, Kenya, are the most painful examples of that. My country, which is slowly recovering from the atrocities carried out by jihadist terrorist groups and the allied drug trafficking groups, reiterates its firm condemnation of terrorism of all stripes and in all its manifestations. On behalf of Mali, I present my most deep-seated and heartfelt condolences to the Government and the people of our brother country, Kenya.

The delegation of Mali is particularly gratified by the central theme of the general debate of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage". The relevance of that theme lies in the uncertainties being faced by the world today, uncertainties resulting from economic and financial instability at the international level, from an accentuation of the scourge of poverty, the continued deterioration of the environment and the increase in the number of natural disasters. Just a few months ago, we suffered flooding that claimed at least 50 lives in my country alone.

Indeed, 10 years after the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Heads of State and Government gathered here at the General

Assembly in September 2010 in the framework of a mid-term review and expressed their serious concerns about the insufficient results. It is clear at this point that the path to be travelled to achieve the MDGs remains a lengthy one. In that regard, it is crucial that we cast a critical glance at the shortcomings noted in order to pave the way for sustainable development.

One shortcoming of the MDG programme that caught our attention was the lack of commitment regarding MDG 8, on the setting up a global partnership for development. Without setting up open and equitable financial and trade systems that would respect the promises made to least developed countries, small island States and landlocked States — our Samoan colleague has just referred to that — and faced with a shortfall of assistance to those countries, we run the risk of failing. Faced with that situation, Mali encourages the adoption of a unique consolidated development programme for the post-2015 period whose priority objective will, in the long run, be the eradication of poverty and the promotion of economic, social and environmental sustainability. That is a vision that has resulted from the pressing nature of the challenges and the shortage of resources available to deal with them.

In line with my predecessors, I would like to reaffirm here and now my firm determination to defend the ideals of peace, security and justice that mark the Organization. In Africa, Mali is extremely concerned about the situation in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt and Libya, and expresses its firm condemnation of violence as a means of political expression. Mali welcomes the progress achieved on the path of reconstruction and national reconciliation in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau.

With respect to the Middle East, we remain concerned by the ongoing deadly violence in Syria, with its daily lot of humanitarian disasters. Accordingly, we condemn with the utmost firmness the use of chemical weapons in the country. Mali urges all parties to favour negotiated political solutions under the auspices of the United Nations.

We encourage the Israeli-Palestinian talks currently under way and urge all parties to take the steps necessary to establish a climate of trust and launch direct negotiations to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting peace based, in particular, on the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. I

take this opportunity to reiterate the solidarity and full support of the people and the Government of Mali for the Palestinian people in their legitimate struggle for the exercise of their inalienable right to sovereignty.

I welcome the measures taken in recent years by the United Nations to bring about qualitative changes in the priority fields of development, peace and collective security, as well as human rights, and to reform the Organization. Despite the progress achieved, much remains to be done, especially concerning the necessary reform of the Security Council and the revitalization of the General Assembly. We must continue our efforts to ensure that the General Assembly, the main deliberative organ of the Organization, occupies a central position, with the means to implement its resolutions.

Turning now to the reform of the Security Council, Mali reiterates its commitment to the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration adopted by the heads of State and Government of the African Union, and supports the legitimate demands by Africa to have two permanent seats and five non-permanent seats in the Security Council.

The Security Council thus reformed would better reflect the geopolitical realities of today's world and would repair the "historical injustice" done to Africa, the only region of the world that does not have a permanent seat on the Council.

Mali is back. Mali now takes back its place, its rightful place in keeping with its rich history, in the community of free and democratic States. The Malian people stand ready to take part, to play a full-fledged role in building a world of peace, tolerance, freedom, justice and democracy. Malians remain convinced that it is along that path that we, the leaders of the world, will lay the milestones of sustainable development for our peoples and will spare present and future generations the scourge of war. That is our mission and, God willing, we will accomplish it.

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

Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

Address by Mr. Khudheir Mussa Al-Khuzai, Vice-President of the Republic of Iraq

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Iraq.

Mr. Khudheir Mussa Al-Khuzai, Vice-President of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Khudheir Mussa Al-Khuzai, Vice-President of the Republic of Iraq, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Al-Khuzai (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in participating in the current session of the General Assembly to discuss the vital issue of post-2015 sustainable development and the achievement of its goals, which we all hope to be able to accomplish.

Having overcome the serious consequences of the economic, political and social policies pursued by the former regime, which were not based on scientific grounds but on the regime's personal reckless whims, Iraq has sought to translate what was agreed upon by world leaders in 2000, notably the development goals, into practical and concrete steps. By adopting plans, strategies and enacting laws that provide for the necessary mechanisms, Iraq has endeavoured to achieve the essence of sustainable development, namely, the integration of its three dimensions: economic, environmental and social.

Iraq has been working on financial and monetary policies to increase the financial flows to its public budget, which is expected to reach approximately \$150 billion in 2015, 40 per cent of which is envisioned to be allocated to the requisite investment expenditure in order to provide basic services, improve infrastructure and strengthen the Iraqi economy.

Iraq is expected to achieve steady growth in the economic sectors through its 2013-2017 development plan. However, oil is still the main engine driving the other sectors, thanks to Iraq's abundant oil and gas reserves, which surpass confirmed reserve estimates by a very large margin. Estimates put the potential of extractable oil reserves at 250 billion barrels and that of gas at more than 250 trillion cubic feet.

We expect to double oil production by the end of the 2013-2017 development plan, with a steady increase in oil exports, which are expected to reach approximately 3,750,000 barrels per day in 2015. Therefore, the 2010-2014 development plan focuses on environmental sustainability and the green economy in Iraq. Strategic goals have been identified for the aforementioned plan and for the 2013-2017 National Development Plan, which was recently approved by the Council of Ministers, as follows:

First, a poverty alleviation strategy will be adopted as one of the components for the attainment of sustainable development. The poverty rate fell from 23 per cent in 2007 to 19 per cent in 2012, and it is hoped that it will fall further, to 16 per cent, in 2017.

Second, the unemployment rate was reduced from 15 per cent in 2007 to 11 per cent in 2012, with an expected decline to 6 per cent in 2017.

Third, the average per capita income increased from \$3,000 in 2009 to nearly \$6,000 in 2012, with an annual growth rate of 15.9 per cent, clearly indicating noticeable economic progress.

Fourth, infant mortality must be reduced to 18 deaths per 1,000 births in 2017. It is noteworthy that those figures fell from 32 deaths per 1,000 births in 2011 to 22 deaths per 1,000 births in 2013. The plan also aims at reducing the mortality rate for children under five years of age to 24 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2017, following the decline from 37 in 2011 to 28 deaths in 2013.

Fifth, primary school enrolment must increase to 95 per cent in 2017 from its 2012 figure of 92 per cent. Sixth, the plan focuses on increasing secondary school enrolment to 40 per cent and that of universities to 20 per cent by 2017.

Seventh, the plan works to curb desertification through the expansion of land reclamation, where approximately 4 million dunums have been reclaimed. We hope to reclaim 2.5 million additional dunums by the end of the plan.

Eighth, it also advocates utilizing modern techniques in irrigation and increasing the latent energy of water resources by focusing on the economic exploitation thereof.

Ninth, it plans to minimize the quantities of burned gases associated with oil production by devising plans for full investment therein in 2015.

Tenth, it is hoped that, by beginning the implementation of a housing programme for the poor and limited-income people, 1 million housing units will be available by the end of the plan.

Eleventh, the plan also includes achieving self-sufficiency in terms of electricity production, which is envisioned to reach 22,000 megawatts in 2015. That means a 15 per cent surplus over peak consumption, while the production of electricity in 2003 was around 2,500 megawatts.

In that connection, we deem it necessary to emphasize the following significant points during the sixty-eighth session.

First, Iraq calls for strengthened international cooperation, particularly South-South cooperation, and we call upon the international community to fulfil its financial obligations in relation to achieving sustainable development.

Second, we favour facilitating the transfer of technology to developing countries, so as to reduce the gap between them and the developed world and contribute to solving the problems caused by global warming and climate change.

Third, we aim to address the problems caused by water scarcity, which has destabilized certain regions of the world, and we stress the need to determine fair water quotas among riparian States on international rivers.

Fourth, we want to extend special support for people suffering from the effects of international conflict and international economic sanctions, which constitute significant obstacles to the attainment of sustainable development.

Fifth, we intend to appropriately address pressures caused by unsustainable production and consumption patterns, particularly in the areas of deforestation, water scarcity, food waste and elevated carbon emissions.

Sixth, we will focus on building effective and accountable institutions; promoting the rule of law, property rights, the freedom of expression and information, in addition to the administration of justice and the fight against corruption.

Seventh, we want to ensure that the post-2015 plan is underpinned by a new spirit of solidarity, responsibility, cooperation and integration built on a common understanding of our humanity and on mutual

respect through the involvement of more participants from among women, the poor, civil society and local governments, academia and philanthropic institutions and charities.

Eighth, we will advocate for the need for Governments to play a leading role in the field of education and the need to recognize that education is a shared responsibility between families, local communities and civil society organizations, which all must contribute to the improvement and development of education and its ways and means.

Ninth, in addition to securing international cooperation and integration to help address the issues of sustainable development and the fight against extreme poverty, we hope to include, as one of the priorities, the achievement of the objectives of sustainable development beyond 2015 and the elimination of violence against women, and to achieve gender equality with appropriate work and decision-making positions, as well as comprehensive economic and social security..

Tenth, we stress the importance of existing standards in the field of human rights, the right to compensation for victims and equity in cases of human rights violations.

Eleventh, we look forward to the completion of tasks by the Working Group that came out of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, on financing for development, as well as to the creation of sound foundations in the field of financing the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda in a sustainable and predictable fashion.

I must stress, however, that no pre-2015 or post-2015 development is attainable with the existence of organized terrorism, which thrives on the blood of innocents and claims their lives. That scourge has adopted extremism as its approach, death as its craft, violence as its means, hatred as its culture and senseless and indiscriminate murder as its hobby and pastime. Such a phenomenon calls for a strict and pragmatic stance by the entire world, so as to face up to terrorism's brutal, ferocious, crazed and destructive attacks. International cooperation must seek to dry up the financial, intellectual and armament resources of terrorism, so as to save humanity from that scourge and the universe from its effects and dangers and the harm it inflicts.

We also wish to reiterate that no sustainable development can be achieved while the drums of war are beating in more than one place in the world, because the concepts of peace, development and life cannot be upheld in conjunction with the will to bring about death, war and genocide. Nor can development be achieved in the absence of peace and security. There will therefore be no political stability or social development without peaceful coexistence, security and stability, where human beings can rest and have shelter.

Against that backdrop, Iraq reiterates its calls and initiatives for a peaceful solution for each and every land where gunfire, bloodshed and the smell of death prevail, and where people witness scenes of destruction. That is because the logic of force cannot produce peace, nor can instruments of death or war mills bring about security or create development or growth.

Hence, we in Iraq, whose people have suffered tremendously from the horrors of war caused by the recklessness and folly of the defunct Saddam regime, are deeply concerned by the worsening events and tense situation on our borders with Syria, a country with which we have borders over 600 kilometres long. That is why we consider the Syrian armed conflict a serious threat to our security and stability and to the integrity of our land and people.

For that reason, we insist on putting forward our initiative to resolve the Syrian crisis politically in order to avoid a devastating humanitarian disaster unfolding in our neighbouring country and on our borders, which could undermine all aspects of the development, stability and prosperity that we and other States aspire to achieve in our vitally important region. Therefore, I invite the Assembly to support the Iraqi initiative in its effort to ensure peace, security and stability. Otherwise, developments in the region could take an unpredictable turn.

Our region is beleaguered by concerns that regional and large-scale wars may erupt or be triggered by a small spark. No one can guess the scale, trends, trajectory or duration of such conflicts. There can be no hope for sustainable development, stability or prosperity in a region that is already fragile, volatile, explosive and complex. That is the message of the Government and the people of Iraq to the Assembly.

In the aftermath of the fall of the dictatorial regime, Iraq has opted for democratic mechanisms as the sole means of ensuring the peaceful rotation of power, for

we believe in the freedom, dignity and rights of human beings. We have adopted an open-door foreign policy in our relations with the international community, and are always looking for common denominators to overcome disagreement through positive dialogue based on justice and responsible involvement with neighbouring countries, our region and the world.

We are firmly convinced that peaceful solutions are the most effective means to settle all problems between peoples, nations and Governments. We reject violence, terrorism and aggression, irrespective of their sources. Internally, we have called for tolerance, national reconciliation and cooperation, with a view to attaining communal coexistence, social peace, stability and prosperity. These principles were formally adopted by the National Conference for Social Peace that was held recently in Baghdad and signed with the code of national honour by most of Iraq's leaders and national representatives.

Iraq suffered more than two decades under international sanctions because of the invasion of brotherly Kuwait under the previous regime. However, today the new Iraq has managed, through its cooperation with the international community and the development of good-neighbourly relations with Kuwait, to overcome the effects of the sanctions. Furthermore, Iraq worked with the Security Council towards the adoption of its resolution 2107 (2013), of 27 June 2013, which put an end to Iraq's obligations under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. Thus, the crises and problems suffered by the two brotherly countries of Iraq and Kuwait are now part of the past. Today, we look forward together to developing our new relations as a springboard and a solid foundation for a prosperous future for generations to come that will have positive effects on the entire region.

Our faith in humankind does not preclude us from taking up the just cause of the oppressed, the disadvantaged and the vulnerable, or from showing solidarity with the just causes of our Arab and Islamic nation, raising our voices in defence of their rights, their humanity and their causes. Foremost among those is the cause of the Palestinian people, who are still suffering from systematic oppression and ongoing settlement activities that violate their rights and threaten their identity and existence. The situation requires the world and its international institutions to assume their due roles and responsibilities and stand by a people who seek only the realization of their rights, freedom,

justice and independence and the establishment of a viable Palestinian State, without which the Middle East region will remain prone to tension and instability.

For the sake of a Middle East living in peace and security, we reiterate the call for the establishment of a Middle East free of nuclear weapons, with an emphasis on the need to hold the Helsinki conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone as soon as possible. The failure of international efforts in that area would adversely affect the credibility of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which in turn could lead to an arms race, raising the levels of violence, tension and instability.

While the United Nations is our agreed forum for international cooperation to address the problems and challenges that we face through multilateral negotiations, we believe that the time has come to reform its bodies, in particular the Security Council, as the primary body responsible for international peace and security, in order to make them consistent with the aspirations of the peoples of the world in the twenty-first century and more representative, transparent and able to meet the challenges they face.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to express, on behalf of the Iraqi people, our sincere thanks and profound appreciation to all those who have contributed to helping Iraq lift the burden of Chapter VII from its shoulders. We wish each and every nation all over the world a free, safe and secure life with dignity and a promising prosperous future. Peace be upon the Assembly.

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

Mr. Khudheir Mussa Al-Khuzai, Vice-President of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Manuel Domingos Vicente, Vice-President of the Republic of Angola

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Angola.

Mr. Manuel Domingos Vicente, Vice-President of the Republic of Angola, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Manuel Domingos Vicente, Vice-President of the Republic of Angola, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Vicente (Angola) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): On behalf of the President of the Republic of Angola, His Excellency Mr. José Eduardo dos Santos, whom I have the honour to represent before the Assembly, allow me to congratulate Ambassador John William Ashe on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session and to assure him of my country's support in the fulfilment of that important and noble mission. I would also like to express our gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić for the effective manner in which he conducted the work of the previous session, and we salute Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his continued dedication to the cause of our Organization.

This session of the General Assembly is taking place in a complex international climate, one where the intervention of the international community is needed to provide lasting solutions to conflicts that constitute serious threats to international peace and security. The prevalence of armed conflicts and their impact on populations, terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking, maritime piracy, environmental crimes and looting of resources, as well as extreme poverty, deprivation and hunger are issues that require priority attention from our Organization. Angola reiterates the importance of the role of the United Nations as a driving force behind global efforts to maintain peace, stability and economic and social development, and it is therefore important to strengthen its capacity for conflict prevention and crisis management.

My country will continue to contribute actively in peacekeeping efforts, assuming responsibilities at the international level, in particular with regard to Africa, as well as in the regional framework and the economic and political groups it is a part of, including the Southern African Development Community, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Gulf of Guinea Commission.

In that context, the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, signed in February in Addis Ababa, is both the most appropriate mechanism for the peaceful resolution of the conflict in the eastern Democratic

Republic of the Congo and the best guarantee for regional stability and for safeguarding the peace, security, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We reiterate our call to the signatories to respect their commitments, and we condemn the threats that negative forces continue to pose to civilian populations, particularly in the city of Goma and its surrounding area.

In the context of global efforts to maintain international peace and security, we reiterate the importance of revitalizing the United Nations system, particularly through reform of the Security Council, which should adapt to the realities of today's world by increasing the number of its permanent members so as to fairly represent every region.

We express our deep concern about the escalation of violence in Egypt and add our voice to the call to the transitional authorities to act with moderation. We urge the African Union and the international community to continue to work towards a solution to the crisis in that country.

The conflict in Syria poses a risk to international peace and security, and the violence is seriously worsening the humanitarian situation in the region. We call on the international community to act urgently in order to arrive at a peaceful solution to the conflict through the mediation of the United Nations and the Arab League, and we urge respect for the human rights of civilians.

The Israeli-Palestine conflict is one of the oldest on our planet and one that still confounds the international community. Angola supports the mediation efforts undertaken by United States Secretary of State John Kerry, and hopes for the resumption of dialogue and the conclusion of an agreement between Palestine and Israel that can convert the deadlock into lasting peace and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, living side by side with the State of Israel in security.

We note with concern the poor progress being made in resolving the question of Western Sahara, and we urge the parties to continue negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations, so that the people of Western Sahara can exercise their right to self-determination.

Angola welcomes the normalization of the legal and constitutional framework of various African countries that, after tumultuous periods of instability,

have successfully held free and fair elections and are now making strides towards building democratic States, establishing the rule of law and promoting economic and social development. In that connection, we welcome the democratic election of President Ibrahim Keita in Mali and express our solidarity with the process of reconciliation and reconstruction of the country. We also congratulate those countries that have shown positive developments and that despite unstable situations are working to implement agreements aimed at resolving crises and normalizing their constitutional frameworks. They include Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Somalia, the Sudan and South Sudan. We call for the entire international community to support the efforts those countries are making to achieve peace and stability.

Six years after the onset of the international financial crisis, with its grave repercussions for the world economy, many countries are experiencing serious difficulties in financing programmes for economic growth and mobilizing resources for development aimed at improving living conditions and meeting the Millennium Development Goals. That situation is even more problematic for developing countries, particularly in Africa, where armed conflict and poverty frequently coincide.

In that context, the Angolan Government believes that it is essential that we consider “The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage”, the theme of this session of the General Assembly, in the hope that it will contribute effectively to the economic and social development of developing countries. The Angolan Government is of the view that during this session the Assembly should consider holding regional meetings based on the report of the High-level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development*, in which various leaders could define their positions on the post-2015 agenda from a regional perspective, and which could be followed by another meeting at the global level. In that regard, the Government of Angola reiterates its support for initiatives aimed at liberalizing international trade so as to promote fair and balanced competition, and we hope that the ninth World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference, scheduled to take place in Bali in December, will lead to the best results.

Environmental challenges persist. By renewing the commitments to sustainable development contained

in Agenda 21, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development provided a sound basis for policy-making at the national and international levels and for ensuring the social, economic and environmental welfare of our peoples. To that end, we reiterate that it is essential to take appropriate measures to strengthen international support for actions in support of sustainable development, as well as to increase the financial resources of the United Nations budget through contributions so as to enable the Organization to fulfil its mandate efficiently and make sustainable development a reality.

On another topic, the embargo against Cuba violates the rules of international law and has for decades been a major impediment to the development of that country and to the improvement of the living conditions of the Cuban people. Angola reiterates its position of principle that, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, the embargo should be brought to an end.

Angola reiterates its belief in mutual respect and mutual benefit, good neighbourliness and the strengthening of regional economic integration. Angola will continue to respect all international commitments and treaties to which it is a party. We respect and implement the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Constitutional Act of the African Union, and we establish relations based on the principles of self-determination, the peaceful settlement of disputes and respect for human rights.

Currently, Angola is experiencing a period of consolidation in its democratic institutions and the rule of law. There has also been a dynamic process of reconstruction and development marked by the consolidation of macroeconomic stability through the implementation of a national policy and strategy for the promotion of economic diversification contained in our economic and social development plan for the period 2013-2017.

By agreeing to join the programme of countries eligible to graduate from the least developed country category, Angola reaffirms its priority to implement a programme of diversification of its domestic production aimed at achieving balanced growth in various sectors, expanding employment opportunities and decreasing its dependence on imports of consumer products and its high dependence on oil sector exports.

Despite progress made in the past decade and the fact that the Angolan economy is on the right path, much remains to be done in order to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals. Aware of that challenge, the Government continues to develop programmes aimed at reducing social inequality, while pursuing the fight against hunger and poverty as two crucial elements for building a prosperous society and attaining social justice. Furthermore, rehabilitating and upgrading the main productive and social infrastructure, including the reconstruction of roads and railways, electricity and water supply and distribution systems, and sanitation and telecommunication networks, continue to be a challenge for the Government in its quest to improve the well-being of the population and attain sustainable development in Angola.

I would like to conclude by referring to an issue of particular importance for the Government of my country. The Republic of Angola is a candidate for non-permanent-member status in the Security Council, with elections to be held at the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly. We hope we can count on the support of all the States that make up the Assembly.

I will finish by expressing my country's unconditional support for the initiatives of the United Nations aimed at building a better world for all, based on justice and freedom, free from all threats that endanger international peace and security.

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

Mr. Manuel Domingos Vicente, Vice-President of the Republic of Angola, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mrs. María Antonieta Guillén de Bográn, Vice-President of the Republic of Honduras

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Honduras.

Mrs. María Antonieta Guillén de Bográn, Vice-President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Mrs. María Antonieta Guillén de Bográn, Vice-President of the Republic

of Honduras, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Mrs. De Bográn (Honduras) (spoke in Spanish): The Government of Honduras extends its warmest congratulations to Mr. Ashe on his election to preside over the proceedings of the General Assembly, and we wish him every success.

I am grateful for the honour that the President of Honduras conferred upon me by asking me to represent him in this world forum. As we come to the close of our term in office, we in the Administration of President Porfirio Lobo Sosa note with satisfaction that we have laid the foundation for national unity and reconciliation. We have successfully overcome the severe political crisis that affected Honduras during the previous Government, and Honduras now looks forward to new general elections in November.

The Government of President Lobo Sosa has normalized relations with the international community. We have secured ties of close cooperation with more than a hundred friendly countries, restored foreign credit and shown the world that we are a country that lives up to its democratic and peaceful calling. Today, Honduras is a member of the principal international and regional organizations. Our membership in major forums has given us access to new markets, opportunities for investment and employment and helped to strengthen our energy sector.

As part of the process of unity and reconciliation, the President of the Republic created a Government of National Integration, with the participation of all the political parties that took part in the last electoral process. Fortunately, that participation continues today and will continue through the end of the present constitutional term. Accordingly, I wish to mention that, as part of the process of healing the wounds of the 2009 political crisis and building the future together, we have successfully adopted by consensus a long-term country vision and a national plan from which our Government programme is derived. That shared vision is being implemented through a major national agreement for economic growth with social equity between the Government of President Lobo Sosa, trade unions, business owners, workers, farmers and civil society. I believe that Honduras and the world should welcome those efforts, together with the spirit of dialogue and commitment of all sectors of Honduran society, which have shown that collective interests come well before individual interests.

Today, we are reaping the benefits of that major national agreement. We have had successes in the small and medium-sized enterprise sector, social protection programmes, the establishment of a transparent budget and foreign trade. Democratic participation has also been strengthened because of the interaction of all sectors in our economic and social council, which is a forum that has made it possible for mechanisms for dialogue and conflict prevention to work.

We are pleased to state that our Government will be handing over to the incoming Administration a series of principles that should serve as a basis for consolidating social policies. Those principles were discussed and agreed upon between the Government and civil society in order to ensure a solid foundation and the sustainability of social institutions in the country.

Our country and our democratic institutions have suffered the onslaught of external aggression, which has led to violence and insecurity. I am referring to drug trafficking and various forms of transnational organized crime. With all the measures adopted to combat crime, last year the Government of President Lobo Sosa was able to halt the rise of the homicide rate, and this year we have seen a reduction in that rate. That has been achieved through the adoption by the National Congress of an entirely new legal and institutional framework, which was lacking before. We have undertaken a reform of the security and justice system. For the first time, we have adopted procedures to certify judicial officials, using confidence-testing measures. We have also adopted a tax to strengthen citizen safety. To the extent possible, we are providing training for the security and defence institutions. We have implemented a national policy to prevent violence against children and youth, and we have promoted and protected human rights.

And yet, while halting the spiral of violence is a positive sign, it is insufficient, given the high level of criminal activity that had been reached. Our commitment to combat crime will be upheld until the very last day of our mandate. However, it is very important to sustain those efforts. The new Government will have to do so with a firm hand. It will have to continue to strengthen security and justice institutions, which is a medium- to long-term task. Combating global crime requires a more decisive and more effective international and regional effort, in which drug-producing and drug-consuming countries assume the shared and differentiated responsibility that they bear in this wave of violence.

Today, I reaffirm Honduras's commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right to life and the respect for human dignity. We recognize that the protection of human rights is the very essence of democracy. During our administration, we created a Secretary of State for Justice and Human Rights and strengthened the role of the Special Prosecutor for Human Rights. We established institutions for combating torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and we enacted a law combating human trafficking and introducing a public human rights policy and a national plan of action for human rights. We now require presidential candidates to sign the human rights pact.

It is fundamentally important to Honduras that we continue working towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals, with which we have made significant progress. Food and nutrition security is a national priority for President Porfirio Lobo Sosa's Government, and we have focused efforts to eradicate hunger through various food and nutrition security programmes targeting the most vulnerable people and the neediest areas of the country.

Through its recognition of the multidimensional and multisectoral nature of the food and nutrition security issue, the Government of our Republic reduced the population suffering from malnutrition by 21 per cent between 2010 and 2012, meeting and exceeding its target for the Millennium Development Goals. As an example of our multisectoral approach and to ensure the sustainability of our programmes, I am pleased to announce the launch of a Government initiative, the Partnership for the Dry Corridor. The Partnership, which has the support of the international community, targets those suffering from poverty and hunger in our country's most vulnerable area.

Concerning education, I should emphasize that Honduras has seen a significant increase in the number of 5-year-olds entering the pre-school system. It is roughly triple what we expected. Our Government has been deeply committed to reforming the national education system. The new legal framework requires a broad participatory process involving parents, communities and teachers. The proposal that President Lobo made here in the General Assembly last year, when he said that classrooms must never be closed (see A/67/PV.6, p. 49), has led to a considerable increase in the number of school days for children in Honduras. That has resulted in an improvement in the quality of

education, and as a nation we are very optimistic about it.

As to gender equality and the empowerment of women, we have made progress in implementing a gender equality system, created with a view to promoting, encouraging and institutionalizing gender-equity policies and improving equality of opportunity between men and women. With regard to the reduction of under-five mortality and improving maternal health, our Government approved a public policy for the holistic development of infants and a comprehensive care strategy for children in the community. The strategy has been internationally recognized, because it has improved maternal health conditions before, during and after delivery and has thus lowered the mortality risk and increased the number of births in medical centres.

Similarly, it is important to emphasize the efforts we have made to reduce infant morbidity and mortality associated with diseases that are preventable through vaccination; our broad immunization programme has achieved more than 90 per cent coverage for vaccines required for children under the age of 2. With regard respect to HIV/AIDS, our Government has increased the national budget for prevention and care and has financed almost 100 per cent of the antiretroviral treatment.

Concerning the delimitation of maritime space in the Pacific Ocean, and specifically the situation in the Gulf of Fonseca, a historic bay that Honduras shares in a co-sovereignty regime with El Salvador and Nicaragua, my Government wishes to reiterate its respect for the decision that the International Court of Justice handed down on 11 September 1992. We also affirm our commitment to including a comprehensive cooperation agreement under the auspices of a tri-national commission of coastal States, which develops conservation and protection programmes for the environment in the Gulf and the improvement of living conditions for neighbouring communities. It is an opportune moment to recall that it was in October 2012 that Honduras first asked the Security Council to authorize the Secretary-General to provide all necessary support for constituting that authority, and I take this opportunity to repeat our request. I thank the European Union for its cooperation in developing this zone, which has great economic potential.

I would like to emphasize the importance that all coastal States attach to the decisions of the International

Court of Justice. We wish to avoid making any territorial or maritime claims that would distance us further from the big picture, which is to make the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Fonseca a zone of cooperation and peace. But given the understanding and neighbourliness we possess, we have concluded, based on equitable principles, the necessary agreements regarding the maritime impact on the Pacific Ocean. Honduras has already made proposals that we are prepared to discuss with our fraternal neighbours.

I wish to underscore the fact that our Government has defined a strategy for a governmental transition for 2013-2014, whose primary objective is to ensure an orderly and structured handover, so as to avoid the vacuums and delays in planning that have traditionally accompanied a change of Government. It is essential to ensure the sustainability of public policies beyond the life of our Administration, so that we can achieve long-term planning that benefits the Honduran people. In November we will hold general elections with the participation of nine political parties, including a strong female presence in the election process. Honduras's electoral authorities, which function independently, are making every possible effort to ensure that the general elections are free and transparent. On behalf of the people of Honduras, I would like to ask all friendly nations to support our electoral process. All States are welcome to witness it.

I hope sincerely that, during its sixty-eighth session, the General Assembly will meet the expectations of Member States, and I take this opportunity to express my thanks, on behalf of the people and Government of Honduras, for the solidarity that the international community has shown to the Administration of President Porfirio Lobo Sosa.

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

Mrs. María Antonieta Guillén de Bográn, Vice-President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Danny Faure, Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles.

Mr. Danny Faure, Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Danny Faure, Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Faure (Republic of Seychelles): It is with great honour that I address the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session on behalf of the President of the Republic of Seychelles, Mr. James Alix Michel, and on behalf of the Seychellois people. I wish to congratulate Ambassador John Ashe on his election as President and on his guidance of the proceedings so far.

In 2014, we will mark the United Nations International Year of Small Island Developing States. Mr. Ashe's appointment during the sixty-eighth session is highly symbolic of the constructive role that small island developing States play within the United Nations, and we express our full support for his efforts to further promote inclusiveness and full participation.

I would also like to join all those who preceded me in complimenting Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his leadership of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, during which he stressed the unifying elements of the Assembly. Allow me to also express our appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the determination and commitment he has shown since the beginning of his tenure of office to strengthening the role of the United Nations.

For the Seychelles delegation, the General Assembly evokes the spirit of humanity's common cause better than any other institution. Indeed, in this Hall, we are reminded that there are no large nations or small nations, rich nations or poor nations, powerful nations or weak nations — simply the United Nations.

As a small island developing State, we are perhaps also more conscious than most countries that very little can be achieved through isolation. Our economy is built around its connectivity to the world economy. Our security is easily undermined by events beyond our control. Our environmental safety is also dependent on many factors that have an impact beyond our borders. Both our opportunities and our risks can be addressed only through international partnerships.

As we have discussions and exchanges of ideas on the post-2015 development agenda, we believe that the experiences of our group of States provide contexts that

can help us to design a better development model. As we aim to set sustainable development goals, we must keep in mind that, if we can sustain our island, then we will know that we can sustain our planet.

In 2013 Seychelles was given the honour to host the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas Sub-Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, to be held next year in Samoa. The participation in the preparatory event by both the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the President of the General Assembly was highly appreciated as a symbol of support for the concerns of islands. Our discussions there, and in the ongoing process, have highlighted the fact that there is an urgent need for the United Nations to adopt a "resilience" that takes into account the evolving developing needs of islands.

In Rio last year, we identified the green economy and the blue economy as tools with which States may implement a more sustainable approach to development. We are convinced that the green economy cannot be properly addressed unless we also give more attention to what is termed the blue economy, which is based on harnessing the development potential of our oceans sustainably. Oceans make up 72 per cent of our planet and connect our nations in terms of geography, trade, transport and communications. We consider island nations such as ourselves as guardians of that space, even if in many cases we can but be witnesses to plunder, pillage and pollution.

The status quo merely perpetuates a model where we will consume our planet's resources with no long-term protection, while the menace of climate change continues to grow as a threat to our economies, our way of life and our existence.

To further mobilize reflection and action on the concept of the blue economy, Seychelles is pleased to be able to organize, in partnership with the United Arab Emirates, a special high-level event to be held as part of the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week on 21 January 2014. The blue economy also represents an unparalleled opportunity for Africa. As an African island nation, we have continued to call for more attention to be given to the sustainable development of Africa's coastal areas and its oceans. We can transform Africa's oceans from being sources of raw products for distant nations to a space where Africa's trade needs are prioritized and where Africa can better protect its oceanic resources.

As an African island State, Seychelles continues to prioritize the security of our maritime spaces. In terms of maritime security, Seychelles reiterates its desire to build partnerships to create better coordination and sharing of information in the immediate region and beyond.

Seychelles has also set up a Regional Anti-Piracy Prosecution and Intelligence Coordination Centre, and it also hosts an anti-piracy cell of the Indian Ocean Commission to build the maritime security capacity of the island States. The tools we have developed through such initiatives have strengthened our ability as a region to deter other criminal activities, such as arms trafficking, drug trafficking, people trafficking and illegal fishing. We look forward to building on those successes with our partners in order to create an effective coordination mechanism for maritime security in our region.

As we consider the security situation in East Africa, may I also take this opportunity to express our solidarity and our sympathy to the Government and the people of Kenya, as well as personally to President Uhuru Kenyatta, as Kenya recovers from the barbaric attacks in Nairobi on Saturday.

Such acts of terrorism strengthen our resolve to ensure that we build a shared future free of the forces of division and hostility. We also salute the efforts of the Government of Somalia in its dedication to ensure that forces of extremism and intolerance have no place in our shared region.

Similarly, we are encouraged by the positive developments in relation to the expected first round of presidential elections to be held in Madagascar in October. Elections represent the path towards resolving the crisis in that neighbouring island, and we are encouraged that the basis for the resolution of the crisis discussed during the Southern African Development Community mediation, with the support of the Indian Ocean Islands Commission, held in Seychelles in the year 2012, have come to fruition.

During the sixty-eighth session, Seychelles will continue to be an advocate for peace and stability and will urge all nations to work through the mechanisms of the United Nations towards resolving existing crises. Seychelles condemns in the strongest terms any use of chemical weapons or any other weapon of mass destruction. As one of the first signatories of the Arms Trade Treaty, Seychelles also urges all nations to

actively engage in that treaty process so as to reduce the risk of arms trades, which remains one of the biggest challenges for our region and the world.

Finally, during the sixty-eighth session, Seychelles will continue to call for every effort to be made to reduce the marginalization of island States, and it is in that context that we reiterate the call for the removal of the embargo against our brotherly nation of Cuba.

The President took the Chair.

Seychelles is a nation that believes that all voices count. In speaking out on behalf of small islands that are often marginalized in international processes, we believe that we have a duty to ensure that all perspectives are considered. It is because of our commitment to that inclusive approach to the United Nations and to multilateralism that Seychelles has announced its intention to stand as a candidate for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 2017-2018. As a nation that has never served before, we are actively engaged in discussions in our East African constituency, and we appreciate the opportunity to engage with all nations that wish to share their views. We look forward to many fruitful discussions.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that our approach towards the sustainable development goals must be even broader and more inclusive than for the Millennium Development Goals. The challenges are obvious: poverty, climate change and energy, among others. The list can go on indefinitely, but we believe that there is also a shared opportunity in setting the sustainable development goals. There is an opportunity to reflect the true interconnectivity of our planet through the adoption of interconnected objectives. Shared objectives will lead to shared success. That is the conviction of Seychelles.

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

Mr. Danny Faure, Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles, was escorted from the rostrum.

**Address by Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif,
Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic
of Pakistan**

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Sharif (Islamic Republic of Pakistan): I stand here today before the Assembly, soon after my country has seen a new dawn. I come to this Hall in all humility as the elected Prime Minister of Pakistan for the third time. I feel exonerated, as my supporters and I have stood firm in our commitment to democracy.

I am happy to inform representatives that we now have a strong Parliament, an independent judiciary, a free media and a vibrant civil society. But there is no room for complacency. We cannot lower our guard. Democracy needs constant vigilance and strong institutions. It needs careful nurturing. More importantly, it is not promises but good governance that sustains democracy. My Government has put the people at the centre. We will work to give them peace and security, an environment of growth and development. I am pursuing an inclusive approach for the entire nation.

Pakistan is an ardent supporter of the United Nations, which is an anchor of peace and a beacon of hope for all nations. The United Nations universal character provides a forum to discuss, develop and implement global responses to the pressing problems of our times. Pakistan upholds international law and promotes international consensus. The security of our world is ensured and reinforced by friendly relations among nations and respect for the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of States.

The United Nations needs reform, but it should be a reform that reflects the interests of all, not just the ambitions of a few. We believe that the Security Council's composition should be made more representative, democratic and equitable, and its work more effective, transparent and accountable. The intended reforms must, however, plan for a dynamic future, not entrench or replicate outdated historical patterns based on privileges. The role and authority of the General Assembly must be fully restored and revitalized. In the past few years, the General Assembly has regained influence in responding to challenges in regard to peace and security, development and climate

change. It is becoming a platform of choice. Yet, it has to go a long way to acquire its full authority.

To save the world from the scourge of war, we have to continue to strive for a fair and just international order based on the rule of law. Festering disputes must be resolved. In that regard, the United Nations has to play a critical role.

The United Nations must, for instance, continue to remain attentive to the issue of Jammu and Kashmir and the full realization of the right to self-determination of its people. The suffering of the people cannot be brushed under the carpet because of power politics. As in the past, Pakistan calls upon the international community to give an opportunity to the Kashmiris to decide their future peacefully, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. The issue of Jammu and Kashmir was presented to the Security Council in January 1948, and yet the issue remains unresolved after nearly seven decades.

I have aspirations for regional peace and stability. I have shared that vision with leaders in our neighbourhood. Shortly after assuming office, I received a message of goodwill from the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Manmohan Singh. I extended an invitation to him to engage with us so as to address all outstanding issues between our two countries, and Prime Minister Singh's response was positive. Our two countries have wasted massive resources in an arms race. We could have used those resources for the economic well-being of our people. We still have that opportunity. Pakistan and India can prosper together; and the entire region would benefit from our cooperation. We stand ready to re-engage with India in a substantive and purposeful dialogue. I am looking forward to meeting Prime Minister Singh here in New York so as to make a new beginning. We have a solid basis for doing that. We can build on the Lahore Accord signed in 1999, which contained a road map for the resolution of our differences through peaceful negotiations. I am committed to working for a peaceful and economically prosperous region. That is what our people want and what I have long aspired to.

It gave me great pleasure to welcome President Karzai in Islamabad last month. We reaffirmed our shared goal of a peaceful, stable and united Afghanistan. The people of Afghanistan are and should remain masters of their own destiny. We support an inclusive, Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process, leading

to national reconciliation. I assured President Karzai that we do not wish to interfere in Afghanistan's internal affairs; nor do we have any favourites in that country. In fact, we hope earnestly that the Afghans themselves will unite for the peace, prosperity and development of their great country.

Pakistan encourages United Nations efforts to stabilize Afghanistan. We will work together with Afghanistan for regional and economic cooperation aimed at establishing and reinforcing regional trade, energy and communications corridors. Our solidarity with the Afghan people has been demonstrated through our willingness to host millions of Afghan refugees in Pakistan for many decades. International support for their repatriation to and reintegration in Afghanistan is indispensable. We also look forward to United Nations support for addressing other transregional challenges, including the flow of narcotics.

Last year, the Assembly gave Palestine the status of non-Member observer State. We hope that it will soon join this body as a full Member State. We are glad that the stalled peace process has started again. It should lead to the consolidation of an independent, viable and contiguous State of Palestine, based on the pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Pakistan will continue to demonstrate its solidarity with the people of Palestine.

Even as we meet here, Syria is in turmoil, with Syrians killing Syrians. We appeal to the Syrian Government and the opposition groups to move to the negotiating table in Geneva to prepare a road map for national reconciliation and the necessary political transitions. More war will lead to more killings, which must be stopped. As a party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, Pakistan remains opposed to the use of chemical weapons. We condemn their use in the strongest terms.

We welcome the agreement reached between the United States and Russia, and supported by the other permanent members of the Security Council, to secure and destroy chemical weapons in Syria. That crucial step has facilitated consensus within the Council to adopt resolution 2118 (2013), which not only addresses the issue of chemical weapons but could start the stalled political process in Syria, leading to national reconciliation and solutions that are acceptable to the people of Syria. Pakistan will support that resolution.

Acceptance of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and a decision on dates for convening a Geneva II conference will be a big step towards ending the crisis in Syria. I call on all forces to invest their political will and capital in diplomacy to bring peace to that country.

As a responsible nuclear-weapon State, we will continue to pursue the goals of disarmament and non-proliferation and adhere to a policy of credible minimum deterrence without entering into any arms race. We cannot, however, remain oblivious to the evolving security dynamics in South Asia, nor can we agree to an arrangement that is detrimental to our security and strategic interests. Our position on the proposed fissile material treaty is determined by our national security interests and the objective of strategic stability in South Asia.

The safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear energy, without discrimination, is essential for economic development. Pakistan qualifies for full access to civil nuclear technology for peaceful purposes in order to meet its growing energy needs for continued economic growth. By the same token, as a mainstream partner in the global non-proliferation regime, Pakistan has impeccable credentials for joining the multilateral export control regime, including the Nuclear Suppliers Group. Pakistan will continue to participate constructively in the Nuclear Security Summit, which is a laudable initiative.

As a country that has suffered grievously for many years from terrorism, we condemn that phenomenon in all its forms and manifestations. Over the past 12 years, we have made huge sacrifices in blood and resources. We have lost 40,000 precious lives of men, women and children, including 8,000 defence and security personnel. There has been colossal damage to our social and physical infrastructure, too. Our economy has been denied the opportunity to grow fully. That must change now. I have tried to forge national consensus on a cohesive policy to eliminate terrorism from our soil. For that purpose, I convened an all-parties conference that spoke out unanimously against terrorism. We are resolved to oppose the forces of terrorism with every means at our disposal. At the same time, we have offered dialogue to end violence, wean young extremists off extremism and integrate all segments of our society into the national mainstream. Winning young people's hearts and minds is as important as using guns to deter terrorism. But dialogue should not be seen as a sign of weakness or a tool of appeasement.

The war against terrorism must be waged within the framework of international law. The use of armed drones in the border areas of Pakistan is a continued violation of our territorial integrity. It results in innocent civilian casualties and is detrimental to our resolve and efforts to eliminate extremism and terrorism in Pakistan. I have urged the United States to cease those strikes so that we can avoid further casualties and suffering.

Terrorism knows no borders. It has no religion or creed, which is why maligning a whole people or a religion on that account is unfair and unwise. Islam is a religion of peace, compassion and brotherhood. And the yet most insidious form of contemporary racism in the name of religion is on the rise. Peaceful Muslim communities are profiled and subjected to discriminatory practices. Their faith, culture, holy personalities and scriptures are under attack. The stereotyping of Muslims as extremists and terrorists must stop. We must all use the influence and reach of the United Nations to avert a clash of civilizations and to promote harmony among followers of diverse religions all around the world. Terrorism negates Islam's humanistic outlook and noble values. Those who perpetrate terrorism are enemies of Muslims and Islam itself.

Pakistan is the largest troop contributor to United Nations peacekeeping. Since 1960, we have contributed 150,000 troops, and 135 of our peacekeepers have lost their lives in the service of peace. That has been our most tangible assistance to the United Nations efforts to maintain international peace and security.

We fully support the United Nations effort to finalize and implement a single, coherent post-2015 development agenda that identifies benchmarks for poverty alleviation, sustainable development and social inclusion. More importantly, we should prepare ourselves to respond effectively to save our planet from the ravages of climate change.

Our Government is undertaking an economic revolution in Pakistan so that it, too, can become part of the emerging markets. We have all the fundamentals and human and natural resources for such a transformation. In the immediate future, our challenge is to overcome a volatile security environment, correct structural imbalances in the economy and bring an end to energy shortages. We are building a new Pakistan with a robust economy. From the international community, we seek

not aid but enhanced trade, market access, investment and strong economic partnerships.

We are creating a new framework for change to provide equal opportunities and social justice for everyone, eliminate the exploitation of the poor, harness our human resources and restore the dignity of our citizens. We intend to use education as a key driver of the socioeconomic development of Pakistan. We are introducing a national health service across Pakistan with the participation of the private sector. We have also made the eradication of polio in Pakistan a matter of great importance for my Government, as we are determined to make Pakistan a polio-free country.

It is our strong resolve to promote the full participation of women in national development, while protecting their political, social and cultural rights as agents of change. More than 63 per cent of our population is under the age of 25. By investing in their education and skills, we aim to tap into the demographic dividend. Minorities are equal citizens of Pakistan. They will not only have complete freedom to worship, but also full protection of their rights to education, employment and political participation.

We are deeply saddened by the recent terrorist attack on the members of a minority community in Peshawar. That heinous attack has united the entire Pakistani nation in support of our brothers and sisters of all faiths in Pakistan. We share their grief and have declared three days of mourning. The attack was carried out by the same elements who have attacked our mosques, shrines, innocent citizens and members of our security forces. However, the attack has further strengthened my Government's resolve to deal with terrorism and extremism in a resolute and comprehensive manner, as I reiterated in my very first speech at the National Assembly of Pakistan.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize to the Assembly that Pakistan is a strong supporter of multilateral diplomacy, convinced that it is the most legitimate and ultimate guarantor of peace and security, economic and social development, and respect for universal human rights. As a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Pakistan has been making every effort to strengthen the role of diplomacy to resolve conflicts and to help build States in post-conflict situations. In all instances, we have upheld the primacy of the Charter of the United Nations. We need multilateral diplomacy so that we continue to respect diversity while reaching

decisions that impact our fate as members of the international community. Towards that end, the United Nations — the virtual world parliament — is our best hope.

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

Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Denzil L. Douglas, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Sustainable Development, Human Resources Development, Constituency Empowerment and Social Security of Saint Kitts and Nevis

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Sustainable Development, Human Resources Development, Constituency Empowerment and Social Security of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Denzil L. Douglas, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Sustainable Development, Human Resources Development, Constituency Empowerment and Social Security of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Denzil L. Douglas, the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Sustainable Development, Human Resources Development, Constituency Empowerment and Social Security of Saint Kitts and Nevis, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Douglas (Saint Kitts and Nevis): I am particularly pleased to extend congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. I am indeed proud, given your stellar service to the General Assembly and of the service you have rendered to your native land, Antigua and Barbuda, and to the Latin America and Caribbean region in general. As a member of the Organization of the Eastern Caribbean regional group and the wider Caribbean region, Saint Kitts and Nevis pledges its full support to you throughout your tenure at the helm of the General Assembly. I am confident that your expertise and skills will position you favourably to guide the general debate and the extensive work

programme of the various committees and agencies of this body.

Sir, Saint Kitts and Nevis wishes to place on record its appreciation to your predecessor, the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, for the important contributions that he made to advance the work of the institution during his own tenure.

We begin the sixty-eighth session fully cognizant of the diverse challenges with which we must contend, and equally seized of our obligation as a Government and people to contribute to the global priorities that inform the work of the Assembly. We see the relevance of maintaining sharp focus on those areas that are quite integral to the national and international development agendas. I refer to matters such as sustainable development, the maintenance of international peace and security, the promotion of human rights, disarmament, the promotion of justice and international law, and the effective coordination of humanitarian assistance efforts. Those, we believe, are the core principles for informing any plan of action to advance towards the post-2015 era with the confidence that our shared vision for meeting the goals we set, will be realized.

Just a few days ago, Saint Kitts and Nevis attained another milestone, celebrating three decades of nationhood with a very strong commitment to maintaining the stability and prosperity of our nation, drawing on our own creativity as a Government and a people. Therefore, this year's statement is very significant for our proud nation. As one of the smallest States Members of the Organization in the western hemisphere, we are pleased with the significant strides that we have made as my Government pursues a process of transformation for sustainability in a nation that is not immune to global developments that continue to have a negative impact on its national agenda.

However, my Government is working assiduously to transform our former sugar-based economy into one that is service-oriented, driven mainly by tourism and hospitality and supported by international financial and offshore education services and by manufacturing and agriculture. In all of this, we are aware of the momentum and impact of information and communication technology as a tool that will assist us in developing our national economy.

As far as the manufacturing sector is concerned, we have developed a cluster of light manufacturing

enterprises that service the North and South American and European markets with quality electronic and electrical components for construction, cable television, and the aerospace and aircraft industries. Indeed, our present economic trajectory will ensure that we meet both the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and our own sustainable development goals in the post-2015 development agenda. That is why the theme for this session — “The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage” — is perceived to be quite relevant.

My delegation is pleased that at this session we will be reviewing the progress made towards achieving the MDGs as the target date of 2015 fast approaches. In that regard, the Secretary-General must be commended for his initiative. I am pleased to indicate that Saint Kitts and Nevis has taken tremendous strides in achieving the MDG 1, concerning the eradication of extreme poverty. Our Government has invested heavily in creating a very solid and expansive social safety infrastructure that has helped the less fortunate to lead dignified lives. We provide subsidized health care for children and the elderly. We assist vulnerable families with the resources to pursue education and provide them with hot, nourishing meals each day. We also provide living facilities for the aged and the indigent.

My delegation hopes that every effort will be made globally to ensure that all targets are met by the indicative 2015 deadline. The *Millennium Development Goals Report 2013* provides a clear indication of exactly where the international community should be directing its focus. The world as a whole has to pay a great deal of attention to the MDGs that are most off track, and those where progress has stalled, including those relating to hunger, universal access to primary education, child mortality, maternal health and access to sanitation. All nations must therefore redouble their efforts to exercise the requisite political will to implement programmes designed especially to meet the established targets and to improve the lives of millions of people in a meaningful way.

We must never lose sight of the intrinsic linkages that exist between the Millennium Development Goals and the sustainable development goals, particularly in the post-2015 development agenda. Both processes, though running in parallel, are mutually reinforcing in the sense that the latter will accelerate programmes to meet target indicators in the former, while the former will provide valuable lessons for achieving a higher degree of overall success.

Cognizant of the fact that poverty eradication is intrinsically linked to attaining sustainable development, we must strive to ensure that a balanced approach is taken to blending economic growth, equity, social inclusion and environmental sustainability as we craft and implement policies to achieve development that is both meaningful and truly sustainable. The post-2015 development agenda must be arrived at through transparent and inclusive intergovernmental negotiations under the United Nations. In that regard, my delegation appreciates the decision taken at the special event on the follow-up to achieving the MDGs that was convened earlier this week.

The post-2015 development agenda should also address other challenges faced by developing countries, such as universal access to modern energy services, ensuring food security and nutrition, providing full and productive employment and decent work for all, job skills and training, agricultural development, building productive capacity, and infrastructure development. My Government has seen the positive impact of its own national initiative, which is geared towards providing young people in particular with the skills they need to integrate themselves into the world of work through the People Empowerment Programme. To date, over 2,000 young men and women have reaped the benefits of this particular initiative.

It is very important for all States Members of this great Organization to play an active role in ensuring that the targets identified in the post-2015 era adequately address the remaining gaps by the indicative deadline for achieving the MDGs. My delegation would therefore wish to reaffirm its commitment to ensuring that small island developing States remain a special case for ensuring sustainable development, recognizing our unique characteristics, our challenges and vulnerabilities, and their ongoing impact on our ability to achieve and build resilience. Small island developing States remain constrained in meeting the economic, environmental and social challenges they face. While we recognize our own responsibility for overcoming some of these setbacks, we wish to stress that in the absence of cooperation and assistance from the international community, success will definitely remain difficult.

At this juncture, allow me to place on record our appreciation to some of our development partners that have offered us tangible assistance in stabilizing our national economy and in generally diversifying

the national economy, in particular in the field of agricultural diversification, information and communications technologies, development and energy diversification in an economy that relies on fossil-fuel consumption. This phenomenon will have a positive impact on our energy cost-reduction efforts as we advance towards realizing our goal of a fully green economy as we endeavour to bring much-needed relief to our people by 2015.

The contributions of the Governments of the Republic of China, Japan, the United States of America, Venezuela, the United Kingdom, Canada and Cuba, and of the Organization of American States, the European Union, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in particular, have assisted greatly in that regard.

The Assembly will agree that no discussion of the issue of development can progress without reference to the area of health, and in particular the chronic illnesses that continue to plague our societies resulting in the loss of lives, thus retarding our developmental thrust. It was just a few days ago, in the margins of the sixty-eighth session, that I had the privilege of addressing a forum on non-communicable diseases and disability, held in collaboration with several permanent missions, the Caribbean Community secretariat, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the World Health Organization and the Non-Communicable Disease Alliance. The forum was designed to bring focused attention to creating synergies between non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and disabilities and to examine how health systems can be reoriented and reinforced to ensure equitable access to high-quality care and thereby advance development.

In that forum, we were able to confirm that NCDs are driven not only by ageing but increasingly and alarmingly by the growing number of cases of juvenile diabetes and the growing number of youth incapacitated by accident injury. The high incidence of NCDs within the Caribbean also places an increased burden on our open economies, which are highly vulnerable to external shocks and natural disasters, diverting resources that could be allocated to building quality infrastructure and our precious human capital. Indeed, we accept the recommendation of the report of the Caribbean Commission on Health and Development that urgent steps must be taken to reverse those particular trends.

Therefore, as we focus strategically on the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda, we cannot lose sight of

non-communicable diseases and the real threat that they pose to societies across the globe. We are therefore grateful for the attention that was given at the United Nations High-level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases two years ago to the need for a global response to that problem. We recognize that much work has been undertaken by the World Health Organization, the Pan American Health Organization and other regional bodies to reverse the high incidence of NCDs in our region. There is now a strong emphasis on testing, since the collection of empirical data is key for proper tracking and analysis. The preparation of strategic plans and budgets and the incorporation of families and communities into education, prevention and detection programmes are all pivotal in this regard.

My delegation is convinced that the combat against the high incidence of non-communicable diseases must receive greater prominence in the post-2015 sustainable development agenda. It is evident that there is a strong nexus between a nation's health status and its levels of productivity. My delegation therefore subscribes to the notion that a nation's wealth lies in the health of its people. Our High-level Meeting of two years ago was an important first step in that regard, and it is one on which we must continue to build on an ongoing basis. It is clear that we need to adopt a strategy similar to the global response to HIV/AIDS in order to achieve the levels of success in fighting the incidence of NCDs.

Today, I respectfully submit that there are practical lessons to be learned from the experience developed by agencies such as the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and PAHO that have touched the lives of millions in a positive way. It is therefore important for the Assembly to keep on the front burner a practical strategy to address the high incidence of NCDs within our region and the nations of the world.

As we usher in a dispensation of sustainment, we remain cognizant of the inextricable link between development and an environment of peace and security. Crime in any society is an unwelcome and destabilizing threat that must be dealt with promptly. Indeed, the ways in which societies are affected at both the micro and the macro levels are known to us all. Entire societies are forced to bear the myriad costs associated with personal injury, psychological insecurity and the related health-care repercussions.

That is why we in Saint Kitts and Nevis have placed great emphasis on effective leadership, clear lines

of authority and responsibility, targeted equipment upgrades, expanded and ongoing training, community policing, strengthened relations between the police and the public, and full cooperation at all levels between our national police force and our national defence force. As a result, Saint Kitts and Nevis has made tremendous strides in confronting the challenge of crime. Indeed, in the space of just over one year, we were able to see crime plummet by some 53 per cent, convincing us of the importance of the United Nations providing a forum via which Member States might share best practices in this era of globalized criminality. If the challenge is becoming international in scope, so too must our response.

In that regard, we are equally aware that the socioeconomic and political gains that we are trying to achieve in the global community will be elusive if the environment of peace is interrupted by warfare and threats to the peaceful coexistence of the world's peoples. Saint Kitts and Nevis therefore joins in condemning the atrocities that have recently been perpetrated in Syria and Kenya, which have resulted in wanton loss of human lives. Such use of chemical and conventional weapons, resort to acts of violence and terrorism, and their spiralling inhumane effects will ultimately have a far-reaching deleterious impact on global safety and security, which must continue to be a concern for all of the world's leaders and their peoples.

More than any other time in its history, the United Nations must be more assertive in executing its mandate as a leading actor in securing world peace. Saint Kitts and Nevis appreciates the strides that we have made with the Arms Trade Treaty, and would urge that we move with alacrity to ensure its entry into force. However, as a small island State with open borders, we see the relevance of establishing international standards and controls that will govern the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons through our Caribbean ports.

We commend the United States of America for the partnership that has been forged with Saint Kitts and Nevis and the other States Members of the Caribbean that form part of the United States Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, which, among other things, will be pivotal to our efforts to stop the illicit flow of foreign-made small arms into our peaceful Caribbean region. This initiative has provided avenues of collaboration in crime prevention and detection as we work together in building the capacity of our security forces. This, we are convinced, will contribute significantly to creating

an enabling environment for sustainable development through the prevalence of peace and security in our communities.

Our focus is not only on the international dimensions of crime. Indeed, we are mindful of the fact that all over the world, women and children are among the most vulnerable in our societies, and so we have instituted a clear and assertive zero-tolerance policy in this regard. Violence against women and children must be seen not as a personal or family matter, but instead as a socially destructive behaviour demanding judicial intervention. If and where this zero-tolerance policy does not yet exist, we strongly urge its embrace today and its immediate implementation.

Thirty years ago, Saint Kitts and Nevis established diplomatic relations with several countries, including the Republic of China on Taiwan. In the intervening years, this relationship has been mutually beneficial. As the debate on sustainable development unfolds, Saint Kitts and Nevis is eminently qualified to speak on the myriad contributions that the Republic of China is capable of making to the international community. While the international community is preoccupied with ensuring peace and security globally, we can applaud the Government of the Republic of China for promoting peace across the Taiwan Strait and proposing the East China Sea Peace Initiative, thereby demonstrating a commitment to peace and stability.

Taiwan is one of the top 18 economies globally. In addition, Taiwan has worked assiduously to advance the economic interests of countries such as ours. In this regard, we have collaborated on a large number of key projects, such as the multisectoral agritourism demonstration farm, our high-priority solar energy farm and an information and communications technology centre, which are all designed to advance the social and economic interests of my small nation.

I wish to place on record my delegation's appreciation to the World Health Organization for having invited Taiwan, for five consecutive years, to attend the World Health Assembly (WHA) as an observer. We are of the view that Taiwan has adopted a very pragmatic approach to its meaningful participation in United Nations specialized agencies and functional organizations that are critical to the current global efforts to address many issues of mutual concern. My delegation is convinced that the arrangements made for Taiwan's presence in the World Health Assembly, which have been referred to as the WHA model, serve

as a useful point of reference for Taiwan's meaningful participation in other international agencies, such as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. While on that note, permit me to commend Mr. Roberto Kobeh González, President of the ICAO Council, on the decision to invite Taiwan to attend this month's thirty-eighth ICAO Assembly as a special guest.

Germane to the concept of exclusion from the international trading arrangement is the trade embargo imposed on Cuba at the height of the Cold War, which today remains a matter of concern for Saint Kitts and Nevis, as it does to the vast majority of nations represented in this important institution. Our own position is based on our commitment to international law, the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and our obligations under the same. We therefore, like so many in this Hall, are concerned about the extraterritorial application and effects of national legislation on the sovereignty of States. Therefore, the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis reiterates its support for resolution 67/4 on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba, and once again calls for an immediate end to that unilateral action.

As we move to open a chapter that will usher in a more enlightened era of human existence, Saint Kitts and Nevis joins with the States members of the Caribbean Community in supporting the very important case for reparations associated with the atrocities of slavery. Although the repercussions of slavery on the lives of our ancestors cannot be quantified, we are convinced that the deleterious effects, which even now are translated into much hardship and poverty for the descendants of our ancestors, must be resolved. Therefore, the time has come.

The world has seen more than its share of conflicts in recent years. In addition, natural disasters, sometimes caused by climate change, continue to wreak havoc in many corners of the globe. All of this speaks to the importance of us marshalling and managing very carefully those resources that have been placed under our respective control for the benefit of the people we represent. It speaks to the importance of us being far more responsible stewards of this planet than we have been in the past. It speaks to our working assiduously, whenever we can, to abate tensions and promote peace.

There can be change in 2015 only as long as we do not fail to take a bold and definitive stance in addressing the ills that stymie our efforts to move forward in achieving our goals. There will be change in 2015 if we do not fail to pursue the priorities that will eradicate poverty, enhance global peace and security, find alternative means of reducing the impact of climate change and saving our planet from destruction, and reduce elevated incidences of HIV/AIDS and NCDs. There must be change in 2015 if the agencies of the Organization adopt a policy of equity and the strong determination to execute their mandate to enable the institutionalization of a culture of peace and security, respect for human lives and justice for all.

Let us therefore, today and forever, commit to rising to the challenge and moving forward, imbued with a renewed sense of focus, determination and urgency to fulfil our goals. May all that we say here bring us closer to that most vital and crucial of ends.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Denzil L. Douglas, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Sustainable Development, Human Resources Development, Constituency Empowerment and Social Security of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Nicholas Clegg, Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Clegg (United Kingdom): In my lifetime, the world has been sliced up and labelled in many different ways: East and West; communism and capitalism; North and South; Christian and Muslim; developed and developing, and so on. But as we meet today, the most important fault line is not one of geography, or ideology, or religion, or wealth; it is the divide between those societies which are open and those which are closed. Open societies choose democracy and freedom at home, and engagement and responsibility abroad. Closed societies suppress the liberty of their citizens, draw a veil across their actions and withdraw from our shared international life.

We must be honest — the forces of insularity and isolationism have gained momentum in recent years. Discrediting democracy feels easier. Authoritarian States point enthusiastically at the ongoing fallout of the 2008 financial crisis — proof, they say, of a broken

Western model. They feel vindicated; their citizens may be less free, but their growth rates outstrip those in the West. At the same time, in many of the States affected by the financial crash, austerity has given rise to a period of introspection. The impulse is to turn inwards rather than face outwards.

And so a crisis of confidence has threatened to take hold in parts of the developed world. It is not surprising to hear some argue that liberal democracy has had its day and that our multilateral system is becoming obsolete. But those who make these claims are wrong. They are drawing the wrong conclusions from recent events.

The real lesson of the past five years has been the remarkable resilience of open societies and the acute need for international cooperation in today's world. Liberal democracies in Europe and across the Atlantic have weathered profound economic difficulty. The eurozone did not fall over, as many said it would. By working together, disaster was averted and the sovereign debt crisis is being managed.

In Europe we have maintained stability at a time of great upheaval because, for the most part, our citizens have expressed their frustration peacefully and through the ballot box. And where there has been unrest, mature democracies have managed it with relative success. And so, just as the events of recent years have revealed the weaknesses of some Western economies, they have also underscored the great strength of open societies — the ability to evolve and adapt. Open societies do not fear change, and in the twenty-first century such openness to reform is critical to lasting stability and success.

Democracy, free speech, participation, equality before the law, the right to peaceful protest, the right to be educated, the chance to work — these are not Western values; they are the political and economic freedoms sought by citizens everywhere, and they are gaining force in every country around the globe. Governments that ignore them are fighting a losing battle. Democracy did not fail in Egypt; a single set of elections failed. Egypt now needs to return to the path of inclusive democracy. The democratic urge remains as strong among the people as it was when they first rejoiced in Tahrir Square.

In other parts of the region, while the picture is mixed, important progress has been made. In Libya, the General National Congress is working towards elections in early 2014. Morocco has a new Constitution and, for

the first time, a Prime Minister elected by Parliament. Although difficult challenges remain, Yemen has chosen reconciliation, dialogue and democracy over violence. Tunisia is also focused on building a new democracy and economic growth, with progress towards a new Constitution, and further elections expected in 2014.

Yes, these nations will undergo more turbulence. That is certain. Well-functioning democracy cannot emerge overnight, be exported from the West or dropped on a country from 8,000 feet — that much we have learnt from the failures of the past. Developing the culture and institutions needed — the rule of law, plural politics, human rights — is a painstaking process for every country involved, and it requires strategic patience from the rest of the world.

But while the road to democracy is difficult, the direction of travel is set. Everywhere we look, people are standing together against discrimination and for equality; against oppression and for liberty. A wave of openness has emerged, transcending borders and cultures. Men and women of every creed, faith and colour are calling for fair opportunities and demanding to be heard.

The United Kingdom is clear. We are on the side of all those who support political freedom and economic empowerment. There will be no pulling up of the drawbridge from us; no heading into retreat. We will resist any impulse to turn our back on the world.

In North Africa and the Middle East, we are helping States put in place the building blocks for their democracies. Whether by training Libyan officials to supervise fair elections, or supporting a free media by training journalists in Morocco, these are the nuts and bolts of successful democratic transition.

We are also supporting these countries' economies through our stewardship of the Group of Eight Deauville Partnership this year, leading efforts to boost trade and investment in the region, helping small- and medium-sized enterprises and, crucially, promoting greater participation by women. And we have kept the political spotlight on the need to return assets stolen by the former regimes in those countries.

In Syria, our priority is to help bring about a political settlement. The foundations for a settlement were agreed in Geneva last year — establishing, on the basis of mutual consent, a transitional governing body with full executive powers. We are in close touch with our partners about convening a second Geneva

conference as soon as possible. No meaningful political solution can occur without the moderate Syrian opposition. We recognize the Syrian National Coalition as the legitimate representatives of the Syrian people, and we recognize their commitments to the Geneva process and to building a secular, democratic and pluralist Syria that ensures equal rights for all.

On the issue of chemical weapons in Syria, on 21 August the Al-Assad regime committed a war crime under international humanitarian law, launching a large-scale chemical-weapon attack on its own people — the first attack on this scale for 25 years and 88 years after such weapons were universally banned. As President Obama said here on Tuesday (see A/68/PV.5), it is an insult to human reason to suggest that the regime was not responsible for that war crime. The international community must react, and react in unison. That is why we hope to adopt later today a Security Council resolution establishing binding legal obligations on the Syrian regime for the removal and destruction of Syria's vast chemical-weapons arsenal.

On Wednesday, I announced that the United Kingdom would provide a further \$160 million of humanitarian support for the Syrian people, bringing total United Kingdom funding to \$800 million — £500 million — our biggest-ever response to a humanitarian crisis, much of which is aimed at helping the many children caught up in this tragic conflict.

The world has raised close to \$1 billion of humanitarian support this month, and I hope that others will step up and contribute. Most importantly, I call on all parties inside Syria to allow humanitarian agencies to operate without hindrance or the threat of violence. Unless that urgent humanitarian access is given, no amount of money can alleviate the scale of the Syrian people's suffering.

I welcome President Rouhani's comments on Tuesday that he wants a constructive engagement between Iran and the rest of the world and that he wants to engage immediately in time-bound talks on the nuclear issue. Those are encouraging words which I very much hope are matched with genuine action. I am pleased that negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme will restart in October. If Iran's words are followed by concrete steps, then there is a real opportunity to make progress in resolving the serious international concerns about Iran's nuclear programme. We also look to a more constructive approach from Iran in helping resolve the crisis in Syria, and we have made clear to Iran that we are

ready, as the United Kingdom Government, to improve our relationship on a step-by-step and reciprocal basis.

One thing that would fundamentally transform the Middle East is a conclusive two-State agreement to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — an agreement based on 1967 borders with agreed land swaps that leads to a sovereign and viable Palestinian State living in peace alongside a safe and secure Israel, a universally recognized Palestine alongside a universally recognized Israel.

I commend the dedicated efforts of Secretary Kerry and the courageous leadership of Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas, which have enabled direct peace talks to resume. I sincerely hope that both parties will make every effort to keep talks going, including a halt in the building of new settlements. The international community must fully support the parties as they make the difficult decisions that are necessary for achieving a lasting peace. Britain stands ready to play its part.

As we wind up our military operations in Afghanistan, the United Kingdom continues to work with the Afghan Government to ensure a successful transition. The Afghan National Security Forces are now leading on security and continue to grow in confidence and capability. That is a significant achievement. In the United Kingdom, we recognize the serious challenges still ahead for Afghanistan, but we strongly believe that there is room for optimism about the country's long-term future. This is a crucial time for Afghan men, women and children, as they prepare for elections in 2014, which must be credible, transparent and inclusive.

Poverty is as great a threat to stability and freedom as are conflict and oppression. Thus, despite the strain on our finances, the United Kingdom has met its target to spend 0.7 per cent of its gross national income on development assistance. We are the only country in the Group of 20 (G-20) to have done so. Following the global economic crisis, we said we would not balance our books on the backs of the world's poorest and we have held true to our word.

On Monday, we announced that we would provide \$1.6 billion to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. That is 10 per cent of the Fund's replenishment, so long as others join.

Women and girls remain at the heart of our development agenda. They are the key to economic growth, so investing in girls' education is the single

most effective thing we can do to break the cycle of poverty. We must end gender inequality, which is the root of violence against women. That ambition is at the heart of the United Kingdom's initiative to end sexual violence in conflict, and I would encourage all States that have yet to do so to endorse the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. Over 115 States are already committed; we are sending a message to the victims of those devastating crimes that they are not alone and that their attackers will be punished.

We have also used our presidency of the Group of Eight (G-8) to focus on three areas where we can support global prosperity — boosting trade, ensuring better transparency to help developing nations benefit from resources that are rightfully theirs, and cracking down on tax evasion and closing tax loopholes. That was just the start of our work on that agenda, and we are pleased that the United Kingdom's trade, tax and transparency priorities have been fully reflected in agreements reached by the G-20, including extending the commitment to resist protectionist measures by a further two years to the end of 2016, so that trade remains as free and open as possible.

Whether it be in the G-8, the G-20, the European Union, NATO or the Commonwealth, or as one of the five permanent members of the Security Council, the United Kingdom will continue to be an active and engaged player in the world. The biggest problems we face are problems we share.

Take climate change, for example—the report issued this morning by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change confirms that sea levels are already rising and that ice is melting faster than we had expected. The report is an authoritative rebuke to all those who persist in claiming that man-made climate change does not exist. The United Kingdom will continue to cut our emissions and give over \$6 billion to assist developing countries to do the same and adapt to environmental changes.

But if we are to halt the devastating effects of climate change, we must listen to the science, act now and act together. We thus welcome the Secretary-General's announcement of a leaders' summit next year as a key step towards all nations agreeing to a deal in 2015 to take action to avert the crisis.

We are all affected by the scourge of terrorism. Whether it is a soldier brutally murdered on a quiet

London street or innocent shoppers gunned down in a busy Nairobi mall, we are all vulnerable. Following the recent horrific events in Nairobi, the United Kingdom is working closely with the Governments of Kenya, Somalia and countries across the region to tackle the issue. Our global response to terrorism must be robust, intelligent and cover all those areas where our work together can make a genuine difference. Alone we can take small steps forward, but together we can take giant leaps.

That much was clear earlier this year when we signed the world's first Arms Trade Treaty (resolution 67/234 B) to better regulate the global sale of weapons. The United Kingdom is proud of the role we played in delivering it, and we urge any countries that have not signed it to do so. The Treaty reminds us that, with enough political will, we can come together and do the previously unthinkable, and that should embolden us to do still more.

The United Nations has many virtues, but it also has serious shortcomings that must be faced. The United Nations has no greater friend than the United Kingdom, but it does not adequately reflect the world we live in today. The Security Council must be reformed. Unless more room is made at the top table, it will fast become an anachronism, a relic of a different time. That is why the United Kingdom continues to support permanent seats for Brazil, India, Germany and Japan, and permanent African representation, too. We call on all States to play their part in this forum, and in our other international institutions, just as we will play ours.

We are at our best when we engage constructively with one another and when we are ambitious in pursuing our shared goals. That is as important for those countries whose economies and influence have grown and transformed over more recent years as it is for the old, established Powers. Greater influence means greater responsibility. The world is a better place because Brazil is taking a lead in tackling deforestation, because Mexico has enshrined climate-change targets into law, because the Republic of Korea is leading the way on nuclear security.

But there is much more to do; there are many more areas where we need to take the lead. A global trade deal to cut bureaucracy at borders — the subject of a World Trade Organization meeting that will take place in Bali in early December — would mean a trillion-dollar boost for the global economy.

In the next two years, the United Kingdom wants to do as much as it can to drive progress on the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, and we are also working in the United Nations and with civil society to set out a post-2015 agenda that is even more ambitious. There can be no greater goal than to eradicate extreme poverty, leaving no one behind.

On these and all other issues facing our nations, we are quite simply stronger together than we are apart. Now more than ever, we must fend off the forces of insularity and isolationism, stand up for our values and look out to the world. That is what the United Kingdom will do. We stand ready to work with all others who will do the same.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): International relations are becoming increasingly complex and multidimensional, while developments in the world are even more rapid and less predictable. Under these circumstances as never before, there is an urgent need to agree upon collective responses to the key issues of today. It is solely within the power of such a truly universal Organization as the United Nations to do so. Moreover, such solidarity-based efforts will be productive only if they reflect the entire spectrum of views of the international community on global challenges and threats, a broad range of historical experiences and the full cultural and civilizational diversity of the modern world.

For most of the Members of the United Nations family, that approach is axiomatic. However, there is also another tendency whereby collective actions are understood primarily as agreement with the viewpoint of one group of countries. Such views manifest themselves in various areas: international security, the settlement of conflict situations, the functioning of the world economy, and the choice of development models and core values.

Many problems affecting today's world are reflected in the tragic situation in Syria and in the uncertainty surrounding the development of events in the Middle East and North Africa overall. From the very onset of the turmoil in that region, Russia has consistently called for the development by the international community of a common approach combining support for the Arab peoples on their path to transformation with

an understanding of the fact that, objectively, those processes will be lengthy and sometimes painful, and that it will be quite important not to undermine them through gross outside interference.

We have emphasized the need to act in a balanced way and to take account of the fact that current complex developments are associated with, among other things, a tireless quest for compromises among the various ethnic and religious groups that make up the mosaic of Arab societies. We have consistently supported the choice of the evolutionary way of development and the peaceful settlement of crises through national dialogue and reconciliation.

Another perspective has been reflected in the attempts made to determine who is and is not legitimate among the leaders of the Middle East and North Africa region, to impose a view as to which side should be supported in domestic national conflicts, and to dictate external, ready-made prescriptions for democratic transformation.

Attempts to portray, in a simplified way, the developments in the Arab world as the struggle of democracy against tyranny or of good against evil have long obscured the problems associated with the rising wave of extremism, which is spilling over into other regions today. The terrorist attacks in Kenya have demonstrated the full gravity of that threat. It is common knowledge that jihadist groups that include numerous radical elements from all parts of the world are the most combat-capable units of the opposition. The goals that they are pursuing have nothing to do with democracy but are based on intolerance and aimed at the destruction of secular States and the establishment of caliphates. It is difficult to qualify as far-sighted a policy that entails fighting in Mali the same extremist groups that are being supported in Syria.

The use of chemical weapons is inadmissible. That does not mean, however, that one can usurp the right to accuse and to render verdicts. All of the incidents associated with the use of chemical weapons in Syria, by whomsoever committed, must be investigated in a professional and unbiased manner and then considered by the Security Council exclusively on the basis of facts rather than of allegations or assumptions. In that respect, at the Group of 20 (G-20) summit held in June, an agreement was reached by leaders of the eight key States.

Recently a common argument has been increasingly made to the effect that the threat or use of force, directly prohibited by the Charter of the United Nations, is virtually the most effective method of addressing international problems, including the settlement of domestic conflicts. There have been attempts to extrapolate such an approach to the situation in Syria as well, despite the fact that recent experience with such interventions has proved that they are ineffective, meaningless and destructive. That is an extremely dangerous path leading to the erosion of the foundations of today's world order and the subversion of the weapons of mass destruction non-proliferation regimes.

It is alarming to hear statements about the right to use military force to ensure one's own interests in the Middle East region under the pretext of a persistent leadership gap in the international arena. Recent history shows that no State, no matter how big or powerful, can cope alone with challenges of the scope faced by humankind today.

There is no doubt that leadership is required. However, today it can only be collective leadership based on agreed actions of the leading members of the international community, with strict respect for the principles and norms of international law. It is the growing understanding of that reality that has opened the way towards achieving Russia-United States understandings relating to the placing under international control and subsequent elimination of the Syrian chemical arsenals. That became possible thanks to the decision by Damascus to join the Chemical Weapons Convention and fulfil the relevant obligations following the expedited procedure.

We expect that the decisions of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Executive Council and the Security Council will contribute to creating the framework required for the elimination of chemical arsenals in Syria.

Progress in the area of chemical disarmament in Syria should give impetus to the implementation of existing arrangements to convene a conference on establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery in the Middle East. We know that there are a number of complicated issues related to ensuring full participation of the countries of the region in such a conference, but they cannot be discussed endlessly. That is exactly when true leadership and resolve must be demonstrated for the common benefit.

People are continuing to die and innocent civilians to suffer every day in Syria. Religious minorities, including Christian communities, are becoming victims of the conflict, which is increasingly acquiring a sectarian character. Virtually the only possibility remaining today to put an end to this turmoil is to break the deadlock regarding the process of a political settlement of the Syrian crisis. We continue to work tirelessly for the earliest convening of a peace conference to implement the Geneva communiqué of 30 July 2012 (S/2012/522, annex). We hope that, following the example set by the Government of Syria, the opposition will also constructively respond to the Russia-United States initiative.

The Syrian crisis should not overshadow the need to address the Palestinian problem. We expect the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to shoulder their responsibility for the future of their people at this current critical stage, where the parties have resumed direct talks after a lengthy interruption. While duly recognizing the efforts made by the United States in the Middle East settlement process, we deem it necessary to intensify the activity of the Quartet, the internationally recognized mechanism for providing assistance to the peace process in the region on the basis of the relevant decisions of the United Nations, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative. It is also important to ensure the close involvement of the Arab countries in the activities of the Quartet.

Approaches based on negotiation are also required with respect to other situations, including the Iranian nuclear programme and the nuclear problem in the Korean peninsula. As President Vladimir Putin noted in his recent article in the 11 September 2013 issue of *The New York Times*,

“We must stop using the language of force and return to the path of civilized diplomatic and political settlement.”

This would help to improve the international environment and contribute to stepping up collective efforts to counter global challenges, including terrorism and drug trafficking. Russia intends to attach priority attention to these challenges during its presidency of the Group of Eight, in 2014.

Today, when the rigid frame of the bipolar system has been long relegated to the past, a mark of the time is the strengthening of the democratic foundations both within States and in international relations. That means

in particular that the recognition of the right of peoples to independently determine their destiny and to choose the optimal forms of social and political structure and social and economic systems should become an indisputable norm of conduct. In the same way, the complex of exclusiveness and supremacy regarding one's own customs in the human rights area should be abandoned and instead the universal criteria enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should be used as a guideline. Moreover, it is important to respect the traditional values that are common to all the religions.

It is obvious that a genuine partnership is hardly achievable without reliance on the foundations of economic cooperation. The prevailing majority of States are interacting within the framework of the World Trade Organization and in that sense they are already operating in a common economic space. This creates the prerequisites for working towards harmonization of integration processes in various regions of the world instead of trying to artificially pit them against each other by creating new division lines. Russia is proceeding from that exact understanding in its joint work with its partners in the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union.

Russia attaches great importance to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the drafting of the global development agenda for the post-2015 period on their basis. The main priorities are the eradication of poverty and support for economic growth through the expansion of investment opportunities and the creation of new jobs. Some of the most urgent issues are the strengthening of the energy and transport infrastructures, the fight against infectious diseases and road safety.

Cooperation among States should rely on efficient mechanisms and an adequate resource base. In that context, we support the further strengthening of the coordinating role and potential of the United Nations Economic and Social Council. During its chairmanship of the Group of 20, Russia has consistently pursued a policy of developing its interaction with the United Nations. We believe that the General Assembly, in cooperation with the G-20, will develop a realistic programme of long-term cooperation.

I firmly believe that, by joining forces on the basis of genuine respect and considering the interests of each and everyone, we will be able to achieve the lofty goals that are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Yun Byung-se, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea

Mr. Yun Byung-se (Republic of Korea): May I first congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. I am confident that the current session will be a fruitful one under your able leadership.

The Republic of Korea is pleased that the United Nations, in partnership with its Member States and under the stewardship of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, is strengthening multilateralism by successfully responding to the diverse challenges that the international community faces. We are confident that the Secretary-General's Five-Year Action Plan will help the United Nations to keep making important contributions in this period of transformation.

Twenty-two years ago I was present in the Assembly to watch with great emotion the historic moment when the Republic of Korea was admitted as a State Member of the United Nations. The moment came at the end of a long wait during the Cold War. At that time the Republic of Korea solemnly pledged to actively take part in the shaping of a new global order that is free, fair and prosperous and where justice and the rule of law prevail. To live up to this pledge, the Republic of Korea, though a latecomer, has fully embraced the callings of the United Nations with passion and devotion. In many corners of the world, Korea has actively taken part in peacekeeping and reconstruction efforts. Currently, Korea is serving as a member of the Security Council and the Human Rights Council, among others.

Since its inception, the United Nations has taken on the noble endeavour of helping the peoples of the United Nations to live in larger freedom. However, insecurity and inequality, injustice and intolerance still prevail in many parts of the world, where our common efforts are desperately needed. Furthermore, the rise of new global challenges, such as climate change, terrorism and cybercrime, calls for global cooperation that transcends the existing inter-State system. In other words, the importance and the relevance of the United Nations is ever increasing, as it is a key vehicle for global cooperation.

The new Administration of the Republic of Korea has put forward its foreign-policy vision, which is built on two fundamental objectives: "happiness of the people" and "happiness of the global community". Such

a vision resonates with the core values of the United Nations — peace, human rights and development.

Korea seeks to make meaningful contributions to maintain global peace beyond the Korean peninsula. We want to share the fruits of our economic success, which was achieved with the help of the international community, and strive to enhance the dignity and happiness of all global citizens. I believe that that is in line with the purposes and principles of the United Nations as well.

The first pillar in attaining global happiness is security. In particular, the Republic of Korea is of the view that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery is one of the most serious threats to international peace and security.

In that connection, the use of chemical weapons in Syria, as confirmed by the report of the United Nations investigators (A/67/997), has caused the worst humanitarian disaster in the twenty-first century. The Government of the Republic of Korea condemns the use of chemical weapons in the strongest possible terms, as it constitutes a crime against humanity that cannot be tolerated under any circumstances.

In that regard, we welcome the recent agreement between the United States and Russia on the Framework for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons, and expect a decision by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and a reinforcing resolution by the Security Council, sometime today. We urge the Syrian Government to faithfully implement its commitments to the international community. We also strongly call upon all countries that have not acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention, including the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, to do so as soon as possible.

In that context, I must draw attention to the seriousness of the Democratic People's Republic's ongoing weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programmes. Despite a series of Security Council resolutions, the Democratic People's Republic launched long-range missiles and conducted nuclear tests as recently as in early 2013, in blatant violation of its international obligations. It should strictly implement its obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2094 (2013). As is the case with Syria, the international community should make united efforts to roll back the Democratic People's Republic's nuclear-weapons programmes to prevent

the advent of another nuclear-armed State. However, if it decides to give up its so-called parallel pursuit of economic development and nuclear armament and in turn embarks on a path of genuine change through concrete actions, the Republic of Korea stands ready to help the Democratic People's Republic.

Alongside the proliferation of WMD, terrorism presents a grave threat to international peace and security in the twenty-first century. The Republic of Korea strongly condemns the terrorist attack that took place last weekend in Nairobi, Kenya. Our sincere condolences go out to the victims and their families of the tragedy. The Government of the Republic of Korea denounces all forms of terrorism and will continue to take part in the global efforts to combat terrorism.

Together with its efforts to respond to the imminent security threats, including the proliferation of WMD, the new Administration of the Republic of Korea is pursuing a policy that it calls "trustpolitik", to establish a regional order of reconciliation and cooperation in the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia. Our trustpolitik, in turn, is implemented through the Korean Peninsula Trust-Building Process and the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative.

The Korean Peninsula Trust-Building Process aspires to safeguard peace based on strong deterrence, while simultaneously building peace through dialogue and cooperation. Through that process, the new Administration of the Republic of Korea was able to ensure the resumption of operations in the Kaesong industrial park, the only remaining inter-Korean economic cooperation project.

Furthermore, the Republic of Korea proposes to create a world peace park in the world's most heavily armed demilitarized zone, in order to transform a lasting legacy of the Cold War and a divided Korea into a new space of peace and harmony. It is my hope that the United Nations and the two Koreas will work together to bring this proposal to fruition, thereby contributing greatly to the building of trust in the Korean peninsula.

Turning to the broader region of North-East Asia, Korea is expecting further political and security cooperation that corresponds to the level of economic interdependence in the region. To that end, the Republic of Korea proposed the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative, which will open dialogue on soft issues of common interests to the players in the region. The Republic of Korea is also interested in

learning from the valuable experiences in successful regional institutions, such as the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Regional Forum of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The second pillar of an era of global happiness is the promotion of human rights and human dignity as universal values. In the past century, the Republic of Korea went through a colonial occupation and a tragic internecine war. From that experience, Koreans became more appreciative than others of the paramount importance of human rights and humanitarianism.

Worldwide, there is an alarming increase in the number of refugees and internally displaced persons owing to wars and intra-State conflicts. Concerning the massive refugee problem caused by the Syrian civil war, my Government is actively involved in international efforts to assist the refugees. Korea is also planning to co-host a working group meeting on Syrian reconstruction in Seoul next month. The Republic of Korea also wishes to emphasize the need to uphold the internationally established legal principle of non-refoulement.

Today, there are over 10 million people in Korea suffering from the agony of not being able to see their loved ones across the inter-Korean border, even 60 years after the end of the Korean War. Based on the recent agreement between the two Koreas, a reunion for those separated families was to be held this week. However, to our utmost regret, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea unilaterally cancelled that reunion, which would have been a humanitarian event, citing political reasons. Such an inhumane decision cannot be justified for any sound reason. Thus far, the new Administration of the Republic of Korea has maintained the insulation of humanitarian issues from political considerations. I therefore urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to convene the family reunion as soon as possible so as to ease the pain and suffering of the Korean people as a whole.

The Republic of Korea wishes to draw the attention of the Assembly to the increasing need to protect civilians, including women and children, from armed conflicts around the globe. With that in mind, during its presidency of the Security Council in February, the Republic of Korea chaired an open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (see S/PV.6917). We are also one of the champions of the newly launched protection from sexual violence initiative. In fact,

sexual violence during conflicts is one of the most serious types of human rights violation. It is a war crime that not only destroys the life of the victim, but also that of the victim's family and the community.

In particular, for the victims of sexual violence during conflicts of the past century, the pain and the agony continue to this day. What matters most is genuine remorse and concrete actions. As repeatedly emphasized in reports of United Nations special rapporteurs on sexual violence, responsible measures are called for that can restore the honour of the victims and soothe their pain, as such crimes involve a universal human rights issue.

Underdevelopment and extreme poverty are the core challenges facing the United Nations today. Since the Millennium Summit was held in 2000, the collective efforts by the international community to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have yielded some very tangible results. However, progress has not been equally enjoyed across all regions, countries and groups of people. It is against that backdrop that we attach great importance to discussions on the future direction of and road map for development cooperation, under the theme of "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage", at the present session of the General Assembly.

The next set of common global development goals should be genuinely people-centred and take into account a standard of well-being that goes beyond the traditional income levels. The new goals should place the greatest priority on guaranteeing the dignity of all. Furthermore, they should seek to build partnerships with the newly emerging development actors, so as to effectively utilize available capacities and resources. The Republic of Korea hopes that the Busan Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, launched in 2012, will also play a significant role in setting up a new cooperative mechanism to lead the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

Such development goals also coincide with Korea's foreign policy objective of building an era of global happiness. The Republic of Korea hopes to work together to complete the unfinished business of the MDGs by pursuing a recipient-oriented development cooperation policy. More specifically, we will continue to increase our official development assistance and share our successful development experiences, such as the Saemaul Undong, or New Community Movement, with developing countries.

In addition, a united response to climate change is critical to achieving global happiness. Korea will actively support the Green Climate Fund, headquartered in Korea, so that it develops into a significant organization that supports developing countries in responding to climate change and the threats it brings.

Deepening global interdependence has led to the rise of challenges requiring a common response. Expectations of the role to be played by the United Nations are now higher than ever before. Indeed, the United Nations has made great contributions as the centre of global cooperation and is expected to continue in those noble endeavours. As former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld once said, we should

“recognize the United Nations for what it is — an admittedly imperfect but indispensable instrument of nations working for a peaceful evolution towards a more just and secure world order”.

I am reminded of the solemn pledge that my Government made 22 years ago — that the Republic of Korea will actively contribute to the resolution of global challenges through the United Nations. Today, I stand before the Assembly to reaffirm the commitment of the new Government of the Republic of Korea — that Korea will contribute to realizing the era of global happiness by achieving the goals set out by the United Nations. It is only when we make common and collective efforts toward advancing the universal values of peace, development and human rights that the United Nations will truly become the parliament of humankind.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Wang Yi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Wang Yi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): This year has been an unusual one in China's development. China's new central collective leadership has put forward the concept of the “Chinese dream”, a dream of the great renewal of the Chinese nation, and it is leading the 1.3 billion Chinese people in an endeavour to fulfil the two centennial goals, namely, to finish building a moderately prosperous society in all respects by 2020 and to turn China into a modern socialist country by the mid-twenty-first century. Having experienced profound changes in the past 5,000 years and especially the past century, China has reached a new historical starting point today.

What development path will China take in the future? What domestic and foreign policies will it

pursue? And what kind of international role will it play? I understand that those questions are of great interest to the international community. As the Foreign Minister of the new Chinese Government, I wish to give an emphatic answer to each of them.

China will stay firmly on the path of peaceful development. China's rapid development over the years has given rise to worries that China might follow the old pattern of wealth breeding arrogance and strength leading to hegemony, and various versions of the China threat theory have surfaced. However, what happened in the past should not be applied to today's China.

The outdated Cold War mentality has no place in the new era of globalization. The Chinese nation loves peace and the Chinese culture values harmony. Throughout history, the Chinese people have always embraced international exchanges and trade, not foreign aggression and expansion, and have adhered to the patriotic resolve to defend the homeland rather than the colonialist doctrine of seizing new territories.

The culture of a country determines its values, and its history points the way to its future. Close to 40 years ago, it was from this rsotrum that the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping solemnly declared on behalf of the Chinese Government that China would never seek hegemony in the world. Today, his statement remains our unchanging commitment and conviction. China has honoured and will continue to honour its promise and remain a staunch force for upholding world peace.

China pursues peaceful development and calls on all other countries to follow the same path. Since the beginning of reform and opening up, China has become increasingly interdependent with the global economy and integrated into the international system. We are committed to working with others to establish a new type of international relations, based on win-win cooperation, and to seek the peaceful resolution of international and regional disputes. With regard to China's disputes with some countries over territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests, we sincerely hope to resolve them in accordance with proper procedures, through negotiation and consultation with the countries directly involved. Those disputes that cannot be resolved now can be shelved for future resolution. That is our consistent position and practice. On the other hand, we will, whatever the circumstances, firmly safeguard China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and resolutely uphold China's legitimate and lawful rights and interests.

China will remain committed to reform, to opening up and to sustainable development. It has been five years since the outbreak of the international financial crisis. The global economy is back on the right track to recovery, but the foundations of the recovery are not solid and the speed is not fast enough. The root causes of the financial crisis have yet to be removed, and the structural problems of developed countries remain unresolved. The adjustment of unconventional monetary policies from the outside, coupled with other factors, have posed new challenges and the risk of financial market volatility to emerging market countries.

Where the Chinese economy is heading engages both domestic and international attention. In that regard, I wish to inform the Assembly that both the fundamentals and the overall performance of China's economy are sound, and China's development prospects are bright. The leading indicators of the Chinese economy are generally good, and China leads the major economies in growth rate.

In pursuit of progress while maintaining stability, the Chinese Government has followed a macroeconomic policy that addresses both immediate and long-term needs and has adopted a series of innovative policy measures with a view to promoting steady growth, economic structural adjustment and reform. We are vigorously pursuing reform, opening up, deepening economic structural adjustment and accelerating the shift in our growth model. We are implementing the basic State policy of resource conservation and environmental protection and promoting green, circular and low-carbon development to build a sound ecological environment and a beautiful China.

With its increasing economic output and its changing growth model, China's economy has entered a phase of high-to-medium growth rate. That is dictated by the law of economics, and it will ensure the sustained and healthy growth of the Chinese economy. The Chinese economy is being upgraded, and its future growth will deliver major dividends in four areas as a result of industrialization, information technology application, a new type of urbanization and agricultural modernization; reform and innovation; structural readjustment; and further opening up. It is projected that in the coming five years, China's imports of commodities will exceed \$10 trillion, its overseas investment will reach \$500 billion, and Chinese tourists will make over 400 million outbound visits. That will give stronger impetus to the world economy

and bring an increasing number of tangible benefits to other countries.

China will firmly promote reform of the global governance system with the United Nations at its core. The United Nations is a big stage for all countries to conduct consultation and cooperation with one another. It is also a big family where people of all countries are brought together. It is our consistent position that the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations form the cornerstone of current international relations and provide safeguards for world peace and stability. Respecting national sovereignty and opposing interference in internal affairs, safeguarding peace and opposing aggression, and promoting equality and opposing power politics; those are important principles that must be observed. China firmly upholds the role and authority of the United Nations, supports the United Nations in its renewal and self-improvement efforts, in keeping with a changing world, and looks forward to a United Nations that plays a larger role in international affairs. China is ready to deepen cooperation with the United Nations and get more actively involved in United Nations activities in various fields.

China is committed to promoting democracy in international relations and the trend toward a multipolar world. We call for a greater representation and voice for developing countries in the global governance system and support the Group of 20, the BRICS group — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — and other emerging mechanisms that are playing a key role in making the international order fairer and more equitable. We also call for the reform of the international monetary and financial systems and want the role of the World Trade Organization as the main forum in the area of trade to be maintained. We are opposed to trade protectionism and are working to make economic globalization more balanced, inclusive and beneficial to all. We call on countries to enhance macroeconomic policy coordination and be mindful of the spillover effects of their respective adjustment of economic policies. We call for the strengthening of North-South dialogue and South-South cooperation to make development benefits more accessible to people of all countries.

China will firmly fulfil its international responsibilities and obligations. The Chinese nation is responsible and ready to play its part. Although it remains a developing country facing the daunting task of development, China, as the second-largest economy

and a permanent member of the Security Council, is fully aware of its responsibilities and the expectations placed on it by the international community. We will be fully and more actively engaged in international affairs and work closely with other countries to meet complex global challenges and tackle the difficult issues facing humankind. We will voice China's views, offer China's wisdom, propose China's solutions, play China's due role and provide more public goods to the international community.

We will vigorously advocate the right vision on justice versus special interests, and we will endeavour to build a community of common destiny with other developing countries. In our exchanges and cooperation with other developing countries, we will uphold justice and place it above special interests. We will provide assistance to other developing countries to the best of our ability, so as to enable developing countries to realize independent and sustainable development.

We will play a more proactive and constructive role in addressing international and regional hotspot issues to promote peace and dialogue, defuse conflicts and safeguard world peace and stability. We will maintain our escort missions and counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden and increase our participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations so as to contribute more to peace and security in Africa and other relevant regions.

The turmoil in Syria has lasted for nearly three years, causing great suffering and trauma to both the Syrian people and Syria's neighbours. The recent use of chemical weapons has met with universal condemnation. China firmly opposes the use of chemical weapons. We hope to see the early adoption of a Security Council resolution to support the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in launching the verification and destruction of chemical weapons, and we stand ready to make financial contributions to the OPCW for the destruction of chemical weapons in Syria and to send experts to work there on the ground.

China calls for an immediate end to hostilities and violence in Syria so that the necessary conditions for the verification and destruction of chemical weapons can be created. We call for the early convening of the "Geneva II" conference and faster progress on a political resolution of the Syrian issue. China seeks no gains for itself in Syria. We respect the aspirations and choice of the Syrian people. China is following the humanitarian situation in Syria with great concern. We

have provided and will continue to provide assistance within our means to the Syrian people, including Syrian refugees outside the country.

Recently, China has been providing emergency humanitarian aid to Jordan in the amount of ¥15 million, and has provided emergency humanitarian aid in cash worth ¥24 million to the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization for displaced people within Syria and Syrian refugees in Lebanon, respectively.

China has been working to promote a peaceful settlement to the Iranian nuclear issue through dialogue. We have played a constructive role in seeking a comprehensive, lasting and appropriate solution to the Iranian nuclear issue so as to uphold the international non-proliferation regime and peace and stability in the Middle East. The dialogue between Iran and the permanent members of the Security Council and Germany has created new opportunities. All the relevant parties should scale up diplomatic efforts and work for substantive progress in the dialogue at an early date.

The Palestinian issue is at the core of the Middle East conflict. Guided by President Xi Jinping's four-point proposal on resolving the Palestinian issue, China will continue to work for a comprehensive, just and durable solution to the issue.

Thanks to the concerted efforts of all the relevant parties, tensions on the Korean peninsula are easing. Achieving the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and maintaining long-term peace and stability on the peninsula will respond to the common interests of all parties concerned. It is China's consistent position that a negotiated solution through dialogue is the right way to resolve the nuclear issue on the peninsula, and the Six-Party Talks are an effective platform to promote denuclearization on the Korean peninsula. This year marks the tenth anniversary of the launch of the Six-Party Talks. We hope that all parties will create conducive conditions, build consensus, work towards the same goal and resume the talks at an early date.

International development cooperation is at a crucial stage, where we must build on past achievements to make new progress. China supports the continued and full implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the early launch of intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda. The post-2015 development agenda should continue to focus on development and poverty elimination, give due

consideration to national conditions and the various stages of development in the different countries, and respect their independent choice of development path. The agenda should give priority to strengthening global development partnerships; adhere to the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities, equity and respective capabilities; improve follow-up mechanisms; step up development financing; promote trade and investment liberalization and facilitation; and increase official development aid and technical support to developing countries.

China welcomes the positive outcomes of the United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Doha in late 2012. China hopes that the developed countries will demonstrate political will and honour their commitments by scaling up emissions-reduction efforts and providing capital, technology and capacity-building support to developing countries. The Chinese Government takes climate change seriously, and the many forceful policy measures it has taken have resulted in notable progress. China will continue to play its due role in addressing global climate change.

Time flies. We will soon be celebrating the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. Born out of the ashes of the Second World War, the United Nations embodies the yearning of the peoples of all countries for world peace and global development. The Chinese dream is a dream of prosperity for the country and happiness for the people; it has much in common with the dream of people across the world. As a responsible Member of the United Nations, China is ready to work with all other Member States to faithfully adhere to the purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, faithfully carry out its historic mission and continue to make relentless efforts to advance the noble cause of peace and development for humankind.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdulaziz Kamilov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Mr. Kamilov (Uzbekistan): The rapidly changing situation, growing tensions, radicalization, security challenges and threats in various regions of the world today cannot but raise serious alarm and concerns around the world. In this regard, needless to say, those problems enjoy special priority on the agenda of the General Assembly at this session.

The war in Afghanistan, which has been ongoing for more than 30 years, remains a serious source of

threats to regional and global security. The situation unfolding in Afghanistan, according to experts, is generally uncertain and unpredictable overall. In these conditions, the drawdown of the International Security Assistance Force troops in 2014 may lead to an escalation of confrontation in the country, stir up terrorism, extremism and drug trafficking, and aggravate the interregional standoff. Undoubtedly, it will have a negative impact on the situation in the wider region of Central Asia and contiguous regions.

It should be recognized that the world has adopted the unambiguous view that there can be no military solution to the Afghan problem. The only way out of the Afghan crisis is a political process through negotiations among the main parties involved, the achievement of consensus regardless of how difficult it might be, and active assistance provided by the international community and the United Nations.

Uzbekistan adheres to an open and clear policy with respect to Afghanistan on the basis of the principles of good-neighbourliness and non-interference in the country's internal affairs. Uzbekistan shall further develop mutually beneficial and friendly ties with Afghanistan on a bilateral basis, and support the Government elected by the Afghan people themselves. We shall also continue to render practical assistance in restoring the economy of Afghanistan, taking into account the fact that economic well-being is an indispensable condition for ensuring peace and prosperity in that country. These principles and approaches towards Afghanistan are enshrined in Uzbekistan's foreign policy concept, which has the status of law.

Secondly, today a new global development agenda is under consideration at the United Nations. It must reflect the interconnection of human beings with the environment and contribute to supporting economic and social development while maintaining ecological sustainability. Uzbekistan attaches priority to sustainable development and ecological safety. We have recently adopted an action programme on environmental protection for 2013-2017, which serves as confirmation of that priority. The Government of Uzbekistan will allocate approximately \$2 billion for implementation of the programme aimed at further maintaining decent conditions in the environment, the reasonable use of natural resources, and the introduction of the ecological basics of sustainable development in the economic sectors.

The loss of the Aral Sea is one of the largest global ecological catastrophes in contemporary history. Each year, it becomes more evident that the problem of the drying up of the Aral Sea and, above all, its impact on the environmental, social and humanitarian situation, gene pool and human health are assuming an increasingly baneful and irreversible nature. We are grateful to the United Nations, and to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in particular, for the keen attention paid to the problem of the Aral Sea. That enormous support gives us the confidence that the countries of the region will not be left alone in the struggle against that planetary catastrophe.

I would like to draw public attention today, first, to the issue of preventing the complete destruction and protecting the remaining environmental system of the Aral Sea region, ensuring minimum living conditions for the people, and preserving the existing flora and fauna. Those key issues are the focus of the message of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Chair of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, and created as an official document of the General Assembly (A/67/884, annex).

Secondly, we take this opportunity to call upon international donors to extend assistance in implementing the programme of measures on eliminating the consequences of the drying up of the Aral Sea and averting a catastrophe in the ecological systems in the Aral Sea region (A/68/383, annex), which is fully consonant with the Millennium Development Goals, particularly, in achieving ecological sustainability, combating diseases and improving motherhood and childhood protections.

Thirdly, ensuring the reasonable use of water resources is an acute problem leading to a worsening ecological situation and shortage of potable water in our region and on a global scale. It is an open secret that the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers, the two major transboundary rivers of Central Asia, have historically been a common good and a source of life for the nations of the region. The Aral Sea basin is supplied with water from the flow of those rivers.

In that regard, we cannot but be concerned about the plans of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to construct new large hydropower stations with gigantic, global-scale dams: the Rogun hydropower station with a 350-metre-high dam upstream in the Amu Darya River, and the Kambarata-1 hydropower station, with a 275-metre-high dam upstream in the Syr Darya River.

The implementation of such plans, according to many competent specialists, would lead to the disruption of the natural flow of the rivers, which is fraught with most dangerous ecological and socioeconomic consequences. The already fragile water and ecological balance in Central Asia will be radically disrupted. Moreover, the construction of these facilities is planned in areas where there is a tectonic fracture with a potential seismicity of not less than 9-10 points on the Richter scale, which carries a high risk of man-made catastrophes.

Taking that into consideration, we firmly adhere to our principled position of the unacceptability of constructing hydropower facilities on international watercourses without the preliminary endorsement of all interested countries. It is necessary, in line with international legal practice, to conduct a mandatory, fair international expert examination of the Rogun and Kambarata-1 projects, under the auspices of the United Nations, to assess the possible impact of new hydropower facilities on the natural water regime, the environment, flora and fauna.

Uzbekistan's position is based on the norms of international law, in particular the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes of 1992 and the Convention on the Law of Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses of 1997.

The year 2015 — the deadline for implementing the Millennium Development Goals set in 2000 — is approaching. In that regard, it should be underscored that the achievements of the Republic of Uzbekistan during its years of independence in the economic sphere, social policy, addressing specific issues related to improving the well-being of the population, the quality of education, health-care services and ecological sustainability have allowed our country to ensure priority implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. I can offer figures and facts that reflect the current potential and development rates of our country.

In comparison with the year 2000, the gross domestic product (GDP) of Uzbekistan grew by a factor of 3.1 and the GDP per capita by a factor of 2.6. The nominal salary grew by a factor of 22, the average amount of pensions by a factor of 12.7, and real income per capita by a factor of 8.4. During the past six years, the economic growth of Uzbekistan has steadily exceeded 8 per cent. The State expenditures

for the social sphere and civil protection in Uzbekistan grew more than fivefold. About 60 per cent of all State expenditures go towards funding social development, including more than 34 per cent for education, and over 15 per cent is spent on public health care.

I am confident that Uzbekistan's continued participation in United Nations efforts in the sphere of sustainable development shall contribute to further raising the living standards of the people, achieving the high goals of ensuring security and stability in the entire region.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Julie Bishop, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Ms. Bishop (Australia): As a freshly minted Foreign Minister, I am delighted to take part in this general debate. Only a few weeks ago, Australia held national elections and chose a new Government. Only nine days ago, I was sworn in as Australia's thirty-eighth Minister for Foreign Affairs. A change of Government is a significant national decision. It has happened only seven times in our country since the Second World War.

Australia is an open, liberal democracy. We recognize our good fortune in having an unbroken record of peaceful democratic transition stretching back to 1901. The United Nations offers that same ideal of peace and order in relations among States. It gives us a place to resolve our differences and to be heard on the concerns that matter most.

There is an intrinsic connection between the security and stability of Governments and economic development. Good Governments understand that providing a secure and stable environment for their citizens is their most fundamental task, but that task is tied inextricably to the strength of their economy. Economic growth, development and trade are the key drivers of national and international prosperity, and a vital support for global security. That is why the new Australian Government will put economic diplomacy at the centre of our foreign policy.

We will promote responsible economic governance and open trading systems that support export-oriented economies. We recognize that a strong business sector, open trading rules and liberal foreign investment policies can foster economic growth and, with it, opportunities to achieve prosperity and security. Strong economies give nations and their people an environment in which to build their lives — to make choices for the lives they

want to lead. Strong, open economies foster sustainable growth. We understand that from our experience in Australia and in our region.

Australia's economic success and high standards of living are anchored in reform efforts over many years. We liberalized our economy and unilaterally dismantled trade barriers and protectionist policies. In our own region, as economies have opened, standards of living have improved. We have witnessed the enormous growth of the middle class in South-East Asia. Estimates suggest that approximately 145 million people will be considered middle-class in 2015, up from 95 million in 2010. In Asia more broadly, we expect a middle class of over 3 billion people by 2030. Indonesia, currently the world's sixteenth-largest economy, is on track to be the world's seventh-largest economy by 2030. China and India are projected to become the largest and third-largest economies by 2030. Over 290 million people in China were lifted out of poverty in the decade between 1999 and 2009.

The Secretary-General has rightly focused our attention this week on the needs of the poor, the commitment we made to them over a decade ago, and our vision for the future. We need to finish the job on the Millennium Development Goals. Beyond 2015, we must prioritize sustainable economic growth in the global development framework. We must provide the opportunity for all people, including people with a disability, to lead healthy and productive lives, leaving no one behind. We must support women's economic participation and empowerment.

The future of peace will be built on economic prosperity. Aid is an important part of delivering sustainable economic growth around the world. It plays a significant role in supporting economic reforms and good governance, promoting the rule of law and building the productive capacity of trade-related sectors. But it is the effectiveness of aid delivery that matters. For example, infrastructure deficiencies that prevent developing economies from fully engaging in the global markets need to be overcome. Estimates of infrastructure financing needs, including for the roads and ports required to facilitate trade, dwarf global aid. According to the Asian Development Bank, Asia alone will require \$750 billion annually over the next decade to meet its infrastructure needs. This compares to annual global aid flows of \$130 billion. Only the private sector has the capacity to mobilize the financing necessary for such massive infrastructure investments.

There is a role for aid in helping to overcome the obstacles to investment. It must attract, but should never replace, private-sector capital. The returns are high. A joint report of the World Trade Organization and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development estimates that every dollar invested in aid-for-trade can lift exports from developing countries by \$8.

We firmly believe that the economic growth of developing countries can be unlocked through trade. Australia will continue to promote trade liberalization through the World Trade Organization, through regional and sector-specific deals, and through bilateral free trade negotiations. The Australian Government aims to build a network of bilateral and regional free-trade agreements. We will work in the World Trade Organization to rebuild the multilateral trading agenda. Australia puts the highest priority on global economic reform and trade liberalization as the best way to secure jobs and economic growth. These will be key themes for us as we chair the Group of 20 in 2014.

No one should pretend that the economic sphere exists in isolation from other parts of our human experience. Economic progress alone is not sufficient. We need to ensure that all people around the world are free to fully exercise their economic, civil and political rights. Australia was one of eight nations involved in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in 1948 the Australian President of the General Assembly, our Foreign Minister Mr. H. V. Evatt, oversaw the adoption of the Declaration (see A/PV.183).

Since then, Australia has been at the forefront of defending human rights globally and regionally in support of equality and fundamental freedoms — freedom from discrimination; freedom from slavery, torture, arbitrary arrest, detention or exile; freedom of speech, conscience and religion; freedom to work, to enjoy health and education and to participate in the life of the community. Importantly, these freedoms must extend to all women and girls, including through equal access to employment, resources, education and health services, and they must be underpinned by robust and independent legal systems to enforce economic, social and political rights.

Australia will continue to promote and protect human rights standards around the world. That is why we are seeking membership of the Human Rights Council for the 2018-2020 term.

The situation in Syria is an urgent security and humanitarian crisis we must address. Left unchecked, it will continue to cause great human suffering and further destabilize the region. Along with the rest of the world, Australia has condemned the horrific chemical weapons attack on 21 August, as we have condemned the Al-Assad regime's use of conventional weapons against its own people.

The first obligation of any Government is to protect its own citizens. In 2005, leaders of all States Members of the United Nations signed on to this principle in the World Summit Outcome on the responsibility to protect (resolution 60/1). Australia, as current President of the Security Council, will therefore co-sponsor a draft resolution before the Council that condemns in the strongest terms any use of chemical weapons. The draft resolution will make clear, for the first time, that the use of chemical weapons is a threat to international peace and security, and in doing so set a new international norm that will help to deter future use. It will say that those responsible for using such weapons must be brought to justice — a call we strongly endorse.

We welcome the fact that draft resolution sets out in no uncertain terms that the Al-Assad regime must comply fully with the requirement to destroy its chemical weapons. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons now needs strong international support for its role in the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons.

Australia will also continue to press for the Council to take action to assist the humanitarian effort in Syria and, of course, provide our full backing to efforts to find a political solution in accordance with the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex) that leads to a cessation of violence and a political transition which meets the aspirations of all Syrians.

But we cannot just focus on a single instance of global security, for we are engaged on security challenges around the world, including in the Indo-Pacific region. Through our Security Council membership, we draw on lessons learned from our experience in peacekeeping and peacebuilding and take forward initiatives that are meaningful to our region. We welcome the strong support which the Security Council gave yesterday to Australia's resolution 2117 (2013) on small arms and light weapons. These weapons are a major driver of many conflicts that are brought to the attention of the Council.

When Australia led the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) 13 years ago with our friends from New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and other countries of the Pacific, one of the first tasks the Mission faced was to restore peace and security. RAMSI moved quickly to secure the surrender of firearms — an early and decisive action that underpinned the peace that was built and maintained over the next 10 years. And women played a crucial part.

That is why, throughout the Pacific, we are supporting efforts to strengthen women's participation in policing, through recruitment, retention, training and mentoring support. In the Philippines, Australia is funding women's participation in peace processes that bring together Muslim, Christian and indigenous women. And we continue to build on our record on security, disarmament and peacekeeping. As co-author of the draft resolution, we worked to secure the adoption of the world's first Arms Trade Treaty (resolution 67/234 B), which has now been signed by the majority of the United Nations membership, with a further 18 signatories being obtained during the course of this week.

Outside of the Council, we work directly with countries in our region to build their security. Australia commends the efforts of Timor-Leste and the Group of Seven Plus countries emerging from conflict, including Solomon Islands and Afghanistan, in their efforts to promote the rule of law, civil and political institutions and a strong private sector.

The United Nations is a vital forum for the security and prosperity of our world. That is what Harry Truman, President of the United States at the time the United Nations was founded, imagined when he spoke of a "world fabric of international security and growing prosperity". No community can build lives, families and nations in the absence of stability, predictability and security. No country can ensure the security of its people without an economy that offers them the dignity to pursue lives they value.

As you have made clear, Mr. President, the task the United Nations takes on this year and next, setting the stage for the post-2015 development agenda, is one that could set the course of humankind for decades to come. On behalf of the people of Australia, I wish all nations well in taking on that task, and commit Australia to play its part. Together, we will strive to build the prosperity

that underpins and supports international peace and security.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Franciscus Cornelis Gerardus Maria Timmermans, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Mr. Timmermans (Netherlands): This year, we celebrate the centennial of the Peace Palace in The Hague, seat of the International Court of Justice (ICC) and the Permanent Court of Arbitration, and symbol of the pursuit of peace by means of law. Next year, we will commemorate the centennial of the first of two suicidal world wars that caused unspeakable human suffering, horrible crimes against humanity and the oppression of half of Europe's population until the Berlin wall came down in 1989.

Out of the ashes of those global conflagrations grew the desire of the peoples of the world to put an end to violent conflict and to guarantee human rights for every human being in every country. "Never again" is what humankind wanted. Unfortunately, so far it is not what we have been able to deliver to everyone.

During the festive celebrations this year in The Hague, which gave fresh impetus to the peaceful settlement of disputes, there were scenes of unspeakable violence in Syria, including the use of chemical weapons. More recently, in Nairobi, dozens of people were killed by terrorists. One of the victims was Dr. Elif Yavuz, a young Dutch woman who was eight months pregnant with her first baby. My heart goes out to Dr. Yavuz's family, to all the victims of the Nairobi attack and to their loved ones.

The powerlessness of the international community to put an end to abuses like those has led in the past to the establishment of new bodies and instruments. After the Second World War, the United Nations was founded and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted. Following more recent genocides, the International Criminal Court was established. The use of chemical weapons by Saddam Hussein led to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). So the institutions and instruments are in place. The question is, what is preventing them from delivering results? Perhaps the answer to the question was given already four centuries ago by Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza when he wrote: "Peace is not an absence of

war; it is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence, justice”.

It is my conviction that the international community must keep working on the project we launched a hundred years ago. We should follow the example of Dr. Yavuz, who was committed to helping people suffering from HIV/AIDS and malaria. We should work to achieve her aims and uphold her ideals. We should make clear that terrorism will never triumph. We should invest in the United Nations and support it as effectively as we can. We strongly support the Secretary-General and the message he delivered here on Tuesday (A/68/PV.5). We will join him on the road to peace, justice and development.

The Netherlands advocates a coherent agenda for strengthening the international legal order. A peaceful world demands a sustainable legal order and a powerful agenda for development. It demands a strategy for disarmament and a focus on human rights. Those are the principles of the foreign policy of the Netherlands. A partnership for peace, justice and development is the cornerstone of the Dutch candidacy for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council in 2017-2018.

The world was shocked to discover that an attack with chemical weapons had taken place in Syria on 21 August. The attack violated one of the most important peremptory norms of international law. The 1925 Geneva Protocol, to which Syria is a party, bans the use of chemical weapons. The situation in Syria poses a clear threat to international peace and security. The Netherlands calls on the Security Council to take concerted action to address that threat. We have just heard from the representative of Australia what is going to happen today.

Mrs. Bruell-Melchior (Monaco), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Syria does not comply with the international norm that requires it to protect its citizens. But the international community also has a responsibility. The Netherlands supports the proposal that permanent Security Council members should henceforth refrain from using their veto power in votes on intervention to stop the mass atrocity crimes identified by the 2005 World Summit. They should show that they are serious about their responsibility to protect vulnerable populations, underlining our consensus that genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing must never be tolerated.

As the Secretary-General said, those responsible for the atrocities in Syria should be held accountable in accordance with international law. The use of chemical weapons is a war crime under the Rome Statute. If the Syrian Government itself sees no possibility of tracking down and prosecuting the guilty parties, it can ask the ICC to do so. If Syria makes no request, the Security Council must take action. Finally, as the Secretary-General also said, we can hardly be satisfied with the destruction of chemical weapons while the wider war continues to destroy Syria and kill innocent people. A peaceful solution is needed. And the women of Syria should be involved in making that happen, as there can be no solution without them.

Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security provides an outstanding tool for promoting inclusive conflict resolution. This week we hosted a side event marking the importance of women's political participation for successful transitions in the Middle East and North Africa. The Executive Director of UN-Women told me earlier this week that courage is every woman's middle name. It certainly is in Syria.

The Netherlands supports John Kerry's efforts to encourage Israel and the Palestinian Authority to arrive at a two-State solution through direct negotiations. The international community should support the Israeli-Palestinian talks. Only a political solution can lead to lasting peace.

Fifty years ago, United States President John F. Kennedy expressed the fear that in the 1970s there would be 15, 20 or even 25 nuclear-weapon States. Thanks in part to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, that danger was averted, but the risk of further proliferation of nuclear weapons has not receded. While much has been achieved in the field of disarmament, there is still a long way to go. In his speech in Berlin in June, President Obama warned of the danger of nuclear weapons. “As long as nuclear weapons exist, we are not truly safe”, he said — and he is right. He plans to take new steps to reduce strategic nuclear arsenals. He also wants to make substantial reductions in the number of United States and Russian non-strategic weapons in Europe. The Netherlands is in favour of those steps, strongly supports the efforts and wants to contribute to them.

In March of next year, the Nuclear Security Summit will convene in The Hague. My country's hosting of the Summit is in keeping with our tradition as a country of

peace, justice and security. Nuclear materials can play an important role in curing our illnesses and heating our homes. And fortunately, the likelihood of terrorists using nuclear materials in an attack is small. But if it did happen, the consequences for the world would be very serious indeed.

The Nuclear Security Summit is meant to give fresh impetus to global efforts to ensure nuclear security and prevent nuclear terrorism by making and implementing agreements at the highest multilateral level. Governments, businesses, researchers and organizations from many countries are working together to reduce the quantities of nuclear materials, to enhance the security of the materials that remain, and to combat nuclear smuggling.

The centennial of the Peace Palace is a good occasion to highlight the peaceful settlement of disputes. The Netherlands has used the celebrations to strengthen instruments for peaceful settlement. We advocate taking three interrelated steps.

First, we need to encourage countries to recognize the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice. As States Members of the United Nations, we recognize the Court as a principal organ of the United Nations. In my view, recognizing its compulsory jurisdiction is a logical and necessary next step. Secondly, we must help countries realize how useful and flexible arbitration is as a way of settling disputes. The Security Council and the General Assembly could draw parties' attention to that instrument more often and we should advocate it more often in the public debate. Thirdly, we must reduce the obstacles to the peaceful settlement of disputes by making alternatives available. This is why the Netherlands enthusiastically supports the Department of Political Affairs and non-governmental organization that promote mediation.

In his 2011 report on the responsibility to protect (A/65/877), the Secretary-General rightly pointed out the importance of mediation as a means of preventing atrocity crimes. National legal systems are the foundation of the international legal order. Strengthening national legal systems should make it possible to keep the courtrooms of the International Criminal Court closed.

The ICC is inextricably linked to the global chain of legal institutions. It delivers justice in the wake of international crimes, thus helping to prevent future offences. So it is crucial that countries continue to

accede to the Rome Statute and that popular support for it be maintained. We need to ensure that countries that have acceded to the Statute continue to work with the ICC.

This year marks the sixty-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the twentieth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration. The Universal Declaration is an enduring source of inspiration. It was adopted without a single dissenting vote under the inspired leadership of Eleanor Roosevelt, who acted as a change agent before the expression was coined. Just before the vote she said, "We stand today at the threshold of a great event both in the life of the United Nations and in the life of mankind" (see A/PV.180).

The World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna underlined that human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. Twenty years after Vienna, the blueprints of our human rights infrastructure are complete. Now it is time to ensure the necessary implementation, political will, capacity, financial resources and treaty body reforms. To that end, Dutch human rights policy stresses the importance of forging trilateral partnerships in different regions of the world. We focus on protecting human rights defenders and promoting LGBT and women's rights.

Without development, there can be no global peace and security. We are fast approaching 2015, and have made great progress. In the next two years we can still make a difference and advance towards the Millennium Development Goals. The post-2015 development agenda will also benefit from a single, unified framework. We cannot talk about the plight of the world's poorest people in isolation from the environmental problems endangering life on our planet. It is crucial to ensure that development is sustainable so that we can balance and integrate its economic, social and ecological dimensions. Peace, security and the rule of law constitute a fourth vital element of sustainable development.

The key words for the post-2015 development agenda are better aid, more trade and stronger policy coherence for sustainable development. Also, we need to promote women's rights. That includes sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as equal opportunity. I have four children — two of them are girls. It would be unbearable for me, as a parent, if they did not have equal opportunity as their brothers.

It goes without saying that a nation that was built by claiming its lands from the sea is concerned when rising sea levels might endanger that claim. Therefore, we feel a strong solidarity with other countries that are threatened in the same way. The Netherlands wants to strengthen the synergy between climate and poverty-reduction policies, particularly in the field of water and food security.

Exactly 75 years ago today, British Prime Minister Chamberlain said, in a radio address on the Sudetenland crisis,

“How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas-masks here because of a quarrel in a far away country between people of whom we know nothing.”

Czechoslovakia was dismembered shortly afterwards. That was not just the fault of the signatories of the Munich Agreement. The entire international community — especially Czechoslovakia’s fellow democracies in Europe, including my own country, the Netherlands — looked the other way.

Today we can no longer pretend to know nothing of quarrels in faraway countries or of the people who live there. If we fail, it is not because of the deficiency of the legal instruments that we have developed. It is because of the international community’s deficient sense of responsibility. It is our duty to take responsibility in addressing the crisis in Syria.

The Secretary-General talked earlier this week about leadership and identified Nelson Mandela as a shining example. I wish we would all listen to “Madiba” more often. On Syria, we should follow the Secretary-General’s lead and make peace and justice a reality.

Investing in the United Nations is an investment in our common future. We are shareholders with a long-term interest. We need to have the instruments for peace, justice and development ready for the moment that they can help avert catastrophe. That is why we invested in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which has now proved crucial in the Syrian crisis. That is why we should invest in the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Security Council. That is why we should work as hard as we can to come up with a clear and ambitious post-2015 sustainable development agenda. We are all in this together; we should invest together in our United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Basile Ikouebe, Minister for Foreign Affairs and La Francophonie of the Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Ikouebe (Congo) (*spoke in French*): At the beginning of this week, at the opening of the general debate, the international community strongly condemned the heinous attacks that have once again struck Kenya. That situation should lead us to reflect on our ability to prevent, manage and settle conflicts. Kenya’s tragedy is to be situated near the territory of Somalia, which for too long has been left to terrorist groups. The lesson is to avoid the creation of any vacuum that could serve as fertile ground for subversive movements. That is why in Central Africa the member States of the subregional community have reacted quickly to the risk of the “Somalization” of the Central African Republic ever since the beginning of the crisis there, despite our limited resources.

The dialogue on the humanitarian crisis in the Central African Republic that we, the partners of that ravaged country, held recently in New York, on 25 September, clearly indicated that the international community has taken stock of the challenge and has decided to resolutely provide assistance to the Central African Republic on the political, security, humanitarian, economic and financial levels, and to ensure that it has a successful transition, like that of Mali, a country which we commend and which deserves all our attention and solidarity today as it did yesterday.

Therefore, beyond the humanitarian emergency, the Central African Republic must be given all the resources necessary to restore the authority of the State, enable its Administration to operate, revive the economy and prepare for elections. An international support mission in the Central African Republic is being established under African leadership. We encourage the Security Council to swiftly adopt a resolution supporting that initiative, which is aimed at creating the necessary conditions to restore peace and security, which would ensure the much-needed stability and the effective implementation of the transition road map. As a mediator and as chair of the follow-up committee of the Economic Community of Central African States on the situation in the Central African Republic monitoring that crisis, the Congo can only welcome that very encouraging development.

Also in the context of my country's neighbourhood, by participating in the signing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, which took place on 24 February, President Denis Sassou Nguesso reaffirmed his commitment to a foreign policy aimed at peace and security in the world in general and in Africa, particularly in Central Africa and the Great Lakes Region. In doing so, he favoured the quest for peaceful solutions and showed his willingness to continue along that path. The various consultations he has initiated in the context of the implementation of the Framework agreement and the appeals directed to him demonstrate his approach.

In that spirit, the Congo is pleased with the conclusions of the Second Meeting of States Parties to the Framework Agreement, which was held in New York on 23 September. We commend the leadership of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, while we call for those efforts to culminate in talks in Kampala.

Just two years ago, we welcomed the wave of popular uprisings — the so-called Arab Spring, which led to the fall of some political regimes in the Arab world, sometimes by force of arms. We welcomed those movements, just as we welcomed the enormous changes that transformed the European landscape after the fall of the Berlin wall, in 1989. Today, in view of the developments in some of those countries, whose populations aspired and still legitimately aspire to freedom, democracy and social justice, I cannot fail to recall the remarks that I made from this rostrum during the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly (see A/66/PV.27). I called then for greater caution and prudence, convinced that the overthrow of a political regime does not necessarily bring freedom and democracy, since they must be won and nurtured by other victories that cannot be imposed from the outside.

The situations we have just mentioned are replete with lessons, not just because of the internal instability that may result from them, but also and above all because of their unpredictable negative impact on regional and international peace and security.

It that regard, I shall mention other challenges to international peace and security, particularly those of the Syrian tragedy, which is unfolding relentlessly before our eyes, and the untenable Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has consumed so many human lives and so much energy and time.

With regard to the situation in Syria, my delegation strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons and welcomes the Syrian Government's adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention and its decision to place its stockpile of chemical weapons under international control for destruction. Nevertheless, we believe that only a political solution can put an end to the martyrdom of the Syrian people and the fratricidal war that has already killed more than 100,000 people. That is why the Congo welcomes the United States-Russian agreement and the discussions under way in the Security Council on the adoption of a resolution that would mark the first steps in a process that will, we hope, in the near future, bring together the Syrian actors and all parties involved around a table in the framework of a conference for peace in Syria. In that regard, once again, we believe that the focus must be placed on finding a peaceful solution.

At the same time as Syria is agreeing to eliminate its stockpile of chemical weapons, it is appropriate to recall one of the most serious threats to humankind — the nuclear danger. It is indeed urgent for the nuclear-weapon States, as well as for those that have other weapons of mass destruction, including biological weapons, to implement concrete measures enabling the elimination of those arsenals and making progress towards real disarmament, while ensuring respect for the prohibition of nuclear proliferation for military purposes. This is also the moment to commend the overtures made here by Iran concerning its nuclear programme.

Last year, the Congo supported the General Assembly's historic decision to confer United Nations non-Member observer State status on Palestine. It was a symbolic act that the Assembly welcomed almost unanimously. The new American initiative designed to relaunch the Israeli-Palestinian talks also deserves the support of the entire international community. Here too, the Congo encourages dialogue and rejects any recourse to force or violence.

Given the current series of political crises and in the spirit of peace and justice, how can we fail to ask that the embargo unjustly imposed on the Cuban people for five decades be lifted? That unilateral decision is contrary to the principles and values of the Charter of the United Nations and to international order, based on non-interference in a State's internal affairs and peaceful cooperation.

The damage done by the economic and financial crisis that recently shook the world is far from being repaired; even if here and there we can see some signs of recovery, they are unfortunately not capable of relaunching sustained growth. The progress that about 40 developing countries have made has definitely led to some rebalancing of power, as the *Human Development Report 2013* of the United Nations Development Programme indicates. However, the fruits of that growth are unequally distributed. Similarly, the disparities both within countries and between rich and poor countries once again raises the problem of inequality and social justice, which often causes social unrest. Between now and 2015 there will be numerous African countries that will not meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

For my own country, there has been significant progress in achieving the MDGs, especially those relating to education and maternal and child health, thanks to my Government's efforts and initiatives in areas such as abolishing school fees, providing free textbooks, recruiting teachers and providing free Caesarean sections, vaccinations and antiretroviral treatments. However, progress has been somewhat slow in fighting poverty and promoting decent jobs. Nonetheless, combating poverty remains a major concern to which my Government accords high priority through investment programmes in health, education, professional training, infrastructure, agricultural production, forestry and mining.

We have reasons to hope for progress between now and 2015. The national context is being prepared. The Republic of the Congo enjoys reassuring stability and a favourable economic environment. Lasting peace has been established. We are consolidating the democratic process, which is strengthened by a regular dialogue between the Government and the opposition on organizing peaceful elections. My country has also built a harmonious overall framework for implementing its development policy, focused on modernizing and industrializing the country on the basis of our national development plan for 2012-2016.

The favourable rise in the price of petroleum products and other natural resources such as wood has enabled my country to register significant increases in its economic growth rate, now over 5 per cent per year since 2010, allowing for inflation. That economic improvement has notably benefited State revenues, which have been going up steadily. The Republic of the

Congo has also benefited from substantial debt relief after reaching the completion point for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative in January 2010 and will from now on have more resources available for national development programmes, particularly in the social sectors.

Structural reforms undertaken through the Extended Credit Facility of the International Monetary Fund have enabled us to make essential progress in managing the public finances and macroeconomic stabilization. The business climate continues to improve. Other measures have been taken to enable the Congo to speed up its achievement of the MDGs between now and 2015.

The 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) outlined for us "The future we want". Ambassador Ashe, who was one of the co-facilitators of the Rio+20 process and is now the President of the General Assembly, is therefore well placed to help us to set the stage that will enable us to reach the horizon that is the future we want. "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage" is the theme of the current session. It invites us to establish the foundations for another vision of development, focused on poverty eradication and human development. My delegation agrees with the President that what is needed is an ambitious, bold programme that takes new and emerging development challenges into account and that better integrates the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development.

The Congo, a country in the forested Congo basin, can only concur with that view. The Congo's commitment to sustainable development at the national level, as well as at the regional and international levels, has been unflagging. It is in that context that, after having spoken for Africa throughout the Rio+20 process, the Congo has continued its active commitment within the framework of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. Once those sustainable development goals have been defined, there remains the vital issue of how to finance sustainable development, which will be tackled by establishing a committee of experts on the issue.

It is regrettable that the issue of climate change, which affects all humankind, is still suffering from a lack of consensus. Permit me to revisit a subject of deep concern for developing countries such as ours, namely, the issue of financing the fight against climate change, which should be a central element in our negotiations. For our part, we affirm the importance of supporting

developing countries in establishing low-carbon regimes that can adapt to climate change in order to tackle the worldwide problem that humankind is facing.

In regard to the programme entitled “Reducing Deforestation and Forest Degradation and Enhancing Environmental Services in Tropical Forests”, established by the International Tropical Timber Council, the Congo welcomes the consensus on the importance of participation by all countries, according to their capacity and national context, in the fight against deforestation, forest degradation and of increasing stocks of forest carbon, which is responsible for almost 20 per cent of total greenhouse-gas emissions. Our interest in conserving nature and protecting wildlife has impelled us to launch a fierce fight against poaching. In that context, next year the Congo is organizing a major international meeting on combating that scourge. Participants will include political and technical stakeholders involved in wildlife management, countries that buy wildlife products, and international organizations.

The world has changed, and we must deal with the new geopolitical challenges that have helped new forces to emerge onto the international scene. Every living organism must evolve. The United Nations, which we would like to see become more transparent, dynamic and democratic, cannot avoid that law of nature.

As President John F. Kennedy noted as early as in 1963, at the eighteenth session of the General Assembly,

“The United Nations cannot survive as a static Organization. Its obligations are increasing as well as its size. Its Charter must be changed as well as its customs. The authors of that Charter did not intend that it be frozen in perpetuity.” (*A/PV.1209, p. 7*)

We are therefore at the heart of an important and timely debate.

United Nations reform is therefore urgent and possible. It must be based on the principles of democracy, justice and equality. In that regard, the cycle of the intergovernmental negotiations on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council should lead, through a consensual framework, to concrete results. That reform is part of the will of the Member States to make the Organization an institution that expresses the values of modernity and is open to the future, a sanctuary for builders of the future of the world, a world where planetary challenges require concerted global solutions, a world that is being built on the bedrock of solidarity, unity, mutual respect and tolerance.

The meeting rose at 2.55 p.m.