



General Assembly

Sixty-eighth session

7th plenary meeting
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Official Records

President: Mr. Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda)

The meeting was called to order at 6.25 p.m.

Address by Mr. Ueli Maurer, President of the Swiss Confederation

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Swiss Confederation.

Mr. Ueli Maurer, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ueli Maurer, President of the Swiss Confederation, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Maurer (*spoke in French*): The world in which we live is profoundly changing, but whether it changes for the better is another matter. That is up to us. We often get the impression that great strides are being taken towards a better, more peaceful future. Unfortunately, reality imposes disappointing setbacks upon us.

I recall an important step taken 150 years ago. In 1863, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was founded in Geneva, giving rise to a global movement. Thanks to their humanitarian spirit, representatives of that organization work to provide humanitarian help worldwide for people affected by armed conflict and other violent situations. The humanitarian work of the ICRC is based on the principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence.

All victims of conflicts receive the same treatment, and help is granted to all vulnerable persons. All human beings are valued equally.

Alongside the humanitarian tradition shared by Switzerland and the ICRC, my country is proud of another tradition dating back centuries — neutrality. I would recall that for centuries Switzerland's foreign policy has been anchored in peaceful coexistence among States. Thanks to our neutrality, we maintain relations with all countries. We never take sides, but we can provide support or propose our mediation. Furthermore, our neutrality allows us to offer our good offices.

Humanitarian engagement is part of our history. It is an honour for us to make our neutral soil available for peace talks, and we will continue to do all we can to contribute towards peace in the world, in particular through our good offices. That impartial work is based on our belief that there are differences between people and between nations. Those differences are natural. Moreover, all human beings enjoy equal rights.

The protection of human rights is a key element of the Swiss commitment. Those rights are an expression of the obligations set out under international law and must be protected. Switzerland is concerned by the widespread excesses of violence and numerous human rights violations. It calls on all States and civilian actors to renounce violence.

In the Middle East, violent conflicts are imposing unacceptable suffering on the civil population. The situation in Syria has deteriorated to such an extent that

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humanitarian organizations are unable to cope. Serious and systematic violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and human rights cannot be tolerated in any circumstances. Such crimes must not go unpunished, regardless of which side is responsible. That is why my country, together with 57 like-minded States, called on the Security Council in January to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. The use of chemical weapons is a particularly despicable crime. It is imperative to shed light on all facts. With that in mind, Switzerland welcomes recent developments.

I stress the need for the international community to spare no effort to pave the way for another conference at the earliest possible date in Geneva. That conference should result in a negotiated and lasting solution that would take into account the legitimate aspirations of all Syrians.

Switzerland is not the only country bound by the principle of equal rights. The Charter of the United Nations endows it with universal validity. The preamble reaffirms “faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women”.

What applies to all human beings also applies to the States we live in. That is why, in the same sentence, after referring to the fundamental rights of all people, the Charter refers explicitly to the equal rights of nations “large and small”. Under paragraph 2 of Article I of the Charter, the United Nations seeks “to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples”. Paragraph 1 of Article 2 states that

“[t]he Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members.”

I firmly believe that those principles are the keystone for the peaceful coexistence of all people and populations of this world.

But are we still sufficiently aware of this? Or are we prone to lose ourselves in grandiose ideas and minor details? I have the impression that in international politics too much is said of how things should be in an ideal world and too little about reality. I cannot help but feel that excessive bureaucracy creates a kind of parallel universe that leads to increased isolation. At the end of the day, that leads to increasingly higher costs and fewer concrete results.

Global problems need more than general discussions; above all, they require a search for solutions shared by all parties. The United Nations was created to find such solutions, and to that end it must be efficient, innovative and effective. Only thus will it be able to make progress in ensuring the equal rights of people and nations. Switzerland is firmly committed to contributing to that task. At present, certain developments are at odds with the shared values laid down in the Charter. I would like to address those subjects and launch a discussion on these worrisome developments.

As the representative of a neutral State with a long-standing humanitarian tradition, it is with some concern that I observe the growing resurgence of power politics. I note that large States are once again choosing to exercise their power and force and that they view smaller States less and less as equal partners. I sincerely hope that this trend will be reversed as soon as possible. Otherwise, the fundamental values of the Charter, which unite the international community and to which its members feel committed, will be placed in doubt.

As I have already said, the tendency towards power politics on the international stage worries me, for we believe that the countries on this planet should be free to choose their own futures, even as they respect others States and accept the rules of peaceful coexistence among peoples, without sacrificing their specific character. We believe in peaceful competition among economies. We believe in the diversity of the world — the peaceful diversity of sovereign States that treat one another fairly and as equal partners. People are free to draw up their own constitutions and to determine their own economic order and their own system of law. No State may impose its law over that of another country. Problems are not solved by diktat, but through negotiations. The shared norms and rules of international law exist to ensure that it is not simply the law of the strongest that applies. The principles of sovereignty and equal rights provide peace and stability and foster friendly relations between all peoples.

Those are the convictions upon which the Charter of the United Nations is based. Do we still share these convictions today?

The way in which large nations have acted in dealings with small nations recently has disturbed me because I often have the impression that force has often been placed above the law. The United Nations is active

in a vast range of areas. There is perhaps a risk that it has taken on too much and lost sight of what is essential and concrete. The United Nations and its Member States often seem at a loss when the principles upon which the Organization were founded are at stake. Let us never forget what underlies these principles: the equal rights of people and the equal rights and sovereignty of nations. They are embodiments of the lessons of history, which has been a painful story of oppression, foreign domination and conflicts.

Together we must decide which path we want to take. Do we want to continue squandering our strength on issues of secondary interest? I believe that we should strive, here and now, to reaffirm and live out the values of the United Nations. Let us commit ourselves to achieving a peaceful world in which people and nations enjoy equal rights and are of equal value — a world in which right prevails over might. It is up to all of us here in this Hall to do all in our power to achieve that goal. Let us start without delay.

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

Mr. Ueli Maurer, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. José Mujica, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay

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

Mr. José Mujica, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. José Mujica, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mujica (*spoke in Spanish*): I come from the South. At the conjunction of the Atlantic and the River Plate, my country is a gentle, temperate plain where livestock graze. Its history is one of ports, leather, salted beef, wool and meat. There were dark decades of lances and horses until finally, with the outset of the twentieth century, we were at the forefront of social,

education and governmental affairs. I would say that social democracy was invented in Uruguay.

For nearly 50 years, the world saw us as a kind of Switzerland, but in reality in economic matters we were the bastard children of the British Empire. When the empire ended, we experienced the bitter and terrible terms of trade and we yearned for the past for almost 50 years, remembering Maracanã. Today, we have re-emerged in a globalized world, having learned from our pain.

My personal story is that of a boy — because I once was a boy — who like others wanted to change his times and his world and dreamed of a free and classless society. My mistakes were in part the results of my era. Obviously I take responsibility for them, but sometimes I cry: “If only I had the strength that I had when we enjoyed such utopia!”

However, I do not look towards the past because what we have today was created from the fertile ashes of yesterday. On the contrary, I am not on this planet to settle scores or to reminisce. I am greatly anguished by the future that I will not see, and to which I have committed myself. Yes, it is possible to have a world with more humanity, but perhaps today the main task is to save life.

I am from the South and I have come from the South to this Assembly. I share with the thousands of poor compatriots in cities, in the jungles, in the plains, in the pampas and the canyons of Latin America the common fatherland that we are creating. I bear upon my shoulders the indigenous cultures, the remains of colonialism in the Malvinas, and the futile and regrettable blockades of Cuba under the Caribbean sun. I also bear the consequences of the electronic surveillance, which does nothing but create the distrust that poisons us needlessly. I also come with a huge social debt and with the need to defend the Amazon, the seas, and our great rivers of America. I also have the duty to fight for all on behalf of my fatherland and so that Colombia can finally regain peace. I have the duty to fight for tolerance for those who are different and with whom we have differences and disagreements. We do not need tolerance for those with whom we agree. Tolerance is the foundation of peaceful coexistence, understanding that we are all different in this world.

I fight against the illicit economy, drug trafficking, theft, fraud, corruption — the contemporary scourges unleashed by an opposite set of values and by those

who maintain that we are happier when we are richer, no matter by what means. We have sacrificed the old, immaterial gods and we are now occupying the temple of the Market God. This god organizes our economy, our politics, our habits and our lives, and even provides us with rates and credit cards and the illusion of happiness. It seems that we have been born only to consume, and when we can no longer consume we are overcome by frustration, poverty and self-loathing.

It is true that today, in order to spend and to bury our garbage in what science calls the carbon footprint, if in this world we aspired to consume like the average American, we would need three planets in order to be able to live. In other words, our civilization has mounted a deceitful challenge, and as we go on it is not possible for everyone to achieve that goal. Indeed, our culture is increasingly driven by accumulation and market forces. We are promised a life of spending and squandering; in fact, it is a countdown against nature and against future humankind. It is a civilization against simplicity, against sobriety, against all natural cycles; worse yet, it is a civilization against freedom, which requires time to experience human relationships and the most important things: love, friendship, adventure, solidarity and family. It is a civilization against free time that does not pay, that cannot be bought and that allows us to contemplate the beauty of nature.

We have destroyed the real jungles and sown anonymous cement jungles. We have tackled a sedentary lifestyle with walking, insomnia with pills, solitude with electronics. Can we be happy when we are so far from the human essence? We have to ask ourselves this question. Stupefied, we have rejected our own biological imperative, which defends life for life's sake as a superior cause, and we have replaced it by functional consumerism and accumulation.

Politics, the eternal mother of all human endeavours, has remained shackled to the economy and to the marketplace. Going from one adventure to another, politics achieves little more than perpetuating itself, and as such it delegates its power and spends its time bewildered, fighting for the Government. Out of control, human history marches forward, buying and selling everything and innovating in order to negotiate what is, in a way, non-negotiable. Marketing exists for everything: cemeteries and funeral services, maternity wards, fathers, mothers, grandparents, uncles, secretaries, cars and vacations. Everything is business. Marketing campaigns deliberately target children and

psychologically influence older children to reserve safe territory for the future. Abundant evidence exists of such abominable uses of technology that sometimes induce mass frustration.

The average city dweller wanders between financial institutions and tedious office routines, sometimes moderated by air conditioning. He often dreams about vacations and freedom. He dreams about having the ability to pay his bills until one day his heart stops and he is gone. Other such soldiers will fall prey to the jaws of the marketplace, sharing in material accumulation.

The crisis really rests in the powerlessness of politics, which is incapable of understanding that humankind cannot and will not escape nationalism, which is practically etched into our DNA. Today, it is time to fight to prepare a world without borders.

The globalized economy has no other driving force except that of the private interests of the very few, and each nation State seeks only to maintain its own stability. Today, the great task for our peoples and our humble way of seeing things becomes the be-all and end-all. As if that were not enough, truly productive capitalism is a prisoner of the banks, which are at the summit of global power. More clearly, the world is clamouring for global regulations that respect scientific achievements, which abound, but it is not science that governs the world.

Today, we need a lengthy agenda of definitions. We must define working hours throughout the world. We need to have convergence among currencies. We need to finance the global struggle for water and against desertification. We have to figure out how to recycle more and how to counter global warming. What are the limits of each human task?

We must achieve a broad planetary consensus to unleash solidarity among the most oppressed and to punish and tax waste and speculation by mobilizing the large economies not to produce disposable goods, but rather useful goods without planned obsolescence or excess, which would help the world's poorest peoples. Useful goods could stand against world poverty. Turning to a useful neo-Keynesianism on a global scale in order to abolish the world's most flagrant embarrassments would be a thousand times more profitable than making war.

Perhaps our world needs fewer global organizations, organized forums and conferences, which serve only to aid hotel chains and airlines; perhaps no one really

benefits from their decisions anyway. We must return to what is old and eternal in human life, along with science that strives to serve humankind, and not only the rich. With scientists, the counsellors of humankind, we can create agreements for the entire world. Neither the large nation States nor transnational companies, not to mention the financial system, ought to govern the world of humanity. Yes, lofty politics combined with scientific wisdom — it must come from science, which is not attracted by material gain but looks towards the future and tells us about things we may not foresee. How many years ago did they tell us in Kyoto about certain facts linked to climate change?

We have finally learned that intelligence must be at the helm, guiding the ship to port. Actions of this nature and others that we cannot name, yet which we believe to be crucial, require life and not acquired wealth. Obviously, we are not so naïve; these and other things like that will not come to pass. Many pointless sacrifices still lie ahead of us. We still must deal with the consequences and not tackle the causes. Today, the world is incapable of establishing global regulations for the planet, due to the failure of lofty global politics, which meddles with everything.

For a time, we were protected by more or less regional agreements, established to create a deceitful so-called free trade that in the end constructed protectionist, supranational barriers in some regions of the globe. In turn, important branches of industry and services dedicated to saving and improving the environment will arise. We will be comforted by that for a while. We will be distracted.

But of course, the accumulation will continue unabated, to the delight of the financial system. Wars and fanaticism will continue until nature calls us to account and makes our civilization non-viable. Perhaps our vision is too crude, not compassionate enough, and we view man as a unique creature, the only one on Earth capable of acting against his own species.

I reiterate that what some call our planet's ecological crisis is the result of the overwhelming triumph of human ambition. This is our triumph and our defeat, given our political impotence to fit into the new era that we have helped to build without realizing it.

Why do I say this? The numbers tell the story. The truth is that the global population quadrupled and gross domestic product grew by a factor of at least 20 over the past century. World trade has doubled

approximately every six years since 1990. We could continue to list numbers that clearly establish the march of globalization. What is happening to us? We are entering a new era, and rapidly, but with our political bodies, cultural accessories, parties and young people all reduced to old age before the horrific and accelerating changes that we cannot even grasp. We cannot manage globalization because we do not think globally. We do not know if this is a cultural limitation or we are reaching biological limits.

The portents of revolution are present in our age as in no other in the history of humankind, yet our age does not have a conscious direction or even a basic instinctive direction, and still less organized political direction, because we do not have even the beginnings of a philosophy with which to face the speed of oncoming changes.

The greed that has been such a negative force and such a driver of history has also pushed forward the material, scientific and technical progress that has made our era and our time what it is and has enabled a phenomenal leap forward on many different fronts. At the same time, this very tool — the greed that pushed us to domesticate science and transform technology — is paradoxically pushing us over the edge into a shadowy abyss, towards an unknown fate, an era without history, and we are left without eyes to see or the collective intelligence to continue to colonize and transform ourselves.

If there is one thing that defines this tiny little human creature, it is that it is an anthropocentric conqueror. It seems that things come alive and submit to men. Glimpses of these things abound everywhere, glimmers that should allow us to discern these things, or at least make out the direction in which things are headed, but it is clearly impossible to make collective, global decisions about the big picture. Individual greed easily triumphs over our species' greed. Let us be clear. What is the big picture of which we speak? It is the system of global life on Earth, including human life, with all the fragile balances that make it impossible for us to continue as we are.

On the other hand — and this is less contentious and more obvious — in the West in particular, because we are indeed from the West, though we are also from the South, the republics arose to make the claim that men are equal, that no one is better than anyone else, and that Governments should represent the common good, justice and equity. Often, these republics become warped

and fall into the habit of ignoring ordinary people, the man on the street, the common people. Republics were not created to outgrow their constituents, but instead are historical phenomena designed to function for their own people. They must therefore answer to majority and must fight for its interests.

As for the traces of feudalism that persist in our societies, or the domineering classicism, or the consumer culture that surrounds us all, in the course of their existence republics often adopt a way of daily life that excludes and holds at arm's length the common man. In fact, that common man should be the central cause of the republic's political struggle. Republican Governments should increasingly look like their respective peoples in the way they live and the way they deal with life.

The fact is that we tend to cultivate feudal anachronisms, spoiled affectations and hierarchical distinctions that undermine the best feature of republics — the fact that no one is better than anyone else. The interaction of those factors and others keeps us living in prehistory, and today it is impossible to renounce war when politics fails. Thus, economies are strangled and resources wasted. Every minute in the life of our planet, we spend \$2 million on military budgets around the world — \$2 million a minute. Medical research on all manner of diseases, which has made huge advances and is a blessing that promises longer life, receives barely a fifth of what is budgeted for the military. That process, from which we cannot escape, perpetuates hatred, fanaticism and distrust, fuels new wars and wastes fortunes.

I know that it is very easy politically to criticize ourselves at the national level, and I think it naive in this world to propose that resources that could be saved and spent on other, useful things. Again, that would be possible if we were capable of making global agreements and working on global prevention and world policies aimed at ensuring peace and offering the weakest among us guarantees that do not exist. Enormous resources would have to be cut to address the most shameful things on Earth, but one question suffices. Where can humankind as it is today go without those guarantees? Thus, each wields arms commensurate with his size.

And that is where we are today, because we can barely reason as individuals, let alone as a species. Global institutions, especially today, languish in the

shadow of the dissenting great nations. Clearly, such nations wish to hold on to power. They block action by the United Nations, which was created in the hope and with a dream of peace for humankind. But what is even worse is that they have cut it off from global democracy. We are not all equal. We cannot be equal in a world where some are strong and others weak. As a result, our world democracy is wounded, and we face the historical impossibility of reaching a global peace agreement. We patch up diseases when an outbreak occurs as one or other of the great Powers wishes, while we look on from afar.

It would be difficult to invent a force that is worse than the chauvinistic nationalism of the great Powers. Nationalism, a force that liberates the weak through the process of decolonization, has become a tool of oppression in the hands of the strong. The past two centuries are full of examples. The United Nations is languishing and becoming increasingly bureaucratic from lack of power and autonomy, above all of recognition of democracy for the weak of the world, who are the majority.

By way of a very small example, our little country is in absolute terms the largest Latin American contributor of soldiers to peacebuilding missions, and we go wherever we are asked to go. But we are small and weak, and in the places where resources are distributed and decisions made, we cannot go even to serve coffee. In our heart of hearts we long to help humankind emerge from prehistory — and people who live with war are still living in prehistory, despite the many artifacts they can build — but as long as we do not emerge from prehistory and retire war as a resort when politics fails, that is the long march and challenge we have ahead of us. We say that in full awareness; we are familiar with the loneliness of war.

Such dreams, however, require us to fight for an agenda of world agreements that can begin to steer our history and overcome life's threats, step by step. Our species should have a Government for all humankind that supersedes individualism and creates political leaders who follow the path of science and not merely the immediate interests of those governing and suffocating us. At the same time, we must understand that the world's poor are not from Africa or Latin America; they are all part of humankind, and that means that we must help them to develop so they can lead decent lives. The necessary resources exist. They can be found in the waste of our predatory civilization.

A few days ago a tribute was delivered in a fire station in California. An electric bulb had been turned on for 100 years. It had been on for 100 years! How many millions of dollars have they taken from our pockets deliberately creating junk so that people will buy and buy and buy? But globalization means a brutal cultural change for our planet and for our life. That is what history demands from us. The entire material basis has changed and it has changed man. In our culture, we act as if nothing had happened. Instead of us controlling globalization, it controls us.

Almost 20 years ago, we discussed the humble Tobin tax, which could not be applied at a global level. All of the banks with financial power rose up against it. Their private property and who knows how many other things would be harmed. However, that is the paradox. With talent and collective work, with science, step by step humankind can make deserts green; humankind can bring agriculture to the seas; humankind can develop agriculture that lives with salt water.

If the power of humankind is focused on what is essential, it is infinite. Here we see the greatest sources of energy. What do we know about photosynthesis? Almost nothing. There is a great deal of energy in the world, if we work together to use it properly. It is possible to eliminate poverty from the planet. It is possible to create stability. It will be possible for future generations, if they begin to reason as a species and not just as individuals, to bring life to the galaxies and pursue this dream of conquest that we, human beings, have in our genes.

But if those dreams are to come true, we will have to control ourselves or we will die. We will die because we are not capable of being at the level of the civilization that we have been developing with our efforts. That is our dilemma. We should not spend our time merely correcting the consequences. Let us consider the deep-rooted causes, the civilization of waste, the present civilization that is stealing time from human life and wasting it on pointless matters.

Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Let us remember that human life is a miracle. Consider that human life is a miracle, that we are alive as a result of a miracle, and that nothing is more important than life. Our biological duty is, above all, to respect life, promote it, take care of it, reproduce it and understand that the species is our being.

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

Mr. José Mujica, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda

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

Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Museveni: In the year 2000, we met here and agreed on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for 2015. They are: Goal 1, the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; Goal 2, achieving universal primary education; Goal 3, promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women; Goal 4, reducing child mortality; Goal 5, improving maternal health; Goal 6, combatting HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; Goal 7, ensuring environmental sustainability; and Goal 8, developing a global partnership for development. As we can see, they cannot be sustainably achieved unless we achieve socioeconomic transformation. That means building a new society comprised of the middle class and the skilled working class out of the pre-capitalist societies that characterize underdeveloped countries.

Our old society of traditional Africa had and has to undergo socioeconomic metamorphosis, just like the insects do, taking on new forms of life — egg, caterpillar, pupa, adult butterfly or other insect, and so on — of the same organism. That means fewer people in agriculture than in industry and services, more people in urban centres than in rural areas, no illiteracy, and modern agriculture rather than subsistence traditional agriculture or uneconomic colonial cash crops that bring in little for the affected families. I hope that no one had imagined that we could sustainably attain the MDGs while maintaining a backward economy.

We in Uganda discovered the following bottlenecks to socioeconomic transformation.

The first is ideological disorientation. The second is a weak State — no army and a weak police, judiciary and civil service. The third is inadequate infrastructure, including inadequate electricity, lack of roads, lack of a railway system, lack of information and communications technology infrastructure, and so on. All of this means high costs for doing business in a given country. That scares away business, and without business there can be no employment, no production of goods and services and no expansion of the tax base. It is a vicious circle.

The fourth bottleneck relates to human resources that are undeveloped on account of lack of education and poor health. An illiterate and unhealthy population cannot be the agent of socioeconomic transformation. The fifth is the issue of small internal markets resulting from the colonial balkanization of Africa. Those had to be worked on through regional market integration. One cannot sustainably produce if sufficient numbers of people do not buy one's goods.

Sixth, a lack of industrialization and a failure to modernize services meant that we continued to export raw materials at 10 per cent or less of the final value of the final product, thereby losing money and jobs to the outside world. The lack of modern services meant that we could not attract tourists and had to import services from outside in the form of professional and medical services, inter alia, in addition to jobs not being created.

Seventh, the failure to modernize agriculture inhibits the earning capacity of the affected portions of the population and the country, stunts job creation and affects food security.

Eighth, the additional mistake was made of interfering with the private sector, influenced by an incorrect analysis of the national interest. Was the private sector causing the national economy to haemorrhage by repatriating dividends, or was it creating an infusion of fresh money and knowledge and expanding the size of the economy? Fortunately, that mistake has been corrected in Uganda and in much of Africa.

Those are the bottlenecks that directly affected the rate of socioeconomic transformation. I do not wish to go into the political bottlenecks here.

In Uganda, therefore, we were clear about all of those from the very beginning. It was not possible to talk of the MDGs sustainably without talking about those strategic bottlenecks. You could not sustainably base yourself on donor support to achieve the MDGs.

In spite of the fact that a number of mistakes were made by some of our actors, Uganda will have achieved the following MDGs by 2015.

First, eradicate extreme poverty and hunger — already achieved; second, achieve universal primary education — already achieved; third, promote gender equality — already achieved; fourth, reduce child mortality — already achieved; fifth, improve maternal health — achieving this one has been slow to be achieved because of mistakes on our side; sixth, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases — we are on track to achieve this, except as concerns new AIDS infections, which have increased slightly; seventh, ensure environmental sustainability by increasing the electrification of the economy, so as to stop the cutting of forests for firewood and for primitive agriculture by modernizing agriculture and shifting a greater portion of the population towards industry, away from agriculture.

We have been working on Goal 8, developing a global partnership for development, first and foremost by working for economic and political integration in Africa and for market access to the rest of the world on the basis of mutual advantage. The process of market integration in Africa has already started in the form of the East African Community, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the Southern African Development Community, the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Central African States.

As part of the global partnership, we should be very careful not to lose the easing in global tensions that came with the end of the Cold War. In the Book of Matthew, Jesus says :

“ By their their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.” (*The Holy Bible, Matthew 7:16-20*)

A good system will prove its superiority by example. The Book of Matthew also states:

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (*ibid.*, *Matthew 5:16*)

We do not have to create new global tensions in order to deal with criminals. Where there is a need for international action, regional and global consensus should be sought so that we unite the many to defeat the few and isolate the enemy to the maximum, as the late Chairman Mao Zedong used to say. Where there is a need to fight for freedom, oppressed people can fight for themselves. They do not have to be sponsored by external forces. Those who seek external sponsorship as their primary aim are suspect, to say the least.

Still on the issue of global partnership, I cannot fail to stress our anger vis-à-vis actors who are beginning to make it a habit to ignore African Union positions on African matters. One of our slogans in the decolonization struggle was “Africa for the Africans”. Some people seem to think that that was an empty slogan. They are wrong. Although the patriotic forces have been taken by surprise by this renewed arrogance by the old mistake-makers, they will react appropriately to protect Africa from hegemony.

The latest manifestation of arrogance is from the International Criminal Court (ICC) in relation to the elected leaders of Kenya. Many African countries supported the establishment of the Court because we abhor impunity. However, in a shallow, biased way, the ICC has continued to mishandle complex African issues. That is not acceptable. The ICC should stop. Our advice to it is from very capable actors who know what they are doing and who know what they are saying. Kenya is recovering. Let it recover. We know the origin of the mistakes of the past. The ICC way is not the right one for handling those mistakes.

Mrs. Miculescu (Romania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In our struggle for socioeconomic transformation, our biggest problem has been funding. The small modern colonial economy of Uganda was destroyed by Idi Amin. Initially, as we struggled for minimal economic recovery, we had to depend on external funding. Although useful, that funding was limited, slow in coming, not always focused, and erratic. Although our economy succeeded in achieving an average annual growth rate of 6.5 per cent per annum

over the past 20 years, we could have achieved much higher rates of growth, especially if we had had reliable funding for infrastructure,

Now that we have a little bit of our own money, we are able to implement infrastructure projects much faster. Even without oil and gas, we were able to move much faster in terms of infrastructure development by relying on ourselves. Of course, additional external funding, if it is focused, sizeable and on time, can be very useful. Without a doubt, Uganda and much of Africa are moving forward robustly. With the resources from the oil and gas we discovered a few years ago, we will be able to fund all our infrastructure needs. The future is bright and our forward movement is irreversible.

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

Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Ms. Cristina Fernández, President of the Argentine Republic

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

Ms. Cristina Fernández, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Cristina Fernández, President of the Argentine Republic, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Fernández (spoke in Spanish): I would particularly like to congratulate the President of the General Assembly and his country Antigua and Barbuda, a member of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. It is an honour for all Latin Americans that he is presiding over the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session.

I would like to begin by expressing our solidarity with the victims of the attacks in Kenya and Pakistan, and generally to all the victims of the terrorist attacks occurring in various parts of the world. I say this not out of formal sympathy or for reasons of protocol, but

because our country, Argentina, along with the United States of America, is the only one on the American continent to have suffered a terrorist attack — in our case, on two occasions: in 1992, when the Israeli Embassy in the city of Buenos Aires was blown up, and two years later, when the Jewish community centre AMIA in Argentina was bombed. Some of the relatives of the victims are here with us, as always, and I can see them from here. Clearly, we are talking about victims. These were not soldiers or fighters. They were people who were getting on a bus, perhaps entering a bar or going to work, and who were surprised by an explosion. They had not taken part in any war; they were not combatants or soldiers; they had not chosen to go and fight. So I am thinking of those victims and their families, who deserve our solidarity and the strongest possible condemnation of all forms of terrorism.

In the context of this sixty-eighth session of the Assembly, we see the Syrian question as a common thread. Almost in a premonition, only a short while ago I was here at the United Nations, presiding over a meeting of the Security Council, of which Argentina is a non-permanent member for 2013-2014. On 6 August, just about a month and a half ago, we proposed a measure to reform the Security Council. We stated that the functioning and the rationale of the Council actually reflected another era, that of the Cold War, when fear of nuclear holocaust had led to the creation of the Organization, uniting the forces that had defeated Nazi Germany, and then produced a bipolar world. That fear of nuclear war resulted in a system with veto power so that no one would be able to push a button and blow up the world. The fact is that that instrument, which worked in 1945, has now been shown to be dysfunctional and completely obsolete — and not only as regards the Syrian question, but also when it comes to dealing with issues affecting peace and security around the world.

Incidentally, I would like to express my appreciation for the fact that for the first time we have been given the opportunity to speak at such a late hour of the day, because it has somewhat interrupted the inertia of the course of the meeting. There are times when we come to these meetings with a format, almost a monologue, that makes it difficult to present arguments or counter-arguments that take into account the statements made by previous speakers. I have listened very carefully to almost all of the addresses given earlier today. Obviously, I paid particular attention to those that touch on the global decision-making system, and, of course, because I am a staunch supporter of multilateralism, I

paid a lot of attention to the first address, by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

In many of those statements I heard mention of 21 August. On 6 August, we spoke of the need for Security Council reform and of the fact that the right of veto is no longer necessary. There should be a system — such as those used by regional organizations of the Americas, such as the Union of South American Nations, Community of Latin American and Caribbean States or the Southern Common Market and its associated States — in which decisions are taken by consensus. Why is that? Governmental administration is different, as the power of veto is necessary in order to govern. When dealing with conflict resolution and management, if one party to the conflict, or an interested party, has the right of veto, that right necessarily becomes an obstacle to the resolution of the conflict. We did not know what would occur 15 or 16 days later. Many have noted that the crisis in Syria erupted on 21 August.

In fact, it is extremely difficult to understand that the current crisis in Syria was only recognized on 21 August, when we became aware of chemical weapons. Syria has been caught up in that conflict for over two and a half years. Over 150,000 people have lost their lives and 99 per cent of them died as a result of conventional weapons — not chemical weapons. I remember that at the last meeting of the Group of Twenty (G-20), during a discussion about Syria, I asked, “What is the difference between a death resulting from bullets, anti-personnel mines, missiles or hand grenades, and a death resulting from chemical weapons?” Each is more or less equally shocking. As it is not the first time, why is there talk of chemical weapons as if it were the first time that chemical weapons or weapons of mass destruction have been used?

I recall a statement made by another leader today with reference to the terrible gas chambers of the Nazis, the gas in the trenches and the chemical weapons used in other instances. I also remember hearing about and reading about — as I had not yet been born — the nuclear holocaust in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the consequences of using those weapons on many generations of Japanese people.

I remember when I was much younger — the President of Uruguay also recalled the time of his youth, I was less than 20 years of age, and many others will probably also remember — when napalm and phosphorous were used during the Viet Nam War. That

was recorded forever in the Pulitzer prize-winning photographs of naked boys and a naked girl. I remember, as if it were today, that naked young girl running down a road after having been hit by napalm in a bombing.

I also remember, in all fairness, the suffering of the people of the United States when they saw the doors of the planes open and they saw the corpses of the soldiers who had gone to fight being removed, wrapped in black plastic bags. I can imagine the pain of each girlfriend, each sister, each wife, each daughter of the soldier who had died, trying to understand why. Many did not understand why the soldiers had had to lose their lives many thousands of kilometres away from their country. It is so irrational, so unjust. There are no just wars. Only peace is just.

On 6 August, in the discussions on the issue of peace and security, it was stated that peace and security are not military concepts; rather, they are political concepts. Today, I was pleased to hear the Secretary-General mention that very concept, which we had referred to in the Security Council — namely, that peace and security are not military but rather political concepts. Therefore, we welcome the fact that an agreement has been reached on the question of Syria. My country opposed direct intervention — bombing. It was quite simple. The argument that, in order to avoid deaths, you would cause even more deaths could not be sustained by any reasoning or even common sense. We did not speak out at that time only to speak. Furthermore, we were not discussing just any country, but one with great respect for the norms of international law.

My country, Argentina, has signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), making Argentina one of the most advanced countries — if not the most advanced country — in developing nuclear power for peaceful and scientific purposes. We sell nuclear power generators to Egypt, Algeria and Australia. We also use nuclear energy for medical purposes. We do not condemn the use of nuclear energy for warfare while at the same time deploying nuclear submarines. That has been our experience, for example, in connection with the sovereignty dispute involving our Malvinas Islands, since the United Kingdom has militarized the southern Atlantic region and sent nuclear submarines. We have no double standards. We are not hypocritical. We have not only signed the NPT but are also parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), as was also mentioned by the Secretary-General in his statement.

In other words, when we speak of condemning dictators, we are actually parties to the Rome Statute and can be brought before the Court. We are also members of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in Washington, D.C. It is curious that many who speak of respect for human rights, the relevant institutions, international law and the ICC and often refer to human rights have not signed the treaties on the subject.

If one is to speak of human rights, Argentina has accomplished a great deal. We were a founding Member of the Organization and promoted the creation of a human rights secretariat within the United Nations and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. I am joined here by the head of the Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo. She was also with me in Paris to sign the treaty, of which we are a founding party.

I referred to human rights because there was something said today about human rights in another speech. It has been said here that if this is the world in which people want to live, then they should say so and be prepared to face the cold logic of mass graves. Argentina too can speak of mass graves. Even today, well into the twenty-first century, we continue to come upon mass graves that hold the remains of the thousands of prisoners and those who disappeared under the genocidal dictatorship that began 24 March 1976, which was similar to the one that took power on 11 September 1973 in our sister republic of Chile, overthrowing the democratically elected Government of Salvador Allende.

How wonderful it would have been, after all the speeches condemning genocidal dictators, if someone back then had come to the aid of the Argentine and Chilean and so many other peoples of the American continent who, in the midst of the Cold War, were the sacrificial victims of murderous dictators. But it was also said here that, if those who cared about human rights were moved to act on someone's behalf, perhaps if that concern had at least coincided with the interests of some great Power, they would have acted differently. We have spoken of those things here, including the need to put an end to that double standard, and we have said that the resolutions and decisions of a multilateral organization such as the United Nations must take place on a level playing field for the weak and the strong, the small and the large.

We have been waiting since 1965, when the plenary and many resolutions of the Assembly and

the Committee on Decolonization required both Argentina and the United Kingdom to sit down to hold a dialogue — another word that I have repeatedly heard in every speech. There is a dispute over the matter of sovereignty over the Malvinas, and yet, the United Kingdom has turned a cold shoulder. And so we continue with double standards, which some people do not like to hear mention of. But hypocrisies are like witches; evidently, they exist.

I have also heard — I should add that I have heard with pleasure, so not everything has to do with double standards — that there has at last been recognition, as an essential basis for beginning to untie the Gordian knot that the matter of the Middle East represents, of the need to recognize the State of Palestine and the right of the State of Israel to live securely within its borders. Moreover, I think it has quite rightly been said that it is impossible to achieve security for the State of Israel unless there is also recognition of the existence, and support for the viability of the physical existence of, the State of Palestine. We can do no less than agree on that characterization.

I have also heard the new President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and I have heard the comments that the great Powers have made about that change of Government. If I understood correctly, there appears to be a kind of new expectation of change in the face of the new authorities in the Republic of Iran, with which, as the Assembly knows, we have a disagreement that stems from — a cause of mine — a formal case by the Argentine judiciary against five Iranian citizens in connection with their participation in the bombing of the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina. It has now been 10 years since, for the first time, on 25 May 2003, then President Néstor Kirchner called in this same Hall for the Islamic Republic of Iran to cooperate in clarifying the facts of that case. Year after year until 2007, he continued to do so, and from 2007 until today I myself have also continued to do so. A little over a year ago, we received a reply from the then Foreign Minister of Iran offering to initiate talks and reach an agreement on cooperation. Why? For a very simple reason. Because the case has been stalled for 19 years. Nothing has moved. If there are five Iranian accused, the only one with whom I can and must speak so that the judge can take a deposition from those five citizens is obviously the Republic of Iran. That seems very obvious, but often in this peculiar world, even in my own country, which is also a bit peculiar, obvious things have to be explained.

I have also heard today about imperfect choices. I liked that expression, which was used by one of the Presidents. I think that when Argentina spends 10 years asking for cooperation and then suddenly someone finally says “Fine, we are going to talk; we are going to cooperate”, there was no other possible choice except to sit down together. That issue used was internally in our country to attack us politically, and here too in the United States by the vulture funds to pit us against the United States Congress and say that we were reaching an agreement, a treaty, with Iran. But on what? Nuclear weapons? No. On a strategic alliance to attack the West? No. On an agreement to convert to Islam? No. The agreement was simply to unblock the procedural impasse in order for the Argentine judiciary to take depositions from the accused, while at the same time ensuring due process through a commission of international jurists who would be neither Iranian nor Argentine and whose actions would not be binding.

The treaty was approved in my country nine months ago. I could almost say that the baby is about to be born, if I were to put it in biological terms or in terms of childbirth. It was approved by all the appropriate organisms, including the Parliament. It was published in the official bulletin. The world knows that Argentina has duly complied with that treaty. To those who found it so convenient for Iran — after nine years with no news or notification or agreement from the Iranian authorities, I wonder if we were not right ourselves when we affirmed and said that it was a way to unblock the issue.

The fact is that there is now a new Government to whose speeches I listened attentively, and a President who declared in statements I read that he in no way denied the Holocaust. That is very important. At least it is important to me and to many citizens around the world. Even today, he specifically declared that through the recent election, by displacing a leader whose positions we have all heard, so there is no point in repeating them, Iranian society had proved that it wanted more moderate positions. We have heard, from this very rostrum and these very microphones, that there is a will to agree, to talk, to be an open and peaceful democratic society, and to act in goodwill.

The President of France referred to the nuclear case as the important matter pertaining to Iran; I would like to speak about the issue of the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina as the other major issue. They said they would make gestures by opening up to

negotiations, and that they did not want weapons for military use. In other words, as I understood it, they were saying that they would adhere to what we support, which is non-proliferation. Now we wait to be told if the agreement has been approved, or when it will be. Moreover, we await the announcement of the date for the establishment of the commission, as well as a date for the Argentine judge to travel to Tehran — yes, to Tehran; we are not afraid and we will go there.

We believe in the goodwill of people, and there is no reason for us not to believe that they actually want peace. Everyone who has spoken here has said they wanted peace and that they loved one another, so we believe everyone. But we also hope to see everyone acting consistent with their words and actions. I therefore wanted to put this specific question on the table. I have no doubt that, if the words we have heard here are true, we will see a positive response. I say that to avoid any misunderstanding as to our deep conviction and belief in the rules of international law, and also to make it clear that our patience does not mean that we are naive or even foolish. We think that more than enough time has gone by, and we think answers are now needed. The victims deserve this. The Islamic Republic of Iran deserves that too, if it really wants to show to the world that this is a different Government and that its actions are also different. I trust that this will be the case. I have no reason to think otherwise.

As for other matters that I wish to discuss, let me say that we are “serial abiders” when it comes to the norms of international law. We are also “serial victims” of other unwritten rules that are nevertheless very important in today’s world of finance and economics. They are norms not written by the major international financial centres or the risk-rating agencies or those that speculate, like the vulture funds, when it comes to dealing with countries that, like Argentina, defaulted on their debt, in the case of Argentina in 2001.

There has also been talk here of poverty and the need for children to have access to education. I wish to read out two paragraphs of the address by the Secretary-General. The first has to do with weapons, wherein he speaks about poverty and points out that

“at a time of pressing human need, spending on weapons remains absurdly high. Let us get our priorities right and invest in people instead of wasting billions of dollars on deadly weapons.”
(A/68/PV.5, p. 3)

For the record, Argentina does not produce any chemical weapons, or even sell conventional weapons. It would be interesting to find out — as I mentioned at the G-20 — who supplies weapons to the rebel groups that are fighting the Syrian Government. It goes without saying that the Government of Syria possesses the weapons of a State. We would like to know who supplies the weapons to those who fight the Syrian Government. This is not about taking any sides; rather it is just about putting forward something that is quite logical, for the weapons trade is today a real business.

Did we really have to wait for 1,000 people to die as a result of chemical weapons to realize that 150,000 others had died before them? Why was an arms embargo not declared two years ago to prevent so many deaths? Well, that should be answered by those who sell weapons. We do not sell them and therefore cannot give an answer to that question — although we suspect what it would be.

I would also like to read out another very significant passage in which the Secretary-General talked about the economic situation. Although the question of Syria has been the common thread running through the whole Assembly, it is clear that the economic crisis that started here in the United States with the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers in 2008 still, despite all speeches and things we have seen and heard, continues to generate volatility and fragility. The latter is a term that was often invoked, and not just in the G-20.

We see millions of people unemployed around the world, a situation that very much reminds us of that in Argentina in 2001 when we defaulted on our own debt. This is linked to the fact that we are also serial victims of the unwritten rules of the lobbyists, of risk-rating agencies and of those who trade in financial derivatives and speculate like vultures hovering over countries in default, buying securities at very low prices and then attempting to make millions. That is the Argentine case, but it could be the story of any other country, very soon in fact.

Since the Government of former President Néstor Kirchner first took office, on 25 May 2003, Argentina began to explore how to emerge from its debt, which accounted for 160 per cent of our country’s gross national product. We had 25 per cent unemployment, a poverty rate of 54 per cent and more than 30 per cent in extreme poverty. Many countries could perhaps see themselves mirrored in that state of affairs.

In 2005 we organized the first restructuring process, which was accepted by 76 per cent of our creditors. During my own Government in 2010 we reopened the debt-restructuring process and managed to secure the approval of 93 per cent of our creditors. Consider that, in any country that has insolvency laws, when companies go bankrupt the law requires the agreement of at least 66 per cent of the creditors in order for the bankruptcy judge to make the remaining creditors accept the terms — at least, that is the case in Argentina. I think the number is the same in the United States, that is, 66 per cent. In addition, here in the United States even municipalities can declare bankruptcy, and a judge may decide that, if the sustainability of the municipality is at stake, an even lower figure is acceptable.

The fact remains that in 2010 Argentina reached agreement with 93 per cent of its creditors. Since 2005, Argentina has consistently and in a timely manner paid each and every one of its debt maturities, so much so that the last payment was made only a few days ago. That involved a bond subject to Argentine domestic law, payable in Buenos Aires. We paid \$2.07 billion, and today our debt to gross domestic product ratio is a little under 45 per cent, down from 160 per cent, as I mentioned before. Much of the debt is actually public-sector debt. The foreign-currency-denominated debt of Argentina is only 8 per cent of gross domestic product, due both to national and foreign private holders. I would reiterate, however, that we have been in strict compliance.

In 2008, seven years after Argentina defaulted on its debt, the vulture funds, as we call them, swooped in. The United Nations is caught between the vultures of debt and the hawks of war. It is worse than Hitchcock's *The Birds*, since Hitchcock, at least, was a good director. But what is certain is that bonds were purchased for \$40 million, and they now wish to collect on that while disregarding the creditors' agreement to certain arrangements and extensions. The creditors, like any group of creditors, wanted to be repaid and so approved certain arrangements and extensions. But the vulture funds want to recover the whole nominal value of the bonds, without arrangements, extensions or delay. From the \$40 million that they initially bought in the so-called self-regulated markets, they will recover \$1.7 billion. So from 2008, we are talking about a yield of over 1,300 per cent.

I would like to ask the Secretary-General where we can find businesspeople devoted to creating jobs,

innovating and investing in production if, in this kind of casino economy, somebody can buy \$40 million in defaulted bonds and then secure a court decision that enables them to collect \$1.3 or \$1.7 billion.

This is not only an Argentinian problem; this is a problem that involves the whole world. This is why we wish to thank the Republic of France for having gone to the United States Supreme Court and presented itself as *amicus curiae*. We also thank the former head of the International Monetary Fund, Anne Krueger. She is not and has never been a very good friend of Argentina's, but she also did that.

We also remember the former United States Secretary of the Treasury, Paul O'Neill, who, when it was decided to leave Argentina to its own devices in 2001, amidst a social and institutional crisis that left 30 people dead as a result of violence in the streets, said that American plumbers should not have to pay for an Argentine fiesta. Today, I say that the millions of Argentines who went back to work, the millions of Argentines who can once again entertain hopes and dreams, the scientists who returned to the country and the children who once again have access to education do not have to pay for the lobbyists' fiesta. These lobbyists, by participating in political campaigns and contributing money to the politicians' campaigns here, have the lobbying power they need to destabilize the international financial system. Is that not remarkable? And such a short time has elapsed between Paul O'Neill's assertion and what we are saying today.

We are not asking for anything. We just want to be allowed to pay. It is remarkable. We started by defaulting on our debt and now they will not let us pay it back. It seems almost absurd, in a world that is grappling with debt restructuring involving millions of men and women. Even here in the United States, there are men and women who are unemployed and have lost their homes, not to speak of the devastation we see in Europe.

Obviously, Argentina and many of the countries represented here today do not have the good fortune of being countries that issue reserve currencies, but we have expressed our willingness to honour our commitments. I think this should be recognized, unless the idea is to use a country like Argentina as an example, because it was able to climb out of the hole, to create jobs and generate growth, and to pay its creditors without applying the prescriptions that the International Monetary Fund tried to impose upon it.

Incidentally, there is also a need for global market regulation and market interventions. Wonderful statements have been made in the Group of 20 regarding tax havens, ratings agencies and capital flows, but what is certain is that the world needs global laws for global governance. Just as we ask for Security Council and General Assembly resolutions to be respected, we also ask for rules and for respect for the sovereignty of countries, especially those countries like ours that wish to honour their commitments.

Finally, I would like to address the Assembly on this very special day. Today we see war, human rights violations and other violations intertwined. Perhaps some are of a more subtle nature, such as losing one's job, one's rights, one's livelihood or one's hope. I think, at the core, our duty as world leaders is to build a truly different history.

Many of those who have already spoken have made somewhat ambivalent statements. Some have been encouraging, while others have been disillusioned as a result of not having been able to do what they wanted, almost as if their desire to do something had just been a whim, and when they were not allowed to, they grew frustrated. I believe that the one thing we cannot do when we have the responsibility of governing and when we might be able to govern a country with a lot of power is to lose our temper or, even worse, make mistakes. Making mistakes is the one thing we should not do, because mistakes are not paid for by the leaders who make decisions or imperfect choices. Mistakes are paid for in human lives, not only if we are talking about war, but also if we are talking about the economy. In that case, they are paid for in terms of unemployment, lack of access to health care, education, housing and security.

There is cheap labour available for drug trafficking, which we talk so much about fighting. One of the keys to fighting drug trafficking is to put an end to cheap labour in emerging and underdeveloped countries. We must also put an end to money-laundering for drug trafficking in central countries, because the money is not laundered in the countries that produce the raw materials. Money-laundering takes place in the central countries. It is right to say this, because we hear so much talk about drug trafficking and other things.

I would conclude with a phrase by the Secretary-General that I really liked. I thought his invitation was most appropriate. It was specifically an invitation to turn hope into action through hard work, commitment,

dignity and integrity. He ended with the words "with passion". I am a person with a lot of passion. Some say that I am sometimes a bit too passionate and a bit too forceful in my statements. "With passion", he said, but above all with compassion. He said that we can build a future that the people want and the world needs with passion and compassion.

It is not the first time I have heard this word. I must confess that I heard it many years ago, and very often, in my own country. Perhaps I did not understand it at the time, this passion. It was used then, and is still used today, by a cardinal from Argentina who is today Pope and whom I would also like, as a Christian, to thank for the key role he played in dealing with the question of Syria. Compassion and passion — that means the passionate embrace of hope, of the future, of the things that are yet to come, and compassion for those who are less privileged, for the most vulnerable, for those who are waiting for so many things, who have done nothing to deserve extreme poverty and be Godforsaken, and compassion for all those who are victims — of war, of unemployment, of extreme poverty and misery — in other words, of our own failures as world leaders.

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

Ms. Cristina Fernández, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Joyce Hilda Mtila Banda, President of the Republic of Malawi

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

Mrs. Joyce Hilda Mtila Banda, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted into the General Assembly.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Joyce Hilda Mtila Banda, President of the Republic of Malawi, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Banda: Allow me to congratulate President Ashe on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. Let me assure him of my full support and cooperation and

that of my Government during his tenure of office. His credentials and experience as a career diplomat here at the United Nations assure us of a successful session.

It is indeed an honour for me to have the opportunity to address the Assembly once again. In my maiden address last year, I spoke of the challenges that Malawi faced at the time that I assumed the office of the President of the Republic of Malawi. I outlined my Government's commitment to addressing the political and economic governance problems that I inherited. I sought to achieve macroeconomic stability and restore the rule of law and the observance of human rights.

The reforms my Government has undertaken have been painful but necessary. I am therefore pleased to report to the Assembly that Malawi is registering a strong economic recovery. For instance, foreign exchange and fuel are available, the currency has stabilized, inflation is declining, and industrial production is up from 30 per cent in 2012 to 75 per cent in 2013. Economic growth is forecast at 5 per cent this year, up from 1.8 per cent last year. Furthermore, Malawians are once again enjoying their freedoms and civil liberties, as enshrined in the Constitution.

I am pleased to say that Malawi, the "warm heart of Africa", is warm again, and my Government is committed to staying the course with these reforms. In moving forward, my agenda is to build on the foundations we have laid in order to realize sustainable and inclusive growth.

Today we are gathered here to reflect on the progress made on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to debate the post-2015 development agenda. Before I provide my reflections, I would like to commend the Secretary-General for his efforts to ensure an inclusive global debate on the post-2015 development agenda. As I understand it, more than 750,000 people from 194 countries provided their views, indicating their readiness for bold change. I am pleased that Malawi was one of the countries selected for the national consultations.

I believe that in Malawi and beyond, the MDGs have played an important role in concentrating our efforts around the common purpose of eradicating poverty. They have raised public awareness about unacceptable levels of poverty and helped to mobilize action towards a fairer world.

At the same time, the MDGs have provided a common framework for monitoring progress and

highlighting areas of achievement as well as challenges. Yes, they have transformed the way in which both developing and developed countries approach development cooperation.

Malawi is on track to achieve four of the eight MDGs: reducing child mortality, combating HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability, and developing a global partnership for development. However, like other countries, we are unlikely to meet the Goals of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal access to education, ensuring gender equality and the empowerment of women, and improving maternal health.

As the deadline for the MDGs draws closer, Malawi is stepping up its efforts to accelerate their attainment. We have identified best practices as well as bottlenecks in the context of our progress. In particular, we have understood that gender inequality and lack of empowerment of women are the common constraints limiting our progress towards the MDGs. In response, my Government has developed a new MDG acceleration framework that places significance on removing these barriers once and for all.

In building the foundations for the post-2015 architecture, I want to reflect on the lessons from Malawi's experience in the implementation of the MDGs.

First, I believe that the strength of the MDGs lies in the fact that they are focused and targeted. That has helped us to narrow our focus and concentrate our efforts on the most critical issues while allowing local ownership. In the case of Malawi, the MDGs were localized through the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy.

Secondly, the past 13 years have taught us about the importance of the linkages between these Goals. A poor family is not just economically deprived. It is also likely to face a host of other challenges such as environmental vulnerability, abuses of human rights and lack of or limited access to essential services. Lifting people out of poverty therefore requires a holistic approach.

Thirdly, strong political will and the transformation of partnerships have accelerated the attainment of most of the MDG targets. Finally, I wish to make a cautionary note that we need to be aware of the fact that different continents were at different stages of development when we established the MDGs. That created pressure,

sometimes leading to unintended consequences. In the case of Malawi and other countries, in our efforts to achieve universal access to education, the quality of education was compromised, yet access and quality should not be separated.

We all recognize that the task of developing and achieving consensus on the theme “The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage” may not be an easy one. However, we know a lot more today about what works and what does not work than we did 13 years ago. We know that in order to achieve real and lasting change, we must be committed. We know that in order to inspire and motivate action, we must be bold and ambitious. We know that in order to maximize our resources and talents, we need smart partnerships.

The report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda provides a strong foundation for a new framework. I applaud in particular the overall vision of ending extreme poverty by 2030. I also commend the focus on, among other things, empowering girls and women, creating jobs, sustainable livelihoods and equitable growth and ensuring good governance and effective institutions. I am aware that many people have argued that the best strategy to achieve the MDGs is to realize growth in the gross domestic product. However, I am of the view that that idea is premised on a top-down-approach. In my opinion, it is income for poor households that must come first. The issues that affect population growth — malnutrition, girls’ access to education, maternal health — are all rooted in poverty and, particularly, in a lack of income at the household level. If we have to overcome those challenges, we need to promote policies and programmes that bring decent incomes into households.

In that regard, my Government has sought new partnerships with the private sector, local communities and development partners in order to deliver development in more innovative ways. My Government is focused on transforming rural economies and breaking the vicious cycle of underdevelopment and poverty. We have decided to invest in improving the livelihoods of poor people in rural and urban areas. That transformation initiative is aimed at modernizing our rural communities by bringing a standard package of interventions in health, education, water, sanitation and housing.

The Government has also rolled out the Malawi Rural Electrification Programme, which aims at spurring industry, trade and agricultural productivity through the provision of electricity. The Government is also implementing a community saving and investment programme to promote a culture of saving and building assets to enhance income and wealth creation. I see that leading to the majority of the poor being active participants in our economy.

If we cannot uplift the people that live in rural areas, as is the case in many developing countries, so that they can earn a decent income in the household, the vicious cycle of population growth, malnutrition, maternal risks and poverty will remain. If the post-2015 development agenda is to realize its dream, we need to go to the grass roots, where the people are.

For that reason, I welcome the idea that under the post-2015 development agenda, we should track progress against our goals by looking at them across all levels of income. That will drive equal opportunities for people across all income groups and help us realize our dreams of shared prosperity. That is key to restoring the dignity of all our people.

Finally, let me emphasize the need to attain global peace and security. We are all aware that conflict, instability and civil unrest disrupt our development efforts. As we look forward to the post-2015 agenda, we should recommit to global peace and security. As a mother and grandmother, I felt compelled to make this appeal.

Malawi will continue to engage fully in the post-2015 development agenda. I am hopeful that the voice of the poor, of women, of people with disabilities and of the marginalized will be included in the agenda. I am optimistic about a world of shared prosperity.

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

Mrs. Joyce Hilda Mtila Banda, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Michael Chilufya Sata, President of the Republic of Zambia

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

Mr. Michael Chilufya Sata, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Michael Chilufya Sata, President of the Republic of Zambia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sata: At the outset, I wish to congratulate His Excellency Mr. John. Ashe on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. I am confident that his wisdom and skill will be brought to bear as he steers the Assembly through a year of progressive dialogue and challenging negotiations.

The theme of this year's session, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage", is timely, as it presents an opportunity for us to discuss the future of global development. To that end, I wish to assure the President of our delegation's support as he discharges the function of President at this session.

The African continent has this year also reached a significant milestone. In May, together with the rest of the continent, we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Organization of African Unity, the forerunner to the African Union. The African Union is a symbol of the collective hopes and aspirations of our resilient continent. As expected, that occasion formed the basis for mutual reflection on the future direction of a young and versatile Africa. Furthermore, next year, our country will commemorate 50 years of its independence. We approach that milestone proud that Zambia continues to enjoy political stability and has embraced democratic principles that have formed the basis for social and economic transformation for improving the lives of the Zambian people.

Our country is also honoured to have played a significant role in peacebuilding initiatives within the subregion and the continent at large and continues to participate in them. Zambia will therefore remain committed to the ideals for which she has stood and is prepared to contribute to global efforts aimed at uplifting humanity.

To address the aspirations of our peoples, in particular those of the most vulnerable nations, we as a global community meeting in this Assembly set ourselves the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) — eight clear targets that resonate with our populations' aspirations. In less than two years, we

will have reached the deadline for the attainment of the MDGs, and Governments will have an opportunity to take stock of the achievements made in efforts to attain the development targets set at the turn of the century.

We are all champions of the MDGs. We have run the race, and we continue to run the race, albeit at different paces and on different terrains. What remains critical, therefore, is what we do between now and the deadline, as well as how we will move beyond 2015.

Amid much anxiety, the 2013 progress report for my country was released in May. On a positive note, the report indicated the tremendous progress made by Zambia on MDGs 4 and 5, regarding reducing the under-five mortality rate by two thirds and the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters by 2015. I emphasize here that maternal mortality is rooted in gender inequality, which manifests itself as poor education for girls, early marriage, adolescent pregnancies and lack of access to sexual and reproductive health care. The results therefore tell us that with more effort, gender inequality can be redressed.

Zambia's MDG report further indicates that we have made great strides in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The challenges are still immense, and we have to ensure that those living with HIV and AIDS are receiving the best care and access to social protection services. All efforts must be made to reach zero infection and zero deaths by building on what has been achieved so far. International support is equally critical for a sustained and enhanced response.

The Zambian economy is presently enjoying macroeconomic stability and has experienced appreciable economic growth over the recent past. However, our Government still has the huge task of ensuring that the basic needs of Zambians are met, as poverty levels and unemployment remain a challenge. It is not surprising, therefore, that we have made marginal progress in reducing the prevalence of hunger. In order to accelerate Zambia's efforts to achieve MDG 1, our Government has taken an unprecedented and painful step in curtailing subsidies on fuel and maize. That has enabled us to release much-needed resources for programmes that are deliberately targeted at poverty alleviation. We have also transformed and repositioned social protection services to optimize efficiency.

The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank estimate that economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa can be expected to be higher than the global

average — around 5.5 per cent in 2013 and 6.1 per cent next year. However, in the absence of inclusive social development and without food security, that growth risks being undermined by social exclusion, particularly for the youth. For instance, while our Government recorded a growth in gross domestic product of 7.3 per cent in 2012, we recognize the fact that it is equally important to ensure that we put in place specific measures that will promote equality and social justice in the labour market. It is for this reason that we are strongly advocating for investment that creates real and sustainable employment prospects for our people, while at the same time making our economy more labour-absorbent.

In turning to the post-2015 agenda, our Government believes that the importance of the intergovernmental processes on sustainable development goals is critical and cannot be overemphasized. I wish to reiterate the need to have a single set of universally agreed sustainable development goals reflecting sustainable development priorities that are actionable and concise and whose implementation will resonate with the different development and economic levels of Member States. Furthermore, the goals will need to be prudently balanced and to effectively integrate the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development. To that end, it is necessary to build global partnerships that are supported by commitments to regional and international cooperation, anchored with mutual accountability, enhanced local private sectors and public-private partnerships.

Our Government believes that addressing issues of poverty is important for the achievement of sustainable and inclusive development in the future we want for Zambia. Our country attaches importance to improving the welfare of our people, especially women, children and young people, through wealth and employment creation, the provision of quality education and of quality health care, and industrialization, among other things.

In particular, our Government wishes to emphasize the need to mainstream children's issues, including access to quality education and quality health care services, provided at the right time. Social protection and upholding the rights of all children is critical and should transcend the global desire for a better future. It is therefore imperative that the post-2015 agenda take into account the momentum that has been attained in the

realization of the MDGs in order to ensure continuity and sustainability.

My address to the Assembly would be incomplete if I did not underscore Zambia's, and indeed Africa's, desire to realize a more democratic and representative Security Council. As a continent, our voice could not be clearer. We continue to call for greater progress in those negotiations, whose conclusion is long overdue. I wish to reiterate our position, as defined in the Ezulwini Consensus. The United Nations boasts of an all-inclusive multilateral process, but that is obviously lacking when it comes to the Security Council. The effectiveness of that organ should be enhanced by adapting it to the prevailing global realities of international peace and security and the legitimacy realized through an all-inclusive process.

In conclusion, allow me to express Zambia's gratitude for the support received in the recent hosting of two important United Nations conferences, namely, the twentieth session of the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization and the fourth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. I therefore take this opportunity, on behalf of my Government and the Zambian people, to thank all those who participated and contributed to the success of those meetings. We look forward to the opportunity to host again in the near future.

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

Mr. Michael Chilufya Sata, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

Address by Mr. Fredrik Reinfeldt, Prime Minister of Sweden

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

Mr. Fredrik Reinfeldt, Prime Minister of Sweden, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Fredrik Reinfeldt,

Prime Minister of Sweden, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Reinfeldt (Sweden): The world is constantly changing and the pace of change is increasing every year. The world is a very different place today compared to 10 years ago when the Millennium Development Goals were set. But it is important to understand the nature of the changes and to draw the right conclusions, because only then will we be able to have an influence and shape our own future.

We are seeing the fastest reduction in poverty in human history. Child death rates have fallen, meaning that 14,000 fewer children are dying every day. Deaths from malaria and tuberculosis are decreasing. New HIV infections are declining. People are living longer. One hundred years ago, the average life expectancy in Sweden was less than 60 years. Today, many children born in my country will live to celebrate their 100th birthday. Those are truly amazing developments.

The world economy is growing. This year, developing and emerging countries' share of the world economy will surpass the share of developed countries. In 10 years' time, they will dominate the growing world economy.

We see the same pattern in expanding global trade flows. The share of developing countries' exports has grown substantially and now accounts for almost half of all exports in the world. That creates jobs and growth for everyone and increases global equality. Technological change is also rapid. Seeking information from the other side of the globe is now part of everyday life for many people, not only for the privileged few. As an example, the number of mobile phone users has risen from fewer than 1 billion to more than 6 billion. But challenges are still abundant, and it is crucial that we intensify our efforts to achieve the existing Millennium Development Goals.

Sweden continues to contribute 1 per cent of its gross national income to official development assistance. Sweden is a firm believer in multilateral organizations, in international cooperation and in the United Nations. The United Nations plays a key role in coordinating our efforts towards the Millennium Development Goals. We believe that together we can become hopeful instead of helpless. Therefore, Sweden contributes approximately \$1.2 billion yearly to the United Nations system. That makes us the second biggest contributor per capita to

the United Nations in the world — that is something we are very proud of.

In addition to the existing Millennium Development Goals, we must also work to establish a strong post-2015 development agenda, with the objective of eradicating extreme poverty, raising standards of living for everyone and offering equal opportunities to everyone. In that regard, I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to the three areas that I believe are central to human and economic development: gender equality, democracy and free trade. Those areas have the capacity to influence developments in many other areas at the same time.

When I addressed the General Assembly two years ago (see A/66/PV.19), I spoke about the most important human rights failure of all — the one that affects the largest number of human beings, namely gender inequality. I want to raise that issue once again, because that challenge is as present and as urgent today as before.

Gender equality is first and foremost a question of ensuring the same human, economic and social rights for half of the world's population, something that should be self-evident. Every year, 1 billion women are still subject to sexual or physical violence. Women are still refused equal access to health services, including sexual and reproductive health and rights. Every day 800 women still die from preventable complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. Legal restrictions still exist preventing women from owning, inheriting and acquiring property in many countries. Many girls and women are still refused access to schools and education. For many women the idea that a Government would have more female than male ministers, like in Sweden, seems utopian. Many of those women are not even allowed to vote.

Against that background, Sweden was one of the countries that gave strong support to creating the entity UN-Women and is today one of its biggest donors. It is our firm belief that by ensuring gender equality one also improves a country's productivity and economy and the rule of law. Educating girls and women leads directly to an increase in a country's economic output. Educated mothers place higher value on schooling for their children. Closing the gap between male and female employment rates increases a country's gross domestic product substantially. Increased participation by women in politics and business leads to clear improvements for

the public good and to less corruption. The inclusion of women in peace processes makes peace easier and more stable. Let me be very clear: it is simply neither acceptable nor very smart to discriminate against women and girls.

To achieve sustainable development, we need a democratic governance that encompasses all individuals. We need a system that covers not only the State, but also the private sector and civil society organizations. We need a governing system that is accountable and transparent with regard to its actions. Nevertheless, nearly one third of the world's population lives under authoritarian rule, a serious barrier to development. With the growing economic power in many developing countries comes an opportunity and a responsibility to use that power wisely and for the common good of everyone.

Every person's human rights must be respected, regardless of origin, religion, handicap, gender, sexual preference or transsexual identity. Only then will society reap the benefits of all human resources. Only when people can freely express their political opinions and freely participate in a thriving civil society can they truly participate in the lives of their communities. That also applies to freedom on the Internet. Only with functioning courts do people feel safe to make investments and develop their businesses. Only with respect for the rule of law can we tackle organized crime and corruption. Only with democratic principles can we ensure freedom from conflict and violence.

Violence and oppression in all their forms are among the main threats to the development of people and the development of societies. We know that it takes, on average, seven years to fight a civil war, and 17 years to recover from a war. That is why conflict is sometimes called "development in reverse". As we speak, there are several major ongoing conflicts, resulting in death and suffering, hunger and disease, and rape and sexual violence. Those conflicts are depriving men, women and children of their right to a prosperous life and a future of hope. A focus on fragile States will remain necessary.

The civil war raging in Syria for more than two years must come to an end. Those responsible for systematic violations of human rights, including those responsible for the use of chemical weapons, must be held accountable. The conflict must, however, be handled within the United Nations system. There is an

urgent need for a political solution to the conflict and a transition to a free and democratic Syria.

It is time for a new era in which countries in conflict can join the rest of the world in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. For that, we need a strong United Nations and a well-functioning Security Council.

I want to thank all peacekeepers and peacebuilders of the United Nations for their efforts and sacrifices. Sweden will further contribute to and participate in those efforts. We also give strong support to the areas of democracy, human rights and freedom from violence. Sweden is one of the biggest donors to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. We are trying to help out through humanitarian assistance for the crisis in Syria and by receiving refugees. This year alone we have welcomed 16,000 Syrians to Sweden.

Let me mention a third area that we need to focus on in the post-2015 development agenda, namely, trade and competition. Protectionism is very expensive. It raises prices and lowers standards of living. Let me illustrate this by a striking example. According to the World Trade Organization, consumers and Governments in rich countries pay \$350 billion per year supporting agriculture. That is enough to fly their 41 million dairy cows first class around the world.

Allow me to mention some other, maybe more down-to-earth, examples. When competition was introduced for mobile phone companies in some countries, the cost of calls fell by 30 to 50 per cent. Studies show that lowering service barriers by one third under the Doha Development Agenda would raise developing countries' incomes by approximately \$60 billion. Unfortunately, progress in the Doha Development Round has been slow. But the good news is that many countries are doing what they can to liberalize trade through regional agreements instead, because they know that that will benefit their economies.

The two free trade agreements now being negotiated — between the United States and the European Union and between the United States and a number of countries in Asia and Latin America — will cover two-thirds of world trade. That will create jobs and growth. Sweden is one of the countries within the European Union working the hardest to get the transatlantic deal in place. Freer trade and openness also mean that new impulses and trends affect a country faster. That puts pressure on reform in countries and

companies to meet global competition. Sweden is an example of that.

Trade has made it possible for us to double our economic output. Our companies have learned that they must consistently take on new trends and technology in order to stay competitive. If they did not, our gross domestic product and standard of living would fall significantly. Let us also remember how important trade is for peaceful relations. To put it very simply, no sales person wants to start a war against a country where he has customers. That would be a bad business strategy, so trade promotes peace.

Climate change continues, leading to extreme weather conditions in many parts of the world and the loss of lives and very high costs for society. The European Union's and the United States' emissions are falling, but overall global emissions are increasing. That is why all countries need to contribute to the international efforts in the fight against climate change. The European Union and the United States cannot solve the problem of climate change on their own, when they only account for around 25 per cent of today's emissions.

The international structures we have to deal with climate change commitments are unfortunately obsolete. We need a new agreement that ensures that all major emitters make commitments that are sufficient so that we can reach the two-degree target.

It is our duty to strive for a society and a world that gives everybody the possibility to create his or her own future. That is what every woman, every man, every girl and every boy deserves. Let me underline that it is in the very interests of every country, because people are the real wealth of a nation. The Millennium Development Goals have been very successful in coordinating and focusing our efforts on the areas where progress has been most urgent. Now we need to prepare for tomorrow. In doing that, Sweden is convinced, the United Nations will play a very important role. We will continue our strong support to the Organization.

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

Mr. Fredrik Reinfeldt, Prime Minister of Sweden, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

The meeting rose at 9.25 p.m.