



# General Assembly

Sixty-ninth session

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New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Kutesa ..... (Uganda)

*The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.*

## Agenda item 8 (continued)

### General debate

**The President:** I now call on His Excellency Mr. Winston Lackin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Suriname.

**Mr. Lackin** (Suriname): My statement today is made on behalf of the President of the Republic of Suriname, His Excellency Mr. Desiré Delano Bouterse.

We want you, Mr. President, to be assured of our support in these turbulent times of international politics. Your task will not be easy. We pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador John Ashe, for his excellent leadership during the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

We also want to express our support to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his endeavour to steer the United Nations vessel through the rough waters of shifting economic forces and rapidly changing political arenas, in an environment where violence and intolerance, whatever the root causes, seem to prevail. Although interdependence, self-determination and non-interference should be the guiding principles of the international community, we are faced with an incredible desire for domination in the name of undefined, so-called national interests.

We have examined some of the arguments used to invade Grenada and compared those to the arguments used to justify the military involvement in Ukraine.

What striking similarity! We have tried hard to understand the value of a referendum in the case of the Malvinas and the value given to the referendum held in Crimea.

States with media, military and economic vulnerabilities such as ours cannot but feel extremely uncomfortable with the custom-made slogans, devoid of any genuine moral value, that are imposed on our minds as precooked recipes.

We express our sincere wish that the United Nations should develop the muscles needed to restructure and democratize itself and move away from restrictive veto powers towards inclusive legal institutions that can effectively apply and monitor adherence to the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. We see that as the only way forward to achieve the ultimate goal of sustainable development, even for the smallest members of the international community. The real proof of civilization is total respect for the seemingly insignificant members of any social entity. Let us, then, become truly civilized.

In sharp contradiction to the turbulence and challenges mentioned, we want to draw the attention of this body to the Latin America and Caribbean region, which is, relatively speaking, a unique area of peace and tranquillity. It is important to answer the question: how is that region showing us the way forward? From a military point of view, it is an area of the world that is nuclear-free. The Treaty of Tlatelolco has proved to be an effective instrument to monitor and maintain Latin America and the Caribbean free from nuclear threat.

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Furthermore, it is important to note that, at the political level, interdependence has become the driving force of both multilateral and bilateral relations. Small and large States alike interact on the basis of established treaties and principles of mutual respect, mutual concern and mutual benefit. The Union of South American Nations, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in particular have played an important role so far in furthering that cause.

The third, and certainly the most important, factor that ensures durable peace in our region is the implementation of people-oriented socioeconomic policies. We have seen such programmes developed in Brazil, Bolivia, Chile and my own country, Suriname, to mention a few. The emphasis on policies and programmes related to health care, education, youth and sports is rapidly changing the image of Latin America and the Caribbean. We invite the world community to take note of those positive realities in our functioning democracies, as they translate into regional integration processes with nothing less than a bright future.

Looking at the positive picture at the national level, we must also address the challenges of dealing with all forms of transnational organized crime in the Latin American and Caribbean region. Suriname fully supports all initiatives deployed to face those challenges.

Having said that, we must assess two areas of concern that our nation faces today. Economically speaking, the latest International Monetary Fund report indicates that Suriname has reached an average per capita income of approximately \$10,000. Our gross domestic product (GDP) is primarily based on the mining sector, where gold mining and the production of crude oil and derivatives represent 33 per cent of our national output. That sector is responsible for 90 per cent of our total export revenue.

We are aware of the fact that the nature of that sector is extractive and, as such, is subject to depletion. In order to ensure the sustainability of the economy, the Government has developed a policy to ensure that the revenue from the non-renewable sectors is invested in developing human capital to ensure the full fruition of the capacities of the Surinamese people in their own interest and the interest of the entire nation.

To ensure that that policy will materialize, President Boutrose announced, at the outset of his term,

a social contract that has been given substance in the following programme: a legal framework guaranteeing a minimum wage, health-care coverage for every citizen and pensions for the elderly.

In the past four years, Suriname has implemented new programmes to promote advanced education at all levels, including after-school care programmes for primary and secondary students and scholarship programmes for higher education. Furthermore, legal instruments are being prepared as part of a full safety net to prevent dropouts.

In the same vein, various programmes have been developed in close cooperation with other CARICOM States to combat the incidence of non-communicable diseases. Our ultimate goal is for those initiatives to become part and parcel of future programmes of the Pan American Health Organization and the World Health Organization.

With regard to the imminent threat of the spread of the Ebola virus, the Government has entered into close consultations with neighbouring countries, the subregion and the global community to design and implement programmes to coordinate and cooperate effectively so as to prevent the spread of the deadly virus.

As a matter of course, we can sustain those initiatives only within appropriate fiscal discipline. We are forced to strike the right balance between economic growth, socioeconomic concerns and respect for our natural environment. In doing so, Suriname has been classified as an upper-middle-income country with an improved ranking in the 2013 United Nations Development Programme *Human Development Report*.

However, that classification limits our access to concessional financing, which hampers our aspirations and endeavours to sustain the achievements I have mentioned. Honestly speaking, we are experiencing that decision as a punishment for doing well. A classification solely based on statistics, and not on our socioeconomic reality, will never serve the objective of sustainable development based on human development. We call upon the multilateral and bilateral funding institutions to adapt their policies to that approach.

There is another area of prime interest to which we want to draw attention. Suriname's territory is more than 90 per cent covered with forest, which annually absorbs 8.8 million tons of carbon, while our annual emissions are 7 million tons of carbon. Suriname

thus absorbs 1.8 million tons of carbon more than it emits on a yearly basis. While many countries work towards becoming carbon-neutral, Suriname already qualifies as a carbon-negative country. With an annual deforestation rate of 0.02 per cent and having dedicated 13 per cent of the national territory to preserving and protecting vulnerable ecosystems, we are generating a national and global asset.

In stark contrast to those positive realities, Suriname has, paradoxically, become one of the most vulnerable countries in the world as a result of climate change. At the recently held 2014 Climate Summit, Suriname indicated that sea-level rise will, *inter alia*, severely damage or destroy our coastal ecosystems, including most of our arable land; damage or destroy over 40 per cent of our GDP; damage or destroy the homes of over 80 per cent of our population; damage or destroy our world heritage-designated capital; and endanger the way of life of most of the people, who represent our cultural heritage and live along the coastal and river shores. Changes in rainfall patterns and rising temperatures are already leading to increased health risks and associated costs, decreased hydropower production and reduced access to river pathways.

The serious absence of international commitment to supporting us so that we can take the proper measures to avoid the impending disasters is disturbing, and we have therefore been obliged to join with similar, vulnerable countries with strong environmentally active frameworks and a history of respect for ecosystems. We call on the rest of the world both to become more proactive in support of the measures that we are compelled to take, and to ensure that the relevant issues have a place on the international agenda.

Suriname would like to emphasize the need for a fundamental restructuring of the United Nations, with the aim of making our Organization better equipped to deal effectively with the international issues at hand. We would like once again to point to the experience of Latin America and the Caribbean as a shining example of how durable peace can be achieved. In that context, the economic blockade of the Cuban people should be considered to be a regional anomaly that must end now.

The role of women in achieving sustainable development, at the level of both civil society and political leadership, has proved an important factor in creating an atmosphere of tolerance in which we choose to use dialogue rather than resort to violence. We must continue to encourage our women — who make up more

than half of the world's population — to persist in their struggle for participation and inclusion and to share the burden of responsibility for peace and sustainable development.

In conclusion, Suriname is ready and willing to play its humble part in helping to find workable solutions to the global issues at hand. We reiterate our commitment to all human rights and to a policy of interacting responsibly with the natural environment in our quest for sustained economic growth, as well as our commitment to peace through dialogue.

**The President:** I now call on His Excellency Mr. Osman Mohammed Saleh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea.

**Mr. Saleh (Eritrea):** At the outset, Mr. President, I would like to warmly congratulate you, my brother, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, with its theme of “Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda”, which is both timely and appropriate. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador John Ashe, for a job well done.

Next year, 2015, marks the seventieth anniversary of the birth of the United Nations. The world has changed almost beyond recognition since 1945. Originally founded by 50 Members, the United Nations has seen three times that many nations join it in the intervening years. The demographic, economic, political and cultural realities of its Member States bear little resemblance to those of the past. The challenges of the time and the demands of the age are vastly different from those of the period following the Second World War, or even the past few decades. Change, rapid transformative change, is the order of the day. And yet the United Nations, the Organization that ostensibly represents the entire community of nations and the peoples of the world, remains stuck in the past. It is still thoroughly dominated by a few countries and has marginalized the overwhelming majority. Its institutions and structures are an anachronism in the modern world.

More crucially, the United Nations has fallen far short of playing the primary role in pursuing the fundamental objectives for which it was established. The maintenance of global peace and security was and remains one of its cardinal goals, and yet conflicts and wars — even simultaneous and multiple wars — have become a constant feature of our lives. Many of them

are waged in total disregard for the United Nations and its mandate. In Africa — from the East to the West and in the North — in the Middle East and on every other continent, extremism, terrorism and all forms of bigotry and intolerance are spreading. The record on other key principles and aspirations is also far from satisfactory, whether the issue is ending poverty, ensuring sustainable development, advancing human rights, preventing epidemics, respecting sovereignty and non-interference in the affairs of others, ensuring justice and equality or protecting the environment. The world is unquestionably facing a very grave and dangerous situation. To paraphrase the words of the Secretary-General, this is a terrible time “for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations” (*A/69/PV.6, p. 1*).

In order to restore the relevance and credibility of the United Nations — to turn it into a truly representative institution of all nations and peoples, where all nations, no matter how big or small, have respect for its Charter and for international law, and where all nations contribute, each according to its capabilities, to peace and security and to the welfare of people and the planet — it is imperative that we fundamentally restructure, democratize and rebuild the United Nations. The crucial and pressing need for that has been clear for several decades now, starting in the height of the Cold War and continuing through the past 25 years, during which time the world has lived through an unsuccessful attempt to impose a unipolar world. Consequently, United Nations reform has formally been on the agenda for close to two decades. No country has openly disputed the importance of restructuring the United Nations, and many workable proposals have been presented and thoroughly discussed. Yet we are no nearer to change, because of the stubborn and cynical opposition of the dominant Powers.

Given the determination of those Powers to maintain their control of the United Nations and its unrepresentative and undemocratic character, the chances of genuine change in the next few years are indeed slender. It is therefore vital that all nations and peoples — as well as the political and social forces that stand for peace, independence, international law, justice, equity and sustainable development — forge a common front. They must consolidate partnerships and coordinate their efforts on the basis of a broad common strategy to stem the threats we face and to build a better and more equitable world, while at the

same time containing without let-up the campaign to restructure the United Nations, eradicate poverty, prevent conflicts, address global warming and fight all forms of terrorism and extremism.

Eritrea’s perspective on the need for an overhaul of the United Nations system is informed not only by the shared experience of the majority of nations, but also by its own history. The international system and the dominant Powers have dealt the Eritrean people a raw deal. First, they were denied the right to decolonization and independence to satisfy what the then United States Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in 1952 stated were in “the strategic interests of the United States in the Red Sea basin”. When the Eritrean people embarked on a 30-year armed struggle for national liberation and independence in order to advance their geopolitical interests in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea region, the super-Powers supplied arms and advisers to their client States to crush Eritrea’s right to self-determination, and the United Nations ignored their plight. Even after achieving independence at a tremendous human and material cost and joining the community of nations, the Eritrean people are still victimized. The United Nations once again has failed to uphold an internationally endorsed, final and binding arbitration of the border decision. In fact, to add insult to injury, it has imposed unjust sanctions on their country.

That travesty of justice has caused harm not only to Eritrea but to the entire Horn of Africa, which is now mired in endemic conflicts and instability. Once again and from this rostrum, Eritrea calls on the United Nations and the Security Council to redress that injustice by taking concrete measures to end the illegal occupation of sovereign Eritrean territory. The unjust and unfair sanctions, for which everyone now agrees that there was and continues to be no justification, must also unconditionally and immediately be lifted. Such long-overdue measures would contribute positively to the tireless efforts of the Eritrean people to build their nation, maintain peace, stability and harmony, improve their livelihood, lay the foundations of a strong, equitable national economy, create opportunities for youth and women, and advance regional and international engagement and cooperation.

**The President:** I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Yousef Bin Al-Alawi Bin Abdulla, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman.

**Mr. Abdulla** (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is our pleasure, Mr. President, to congratulate you and your friendly country, the Republic of Uganda, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. We are confident that your vast experience in diplomacy will steer the work of this session to a successful outcome. I would also like to assure you of the cooperation of the delegation of the Sultanate of Oman in working with you towards achieving the cherished goals and objectives of the current session, at the forefront of which is enhancing international peace and security.

We would also like to take this opportunity to express our thanks and appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. John William Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda, for the excellent manner in which he conducted the work of the previous session. We would also like to reiterate our confidence in Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his tireless efforts to enhance the role of the United Nations and improve its working methods so that it can respond in the best possible way to the hopes and aspirations of Member States.

The Middle East is going through a difficult phase as it grapples with several crises due to a lack of international consensus. We believe that the overall situation in the Middle East requires a unified position to solve the crises, the most immediate of which is the Palestinian question, which no doubt lies at the core of regional conflicts. We note that while the Palestinians have consistently shown willingness to enter into a genuine partnership in peace with Israel, based on the concept of two States living side by side in peace, Israel has not demonstrated responsible cooperation as it continues to resort to military force as a tool to maintain its security.

Security and stability cannot be achieved through the use of excessive force and the insistence on inflicting heavy loss of life, injuries and destruction on the largest possible scale. The path to achieving the security and stability that underpins economic and social recovery can be realized only through the peaceful partnership of the Palestinians and Israelis. We now believe that there is a chance to achieve that objective, following the ceasefire agreement reached between the two sides, Palestinian and Israeli, in the Gaza Strip. We stress the importance of the two sides sticking to the agreement in words and in actions and avoiding violations under any justification or pretext. In that respect, we call upon Palestinians and Israelis alike to resume negotiations in

order to reach a just and comprehensive settlement that would provide peace and security for Israel and that responds to the hopes and aspirations of the Palestinian people to regain their inalienable rights.

The continuation of violence in the brotherly Syrian Arab Republic and its serious implications for regional and international peace and security require us to redouble our efforts to encourage the Syrian Government and the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces to return to the negotiating table, based on the Geneva communiqué. The two parties should approach negotiations in a positive manner by focusing on areas of consensus and avoiding negative aspects and positions with the aim of saving the Syrian people and sparing them further suffering and tragedies.

While we applaud the role of humanitarian relief organizations and agencies in helping the Syrian people overcome their prolonged ordeal, we also call for intensified efforts to facilitate access by relief agencies to all areas inside and outside Syria to provide the necessary humanitarian assistance to the affected people. In that respect, we look forward in confidence to the efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, to encourage Syrian and international stakeholders to reconvene the Geneva conference. We believe that the current situation is more conducive than ever to this effort.

My country appreciates the efforts of the President of Yemen, Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi, to achieve security and stability there. We welcome the agreement of peace and partnership signed by President Hadi and the political powers in Yemen, and we call upon all political partners, particularly Ansar Allah, to comply with its provisions. We call on all political entities in Yemen to renounce violence and uphold the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference as the best available road map for resolving the current crisis. We hope that the Yemeni presidency will take the remaining important steps in the Comprehensive National Dialogue, most notably the referendum on a new constitution that would secure the rights and interests of all Yemenis.

The Sultanate of Oman is firm in its principled position regarding the condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, regardless of motives and justifications. In that context, we condemn the terrorist acts perpetrated by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). We support the recommendations

of the Jeddah and Paris conferences, and the steps the international community is taking to extend Iraqi authority over all ISIL-controlled areas. We emphasize the importance for the international community to stand united in freeing the Middle East from all forms of violence, extremism and terrorism. We also welcome Security Council resolution 2178 (2014) on the threats to international peace and security posed by terrorist acts.

There are a number of ways to prevent violence and extremism. These include the consolidation of good governance and sustainable development, which would allow all sectors of society — especially young people, who constitute two thirds of the populations of Arab countries — to work, innovate and actively participate in the decisions affecting their daily life. On this basis, the Sultanate of Oman has established a complete and interlinked system encompassing the principles of good governance, including councils and institutions to protect society and young people and ensure their participation in the development process.

In that regard, my country has established the Council of Oman, composed of two chambers, the Shura Consultative Council and the State Council. It has also created municipal councils, whose members are popularly elected, to oversee local issues that affect the lives of the people in the economic, social, educational and other fields, based on the principles of good governance and sustainable development.

The Sultanate of Oman has also come a long way in its national development. It has established an independent judiciary, which has become a key element of the development and modernization process. It has also established the Public Prosecution Office, which stands at the apex of the independent judicial system in the Sultanate, as well as the State Audit Institution, whose role is to provide a secure and proper administration to ensure better management of public properties.

It has also redoubled its efforts to fight corruption and organized crime. In that respect, and in the context of its efforts to protect the country and its citizens, the Sultanate has acceded to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the three protocols thereto. This system of institutions is based on effective public participation in the policies adopted and implemented by the Government in order to enhance good governance in the framework of a

modern civic State, based on institutions, in order to achieve security, stability and sustainable development.

Regarding regional peace and security, my country supports the call for an international conference to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, in line with the resolution adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. My country calls upon States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, especially the depository States, to take the necessary measures to achieve this goal in order to spare the region the dangers of tension, and to avoid confrontation.

In closing, we would like emphasize that the Sultanate of Oman has come a long way towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals in all fields and within the specific timelines set by the United Nations.

**The President:** I now call on His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Makei, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

**Mr. Makei (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*):** Humankind has only one past, but many options for the future. History is such that we know only the consequences of those actions that have occurred, but not those that did not take place. What would our world look like today if, a century ago, that memorable shot had not been fired in Sarajevo, irrevocably changing the course of history? That shot set in motion a dynamic that has yet to be fully explained. For some key European countries the question of honour contained in that shot overrode both common sense and all other considerations. Millions paid with their lives for that hypocritical honour. Unfortunately, the tragedy did not end there, because the lessons of the First World War have not been learned. As a consequence, other global carnage has claimed even more human lives. Thus, the shot in Sarajevo marked nothing more than the onset of the bloodiest period in the history of humankind.

For Belarus, this period was also the bloodiest in the history of its people. Located at the centre of Europe, in the very crucible of geopolitical interests, Belarus lost a third of its population during the Second World War. Even today, with 20 years of unprecedented successful and stable development, we have not recovered from that immense loss, either physically, psychologically or emotionally.

This year, as the Republic of Belarus celebrates the seventieth anniversary of its liberation from the Fascist occupiers, is very important and symbolic for the country. Belarus remembers all the victims who paid with their lives for the freedom of the nation. Against this background, we do not understand and strongly condemn some attempts to revise the outcome of the Second World War, downplaying the significance of the Great Victory or desecrating the memory of the fallen heroes. The world community must not allow this to happen. Indeed, the verdict of history is unequivocal; if humankind fails to learn the lessons from past tragedies, we are bound to repeat them in the future.

Let us ponder the the immediate and distant future, and indeed the present, as we mark the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. What do current global trends tell us about the future? Undoubtedly, a multitude of factors determine the dynamics of contemporary global politics. We would identify the resistance of the majority of the world's population to the imposition of external influences as one of the key factors. Indeed, much like in the past, the mighty of the world persist in believing that only their vision and their development model stand as universal. Therefore, they do not ask others whether they like or dislike, for instance, so-called liberal democracy or the Washington consensus. Others are just forced to choose — either they accept our recipes or face the consequences, such as threats, sanctions and colour revolutions.

To be honest, we — that is, the majority — have grown accustomed to alien political and economic models being foisted upon us. We know what is going here. Someone wants our nations to feed transnational corporate capital, not ourselves. If we resist, we are punished. The pretext is always contrived — alleged violations of human rights by unruly States. Having been subjected to external attacks for many years, countries such as Belarus, Cuba, Iran and Venezuela feel such pressure especially acutely.

No less dangerous, however, is another factor. Similar attempts at imposition have been made recently against our identity. Indeed, some have been doing their best to impose on us extraneous cultural preferences. For example, we are being forced to renounce the values of a traditional family and recognize instead the diversity of that institution's forms. In other words, they are striving to strip us of our own soul. That may be just another way to subdue those who dissent against capital by turning them into soulless slaves.

We are convinced that nothing will come out of it, however. The reason why the world is developing is because it is diverse. It is diversity itself that gives rise to healthy competition and creativity, which, in turn, drive human progress. Do we need uniformity and the ensuing trivial, soulless world? Of course we do not. In that regard, I appeal to those who persist in compelling others to do something that they find alien and unpleasant to give up their meaningless and futile policy. It is a road to nowhere. Their efforts only divide us. We have too many problems on our plate that require us to be united.

Today, two approaches determine international relations: the ability to effect change and the ability to stand in its way. Indeed, on the one hand, one or even several countries can easily paralyse the international community in its activities; on the other, no State or group of States, however powerful, can alter the status quo without cooperating with the rest of the world. That is the paradox of globalization. We have become too intertwined and too interdependent. Sadly, the same holds true for global challenges — they too have become intertwined. It is impossible in today's world to succeed in one area without making headway in others. There is, for instance, no simple solution to the threat of human trafficking unless we effectively tackle the problem of poverty.

In short, strategies and policies to counter all contemporary threats will be effective only if they are comprehensive in scope and focus. Let us be realistic and acknowledge that we will never solve the world's problems all at once. Our collective goal must therefore be to reduce the extent of the threat they pose to society through our constant, unswerving attention.

It is precisely that attitude that must underpin our collective effort aimed at developing the post-2015 United Nations development agenda. That agenda should be both comprehensive and realistic. Its main goal should be to make globalization more even and equitable than it has been up to now. When people in different countries take to the streets to protest against globalization, they are not calling for a return to parochial nationalism. Rather, they seek a strengthened globalization; they want to make it sustainable and they want it to result in a win-win situation.

Rising inequality in the world is the biggest scourge. We face a paradox. Having recently made significant progress in strengthening various forms of equality, such as gender, race and ethnic equality,

we are seeing a stubborn rise in economic inequality. The international community must do whatever it takes to reverse that trend. Otherwise, we will not eradicate poverty. Climate change is another major challenge. It is inextricably linked to such issues as energy consumption, food security and water resources. We need to fully reflect this complex issue in the future agenda.

To be sure, many other sectors must also be represented in this comprehensive document. In that context, Belarus attaches particular importance to the struggle against human trafficking and the strengthening of the institution of the traditional family. In the light of the significant and recognized advances we have made at the national level, we propose for the consideration of our partners specific, effective, long-term solutions to those vital issues at the global level.

We need to be thinking right now about how we will implement the future agenda. We are certain that it should be carried out through the tool of thematic global partnerships. In this day and age of multiple actors and multiple threats, only effective partnerships among States, international organizations, civil society and the private sector can deliver success in addressing global problems. The State must, of course, remain the central pillar among all other partners. Moreover, what is needed is a powerful and responsible State. Only such a State can achieve the long-term complex goals arising from the post-2015 United Nations development agenda.

A powerful State often frightens people on the grounds that it may potentially abuse its power and harm the people. But let us take us a look at the other side of that coin. How do people feel when they do not have a powerful State, when there is no one to protect them from resulting chaos, lawlessness and excess? I believe that both the people of Belarus and their neighbours can soberly assess arguments like these and draw the right conclusions. It is no wonder, then, that the world community selects stable and internally coherent States like Belarus to serve as a stage for addressing acute international crises. The people of Belarus very much value stability and successful development. We are convinced that those factors make us a fully responsible stakeholder in the implementation of the future global development agenda.

The United Nations should play a special role in implementing the agenda. It is this universal forum where Governments and their partners seek to implement

it. We are convinced that the Organization will be able to cope with the task at hand if it successfully adjusts to the constantly emerging realities of life. The issue of the reform and revitalization of the United Nations is as acute as ever, not just in its traditional institutional dimension but also in conceptual terms.

As far as the latter is concerned, we believe it necessary to give a serious thought to two problems. First, we need to look for practical solutions to numerous situations where certain United Nations principles contradict each other. Secondly, there is the problem of negative consequences arising from purportedly benign international activities that are often undertaken under a United Nations mandate. Far too often, those activities seek to advance someone's political goals, and the sponsors care little for the consequences, including chaos, lawlessness and refugee flows. Iraqi Kurdistan, for instance, stands as a typical example of such egotistical policy when it comes to the issue of refugees. We hope that the issue will be tackled ahead of the next United Nations global summit.

As we look to the future, we would all be well advised to take to heart the words of the great internationalist who lived during the First World War, American President Woodrow Wilson, who said: "The interests of all nations are our own also. We are partners with the rest. What affects mankind is inevitably our affair."

**The President:** I now call on His Excellency Mr. Wilfred Elrington, Attorney General and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Belize.

**Mr. Elrington (Belize):** On behalf of the Government and the people of Belize, it is with great pleasure that I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I would also like to take this opportunity to register Belize's thanks to your predecessor, our own son of Caribbean soil, Mr. John Ashe, who performed his duties superbly this past year and leaves the Organization a legacy of lasting value.

Mr. President, your chosen theme for this year's session, "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda", is ambitious, hopeful and challenging, and Belize commends you on its selection. In the next 12 months, we will closely monitor and contribute to its crafting and evolution. The stated goal of the new agenda is to promote sustained and inclusive economic growth, safeguard the future of our planet and lead to the

achievement of sustainable development, with the eradication of poverty and hunger at its core.

Belize views those outcomes as more than aspirational. For us they are imperatives. Failure to attain them will have dire consequences for our nation and people. They call for a transformative mobilization of our societies at the organic level. For that to happen, we must inspire and equip every actor in our societies with the requisite tools for tackling their responsibilities and partaking in the dividends of sustainable economic growth with equity and social justice.

The experiences we have had in seeking to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, however, make us less than sanguine that we will have more success with the post-2015 development agenda than we have had in meeting the Millennium Development Goals. We are mindful that the support that some developed Member States pledged to provide for our efforts with the Millennium Development Goals did not materialize in the amounts that were pledged and needed. On the whole, small countries like my own are disadvantaged by their lack of the resources and human, financial, scientific and technological capacities that are prerequisites for succeeding with such ambitious and complex initiatives. Without cooperation and support for addressing those needs from the developed States Members of the United Nations and other multilateral agencies and, crucially, through reform of the policies of the international financial institutions, Belize's attainment of the post-2015 development agenda will be severely hampered.

Looking to the future, Belize welcomes and supports the Assembly's adoption at its sixty-eighth session of resolution 68/304, "Towards the establishment of a multilateral legal framework for sovereign debt restructuring processes", and hopes it will result in a robust multilateral treaty that will increase the efficiency, stability and predictability of the international financial system. In the wake of the world's financial meltdown in 2008 and the many disasters that have occurred around the world over the past six years, necessitating large outlays of donor funding to assist the victims of such disasters, there are unmistakable and troubling indications of donor fatigue and a tendency towards isolationism and self-centredness in our global environment, a trend that does not augur well for financing the post-2015 development agenda.

Belize nonetheless remains cautiously optimistic. We are encouraged by the pilgrimage to this Hall over the past week of world leaders from nations large and small, friends and foes, allies and enemies. Each spoke from this very rostrum, and each in essence voluntarily reaffirmed the conviction of their respective countries that collective action under these United Nations offers our world the only true hope of dealing successfully with the myriad problems currently afflicting mankind, whether climate change, the dreaded Ebola virus, religious fanaticism, or persistent poverty and underdevelopment.

Of those maladies, Belize regards climate change as the most pernicious. While a global consensus seems to have finally been reached as to the causes, as well as the cure, for this apocalyptic phenomenon, the political will of the major emitters to take immediate, concerted and decisive action to combat it is still absent. Indeed, just as our international community was grievously dilatory in taking prompt collective action to prevent the genocidal massacre in Rwanda or the current spread of the Ebola virus in Africa, so the major emitters are being dilatory in confronting the challenges of climate change. It is evident that the threats that epidemics, pandemics and terrorism pose to our planet and humankind pale into insignificance when compared to the existential threats of climate change. Furthermore, it is equally evident that it would not be hyperbole to opine that time is not on our side. Horrendous devastation — caused by extreme droughts, huge conflagrations in our forests, intense rainfall, floods, hurricanes, melting snowcaps, warming seas and sea-level rises, and an awful and frightening increase in pestilence and diseases — is already occurring around the world.

Among other things, my own country, Belize, is already experiencing coral bleaching, coastal erosion and flooding, and it is forecast that next year the entire country will be visited by severe drought. The cost of mitigating the damage that is already being done to my country and of adapting to climate change is prohibitive. It is time for the large competing emitters to put aside their mutual suspicion and commit to capping global warming at 1.5°C above preindustrial levels. While my country appreciates the pledges that have already been made to the Green Climate Fund, the amount of money needed to address global warming is exponentially larger. We do, however, remain optimistic that a robust climate change agreement will be signed in Paris in 2015.

The development and security needs of nations large and small in this era of globalization have hastened the imperative of regional integration. Indeed, today it is virtually impossible for any nation to function successfully on its own in any sphere of activity. In my own country's case, the measure of development and security we have enjoyed over the past 33 years, since gaining independence, must be credited in large part to the good relations we continue to have with our partners in the various regional integration groupings to which we belong and the excellent cooperation programmes we share with our bilateral and multilateral partners, prominent among which are the various agencies of the United Nations. However, even as we acknowledge with gratitude the tremendous contributions of our partners to our nation's security and development, our Government is ever mindful that the primary responsibility for it rests with our Government and people. In that conviction, and given our limited resources, our Government has had to prioritize its areas of intervention. It has concentrated on providing our nation's basic needs — security, housing, education, health care, employment and wealth generation.

Highest on that list of priorities is the importance of safeguarding our country's security and territorial integrity. Successive Belizean Governments have invested heavily in efforts to bring about a peaceful resolution of the Guatemalan territorial claim over our country. Our Government is unalterably wedded to the peaceful resolution of this claim by adjudication at the International Court of Justice. We have enlisted the support of all our international friends and partners for that decision, and the Guatemalan Government is also committed, through the Special Agreement of 2008, to the resolution of the claim by the International Court of Justice.

We are convinced that wars and rumours of war and any kind of international conflict will only bring grief and cause pain, hardship and devastation. That is why we keep working assiduously with our neighbours in the region to cement friendly, peaceful, collaborative and productive relations in order to achieve development for our people. Belize is very pleased by the recent designation by the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States of our entire region as a zone of peace. We also welcome your own call, Mr. President, for the intensification of efforts towards the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Domestically, Belize has enjoyed uninterrupted peace and harmony for the past 33 years. Our Government acts with alacrity and sensitivity to defuse any situation that has the potential for civil strife and disorder, and we invest substantially in our security forces, in terms of both capacity-building and equipment and transportation. In our quest for wealth generation, job creation and the attainment of sustainable development, Belize is pursuing, inter alia, the prescriptions articulated in our Horizon 2030 national development plan. In that regard, our Government is working in close concert with economic development experts from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and other institutions.

Among the initiatives we are pursuing is a comprehensive programme of infrastructure works throughout our country, which includes the upgrading and expanding of major highways; the paving of streets in cities and towns; the installation of new drains in flood-prone areas; and the construction and upgrading of sporting stadiums and recreational community buildings. Those programmes are being executed at a total cost of \$100 million.

Thanks to the collaboration of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the tremendous support we receive through the Petrocaribe initiative, our Government has been able to invest in infrastructure and social programmes to the benefit of all our citizens. Our Government is cognizant of the importance of good infrastructure to our economic development. Belize is a major exporter of primary products. All our agri-products are transported by road from the farms to the factories and then to the sea ports for export. The aquaculture products and petroleum products we produce are also transported by road to our seaports. All our archaeological sites and many of our tourist resorts are also only accessible by road. It is the expectation of our Government that, with the enhancement of our network of streets and roads, our country will become more attractive to both residents and foreigners, be they tourists or investors, and that this will translate into a rapid expansion in productivity, economic growth and wealth generation.

With a view to ensuring that as many Belizean workers as possible obtain employment in the infrastructure works being carried out, the Government has requested all contractors who successfully bid for the works to utilize manual labour wherever it is

feasible to do so. The works are providing employment for many Belizean youth, both male and female.

*Ms. Rambally (Saint Lucia), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

As a further initiative to stimulate economic development, our Government inaugurated the very first National Bank of Belize one year ago. The Bank started out modestly. It commenced operations by providing loans primarily to finance the acquisition of homes for middle-class Belizeans. Though the Bank is limited in its offerings, its establishment has resulted in an immediate and dramatic reduction of the interest rates being charged by commercial banks in the country on similar loans. That is a welcome development and a goal that our Government had tried for many years to achieve without success. The new Bank is rapidly building up its customer base and has now started to accept deposits. The prospect for young employed Belizeans to own their own homes at affordable mortgages is now greatly increased. Very many Belizeans are already landed property owners, thanks to an ongoing programme by successive Governments to make land available to them at minimal costs.

Our Government is also aggressively promoting foreign direct investment. We have successfully attracted investment in petroleum extraction, agribusiness, renewable energy, tourism and business processes outsourcing.

On our Independence Day, 21 September 1981, Belize inherited an educational system that was designed to educate citizens for the needs of a remote colonial outpost in the industrial age, the primary economic activity of which was the export of timber and sugar. We have since been making strenuous efforts to transform that system into one capable of satisfying the needs of an independent nation in this, the twenty-first century and the information age. That is proving to be a task fraught with great difficulty. It is also an exceedingly expensive one. Our Government currently spends 26 per cent of our national budget on the education sector. However, that is not nearly enough to cover the cost of the training and education needs of our young nation. We appreciate, however, that the quality of our workforce will be a great determinant in our future development, and that we must therefore do all in our power to make our workforce the very best it can be regardless of the cost and without heeding the sacrifices we will undoubtedly have to make.

To that end, our Government is engaged in a number of initiatives aimed at training and educating our population. Among those is a comprehensive teacher training and certification programme. We are resolved to have only teachers trained in pedagogy and in the various subject areas that they are expected to teach in our classrooms. Simultaneously, we are assiduously expanding our education coverage from the pre-primary to the tertiary levels. Indeed, more young people today than at any other time in the history of our nation can afford to obtain an education and can find space in an educational institution near their homes. We are also placing increasing emphasis on vocational and technical education and training and on the teaching of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. We are in the planning stage for a new institute of science and technology, and we are expanding the presence of centres for employment training across the country.

Because we possess only two young universities, we make strenuous efforts to gain access to universities and other advanced educational institutions abroad for those of our students who successfully attain the matriculation requirements for entry into those institutions. We have been very successful in that initiative. The vast majority of our students attend those universities on scholarships, thanks to the generosity of our cooperation partners. Every Belizean student, male and female, who attains the requisite matriculation requirement has an equal opportunity to win a scholarship. Current data indicate that our female students are much more successful at winning scholarships than their male counterparts. Our initiatives in the education sector are contributing greatly to the increase in the competence of our workforce at every level, thereby enabling it to produce goods and services that are competitive in the world markets. In order to continue our efforts in that regard, we will need the continued support of the United Nations and its formidable network.

Belize currently spends over 13 per cent of the national budget on the health sector. We seek to develop and maintain a healthy and productive population. To that end, our Government is expanding school food programmes countrywide and programmes that allow parents of low-income families to purchase food items at concessionary rates. We know that regular, balanced meals are vital to the health of our population and that it is much less expensive to keep our population healthy than it is to cure it when it is ill.

We continue to strengthen our primary health-care network. We continuously upgrade facilities in our hospital and clinics with modern diagnostic equipment. Our flagship public hospital is now benefiting from a significant technological upgrade. We also recently inaugurated a brand-new neonatal wing at that hospital. For the first time in our country's history, a state-of-the-art facility to cater exclusively to the health needs of our physically challenged children has been built. This facility is the brainchild of the wife of our Prime Minister, who serves as a Special Envoy for Women and Children in Belize. She spearheaded both the raising of the finances for its construction and the supervision of its construction.

We take this opportunity also to applaud the efforts of our Special Envoy who, just a few days ago, hosted one of the largest gatherings of First Ladies and Spouses of Heads of State and Government on the subject of the empowerment of women and girls, here at the United Nations. That special event was a universal call to action on the financial health of women and girls based on the Beijing Platform for Action. We call on all Governments and international organizations to support that worthy cause.

Belize expanded the coverage of our health insurance scheme in the last budget year and, through our cooperation agreement with the Republic of Cuba, we are significantly increasing the number of our health-care personnel. Indeed, only some three weeks ago we welcomed a contingent of some 35 newly trained Belizean doctors — the largest contingent of doctors ever to return to our country in a single year. Our citizens are our nation's most valuable resource. We are resolved to invest in them, to enhance their competences and to ameliorate the quality of life of each and every one of them.

The victims of global strife and global tragedies are invariably human beings. The United Nations was founded on the determination that no other generation would have to suffer the scourge of war, which we all know brings nothing but death, destruction and sorrow to humankind. Our compact is to promote and protect fundamental human rights and the dignity and worth of the human person — all human persons of all nations, large and small.

The devastating Ebola virus is increasing exponentially and frighteningly. While we are disappointed that international health agencies did not respond more vigorously and with greater alacrity to

the Ebola outbreak many months ago, Belize welcomes the Secretary-General's United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response.

Belize endorses without reservation the call for the Republic of Taiwan to be permitted to participate in the specialized agencies of the United Nations. In this modern day and age, it is incomprehensible that we should want to deny ourselves the benefit of their expertise in dealing with global issues.

If we are to remain true to the principle of inclusion as enshrined in our Charter and as promoted in the post-2015 development agenda, we must continue to advocate for the right of the Sahrawi people for self-determination.

The indiscriminate killing, maiming and destruction recently meted out to innocent Palestinian civilians, especially helpless women and children, and their possessions, were an affront to decency, morality and humanity. We reiterate our support for the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by diplomatic means and for the coexistence of the State of Israel and the State of Palestine in peace and security in their respective pre-1967 international borders, as recognized by the international community.

Belize is convinced that any discussion of a future development agenda must include the removal of unilateral harmful practices that stifle and stagnate development, wherever they occur. In that respect, we join the rest of the international community in calling for an end to the anachronistic embargo against Cuba.

Belize recognizes that foremost among our development priorities is to ensure the sustainability of the environment, in keeping with our flagship status as a haven for democracy, the promotion and protection of human rights and environmental conservation. We embrace the principle that economic growth should not come at any cost. However, neither should our people have to forgo development to protect the natural environment. We firmly believe that it is a false dichotomy to pit development against the environment. That is why we fully welcome and embrace the principle of sustainable development. Our future and the world's depend on the entire globe embracing the sustainable development approach.

**The Acting President:** I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Maxine Pamela Ometa McClean, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados.

**Ms. McClean** (Barbados): It is indeed a distinct privilege to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa on behalf of the Government and the people of Barbados on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. It is appropriate that I also commend his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. John Ashe, for the aplomb with which he guided the deliberations of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session.

The theme of this year's Assembly — "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda" — is both timely and critical. Fourteen years ago, world leaders placed the Millennium Development Goals, a set of time-bound and measurable goals and targets, at the heart of the global development agenda. Today, we stand on the cusp of the unveiling of a future global agenda for development. This must be an ambitious, long-term project to improve people's lives and protect the planet for future generations. The 17 goals and targets proposed by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals must form the basis for the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda. This is especially so if we are to create a truly transformative global programme anchored in the three dimensions of sustainable development, with poverty eradication as its central objective and overarching goal.

The special vulnerabilities faced by small island developing States (SIDS) and which serve to constrain our development are well known. As such, the international community recognized SIDS as a special case in sustainable development in Agenda 21 — a recognition that is echoed in the Barbados Programme of Action; the Mauritius Strategy, the outcome document (resolution 66/288, annex) of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20); and, most recently, the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (Samoa Pathway).

Despite that recognition, the Rio+20 outcome document indicated that SIDS have made less progress than most other groupings, or even regressed, in economic terms, especially in terms of poverty reduction and debt sustainability. This finding was repeated in the Samoa Pathway. The International Monetary Fund has also acknowledged that, in the past 10 years, SIDS have slid down the ladder of progress.

In design, delivery and implementation, therefore, the post-2015 development agenda must as a priority address the unique and particular vulnerabilities and

challenges of small island developing States. It must foster the resilience of SIDS as a key objective of global efforts. A development agenda that ignores the integration of SIDS-specific issues would be incomplete and of questionable validity.

The post-2015 development agenda must also make provisions for countries like Barbados, which is both a small island developing State and a highly indebted middle-income country. We continue to suffer the devastating impact of the global economic and financial crisis and have limited scope, capacity, fiscal flexibility or policy space to respond effectively to them. We face declining export demand and decreased investment and demand for services upon which our economy is dependent, including tourism. Fiscal and financial stresses have forced us to make significant adjustments to our expenditure programmes. Against that backdrop, we face the daunting challenge of continuing to provide adequate social safety nets for the most vulnerable of our citizens in a responsible and sustainable manner.

Debt servicing and debt unsustainability far too easily undermine the advances that we desire to make towards our sustainable development. Too often, the plight of middle-income countries is overlooked on the presumption that by virtue of our gross domestic product (GDP) per capita we do not require international assistance. Barbados emphatically restates that GDP per capita cannot be the sole defining criterion for access to concessionary financing. The social, economic and environmental vulnerability of countries such as ours must be taken into account.

Barbados is therefore pleased to see that the United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report 2014*, entitled "Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience", incorporates the concept of vulnerability and places emphasis on strengthening the resilience of people, communities and countries. It is our hope that those factors will give a more accurate picture of the challenges that developing countries face. On that issue, the Prime Minister of Barbados, Mr. Freundel Stuart, stated in his address at the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in Samoa in September, that

"the time has come for new approaches to be designed to assist middle-income countries which have been graduated from access to concessional resources".

I echo that call today. I implore the international community to address the needs of middle-income countries in the elaboration of a post-2015 development agenda. Accordingly, Barbados welcomes the third International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Addis Ababa in July next year. The outcome of the Conference must make provisions for the special needs of SIDS and middle-income countries.

Barbados is fully cognizant of the responsibility that developing countries themselves bear towards achieving their development goals. However, the reality is that, in seeking to meet those goals, the developing countries are forced to do so on an uneven playing field. The global financial and economic system and the governance process that accompanies it continue to operate in an exclusionary manner. Barbados reiterates its call for a more transparent architecture that is supportive of development objectives.

Barbados has developed and implemented a cross-sectoral Green Economy Initiative, which is predicated on the fragility of our small island ecosystems. The Initiative prioritizes natural resource protection intervention, business and investment choice, human development programming and the facilitation of export market development strategies. Barbados continues to partner with the United Nations Environment Programme and, more recently, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization to promote a transition to a resource-efficient green economy. We have taken action to enact a series of incentives in support of renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Our efforts to transition to a green economy will be undone if the international community does not take immediate and urgent action to address climate change. The most recent findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change underscore, yet again, the vulnerability of SIDS, particularly to the effects of climate change, sea-level rise, ocean acidification and extreme weather events. Together, they represent an existential threat to SIDS. We therefore urge major carbon emitters to take all necessary actions.

Barbados welcomed the holding of the Secretary-General's Climate Summit 2014 at United Nations Headquarters on 23 September. We hope that the momentum from the Summit will inject urgency into the proceedings of the upcoming twentieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 20), to be held in Lima in December. We also hope that,

beyond COP 20, it will ultimately galvanize political will to conclude the negotiation of an ambitious, legally binding international climate agreement in Paris in 2015.

If SIDS are to have an impact internationally, particularly at this crucial moment during the design and construction of a new global architecture for sustainable development, we must ensure that our voices are heard. We must be guided by the concept of a SIDS collectivity that recognizes strength in unity. We SIDS must speak with one voice at the international level.

Any discussion on the creation of a new global sustainable development agenda must have at its core the means of implementation. Indeed, the means of implementation must be the foundation on which the agenda is based. We know that MDG 8, global partnership for development, remains one of the least fulfilled of all of the Millennium Development Goals. The international community can therefore ill afford to let the new development agenda fail as a result of a lack of adequate and reliable means to implement it. The means of implementation must encompass far more than financing. As we use the sixty-ninth session to complete the framework of the post-2015 development agenda, it is incumbent upon us to ensure that definitive and durable partnerships are made to facilitate the following elements — first, the provision of adequate financial and other resources; secondly, fair trade and market access; and thirdly, technology transfer and capacity-building, particularly in the area of data collection and statistical analysis.

My country sees peace and security as enablers and indicators of sustainable development. They constitute indispensable prerequisites for human, social and economic development, as well as for progress and prosperity. Barbados therefore views the continuing crises and armed conflicts, including those in the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Syria, Iraq and Ukraine, with grave concern. Indeed, we view them with grave alarm. Armed non-State actors and terrorist groups continue to destroy lives, destabilize nations and threaten national and international peace and security.

In the face of such hostilities and blatant acts of aggression, the Security Council has been paralysed. Barbados will continue to be actively engaged within the Caribbean Community in negotiations on the reform of the Security Council. We applaud Ambassador Ashe, former President of the General Assembly, for his

initiative to move discussions on the issue forward. We also welcome the summary of the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform prepared by the Chair of the Open-ended Working Group. Barbados calls on all Member States to work assiduously during the current session to make substantial progress, if not to finalize, the decades-long project of Security Council reform.

My country reiterates its commitment to democracy and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. We welcome the discussions that will take place during this session on the responsibility to protect. Our position is motivated by principle and objectivity, and we have no desire to see the issue politicized.

The Ebola outbreak constitutes a public-health emergency of international concern and a threat to global security. It also threatens the peacebuilding and development gains of the countries most affected. It is our sincere hope that the recently adopted Security Council resolution 2177 (2014) and General Assembly resolutions 69/1 and 69/3 will accelerate the mobilization of resources to assist the affected countries and halt the epidemic.

Barbados has long supported a negotiated two-State solution to the question of Palestine, the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and their right to live in peace and security in a Palestinian State within pre-1967 borders. Barbados's position is that the State of Israel has a right to exist and the people of Israel have a right to live in security and to do so with the full and undisputed recognition of the rest of the world. The Palestinians are also entitled to enjoy the fruits of prosperity within their own sovereign State. This year's unprecedented escalation of the crisis in Palestine revealed, yet again, the urgent need to reach a durable, negotiated solution, and we call on all parties to rededicate themselves to achieving that aim.

The long-standing economic embargo on Cuba continues to be of serious concern to Barbados. The Government of Cuba has always demonstrated a willingness to assist the Caribbean, and indeed the developing world, in our quest for development. We join with the overwhelming majority of States Member of the United Nations in opposing that unilateral action and look forward to a time — the sooner, the better — when it will be relegated to the pages of history.

In closing, Barbados believes that there is an inextricable link among development, international

peace and security. As we stated in 1993, within the context of an "Agenda for Peace",

"Where access to food, clothing, shelter, education, health and the opportunity for gainful employment is denied, democracy cannot flourish" (*A/48/PV.26, p. 11*).

We also hold the converse to be true. There can be no real development without respect for human rights, the rule of law and democracy. We hope that much of the time and energy of this body at its sixty-ninth session will be spent on delivering a post-2015 development agenda that will redound to the benefit of us all. Barbados will continue to be in the vanguard of that effort.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Samuel Santos López, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Nicaragua.

**Mr. Santos López (Nicaragua)** (*spoke in Spanish*): We are proud to have our African brother, Sam Kutesa, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uganda — a member country of the African Union — presiding over the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. We are fully confident that during his tenure he will advocate for and advance the most pressing issues of our peoples. He can count on Nicaragua's support.

We would also like to congratulate the President of the General Assembly at the previous session, a brother from the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, Ambassador John Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda, and his entire team for their dedicated leadership and unstinting effort to realize an agenda for the benefit of our peoples.

We live in a world of many interconnected and related crises that reveal the unjust and inequitable development policies prevailing among various peoples and nations. The existing unjust economic order, resulting from imperialism and its contemporary model — global capitalism — has failed to respond to the growing and increasingly frequent crises. The numbers of the world's poor increase daily in both the South and the North, in flagrant violation of the most basic human rights. We must work together to overcome and eradicate poverty, hunger, malnutrition, disease, war and conflict, regime change politics and coups, violence against women and children, the arms race, the negative impacts of climate change, and emerging social and slavery plagues, including drug trafficking,

organized crime and human trafficking, among others, as soon as possible.

Social justice, solidarity, unity, complementarity among peoples, and brotherhood and respect among nations must prevail. The eradication of poverty remains the greatest challenge facing the world. We will begin negotiations on the post-2015 agenda with the central concern of not having achieved the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in all developing countries. It is urgent to redouble efforts and create an international environment conducive to facilitating developing countries' implementation of the MDGs, including appropriate financing.

The post-2015 agenda will provide a new opportunity to strive for a just world order. It should promote sustained economic growth, inclusive and participatory social development, environmental protection and human dignity, with sufficient flexibility to respond to the needs, priorities and specificities of each country and region, conscious of the fact that no single model or recipe for development exists. The agenda should involve an intergovernmental, open and transparent process, based on the results of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

Developing countries suffer the most from the adverse effects of climate change, whose extreme meteorological phenomena are ever more frequent and intense. Despite our economic limitations and prioritized focus on poverty and sustainable development and with no obligation under the Convention, we are assuming the costs of the adaptation and mitigation efforts.

We must urgently achieve a binding agreement in 2015, containing strong, ambitious and balanced commitments on all its provisions and based on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its principles and provisions, particularly equity and common but differentiated responsibilities, in order to address the climate crisis and protect the ecosystems that sustain life on our Mother Earth.

No country that is part of the international community can claim the right to use or threaten the use of force in its international relations. Such exceptionalist policies not only do not resolve conflicts; rather, they stir things up, as has been seen in recent years. Dialogue and negotiation are the only means to resolve conflict. Based on its Charter, the United Nations must assume

its role as the main organ responsible for ensuring world peace and must reject war-mongering policies, war and confrontation. Given the challenges we are dealing with, thorough reform of the United Nations is becoming increasingly imperative, and particularly reform of the Security Council, which should recognize contemporary realities by including the voices and votes of developing countries in the categories of both permanent and non-permanent members.

We consider it vital that we have a nuclear-weapon-free world with total and complete disarmament. We welcome the designation last year of 26 September as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, initiated by the Non-Aligned Movement at Cuba's suggestion.

In the face of the growing Ebola epidemic, Cuba, our sister in solidarity, has once again made its human and scientific resources available to work alongside our African brothers who are fighting the deadly virus. Meanwhile, that same sister nation of Cuba continues to resist the criminal economic and financial embargo imposed on it by the United States. Nicaragua emphasizes its unconditional solidarity with Cuba and demands an end to a blockade that violates international law and the human rights of the people of Cuba. We demand the immediate and unconditional release of the five anti-terrorist Cuban patriots. And we condemn the role that the United States arrogates to itself in putting countries on its unilateral and arbitrary list of State sponsors of international terrorism, and demand that Cuba be removed from the list. We condemn such anachronistic United States policies, as well as the intensification of the blockade and its extra-territorial nature.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and its Bolivarian revolution continue to suffer from harassment, interference and external aggression. Nicaragua offers its unconditional support to Venezuela's people and Government, led by our comrade Nicolás Maduro Moros, in their defence of their revolutionary liberation process.

We must bring to an immediate end Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territory and prevent Israel from continuing its aggression and brutal attacks on the men, women and children of Palestine. The Security Council should once and for all live up to its obligations and demand that Israel end such practices and policies in order to clear the way for a sovereign and independent State of Palestine, based on its

pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and with two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace. Nicaragua reiterates its absolute and unconditional solidarity with the State of Palestine in its fight for freedom and its inalienable rights.

We also stress our total solidarity with the Government and the people of Syria in their fight against international terrorism and in defence of their sovereignty and territorial integrity. We emphasize the importance of achieving a negotiated political solution among Syrians and ending foreign intervention, including the financing and supplying of weapons to terrorist groups. When confronted by such conflicts, rather than opting for dialogue and negotiation to settle them, the NATO countries take unilateral decisions, measures and action outside the United Nations framework and in violation of international law, including aerial bombardment in territories of sovereign countries.

Nicaragua has frequently expressed its rejection and condemnation of actions aimed at regime change, which rupture constitutional order, lead to widespread violence, encourage the use of force and open the door to coups d'état that can overthrow legitimate Governments elected by the will of the people. That is the kind of policy that we have witnessed in Ukraine; it has led to loss of life and the displacement of populations, and created a humanitarian crisis with unpredictable consequences. Because we want peace and believe in the prevention and resolution of conflicts by peaceful and inclusive means, we reject such policies, as well as the imposition of unilateral measures and economic sanctions that violate international law.

Nicaragua recognizes the cooperation of China on Taiwan with developing countries, particularly in the area of food and social inclusion programmes, and we reiterate our support for the legitimate aspirations of China on Taiwan for greater participation in the United Nations specialized agencies, one that accords with the requirements and needs of its population of 23 million.

We reiterate our full support for the legitimate rights of the Republic of Argentina in the dispute over the sovereignty of the Malvinas Islands, the South Sandwich Islands and the adjacent islands. The United Kingdom should comply immediately with the relevant United Nations resolutions and initiate direct negotiations with Argentina. Similarly, we support and consider ourselves part of Argentina's fight against culture funds.

Puerto Rico continues to labour under the colonial yoke and now more than ever needs our solidarity and active support in its struggle for independence and self-determination. The United States should free the world's longest-imprisoned political captive, the Puerto Rican patriot Oscar López Rivera. We also commend and remain in solidarity with the struggle of the people of Western Sahara under the leadership of the Frente Polisario.

Nicaragua, a small country whose policies are based on Christian values, socialist principles and the practice of solidarity, works proactively in our complex global environment, through various international and regional forums, to promote policies of peace, unity and understanding among nations, political and negotiated solutions to conflicts and the right of our peoples to achieve sustainable development and well-being.

The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, of which Nicaragua is a member, has been a factor in improving unity, complementarity and economic integration in our region. In turn, it promotes other forums such as Petrocaribe, which groups together 20 countries of our region and has had an immediate and concrete positive impact on the well-being of our peoples as one way of overcoming poverty, hunger and inequality. On 14 December, we will celebrate the tenth anniversary of its founding, resulting from the unifying vision of the Latin American and Caribbean leaders Hugo Chávez Frías and Fidel Castro Ruz.

These steps towards regional integration have borne fruit with the creation of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, through which we continue to deepen our process of political, economic, social and cultural integration, respecting diversity and building unity. We have declared our region a zone of peace. Within the framework of the Central American Integration System, we are strengthening integration in all fields and working together to fight the scourges of drug trafficking and organized crime and to turn the Gulf of Fonseca into a zone of peace and development.

Our Government of Reconciliation and National Unity, under the visionary leadership of our President, Commander Daniel Ortega Saavedra, continues to work to restore the political, economic, social and cultural rights of all Nicaraguans. Nicaragua has become the leading country in the region in terms of public safety. Our fight against drug trafficking, organized crime and human trafficking has been recognized as the most vigorous and effective in the region. Our economic

growth is consistent and rising and is among the highest of our region. We are reducing poverty and extreme poverty, attaining the Millennium Development Goals and empowering women through political and economic participation. Indeed, we rank very highly in the world in terms of female ministers, parliamentarians and mayors.

We combat violence against women and girls head on, with strict laws and social programmes targeting both groups, and with police stations for women in all municipalities of the country. Education and health care are prioritized and are provided free for all Nicaraguans, and early childhood care programmes and maternity homes can be found throughout the country.

In our Caribbean autonomous regions, in addition to the restitution of the rights of indigenous peoples and people of African descent, the autonomy process is growing in strength every day, with the recent completion of the land ownership process in the indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. All these efforts of our people and Government, together with our policies of inclusion and social justice, won immediate recognition and support from our people, who have taken ownership of them, and they have been held up as examples of good practice by all the agencies, projects and programmes of the United Nations system.

In conclusion, we note that the work of the General Assembly at the present session and in the coming years will be crucial for developing countries and the rest of the world. Let us unite from this very moment to achieve the urgent and necessary changes needed to attain a better world and better lives for our peoples.

**The Acting President:** I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mohamad Waheed, former President and Special Envoy of the President of the Republic of Maldives.

**Mr. Waheed (Maldives):** Allow me to extend warm greetings to the President of the General Assembly upon the assumption of his duties at the sixty-ninth session. I also recognize the exemplary stewardship of Mr. John Ashe, the outgoing President, and record our appreciation of the Secretary-General's stewardship of the Organization during these difficult times.

What defines the great communities of our times is their ability to overcome the unexpected and to persevere and adapt to changing realities — from the daunting effects of climate change and the ever-pressing challenges of poverty and want to the uncontrollable spread of disease. Communities everywhere are striving

to overcome such obstacles. When communities are subject to challenges that are impossible to bear, they think beyond the realm of possibilities and begin seeking different answers to the same questions. That is when they nurture their ability to bounce back from adversity, shock and threats. The ultimate goal of fostering resilience is to overcome the unexpected. Sustainability is about managing, but resilience is about thriving.

For the past eight decades, the Maldives has been on a journey to consolidate democracy. Last year, our democracy faced unprecedented challenges. Yet we were able to overcome those hurdles entirely by peaceful means. Even though it sometimes felt as if we were quite alone in this fight, we are proud of what we have achieved. We take pride in the fact that our democracy is home-grown. Our systems are organic. Our young institutions, as in the older democracies of the world, are gradually settling into patterns and traditions that are unique to our string of islands and in harmony with our Islamic heritage and our traditions.

Our experience clearly shows that holding elections or introducing a multiparty political system does not instil democratic values in a society. Democracy cannot be traced in the pages of laws. The only way for a new home-grown democracy to achieve resilience is to shift the way its people think. A transformation in their normative framework is necessary. Democratic values need to find a place in the hearts and minds of the people. The Government of President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom and the people of the Maldives are determined to achieve a modern and authentic Maldivian democratic State.

Promoting and protecting human rights is central to Maldivian democracy. Our Constitution is very clear on what those rights entail. Yet with every right come responsibilities. It has been a daunting challenge to make human rights a way of life. That is why the Maldives advocates cultivating a culture of respect for human rights. Policies need to be rights-based. People need to be rights-minded.

People must lie at the heart of every decision we make and every policy we adopt. The ultimate goal of every action must be to improve the lives of our people. The Government of President Yameen has embarked on an ambitious programme aimed at realizing the full potential of our young people. The goal of the Government is to create opportunities that would help to unleash their creativity. Young people are the future

of any country, and, without the full realization of their productive capabilities, countries cannot prosper.

A few days ago, the United Nations marked an important milestone: the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. Today, we celebrate the achievement of many of the goals of that Programme — most notably, low maternal and infant mortality rates, gender parity in school enrolment and equal pay for equal work.

Next year, we will celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of another important document, the Beijing Platform for Action. It is a fact, not mere speculation, that for building resilience and building sustainable societies, women's contributions are a necessity. Women have achieved remarkable progress since the Beijing Platform. Maldivian women are among the most emancipated in South Asia, with no structural barriers to education, employment or mobility. Still, much remains to be achieved. Just as an example, I ask the Assembly to think back over the past week of general debate. How many women spoke at this rostrum? How many countries can claim to have achieved parity between men and women at decision-making levels? In the Maldives, we are committed to empowering women and have adopted a zero-tolerance policy towards violence against women.

The resilience of our people in overcoming adversity in their lives is rooted in their ability to rise up from the fear of want and the fear of need. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were framed to do just that. The MDGs committed to a new partnership to reduce extreme poverty, halt the spread of HIV/AIDS and provide primary education for all. The MDGs set benchmarks and gave targets to Governments. Those targets enabled them to plan effectively. The MDGs, though remarkable for their time, were limited and are now reaching their expiry date. We ardently believe that the post-2015 development agenda must be inclusive, transparent and people-centred. The new development agenda should succeed where the MDGs failed.

At times, the violence, bloodshed, conflict and upheaval that we witness on a daily basis seem unbearable. In July 2014, we watched with grief the horrendous attack on the Gaza Strip — another in a countless cycle of aggression and brutality. Our hearts bleed for the countless children who lost their lives, the mothers who lost their children, the nation and the State of Palestine, which lost countless citizens. After the

global outcry and the outpouring of condemnation, the guns have stopped firing and the bombs have stopped dropping. The world seems to have moved on to the next crisis. The news cycles have found their next headline.

Yet, we recall here again, the siege is not over. The blockade has not ended. Gaza has been destroyed and its development set back several years. Palestinians are still being denied their right to a sovereign nation of their own, to their own lands and to the fruits of their labour. Palestinian children are being denied a right to determine their own destiny. Are we willing to let that continue? We must do more to help realize the dream of peace in the Middle East and a two-State solution. We must resume peace talks with a clear goal and an endpoint in mind.

The biggest challenge to our development and our way of life is ignorance, violence, subjugation and perpetual poverty. Misinformed yet talented young people can easily be lured into fanaticism, radicalism and extremism. Islam's identity as a religion that supports innovation, knowledge and scholarship is slowly eroding away. The golden era of our religion is almost forgotten.

Today, the world has a choice to make. Should we allow extremists to shape our future? Or should we take decisive actions to defeat the extremist ideologies? Our answer to those questions will define the way in which we deal with the so-called Islamic State and other terrorist groups. Not only are those groups un-Islamic, they are anti-Islamic. They are terrorist organizations, not religious groups. Islam, our great religion of peace, compassion and tolerance, is being hijacked by radical and extremist elements to perpetuate hatred and violence. We, the Government and the people of Maldives, condemn in the strongest terms those groups, their ideologies and their activities. We join our fellow Muslims around the world in saying "not in my name".

The unique challenges faced by small island developing States are well known. Climate change exacerbates those challenges. We remain hopeful that a legally binding treaty will be agreed to next year in Paris. The Maldives stands ready to do all it can to make this hope a reality, for the sake of our children and our nation.

Earlier this month, we agreed to a new highway for development, the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway. We commend Samoa for its leadership in setting the vision for a new

gateway for small States. To make the partnership enduring, we need the small island developing States to make their voices heard and to be united in the quest. The Maldives has therefore been inspired to take the lead in forming the Alliance of Small Island States for the purpose of facing the challenges of post-2015 and beyond. We call on others to join us in that journey.

Nine days ago, on 21 September, we celebrated 49 years of membership in the United Nations. The Maldives joined the United Nations a mere 58 days after independence — we were the smallest Member State at the time. As we look forward to celebrating 50 years of membership in 2015, the Maldives is happy to note that the United Nations has served us well. We joined the United Nations in 1965, amid questions over the viability of small States. In the past 49 years, the Maldives has taken the lead in showing the world that small States are not only viable, but in fact valuable in finding common solutions to common problems. Today, at the United Nations, we continue to prove that small States can also lead and that it is not size but smart ideas that make a nation's destiny.

**The Acting President:** I now call on His Excellency Mr. Frederick A. Mitchell, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

**Mr. Mitchell (Bahamas):** Kamallesh Sharma, the Secretary General of the Commonwealth of Nations, said to us at a gathering here in New York a few days ago: “Do not be demoralized by your income, be inspired by your outcome”. That should be a driving principle as all countries, particularly the small island developing States, seek to determine what the post-2015 development agenda will be. The obstacles are many. The lip service is evident. We have hope, and our moral case is strong. We are inspired by the potential outcomes of this new development agenda.

We must be people-focused and, in that regard, I remember a story told by a colleague, a Minister from the Far East, who explained his absence to a constituent at home as dealing with many of the world's problems. “Yes”, said the constituent to him, “but the water pump in the village has not been fixed”. It is a reminder of whom we really work for in this body — not for ourselves, but for that villager who needs the pump at home to be fixed.

At this session, our Prime Minister gave a comprehensive statement on climate change and the need for developed countries to honour their financial

commitments in that regard. In addition, we deposited our instrument of ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which helped to bring the number of countries to 50 and so caused the Treaty to enter into force. Furthermore, in the margins of the session, we signed a memorandum of understanding with the International Organization for Migration.

There are no higher priorities for the Bahamas than these matters: the environment, fighting crime and containing illegal immigration. They go to the very root of our existence. If we do not resolve the climate change issues, there will be no Bahamas. Solving the crime problem in the Bahamas is key to our domestic peace and economic survivability. No Bahamian doubts that the control of illegal immigration is central to our survivability as a country, central to our national identity, and central to our national security. We have only to see today how illegal immigration drains our financial resources, and we do not have to look far to see how unchecked immigration in other countries has been a recipe for civil strife within their borders. We do not intend for that to happen to us. All of the efforts related to the three main themes I have just mentioned are buttressed by our work to ensure that we have a robust, strong and sustainable economy.

Tourism is by far the number-one economic activity for the Bahamas. The environment is central to that business. It should therefore be no surprise that the Bahamas has adopted or established the following: the National Environmental Policy, 2005; the National Environmental Management and Action Plan for the Bahamas, 2005; the Bahamas National Wetland Policy, 2007; the Bahamas Protected Areas Fund, 2013; and the Forestry Amendment Act, 2014. We believe that those policies and programmes will all help with the issue of climate change. We also believe that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change. We believe that it should be completed with dispatch.

The Bahamas is committed to the small island developing States processes at the United Nations. The Bahamas welcomes the convening of the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction next year in Japan.

The Bahamas is appalled by the practice of killing sharks simply for their fins. We must make the fishing of sharks a sustainable practice, as these creatures are a vital part of the global ecosystem. The Bahamas

therefore assumed the chairmanship of the United Nations Save Our Sharks Coalition in December 2013. The aims of the Coalition resonate with us, and we believe that we can help save the shark from extinction.

The Bahamas has been grappling with serious crimes in our society, related largely to, first, the inability of young males to settle disputes without recourse to violence and, secondly, the resulting proliferation of gang activity and trafficking in illicit drugs, small arms and light weapons, and ammunition. The Bahamas therefore became actively involved in the negotiations leading to the successful adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty and considered its adoption a landmark accomplishment for the United Nations (resolution 67/234 B). The Government believes the entry into force of the ATT will contribute to peace and security in the Bahamas and throughout our region. We deposited the instrument of ratification of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas to the Arms Trade Treaty on 25 September. We continue to fight the illegal drug trade and trafficking in persons, and we are investing in social intervention programmes, like the award-winning Urban Renewal Programme, in order to fight crime.

I spoke earlier of the memorandum of understanding signed with the International Organization for Migration. This is one part of a multifaceted strategy to stop the flow of undocumented non-nationals into Bahamian territory. New policies and measures are now in place, and there will be stricter adherence in the future to them to stop this trafficking. A new fleet of vessels has been purchased to support our work to stop migrant smuggling. In the last few months, the Bahamas has entered into important agreements with our immediate neighbours — Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Haiti — to come to terms with the vexing situations that impact our good relations. Those accords are on fishing and on migration. Let there be no doubt that we mean to bring illegal migration under control.

Nevertheless, our relations with neighbouring countries remain good. This is all the more reason why we believe that the continued economic embargo by one neighbour against another in our region is counterproductive to the peace and good order of the region. We continue to keep matters with regard to the governance issues in our neighbour, the Turks and Caicos Islands, under review.

The Bahamas looks forward to the forthcoming launch of the International Decade for People of African

Descent, which will have as its theme “People of African descent: recognition, justice and development”. That theme could also be linked to the efforts of States members of the Caribbean Community in seeking the restorative justice due from the legacy of 400 years of slavery. We were heartened by the unveiling of the winning design for the permanent memorial to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. We reaffirm our support for that important project.

The Bahamas welcomes the convening of the third International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in July 2015. We plan to participate in that conference, which we expect will provide a forum to address the need to demystify and replace the view that gross domestic product is the sole indicator of sustainable development — a replacement that needs to be converted into policy — as well as the matter of international cooperation in tax matters. In that regard, the Bahamas reaffirms the important role of the United Nations in addressing matters related to international tax cooperation, given its universality and legitimacy.

The Bahamas reaffirms its commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all people, regardless of their station or status in society. These rights and freedoms are neither negotiable nor peripheral. As a demonstration of its commitment to human rights, I am pleased to report that the Bahamas has passed national legislation, the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities) Act, which will ensure its ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in due course. In addition, four bills have been introduced in Parliament with a view to amending the Constitution of the Bahamas to bring about full equality between men and women in law. This event will mark a significant opportunity for the people of the Bahamas to usher in a new era of equality for men and women.

The Bahamas looks forward to the process of elaborating the post-2015 development agenda and to actively participating in the intergovernmental process that will lead to the adoption of this agenda in September 2015. Our vision for the post-2015 development agenda is creative, inclusive and transformative.

The Bahamas endorses the idea of Security Council reform. As we look around at the tens of millions of dollars that have been, and are being, spent to bring the physical structure up to code and into the twenty-first century, why cannot we ensure that the organs of the

United Nations, especially the Security Council, also reflect twenty-first-century realities?

Last year, the Bahamas celebrated its fortieth year of independence. In addressing the General Assembly last year (see A/68/PV.19), the Right Honourable Perry Christie, Prime Minister of the Bahamas, renewed the commitment of our country to playing its part in making our planet a more peaceful and prosperous place, characterized by cooperation, mutual respect and support. We believe that each country has a primary responsibility for its own development, and, throughout my statement, I have indicated our achievements and challenges in that regard. I repeat that the environment, crime and illegal migration are issues of existential significance to our country. However, despite the many challenges, we are inspired by the possible outcomes. We therefore exhort the Members of the United Nations to stay motivated and committed, for each new effort undertaken and each achievement registered brings us nearer to our development goals. Now, more than ever, we need the United Nations.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Lyonpo Damcho Dorji, Minister of Home and Cultural Affairs of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

**Mr. Dorji (Bhutan):** I wish to begin by conveying the warm greetings of His Majesty the King of Bhutan. It is an honour for me to be present in this grand assembly of nations. Great men and women of our time have graced this rostrum. Yet the magnitude of the challenges we are called on to address today remains formidable — greater than any person or any country we represent.

The United Nations was founded to unlock the potential of our collective endeavour to promote the peace, prosperity and progress of succeeding generations of humankind. As we approach the seventieth anniversary of the founding of our Organization, the considerable gains we have made on the social, economic and political fronts give us many reasons to be hopeful. However, we continue to be confronted by grave challenges. They include the festering wounds of age-old conflicts that threaten to spin out of control; new tensions and the resurgence of violent extremism; the irrefutable evidence of the menace posed by climate change to life on our planet; and the unconscionable inequities and injustices that contribute to the fact that millions are deprived of such basic needs as food and shelter. All of these are compelling issues that remind us that we have yet to heed the tragic lessons of the past,

and that we are far from realizing the world envisaged in the Charter of the United Nations.

We commend the President for his choice of the theme for this session, “Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda”. This is an opportune moment to redefine a new era in international development and cooperation, one that can build on the successes and shortcomings of more than three decades of internationally agreed development goals, and the Millennium Development Goals in particular. The process must activate real and meaningful change for all countries if it is indeed to be transformative. For this to happen, the agenda must be anchored to the need for breakthroughs to address the hard realities on the ground in individual countries, especially with regard to capacity and financing for development.

Accordingly, a collaborative approach, based on an appreciation of the unique circumstances and experience of each country and driven by the desire for true working partnerships among and within countries, will be vital. Such an approach would require changes in our development paradigm, in our beliefs regarding the sustainability of the world’s current trajectory, and in our behaviour as individuals, which shape our national character and our destiny as an international community of nations.

A small, least developed, landlocked country like mine, with many less-than-ideal indicators, has to get its development priorities right. Given our small size and unique circumstances, the lessons Bhutan has learned are not universal, but certain principles may have relevance. It is in a spirit of humility and modesty that we share our experience and aspirations.

First and foremost, we believe that development must be guided by a clear, home-grown vision. Ours, championed by successive monarchs, identifies people’s welfare and happiness as its central objective. Secondly, it takes good governance to unlock the full potential of a country and its people in the pursuit of effective development and peace. Thirdly, within the broader development objective, the eradication of poverty must remain an overarching aim. Eliminating the scourge of poverty must therefore form the central purpose of the post-2015 development agenda.

Fourthly, strong partnerships are the key to delivering on the post-2015 development agenda. In our experience, nurturing and maintaining strong

partnerships with our donors, based on trust and mutual respect, has been critical to our progress. Last but not least, there is the conservation of the environment, which is related to the issue of sustainability. A decent standard of living, with adequate education, health care and employment, is essential for people to live with self-respect, dignity and hope. But if the most basic necessities of life, air, water and food are polluted and contaminated, a decent standard of living is unsustainable. The wanton exploitation of natural resources, without any care for the health of our planet, clearly cannot go on.

In a world riven by challenges of epic proportions, the centrality of the United Nations as the only truly global organization cannot be overemphasized. Yet efforts to reform its highest organ, the Security Council, remain deadlocked. While a consensus-based decision is the most desirable way forward in multilateralism, we cannot allow its absence to obstruct progress indefinitely, especially in the crucial area of peace and security.

We are heading into a momentous year during which the international community will craft a new development agenda that will lay the framework for transformational change and shared prosperity. In the final analysis, no matter what brilliant concepts we introduce and breakthroughs we achieve on paper, nothing of lasting value can be achieved without a transformation of mindsets and hearts. It is there, perhaps, in our hearts and minds that we really need a paradigm shift.

In the words of His Majesty the King of Bhutan:

“This is a world that is shared, not between Governments and nations but among the peoples. No nation today can stand alone in achievement. There can be no lasting national progress if it does not fit into a future of global peace, harmony and prosperity. The world must progress together or fail together.”

**The Acting President:** I now call on His Excellency Mr. Alva Romanus Baptiste, Minister for External Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation of Saint Lucia.

**Mr. Baptiste** (Saint Lucia): Exactly one year ago, on 30 September 2013, I had the unsurpassed glory of delivering my maiden address to the General Assembly (see A/68/PV.21), and I used that occasion to pay homage to the great architects of world peace who fostered the

birth and initial dynamics of our United Nations. In so doing, I used the principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations as a ready compass to set my course as I navigated the issues that occupied the forefront of our attention at that time, under the captaincy of former President John Ashe, who successfully piloted our Organization of peace through the turbulent seas of global uncertainty.

The issues that commanded the attention of the international community then included global terrorism and the tensions in the Middle East and the Korean peninsula. Those were compounded by concerns around geopolitical conflicts and unresolved trade issues, as well as trade and macroeconomic approaches that favoured industrialized countries to the detriment of developing nations.

Given that in nature's irreversible onward march, unresolved problems are brought forward and compounded by succeeding problems, this year the General Assembly has convened at a time of increased turmoil. Since our discussions last September, it is undoubtedly the case that dissension and conflict have increased in the Middle East — the arena that inevitably sets the price for petroleum and its associated products, which are utilized by the peoples of the global community, rich or poor. On the other hand, the benefits expected from the end of the Cold War, with the potential for normalizing relations on the European continent and in lands and regions far distant from Europe, now seem to be doubtful of fulfilment, as signs, tensions and pressures once associated with the Cold War are evolving, bringing about renewed concerns for the international community as a whole.

When such tremors emerge, it is much harder for small States like ours to get the attention of the major Powers with regard to the evaluation and discussion of our own issues and objectives. Those can be successfully resolved only if the dominant members of the international community can relate to them, without the positions and tensions that emphasize allegiance on the part of small Powers to this or that side. That is why we, from our small corner of the globe, venture to express the view, in this most significant of international forums, that the tensions and the tendencies towards war now emerging should be subordinated to the search for solutions in which the principles and objectives of the Organization, particularly its preference for the negotiated resolution of conflicts, are pursued as far as practicable. The escalating conflicts have negative

effects on the access of small States to the attention of larger Powers, and therefore they retard the positive contribution of the international community to our own concerns.

In that connection, we have observed, with a certain disquiet, tendencies in Europe that indicate a possible resumption of the Cold War on that continent. We believe that that can only be disadvantageous to small countries like ours, because in forums such as this we tend to find a return to demands for automatic commitment to one side or the other. As a small country, we have called for negotiations to prevail in the pursuit of the rearrangement of continental European relations, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. Despite being a small country far away from the situation in Europe, we have long had, and continue to have, an integral relationship with that continent. It is particularly on that basis that we call for diplomacy to prevail, and we have been gratified to see recent signs indicating that that is likely to be the path pursued on the European continent.

We are relieved to see that the contentions in the Middle East, specifically in respect of the Palestine issue, have returned to the negotiating table. That is in concert with earlier developments relating to contentions between the NATO Powers and Iran, as the various parties were able to adopt postures of mutual discussion and engagement. That has led recently to what seems to be jointly negotiated stances to the extremely complex situation in Syria and to the emergence of the so-called Islamic State, which has been spreading disorder and contention in the wider Middle East.

From our perspective, we can only express the wish that negotiations and cooperation among the larger Powers and between themselves and other Middle East countries continue, even as some members of the international community felt it necessary to resort to the use of force in the area. We reaffirm, even in the midst of great global complexity, our country's commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes.

While many developments in our world hold the seeds of our region's continued marginalization, we also want to accentuate the more positive trends emerging in the international community that are leading to the creation of space in our global arena. Consequently, Saint Lucia is encouraged by the possibility of enhanced flexibility in decision-making being permitted to members of the international community via the emergence of large, developing States in such a

manner that they are now characterized as increasingly significant actors in decision-making relating to the resolution of global issues.

When I addressed the Assembly last year, I referred to the emergence of institutions such as the Union of South American Nations, which includes some members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and to the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America — Peoples' Trade Agreement (ALBA). They have opened up opportunities for assisting our countries to meet the Millennium Development Goals, to which we are all committed.

Saint Lucia reiterates its appreciation for the work of ALBA, an institution committed to assisting countries without requiring ideological commitment to this or that position but recognizing the priority of economic and social development and preferring the peaceful resolution of disputes above all other concerns. In consonance with that posture, we commend the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for its contribution to the Ebola eradication budget, and Cuba for its dispatch of 156 doctors to West Africa to assist in the fight against the deadly Ebola virus.

Saint Lucia welcomes the initiative by Brazil, India, China and South Africa, along with Russia, to extend and deepen the assistance available to other developing countries, thereby widening the scope for their advancement towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Specifically, we would mention the establishment of the New Development Bank, which further facilitates the efforts of developing countries for economic reconstruction. The establishment of the World Trade Organization and the single-minded immediacy with which it has pursued international trade liberalization have threatened the very foundations of our economies, particularly in agriculture, which has suffered sudden and certain destruction. From our perspective, therefore, another dimension has been added to the efforts of small States such as Saint Lucia to navigate the consequences of sudden international economic liberalization and globalization.

In that context of the emergence of new balances of economic and political power and new flexibilities in the use of diplomacy, including within our hemisphere, Saint Lucia once again reiterates its plea for the removal of the blockade imposed against the Republic of Cuba. More specifically, my Government calls for the removal

of Cuba from the so-called terrorist watch-list. That is a residual effect of the Cold War, which is over.

Given the scourge of the traffic in narcotics in particular, we call for further cooperation among all countries in the hemisphere and a setting aside of the old Cold War postures as necessary conditions for balanced development and peace. A specific example of where that applies relates to our efforts in pursuing collective arrangements and unimpeded cooperation against the menace of the movement of narcotics through the Caribbean Sea and their decimating march across the moral, social and economic fabric of our region. The drug barons make no ideological distinctions among countries as they continue to exploit weaknesses deriving from outmoded political stances that impede effective regional cooperation. As we all know, those pursuing the sale of narcotics make special efforts to attract the youth of our countries, compromising the essential resource base for our future economic development and social stability.

Once again, I draw the attention of this body to Saint Lucia's firm and consistent belief that the historical anomalies of the Cold War still in our international system should not be allowed to inhibit the contribution of countries desirous of participating in, and enhancing, the advancement of developing countries simply because there are issues surrounding their particular status.

In that connection I would refer, as I did on behalf of the Government of Saint Lucia last year, to the participation of Taiwan in international organizations, particularly those that focus on technical arrangements or the resolution of important issues that are of value to the international system as a whole or to its member States. My country again makes a plea for fuller participation by Taiwan, particularly in the World Health Organization and the International Civil Aviation Organization. Taiwan has the experience of engaging in a technological revolution that has enhanced its economic development and the welfare of its people, and in many respects that State has become a viable economic development model for small States. Hence we believe that the Government and people of Taiwan have much to offer developing countries, and so we would support any institutional initiative that would allow that country to make a contribution through those mechanisms of the United Nations that are devoted to solutions to issues of technological, economic and social development.

I shall now turn to the theme of this year's General Assembly, "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda", to navigate two issues of paramount importance to Saint Lucia as a small island developing State. At this juncture, I must congratulate the President of the Assembly and his country, Uganda, on this theme, which is charged with invaluable significance for my region and for Africa, as we are challenged in building an impregnable substratum of economic and technological self-determination to successfully deal with the development challenges of our times.

First, speaking of Africa and the Caribbean region in that context, I come to a matter of great historical and contemporary concern to the people of Saint Lucia and the Caribbean Community as a whole, which I adumbrated in my address to this body last year. It is the issue of the need for the metropolitan Powers to come to terms with the manner in which the Caribbean States were historically created and organized and the consequences of that for their standing and situation in today's world. Specifically, at their meeting in July 2014, the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community decided that a case for reparations should be elaborated beyond the relationship between ourselves and the relevant European Governments and that Caribbean States should, in seeking support for that objective, "advance the reparations case during the sitting of the United Nations General Assembly in 2014".

I carry out that mandate now on behalf of the Government and the people of Saint Lucia, who, in concordance with the peoples of other CARICOM member States, seek the award of reparations as a specific way in which those who in centuries past held the reins of power without accountability can now in recompense make a specific contribution to the nation-building programmes of our Governments beyond existing commitments. In that regard, we make a case for reparations as a matter of principle.

Secondly, Saint Lucia has welcomed the deliberations of the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in Samoa earlier this month, and the efforts made in that regard by the United Nations. The recent Samoa Pathway conclusions have re-emphasized the persistent and peculiar problems inhibiting the development of small island developing States (SIDS). In the words of the recent SIDS declaration, there is an insistence that "small island developing States remain a special case for

sustainable development”, without which “success will remain difficult”. As the Commonwealth Secretariat recently pointed out, research has shown that countries most exposed to preference loss are mainly SIDS, such as Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Dominica, Jamaica, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. From our regional point of view, the Caribbean Community’s continental States of Belize and Guyana are included in that list.

The Commonwealth Secretariat has also shown that, while the compound annual growth rate of per capita income of SIDS between 1970 and 2000 was 0.73 per cent, that of the world economy was almost three times higher, at 2.07 per cent; and that, in the period between 2002 and 2012, SIDS had one of the lowest compound annual growth rates, at 1.23 per cent, as compared to 4.96 per cent for developing countries, 4 per cent for least developed countries and 3.23 per cent for sub-Saharan Africa.

The Saint Lucia Government wants the recommendations of the Samoa Conference to be given the international attention that they deserve. That is critical, considering the fact that along with the specific problems that have been identified as continuing to inhibit sustainable development, the instability of the present international economic system only serves to aggravate the precarious position of small States. In that connection, we stress, as we did when addressing the Assembly last year, the importance of assistance arrangements, including further development of the Adaptation Fund so that our countries can cope with the negative effects of sea level rise.

In view of Saint Lucia’s urgent requirements, we also emphasize assistance for the construction of facilities that can protect our countries against untimely natural disasters due to climate change. Losses from disasters in SIDS continue unabated and continue to outstrip our capacity to cope. Over the past decade, many SIDS have lost considerable momentum in their development progress by having to contend with post-disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction costs, which invariably have brought increased debt. The Caribbean has been a particular victim of those events since I spoke here last year, and we hope that following the recent Samoa Conference, a certain urgency will be attached to the matter.

Saint Lucia would like to reiterate a few points.

First, we emphasize the persistent use of diplomacy as a prime instrument for the pursuit of normalized relations among all States.

Second, the rapidly changing nature of international relations mandates the need to subject the United Nations system to new levels of critical examination, with the central objective of strengthening the internal machinery of our Organization and reforming it to truly reflect today’s geopolitical reality.

Third, we must as an international community do all within our power to ensure that the Cold War does not resume even though the post-Cold War dividends have not yet materialized for much of humankind. Now is an excellent time to divest ourselves of any residual effects of the Cold War, such as the blockade imposed on our sister island of Cuba and to remove Cuba from the so-called terrorist watch list.

Fourth, we make a plea for reparations as a matter of principle.

Fifth, we must take advantage of new, meaningful opportunities for cooperation and partnership, not only with traditional partners but also, setting aside long-standing geopolitical contentions, with a range of non-traditional partners, such as Taiwan.

Sixth, developed countries should not pursue trade and macroeconomic approaches that are detrimental to the well-being of small island developing States.

Seventh, we must determine a clear and effective strategy by which SIDS can translate the outcomes of the Samoa Conference into concrete results — results that build on existing international commitments and include the means of implementation to support the national and regional development efforts of SIDS. Without that, the Samoa Conference could be construed, in the words of the late Martin Luther King, Jr., “as a meaningless drama on the stage of history ... shrouded with the ugly garments of shame”.

Eighth, Saint Lucia stands for freedom, democracy, non-discrimination, sustainable development, poverty eradication and special and differential treatment for SIDS, all of which are important ingredients of our most precious pursuits and aspirations: peace and prosperity for our people, the recovery and resilience of our Caribbean region and stability and security in our world.

Finally, it is fitting and opportune that as we ponder the possibilities of “Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda”, we deliberate carefully on the opportunities and alternatives to the current world order. We must look to our past to understand our present, and we must plan our future by analysing our present and applying the lessons of our past. It is in that connection that I feel compelled to conclude by inviting careful consideration of the words of the late United States President Woodrow Wilson, who asserted America’s historical leadership and commitment to international democracy and freedom in these words: “We shall fight ... for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations”.

**The Acting President:** I now call on His Excellency Mr. Rimbink Pato, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Trade and Immigration of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea.

**Mr. Pato** (Papua New Guinea): Allow me, on behalf of the Government of Papua New Guinea, to congratulate Mr. Sam Kutesa on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. Papua New Guinea supports his leadership as we work with him on the ambitious theme of “Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda”. I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to Ambassador John Ashe for his strong leadership in setting the stage for enhancing the sustainable development agenda of Member States, especially of small island developing States (SIDS). We also commend the Secretary-General for his leadership and untiring commitment to advancing the cause of global peace and security to enhance the multidimensional global development agenda.

It has been a long and sometimes hard road for the people of Fiji over the past eight years. We therefore warmly congratulate the people of Fiji for their return to constitutional and democratic rule following their general elections this year. We welcome the return of Fiji to the Commonwealth and to the Pacific Islands Forum. In wishing the people of Fiji well, Papua New Guinea will continue to stand ready to assist them, as it has done in the past, along with other major Pacific partners, in areas where such assistance can be effective as Fiji embarks on its new path forward.

The recent third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in Samoa, was a great success. We commend the adoption of the Small Island

Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action/Samoa Pathway, which reiterated the sustainable development priorities of SIDS, which has been affirmed by the international community.

But the impacts of climate change continue to pose a serious challenge to the sustainable development of SIDS. The full range of damaging events — such as rising sea levels, coastal erosion, salinization of the fresh water table, prolonged and severe droughts, flooding and other extreme weather and loss of and damage to vital infrastructure — remains a constant concern for SIDS. Many SIDS, especially in the Pacific, have reached a tipping point. While the right thing for us to do is to respond to the challenges by working smarter and harder to improve the livelihoods of people at risk, the bigger and advanced countries of the world must not only do likewise; they must also redouble their efforts in partnering with us.

As part of our support to Pacific SIDS, Papua New Guinea has launched the Pacific Development Assistance Programme, which is aimed at assisting Pacific SIDS in critical areas of development such as education, health, capacity-building, climate change and the reconstruction of important infrastructure after natural disasters. We reiterate our call on the international community, including the United Nations, to work together with SIDS in the spirit of genuine and durable partnership.

We commend the Secretary-General for convening the successful Climate Summit last week. In supporting the outcomes, we must build on the political momentum generated as we move towards Lima this year and, importantly, towards Paris in 2015, where the international community must conclude a legally binding agreement in order for us to collectively address the adverse impacts of climate change.

The international community stands at an important crossroads. The imminent deadline of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the transition to the post-2015 development agenda have rightly become the centre stage of the global agenda. We support a people-centered and transformative post-2015 development agenda underpinned by global partnerships that support national ownership of sustainable development.

We welcome the adoption by the General Assembly, by resolution 68/309, of the report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (A/68/970),

which recommended 17 goals. We must chart a realistic path, with goals that are attainable given the necessary means of implementation. We also commend the work of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing, which is critical to the successful implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

In that respect, the Pacific island developing States note with appreciation the inclusion of the important proposed stand-alone goals on oceans and seas, sustainable energy and climate change. Along with the other proposed goals, those goals should form the basis for the intergovernmental negotiations that are to take place. Papua New Guinea will participate in those negotiations.

My Government remains fully committed to those efforts because we have experienced the galvanizing impact of the MDGs, which has helped us take national ownership and develop a home-grown sustainable development paradigm. While my country's MDG scorecard remains a work in progress, my Government has undertaken various initiatives to redress the situation. We have retailored the MDGs to our national priorities, with 88 indicators connecting them to our national development plans.

A recent report by the United Nations country office on progress to achieve the MDGs was optimistic and positive. The report found that Papua New Guinea had made important strides towards achieving the MDGs, especially since the general elections in 2012. They include the bold decision to run budget deficits until 2017, which, the report notes, has enabled the nation to invest in essential areas.

My Government is implementing a policy of free education for all primary-school children, resulting in an increase in school enrolments by as much as 80 per cent in some areas. We now have around 2 million children in schools. In the health sector, we are witnessing a reduction of rates in early child and maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS, malaria and other communicable diseases. More mothers and children are getting access to health care as a result of our free health-care policy. Our infrastructure development programme is improving Papua New Guinea's business environment and creating opportunities for our people to participate meaningfully in national development.

A key cornerstone of our development road map is a people-centred focus on population management

and stabilization. It entails empowering individuals to take leadership and full responsibility to improve their livelihoods through appropriate measures. Our economy has grown over the last decade at an average rate of 6 to 8 per cent per annum, and is projected to reach 20 per cent in 2015. That growth is transforming our country, especially with revenue from the completion of our first liquefied natural gas project and its exports.

This is a new economic and development age for our economy. The unprecedented and transformative economic progress will coincide with the pursuit of the post-2015 development agenda. We are clearly focused on actively participating in the process and in its implementation at the national and regional levels. Our Government is fully committed to ensuring that we manage the transformation carefully and effectively. Our challenge is to ensure that the growth delivers the maximum benefit to our citizens.

Recently, our Government launched a \$100 million initiative with our leading national bank, the Bank of the South Pacific, to make home loans more affordable for our citizens. We are also facilitating financial inclusion services for our people. We are grateful to our development partners, including the United Nations, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Japan, China and the European Union. My Government has helped with the capital for the first national women's bank and for microcredit schemes to help our people at the grass-roots level become owners and drivers of their future well-being. In addition, we are giving priority to small and medium enterprises to drive national development.

Furthermore, my Government is developing a national statistics development strategy to provide a road map for Papua New Guinea to continually improve and update the collection and management of its statistical information in order to improve decision-making. That includes embarking on a national biometric identification card system to record and maintain the population information of our citizens.

Despite our economic growth, social issues remain a challenge. My Government values our women and girls, who constitute half of our population, as equal development partners. We are making sure that gender empowerment and equality continue to be a cornerstone of our responsible sustainable development. We therefore support the work of UN-Women.

I am pleased to inform the Assembly that my Government has committed record funding of

\$10 million this year for various initiatives, including partnering with the United Nations Population Fund to make available 40,000 contraceptive implants as important intervention measures for the health of our women and girls of child-bearing age. That will be scaled up to \$20 million by 2015. My Government, in partnership with our development partners, is also investing in upgrading vital midwifery skills, along with enhancing our health referral systems to address complicated pregnancies. As a member of the Executive Board of UNICEF, we will promote and participate in the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

My Government welcomes and pledges our support for the President's timely agenda for strengthening international peace and security. As a responsible Member of the United Nations, we are committed to fostering global peace and security. As such, my country is deploying a modest level of troops to the United Nations peacekeeping missions in the Sudan and South Sudan. As our capacity grows, we intend to contribute more.

We are concerned about the increasing conflicts and tensions in many parts of the world, particularly those involving non-State actors. An unacceptable heavy toll of destruction is exacted upon millions of innocent children, women and men, often uprooted from their homes, dislocated and downtrodden and their dignity humiliated. We must rebuke and unite against the rising tide of intolerance, bigotry and hatred under various banners.

We again condemn terrorism in all its manifestations. We join the international community to combat that global threat. Our support for Security Council resolution 2178 (2014) against terrorism, which was recently adopted, is a reaffirmation that inhuman atrocities committed cannot and should not be condoned by the international community. Those responsible for such inhuman atrocities must be held accountable.

We are also concerned by the rising tensions between and within certain countries and the re-emergence of the ugly head of another potential arms race. The world does not need that; rather, we must recommit our efforts for global disarmament that supports a transformative development agenda that brings long-lasting improvement in the livelihoods of people everywhere.

The Ebola crisis is a concern that is not limited just to West Africa. It is an international crisis, one which we, the international community, must address together as we have done with severe acute respiratory syndrome and HIV/AIDS. Those diseases and pandemics do not recognize national sovereign borders. Like other countries, Papua New Guinea has taken appropriate measures to address the potential spread of Ebola.

We note with concern that progress in the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism has been slow. We need to strengthen efforts to complete that process. Papua New Guinea urges the implementation of the report and conclusions of the United Nations visiting mission to New Caledonia this year, and thereby calls on the United Nations and the international community, particularly the administering Power, to support the process of decolonization under the Noumea Accord. The Summit of the Melanesian Spearhead Group in June 2013 supported through a declaration the efforts of the Front de libération nationale kanak et socialiste in New Caledonia.

*Mr. Emiliou (Cyprus), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

Papua New Guinea strongly believes that the international community is a better, more secure and harmonious place because of the United Nations. Certainly there are areas in the United Nations where reform is required, as is the case with any large organization. We need to recommit ourselves to the areas where the Organization has been successful, and in other areas we need to build adequate systems. Our ultimate objective must be to promote a more effective, more accountable, more responsive and more caring United Nations — a United Nations capable of meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Papua New Guinea therefore shares the President's intention to further reform, rejuvenate and strengthen the Security Council to allow for equitable geographic representation. Regrettably, that important organ does not reflect today's geopolitical realities. We again join many other Member States in calling for the reform of the Security Council in both categories of membership.

At this time next year we will be celebrating 40 years of nation-building in Papua New Guinea, just as the United Nations commemorates its seventieth anniversary. We continue to be a proud, united country of many diverse cultures and peoples speaking more than 800 languages. We are also rapidly transforming

our traditional way of life to that of a modern country in just one generation.

In conclusion, I recommit my country to the ideals of the Charter of the United Nations and pledge to work closely with all other Member States to collaborate on solutions to the many issues we all face as humankind.

**The Acting President:** I now call on His Excellency Leonardo Arizaga, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs and Political Integration of Ecuador.

**Mr. Arizaga (Ecuador)** (*spoke in Spanish*): What an honour it is to be at the General Assembly and to represent Ecuador and our citizens' revolution. I would like to begin by congratulating President Sam Kutesa on his election to lead the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I want him to know that he will have the full support of the delegation of Ecuador during his tenure. Similarly, I want to express Ecuador's appreciation and gratitude to our brother John Ashe for his work at the head of the General Assembly. I wish to convey the brotherly greetings and solidarity of President Rafael Correa, Minister Ricardo Patiño and the citizens' revolution.

Four years ago today, Ecuador suffered an attempted coup d'état in which there was an attempt against the life of the President of the Republic, Rafael Correa Delgado. Four years ago, democracy in Ecuador was threatened, but it prevailed. The international community's condemnation was immediate. Countries, particularly those in the region, and the United Nations and other international organizations supported the millions of Ecuadorians who took to the streets and squares of my country, condemning the use of violence, rejecting the coup d'état, channelling the aspirations of all sectors of the population and consolidating democracy in my country.

I would like to convey my appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who immediately made statements bringing that issue to the world's attention and sent a special mission to Ecuador to assess the situation. The effective work of Assistant Secretary-General Oscar Fernandez-Taranco and his team deserves to be remembered and appreciated.

Democracy in Ecuador was strengthened, the coup plotters were isolated and the law and the will of the people, as expressed at the ballot box, prevailed over the interests of small, but powerful, groups, which were then left behind in history. On the night of 30 September 2010, all the Heads of State of the Union

of South American Nations (UNASUR) met in Buenos Aires to support the Ecuadorian Government and President Rafael Correa. As a result of that meeting, the 12 countries of South America adopted an additional protocol to the Constitutive Treaty of UNASUR, which added a democratic clause that seeks to discourage a breakdown of, or threat to, democracy in the region. In Ecuador and in South America we are not returning to the past; we cannot return to the past. The use of force as a means of expression and of resolving differences will not return. That became clear on 30 September 2010. We have chosen the path of law and dialogue to build a better world and future for our peoples.

The Government of Ecuador — the Government of the citizens' revolution — has suggested the implementation of a radical change in the State's structures and its political and development model. Ecuador's position internationally is therefore in line with that reality. "Sumak Kawsay", which in the language of our ancestors means "living well", is built on a daily basis through a new model based on a socially inclusive and supportive economy, supported through a citizen-based democracy and sustained in its planning. The changes made by the Government of the citizens' revolution in Ecuador are clearly in line with the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 agenda and reflect the values encapsulated in the Human Development Index of the United Nations. Let me briefly mention some of the achievements of the citizens' revolution over the past seven and a half years.

Approximately 1,136,000 Ecuadorians — 10 per cent of the population — have been lifted out of poverty. We reduced the rate of unemployment to 4.9 per cent in 2013, which is the lowest in Latin America. We have maintained a policy of wage increases, and Ecuador now has the highest rates in real values in the region. Moreover, Ecuador is the leader in Latin America and the Caribbean in reducing inequality, which is a major problem afflicting our region. The country's competitiveness is no longer based on labour scarcity or exploitation, but rather on public investment in roads, ports, airports, telecommunications, power generation and systems of justice and security for our citizens. Public investment in Ecuador is the highest in the continent, at 15 per cent of our gross domestic product (GDP) in 2013 — three times the Latin American average. Thanks to that effort, we have moved up 15 places in terms of our competitiveness, according to the World Economic Forum.

We have universal basic education, which fulfils one of the 2015 Millennium Development Goals. Child and youth labour have been substantially reduced. There are 82 public schools that have been registered with the International Baccalaureate Organization, and it is expected that, by 2017, 500 schools will offer the International Baccalaureate. Thanks to the educational changes under way in Ecuador, 179,290 students have moved from the private education system to the public education system. In other words, in the past two years, 19 per cent of students left private schools to study in State schools. As I said, we are experiencing a true revolution in education.

Ecuador has invested some 2 per cent of our GDP in higher education, which is more than double the average for Latin America. In the seven and a half years it has been in office, the Government of Ecuador has funded 8,000 scholars abroad, most of whom are enrolled in masters and doctoral programmes at the best universities in the world. That represents the largest investment in scholarships in terms of GDP in Latin America.

I have mentioned all those achievements of our citizens' revolution — and many more exist, but I cannot mention them owing to a lack of time — because those achievements were at stake on 30 September 2010, four years ago today. Those advances were made possible because democracy prevailed and because the Government of Ecuador continues to work for the well-being of its people.

The most important challenge facing the Ecuadorian State, along with the fight against poverty, is changing its economy, and that means changing the production matrix of our country. To ensure sustainability in our domestic and production model, we are committed to boosting our productive development, trade flows and non-speculative foreign direct investment in target sectors, such as technology transfers and the financing of strategic projects. The fundamental objective of Ecuador's foreign policy is therefore to assist in promoting the internal development of the country, balancing that with its international relations. That means expanding its political, trade, economic and social networks with an alternative and complementary view of the integration scheme that the country has traditionally had at the global level.

Ecuador reiterates its concern with regard to the challenge of global warming. As we change our production and energy model, my country is promoting

the generation of renewable energy sources with fewer greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere, the mass use of induction cookers and the optimization of the use of raw materials, reducing waste as much as possible. However, the ability of developing countries to meet the goals of a post-2015 development agenda is directly proportionate to developed countries' continuing provision of resources aimed at the timely implementation of plans and projects for addressing natural disasters caused by weather events exacerbated by human activity, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

My country was grateful for the Secretary-General's invitation to the Climate Summit held here on 23 September. We are pleased with the decisions some developed countries have made on their national plans for mitigating and adapting to climate change, particularly the announcement by some, including France, that they would be increasing the capitalization of the Green Climate Fund. Despite those efforts, the Fund will not reach its target of \$15 billion by the end of the year. We, the developing world, would like to see more ambitious national plans and policies on the part of the developed countries if the global consequences of this irrefutable scientific reality are to be addressed.

Ecuador's foreign policy is now making it a priority to strengthen South-South relations with a view to the sovereign integration of our peoples and the creation of new areas for regional governance. In that regard, Ecuador is working to achieve harmonious South American and Latin American integration, to build a multipolar world and to democratize our international organizations, with the goal of creating a more just and equitable world order. We are promoting multilateralism and working on innovative integration processes, cooperation for development and a harmonious political dialogue. In that context, UNASUR, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) are very relevant entities and are national priorities in our efforts to create improved integration mechanisms.

Regarding UNASUR, I am pleased to announce that its new headquarters will soon open in Quito, at the centre of the world, the point where two hemispheres and the South American brotherhood meet. In January 2015 Ecuador will take over the rotating chairship of CELAC, with the purpose of reinvigorating the regional integration agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean

and furthering our political cooperation, while continuing to base integration on respect for pluralism and States' diversity. The Government of Ecuador initiated the creation of this integration mechanism, and it has been a major undertaking. CELAC does not exclude any Latin American or Caribbean State; we have firmly rejected unilateral embargoes and sanctions, and our ongoing struggle is about fighting inequality and poverty.

We must overcome and end injustice. It is therefore unacceptable that the United States of America's blockade of our sister Republic of Cuba has been going on for more than 50 years, and that despite the fact that Cuba has been supported by the Assembly for 21 years. We also condemn Cuba's inclusion in the list of countries that sponsor terrorism.

We would like to reiterate once more that we must call for a settlement through dialogue of the conflict over Argentina's Malvinas Islands. The United Kingdom should comply with the more than 40 resolutions adopted by the Assembly on the subject. We also support Argentina in its efforts to address the pernicious effects of speculative hedge funds. Argentina is not alone in that fight, and it can count on the backing and solidarity of Ecuador and our entire region.

Concerning Palestine, I would like to state that on 17 July the Government of Ecuador firmly condemned Israel's military incursion into Palestinian territory and called for an immediate end to Israel's military operations and the indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population in the Gaza Strip. My country has appealed to the international community to shoulder its responsibility for preventing such indiscriminate attacks in the interests of saving innocent lives and maintaining international peace and security. As proof of our support for the Palestinian cause, Ecuador decided to establish a diplomatic presence there, and it is now up and running in Ramallah. Meanwhile, just a few days ago we sent humanitarian assistance to Gaza, and we will shortly send a second humanitarian assistance convoy there for the use of the Palestinian national authorities.

In 2016 Ecuador will host the Africa-South America Summit, a responsibility requiring considerable preparation and providing an opportunity to draw up joint policies that unite us with our African brothers. The time has come to further strengthen the relationship between Africa and Latin America, and Ecuador has therefore decided to open new embassies

in Algeria, Nigeria and Angola in the near future. We will also strengthen our existing embassies in Africa, and we will be opening additional diplomatic missions there in a second phase. We intend to work with our African brothers for our mutual benefit and shared opportunities.

For Ecuador, it is a source of pride and a heavy responsibility to be hosting the forthcoming third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, Habitat III, in 2016. Thus in one year, 2016, we will host the meetings of the CELAC Heads of State, the Africa-South America Summit and Habitat III.

For over a year, we have undertaken intensive work to address the main issues stemming from the rapid urban growth that we have seen in our countries, issues that were raised at the most recent World Urban Forum, last April in Medellín, Colombia. We hope to continue to generate synergies in order to move towards a new global agenda for sustainable urban development that we will take up at Habitat III.

The Government of Ecuador, in its efforts to build a just and equitable society, has sought in recent years to implement a system of rights in terms of habitat and urban development. The principle guiding its action — “the right to the city” — is understood not as a unitary right, but as a set of interrelated rights linked to the land. Policies for habitat, human settlements and housing are expressions of the State's aspiration to build, as I mentioned, a society of living well, through public regulation in line with the concept that Ecuador promotes, namely, harmony with nature. Ecuador is the only country in the world that sets forth in its Constitution “the right to nature”.

With respect to the reform of the United Nations system, Ecuador has actively and constructively made profound and comprehensive proposals for change in some international organizations, with a view to making them more efficient, democratic, participatory and inclusive. We aspire to their universalization and transparency, as well as to increased and equitable representation, consultation and decision-making on the part of all States, especially the developing countries. Consistent with that, the Government of Ecuador has advocated the reform of the global governance system, in order to democratize decision-making and improve transparency in the management of all multilateral organizations. Many Members of this Organization join us in that approach.

Ecuador proposes marking a turning point with respect to the United Nations system, as with its current structure it is not addressing the international tensions and disputes or the troubled international situation. Ecuador seeks to democratize the Security Council, which should be composed of clusters, in order to find a balance, ensure representativity and protect the principle of the equality of States. Only in that way can the Council play its role in maintaining peace and international security.

We are at the threshold of the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations. We have a historical obligation to modernize and democratize the Organization, strengthening the role of the General Assembly in such decision-making as the election of judges to the International Court of Justice and the election of the Secretary-General.

At present, we are concerned that, despite the progress made in 2014, a great many threats continue to loom over humankind. Situations of armed conflict, humanitarian crises, violations of human rights and breaches of international law threaten entire populations, demanding an urgent response from the international community. The Government of Ecuador has expressed its conviction regarding the need to respect international law and reach negotiated and peaceful solutions. It has totally rejected all forms of interference and unilateral action that violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, trample on human rights or disregard international law. We also strongly condemn all terrorist acts, whether perpetrated by irregular groups or in the name of a State. Ecuador has condemned the actions of the Islamic State in both Iraq and Syria.

Those global challenges must be dealt with by the United Nations, as the most appropriate forum to address and respond to the difficult situations that we are facing. It will surely have the support and solidarity of all Member States.

Let us endeavour to ensure that international law is the standard that governs our actions. A few months ago, in this very Hall, Member States adopted a resolution which called for respect for the right to privacy in the digital age (resolution 68/167). The same label has been applied to another abuse — global surveillance. Once again we are in a situation where we are being monitored and spied on. Ecuador, along with several other countries, co-sponsored a draft resolution put forward by Germany and Brazil and, with the adoption

of that legal instrument, a new process for defining human rights — the right to privacy — was initiated. The resolution, adopted by consensus, constitutes a rejection of an abusive posture. The abuse was brought to our attention by an Australian citizen who felt that the world should know what was being done with sovereignty.

The decision of that Australian citizen led to the harshest persecution, which caused him to seek protection for his life in the light of the real threats he had received. I am referring to Julian Assange, who is now associated with Ecuador because, after reviewing the merits of his case, we granted him asylum. Two years have passed in the new life of Mr. Assange, two years without freedom of movement, two years in which he has been confined to a small space waiting for justice. There it is again, Sir, that dream of justice.

When asylum is granted, it is primarily by immediate recognition and respect for a fundamental human right — the right to life. What has been difficult is convincing the counterpart — the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland — that in this situation the fundamental human rights of Julian Assange should be taken into account. Ecuador will continue to work tirelessly to find a solution in this case. To that end, we hope to have the support of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Kingdom of Sweden.

I appeal to the Kingdom of Sweden to enforce one of the most important legal principles recognized internationally and by the Swedish legal system: effective judicial protection. After four years, the Prosecutor's Office of that country has been unable to take statements from Julian Assange, even though under Swedish law this could have been done in another country, even though Ecuador repeatedly offered its judicial cooperation, and even though Julian Assange's lawyers expressed their willingness to cooperate.

Turning to another subject, and with this I will conclude my statement, I would like to speak about transnational corporations. In recent years, there have been increased demands brought by transnational corporations in international arbitration courts against the States and peoples of the South. Those multimillion dollar disputes, such as the *Chevron-Texaco* case in Ecuador, threaten the tax resources and jeopardize the validity and legitimacy of the national jurisdiction of the States concerned. The scale of the problem could even compromise the development plans of the countries of

the South, in Latin America and other regions of the world.

In that context, we are also establishing, within the framework of UNASUR, a regional arbitration centre that will, inter alia, provide legal advice in investment disputes. We are also creating a code of conduct for arbitrators and mediators within UNASUR. And we are establishing, with other regions of the world, an observatory on transnational corporations. All of that is aimed at creating support mechanisms that can analyse, monitor and respond to States' requests so as to prevent and solve investment disputes. Ecuador, together with South Africa, has also submitted a proposal in the Human Rights Council aimed at creating a binding instrument to impose international human rights legal obligations on transnational corporations. For the time being, a working group is being established to consider that initiative. My country attaches special importance to the matter, and we will work to reach an understanding with States because that is an extremely important issue. We are confident that we will have the States' full support.

Finally, I wish to reiterate to the Secretary-General Ecuador's gratitude for the appointment of the former Vice-President of the Republic, Mr. Lenín Voltaire Moreno Garcés, as Special Envoy on Disability and Accessibility. Ecuador will continue to support all initiatives of the Organization to promote and protect the rights of people with disabilities and their families.

At the beginning of my statement, I pointed out some achievements of the citizens' revolution in the past seven and a half years. The changes brought about have had a profound impact and have caused a historic transformation. My country also wishes to work with all Member States to achieve a true transformation of the United Nations. We have enormous challenges ahead to promote development, maintain peace and reduce inequality and poverty. Ecuador is fully committed to working together on that historic task. I hope to see fellow Member States in the Hall next year at the seventieth session of the General Assembly, when we can then celebrate important decisions that we have taken.

**The Acting President:** I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jean-François Régis Zinsou, chair of the delegation of the Republic of Benin.

**Mr. Zinsou** (Benin) (*spoke in French*): The President of the Republic of Benin, His Excellency

Mr. Thomas Boni Yayi, has asked me to deliver this message to the Assembly on his behalf.

At the outset, I would like to congratulate Mr. Sam Kutesa on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. We pay tribute to the country of Uganda for its leadership. I would also like to congratulate the outgoing President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. John Ashe, whose enthusiasm enabled consensus to be reached on important issues considered during the Assembly's sixty-eighth session. Without a doubt, he successfully fulfilled his mandate, laying the groundwork for the post-2015 development agenda, in particular with the successful conclusion of the work of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. My gratitude also goes to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his continuing efforts to strengthen the role of the United Nations as an effective force for stability, peace, collective security and the promotion of human dignity and sustainable development. I would like to express to him my firm support for his initiatives aimed at easing tensions and settling conflict situations in order to pave the way to building a world that is more just, based on equality, justice, respect for human rights and solidarity among peoples, and to curb climate change.

The theme of the current session, "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda", is of prime importance for the least developed countries (LDCs), a group for which Benin serves as Chair through September 2015. It clearly describes the major work to be done and on which we should focus our energies throughout the Assembly's sixty-ninth session in order to forge consensus around actions to be taken to make "The future we want" a reality. In that regard, the post-2015 development agenda must take into account the lessons learned and experiences acquired throughout the 15 years we have just gone through in the implementation phase of the Millennium Development Goals. Efforts must therefore be pursued to eliminate extreme poverty, promote more equal and inclusive economic growth, establish transparent and responsible institutions that are able to stimulate the process of sustainable development, bring about the professionalization of young people, and create decent jobs for the long term through the implementation of integrated social protection schemes that cover all forms of vulnerability. Once adopted, the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda should receive stepped up attention and energy so that no one will be left behind. The High-level Panel of Eminent Persons

on the Post-2015 Development Agenda have sent the Secretary-General their recommendations on the programme.

The third International Conference on Financing for Development should be prepared with an open mind towards innovation. In that regard, it is important to create strategies and find the means to implement them in order to accelerate structural transformations in the least developed countries so as to reduce the gap that separates them from developed countries, notably with regard to access to the benefits of modernity, and in order to meet basic needs, which should now be seen as a fundamental right to be guaranteed to all human beings. It is necessary to put an end to exclusion in all its forms and at all levels and to integrate all countries affected by marginalization into the global economic growth by re-establishing the balance that has been disrupted among the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely, economic efficiency, social stability and environmental preservation.

I would like to recall that the Istanbul Action Programme set as a major goal halving the number of LDCs by 2020. The Programme made the productive capacity-building of LDCs one of its foremost priorities in order to achieve that goal. With a view to mobilizing the international community to implement that effective programme, in its capacity as Chair of the Global Coordination Bureau of the Group of Least Developed Countries, Benin took the initiative to organize the Ministerial Conference on New Partnerships for Productive Capacity-Building in LDCs, held in Cotonou from 28 to 31 July.

In its resolution 68/224, of 20 December 2013, the General Assembly expressed its expectations with regard to the outcomes of the Ministerial Conference. Today, I can report those outcomes to the Assembly. The Ministerial Conference adopted the Cotonou Agenda for productive capacity-building in LDCs. It advocated innovative approaches in that area through specific recommendations both for LDCs and for their development partners. It also requested that the General Assembly include on its agenda for the sixty-ninth session the issue of productive capacity-building in LDCs.

*The President took the Chair.*

On behalf of the Government and people of Benin, I would like to thank our partners, in particular, Turkey, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain

and Italy, for their contribution to the success of that Conference, which is of historic importance to LDCs, since it affects a crucial aspect of their development and of their integration into the world economy. I would also like to thank Belgium, co-Chair of the Group of Friends of LDCs, and the European Union, which assisted in implementing the initiative. The Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, the United Nations specialized agencies, funds and programmes, civil society and the private sector provided valuable technical support for the knowledgeable preparation of the Ministerial Conference. The Cotonou Agenda for productive capacity-building in LDCs will clearly be a road map for promoting the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

In 2015, we will undertake a comprehensive review of the major efforts undertaken and the results achieved in all areas targeted by the Millennium Development Goals. The most recent performance assessments put Benin, my country, among the leading 20 countries for the greatest progress made in absolute terms of the proportion of their population that has emerged from poverty. Benin, my country, is singled out by the introduction of free kindergartens and primary education and the provision of facilities at the secondary and higher education levels for pupils and students in need, thereby allowing a significant increase in school enrolment, in particular among girls.

In the area of health, the actions of my Government have improved the management and provision of services for the prevention of mother-to-child HIV/AIDS transmission, nutrition, water supply, hygiene and sanitation. On the basis of the established health-care infrastructure network, the Government was able to launch a universal health insurance plan, which provides a level of social protection to people at an affordable cost. The provision by the State of Caesarean operations, as well as free health care to children under 5 years of age, have also been life-saving measures for thousands of Beninese families. Also, efforts have been made by the Government of Benin to alleviate poverty by providing substantial support to microcredit institutions. That has had a significant impact on improving the living conditions of many rural populations.

The willingness of development partners to support Benin in its vision for long-term development and in underpinning the progress made in the areas of policy and administrative governance, the management of social justice and the economic governance was strengthened by the very encouraging results of the round table on Financing for Development in Benin, held in Paris from 17 to 19 June, with funding commitments to the tune of approximately \$12 billion over a period of five years.

The facts demonstrate every day that peace, security, good governance at the national and the international levels and the flawless exercise of sovereign functions by States are the best guarantees for international peace, security and stability. In that regard, it is urgent to strengthen the effectiveness of the United Nations with regard to efforts to ensure better conflict prevention and to combat injustice and the various forms of criminality rampant in the world. In that connection, with regard to Africa, in general, and the Sahel region, in particular, it is necessary to improve the United Nations support mechanism in order to prevent further conflict and to promote the necessary stability for the development of the States of the region.

There is a crucial need to address the root causes of conflicts, which, at the global level, are used as a pretext for extremism and terrorist organizations. I would like to welcome the mobilization of the international community and the steadfastness of the United Nations in response to the actions of those armed groups. Thanks to the effectiveness of the actions undertaken, the main theatres of conflict in Africa are seeing an easing of tension. Benin will continue to provide its modest but quality contribution to United Nations peacekeeping in that regard.

Coastal African States, in particular those in the Gulf of Guinea, also face piracy and armed robbery at sea, as well as transnational organized crime. That greatly hampers their economic growth. The steps taken to address such criminality have clearly produced encouraging results. However, we need to further strengthen those steps through the ongoing vigilance and greater support of the international community in order to rapidly implement the measures adopted on the basis of the outcome of the ministerial meeting held in Cotonou on 18 and 19 March 2013 and the summit held in Yaoundé on 24 and 25 June 2013 with regard to the

implementation of Security Council resolutions 2018 (2011) and 2039 (2012).

Moreover, the tranquillity of West African nations has been shaken for some months by the outbreak of the Ebola virus, whose rapid spread has already caused more than 3,000 deaths, half the number of those infected. The scale of the phenomenon requires the deployment of a coordinated health mechanism throughout the countries of the region in order to contain it.

From this rostrum, I commend the diligence shown by the Secretary-General and by the World Health Organization in leading the international community to take measures commensurate with the challenge to humankind and to establish a series of emergency measures to counter and to contain that global threat beyond the affected States. The crisis underscores the need to promote human security and, in particular, health security in order to increase the resilience of populations.

The state of the world is undoubtedly taking a very worrying turn. Humankind is at a crossroads. It is more necessary than ever that the United Nations affirm its leadership so as to reverse the alarming trends. In that regard, it is urgent to find a negotiated solution to the situation in the Middle East, which has continued for too long. Maintaining the status quo is untenable in all respects. The recognition of Palestine as a sovereign State and a full Member of the United Nations, living in harmony with Israel, cannot be delayed any longer. Such recognition will clearly facilitate the momentum for reducing tensions in the Middle East and establish favourable conditions for a just and lasting settlement of the other conflicts and complex problems afflicting that region.

Benin deplores the escalation of violence in Ukraine and the radicalization of the parties to the conflict, which is leading to increase in the loss of human lives and the damage suffered by the affected civilian populations. I would also urge the United Nations to work towards the settlement of that conflict in the higher interest of international peace and security.

In addition, Benin advocates for the peaceful settlement of existing disputes in the context of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. We call for the mobilization of the international community with regard to the holding and the success of the next Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the

Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapon, with an African Chair. We draw the Assembly's attention to the issue of the funding for the preparations for the Review Conference, the responsibility for which cannot rest solely with the upcoming Chair, particularly since that country is an LDC.

The universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights are fundamental values for Benin. We are strongly committed to human dignity and the sacred nature of human life. For that reason, out of a national belief, Benin acceded to the international instrument for the abolition of the death penalty. That enables us to join the countries at the forefront of the global campaign for the abolition of that form of punishment. We welcome that commitment.

That campaign must continue so that the idea that the death penalty, far from serving justice, instead represents a failure of justice is more broadly shared. The increasing number of countries that support the moratorium or have acceded to it by law or in deed strengthens our hope for the universal abolition of the death penalty. In the context of that campaign, the Government of Benin, in cooperation with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, organized a regional conference on the abolition of the death penalty in Africa in Cotonou from 2 to 4 July. The conference called on African States to abolish the death penalty throughout the continent.

My Government remains committed to strengthening the principles of democracy and the rule of law and the implementation of effective development policies. That is why my Government strives daily to find ways and means of strengthening those norms in Benin, which requires the creation of jobs and opportunities for all. That noble goal can be achieved only by effectively combating corruption.

The difficult times that the world is currently experiencing require both globally and nationally a united front in support of the values of mutual respect, solidarity, inter-faith dialogue and, in particular, ongoing talks between Muslim and Christian leaders in order to establish a common space of friendship, essential to the flourishing of peoples. Taking into account the seriousness of that problem in Africa, my Government decided to support an initiative of the Pan-African Social Prospects Centre, headquartered in Benin, to hold an international symposium on Islamic-Christian dialogue in Cotonou in March 2015. That multifaceted project seeks to promote education on

peace and development among peoples in the context of a harmonious coexistence of religions. I encourage all people of goodwill to respect such ideals and to support Benin's initiative.

In conclusion, I recall the need for intensified negotiations to achieve the reform of the United Nations, in particular, the Security Council. Benin strongly hopes that in 2015, the seventieth anniversary of the Organization will be marked by the adoption of significant measures commensurate with the challenges and opportunities of the new era in order to make the composition of the Council fairer and more representative and its working methods more inclusive so that it can fulfil its mandate more effectively.

Moreover, all our efforts must seek to achieve our shared desire to see the United Nations regain its full capacity to promote an inclusive, transparent and more effective global governance in the context of productive multilateralism so as to build a balanced world order that promotes stability and harmony to the clear benefit of our peoples. In such conditions, all Member States would be able to take the virtuous path of sustainable development and shared prosperity so that equality, peace, brotherhood and the effective solidarity of nations lead to that better world for which we yearn.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the chair of the delegation of Solomon Islands.

**Mr. Beck** (Solomon Islands): On behalf of the Government and people of Solomon Islands, I extend warm congratulations to you, Sir, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. My delegation reaffirms the core function of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative body on all global issues. We look forward to working with you in "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda", which is the theme that you have chosen for this session.

My delegation pays tribute to your predecessor, Mr. John Ashe, who has done a sterling job in setting the stage for a post-2015 development agenda. Under his watch, he convened four high-level events and two thematic debates in shaping the new development paradigm. President Ashe also guided the work of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals in developing universal sustainable development goals (SDGs). Today, we have 17 carefully crafted and delicately

balanced SDGs, accompanied by 169 targets. A means of implementation is attached to each goal, which, if honoured, will trigger a seismic shift in the way that we do business.

We look forward to the Secretary-General's post-2015 synthesis report later this year. That report will provide a structure for our post-2015 negotiations. My delegation is mindful of the fact that the outcome of the third International Conference on Financing for Development, scheduled for mid-2015, will feed into the negotiation process. Solomon Islands commits itself to ensuring that our people own and buy into the post-2015 development agenda.

The Solomon Islands' scorecard on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) remains mixed across all eight Goals. We are on track for achieving some of them, off track for others and in the process for three Goals. However, we remain committed to consolidating our MDG gains and are beginning to build the foundation for integrating a new development agenda nationally at all levels.

If sustainable development is to grow roots in any country, it needs to be nurtured in a politically stable environment. The Solomon Islands National Parliament passed the Political Party Integrity Bill in May. The act allows political parties to develop and to operate in a regulated and systematic manner, thereby instilling a predictable and stable political atmosphere, which is an essential condition for development.

I am pleased to inform the Assembly that, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, the Honourable Gordon Darcy Lilo, the ninth Solomon Islands Parliament concluded its four-year term early this month. As the people anxiously look forward to exercising their right to vote in the forthcoming national general election, we will do so using the biometric voter system for the first time. As a young democratic State, we are constantly improving our governance system and correcting past election irregularities. We could not have achieved that without international support and partnership. To our partners, I convey once again the deep appreciation and gratitude of Solomon Islands.

Solomon Islands would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate both Fiji and New Zealand on their newly elected Governments and Parliaments. We stand ready to strengthen our bilateral relations with our two neighbours and to address issues of mutual concern. We also convey our best wishes to the

Kingdom of Tonga for its November national general elections.

Solomon Islands has continued to serve on the Executive Board of UN-Women. Gender-based violence is a major economic leakage in any country's development. It reduces women's productivity in all three dimensions of sustainable development. Gender-based violence also imposes a cost on the wider society. Last month, the Solomon Islands National Parliament met its international obligation under the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and adopted family protection legislation. The act protects families from domestic violence, deals with perpetrators and provides practical support to victims of violence. The legislation has received strong national visibility and promotes gender equality. Solomon Islands wishes to acknowledge UN-Women's Markets for Change project in the country. The project aims to improve market governance and on-site services for women. It recognizes and addresses our rural women's challenges and will, hopefully, encourage more women to engage in economic activities.

The year 2015 marks the twentieth anniversary of the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women. Solomon Islands conducted a national review on its implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and has identified three areas of achievements: recognition of gender equality, the economic empowerment of women and awareness of gender-based violence. We believe in the notion that progress for women is progress for all. We remain committed to implementing the Platform for Action.

The third International Conference on Small Islands Developing States (SIDS), convened in Samoa, reaffirmed SIDS as a special case for sustainable development given their unique and particular vulnerability. The once-in-a-decade Conference adopted the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway, which outlines 19 priority areas. The outcome document (A/CONF.223/3, annex) calls for a comprehensive review of United Nations support to SIDS.

In that connection, Solomon Islands seeks closer relations with the United Nations. We would like to see the United Nations Development Programme Subregional Office in Solomon Islands upgraded to the status of country office. After more than three decades of the United Nations managing Solomon

Islands relations from abroad, it is time to invest in such relations in my capital.

With regard to a related matter, Solomon Islands continues to be underrepresented in the composition of United Nations staff. However, we are grateful for and welcome the United Nations annual recruitment drive in Solomon Islands and hope to fill our employment quota soon, with Solomon islanders joining the diverse United Nations staff.

Health remains a precondition for sustainable development. Solomon Islands has continued to demonstrate its commitment to improving the health of its people. In July, the first 20 Solomon Islands doctors graduated from medical schools in Cuba. Solomon Islands would like to thank Cuba for the scholarships awarded to the doctors, as well as to the remaining 80 Solomon Islands medical students. This year alone, we will witness more than 30 new doctors joining our health services. It is the vision of the Government to double the number of doctors in the country in the next two years, to continue to strengthen our health-care infrastructure, putting in place health and social protection systems, and to work towards making health-care coverage in Solomon Islands universal.

Solomon Islands joins the international community in calling for the lifting of the economic and financial blockade imposed on Cuba by our friend and partner, the United States of America. After more than five decades of sanctions on Cuba, it is time to reset relations between the two neighbours on the basis of good-neighbourly relations and respect for territorial integrity and political sovereignty.

One of the principles of the SDGs is that we must not leave anyone behind. There are States knocking at the door of the United Nations, ready to take on multilateral responsibilities. The Republic of China on Taiwan continues to seek full and effective participation with three United Nations specialized bodies, namely, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

Those United Nations bodies deal with urgent global issues in which we all have an interest — from climate change to the evolving health challenges. ICAO works to keep our travelling public and air services safe. I wish to note that 45 million passengers passed through the Republic of China, Taiwan, in 2012. We

do not have the luxury of time to turn a blind eye to the required cooperation. The global challenges before us are too great for narrow interests to adopt a wait-and-see approach and to keep postponing action that is needed.

The Republic of China, Taiwan, is a country that has transformed itself from a developing country into an industrialized one. It is the twenty-seventh-largest economy in the world and has experience, technology and capability from which our shared agenda can benefit. We have all to gain and nothing to lose by inviting the Republic of China, Taiwan, to become the 195th member of the UNFCCC, the 192nd member of ICAO and the 195th member of the WHO.

The Solomon Islands partnership with the Pacific Islands Forum, under the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands, continues to create positive conditions, allowing the country to begin a limited rearmament of its police force. The private sector and the international community have responded to the changing environment, with the European Union upgrading its representation in my capital, Honiara, and more and more non-traditional partners accrediting their envoys to Solomon Islands. A new commercial bank was incorporated and entered the Solomon Islands market, making it the fourth commercial bank to provide financial services to our vibrant population.

Sustainable development for Solomon Islands, as a coastal State, includes its seabed resources beyond its 1.3-million-square-kilometre exclusive economic zone. The Solomon Islands has registered a number of continental shelf claims with the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS). My delegation is pleased to see that one of the claims is now being examined by the Subcommittee of the CLCS. We look forward to further engagement with the Subcommittee during the course of this session.

The world is facing a series of crisis and conflicts in Africa, the Middle East and now in Europe. In dealing with conflicts, we must exert greater effort in seeking the peaceful settlement of disputes. We must collectively counter extremism, terrorism and crimes against humanity, and protect civilians, operating within the letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations.

As the principal organ of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council must be part of that solution.

Despite the call of world leaders for the speedy reform of the Security Council in 2005, nine years on we are still working at it. At the tenth intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform in July, there was overwhelming support for the expansion of Security Council membership and for making the Council more representative and accountable in terms of improving its working methods. An advisory group mandated by your predecessor, Mr. President, produced a non-paper. It provided structure to the last session's discussions and can be used as a basis for negotiations during this session. We look to you for leadership on that.

Turning now to the recent outbreak of Ebola, the gravity, scale and spread of the Ebola virus in West Africa is unprecedented and demands urgent international cooperation. The Ebola disease has halted services and disrupted the lives of many people in the affected countries. The Solomon Islands supports our Secretary-General's action to establish the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response, and acknowledges global efforts in mobilization of resources to combat the disease as a matter of urgency.

As stated by other delegations, decolonization remains an unfinished business of the United Nations. If we are to deliver on the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, we will need the cooperation of all parties — including the administering Powers, the Non-Self-Governing Territories, and regional and subregional organizations — to honour their commitments under the Charter of the United Nations and the 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), made up of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and the Front de libération nationale kanak socialiste, continues to follow the question of New Caledonia in the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization (Committee of 24). The Group welcomed the Committee's visit to New Caledonia in March, and noted its concerns relating to the Territory's electoral process and needed legislation in keeping within the spirit of the Nouméa Accord. Those issues have implications in preparing for a credible referendum process, consistent and in conformity with the universally accepted principles and practices of self-determination, as defined by resolution 1514 (XV) and other relevant resolutions of the Assembly.

My delegation would also like to acknowledge the diligent work of the Committee of 24 in examining the

question of French Polynesia. Solomon Islands continues to reaffirm its support for the inalienable rights of the people of French Polynesia to self-determination, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. It is our hope that the Decolonization Committee will soon visit the Non-Self-Governing Territory, in cooperation with the administering Power.

Solomon Islands, as a member of the MSG, is working in collaboration with Indonesia on human rights concerns in Papua and West Papua, the two easternmost provinces of the Republic of Indonesia. On 21 May, Solomon Islands established its Embassy in Jakarta with the genuine intention of continuing to cooperate with Indonesia on many important issues of mutual concern, including those taken up together by MSG members.

Solomon Islands welcomes the World Conference on Indigenous People. More than 90 per cent of our population are indigenous Melanesians and Polynesians speaking more than 87 different languages. Our diverse cultures are under threat due to forced relocation from ancestral lands as a result of sea-level rise. Their right to live in harmony with nature is being threatened by the declining health of the planet.

Climate change remains the greatest challenge of our time. It calls for the widest possible international cooperation on the part of all. This month, Solomon Islands ratified the second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). We encourage parties to the Protocol that have not ratified the amendment to do so as soon as possible. It is in our collective interest to see the Protocol enforced. We remain deeply concerned on the slow progress of climate-change negotiations, and hope that the General Assembly will invite the UNFCCC to conduct its negotiations in New York, where diplomats from all parties to the Convention are located all year round. We need to accelerate the pace of negotiations. This must be done while working with our technical experts in the process.

In looking at the 2015 Climate Change agreement, Solomon Islands would like to see a credible agreement that will guarantee the survival of the SIDS and the least developed countries (LDCs). The agreement must be comprehensive in scope, addressing mitigation, adaptation, finance and technology transfer. It must be inclusive, and respect and respond to the special needs of SIDS and LDCs. The agreement must be flexible

enough to respond to the changing science and be adequately resourced.

Climate-change risk remains at the forefront of our sustainable development path. The flash floods of great magnitude and intensity that occurred in Solomon Islands in April claimed lives and destroyed homes and infrastructure. Damages and losses are equivalent to 9.2 per cent of Solomon Islands' gross domestic product. This has created pressure in the form of new expenses, prompting the Government to borrow and secure grants externally. Solomon Islands remains grateful to its neighbours — Australia, New Zealand, Nauru, Tuvalu, Samoa and Papua New Guinea — as well as Turkey, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Botswana, Sri Lanka and the Republic of China on Taiwan, among others, that have supported our national rehabilitation and recovery efforts.

Despite the disaster challenges, Solomon Islands remains determined to build a resilient society. We are on track in building two hydro-projects in two provinces, in partnership with the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. In partnership with Japan, we are expanding our port facilities to promote and enable domestic, regional and international trade. I am pleased to say that, since the sixty-eighth session, a number of domestic airports and 18 bridges have been constructed, further uniting our scattered population. This would not have been possible without the support of Australia, New Zealand and the European Union, and we express our gratitude to our traditional partners.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) confirms that, without additional mitigation actions, we are heading towards a 3.7-4.8°C world. The fifth IPCC assessment report indicates that by 2030, 89 per cent of coral reefs are projected to experience severe coral bleaching, with the temperature increasing by 1.5°C. By 2050, at 2°C we are looking at 100 per cent coral reef bleaching. These developments will occur in our generation and will have an impact on tourism industries and fish stocks, potentially driving households in the SIDS and LDCs into poverty traps.

We call on the international community to respect the principles of fairness and justice and to put SIDS and LDCs at the heart of international cooperation. In that connection, my delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's Climate Summit, held last week. We also support your proposal, Mr. President, of convening a high-level debate on climate change during the course of this session. We do so because our lives depend on it.

Let me conclude by reaffirming the commitment of the Solomon Islands to striving for a just, equitable and inclusive world. Implementing the post-2015 development agenda provides us with our first and last line of defence in guaranteeing a sustainable future for our current and future generations.

**The President:** I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Milan Jaya Nyamrajsingh Meetarbhan, Chair of the delegation of the Republic of Mauritius.

**Mr. Meetarbhan (Mauritius):** The year 2015 will be a crucial one for the United Nations and the international community. In the coming year, we will reach the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and adopt a post-2015 development agenda, which will include our sustainable development goals. In 2015, we should adopt a new, legally binding global climate agreement. And the international community will also commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations.

At this juncture, we have to ask ourselves to what extent we have achieved the ideals set out in the Charter of the United Nations, and what is still to be done. We must also ask to what extent the institutional framework laid down almost 70 years ago is still valid today. Inequality, both among and within nations, is still a matter for great concern. In spite of the constant references to the rule of law at national and international levels, we still do not always have the possibility of recourse to machinery adequate to resolving legal disputes between States.

Within the United Nations itself, the principle of equality is not always honoured, whether in its constitutional framework or in practice. The twin pillars of peace and security, on the one hand, and development, on the other, as established by the Charter, have been undermined by the ascendancy of political issues at the expense of those of development, which are still often seen largely in terms of safeguarding dominant interests rather than from a perspective of global cooperation. Inequality and vulnerability are increasing in rich and poor countries alike. Unemployment, precarious employment, lack of social protection, access to human development services and financial services are still matters of universal concern.

The post-2015 development agenda cannot be only about human rights — civil, political, economic — at the national level; it must also ensure that the right to development is upheld at the international level. As we

work on a new, comprehensive development agenda, we must ensure that no right is ignored and no one is left behind. The United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda has proposed that the transformative efforts to achieve inclusive, people-centred sustainable development be guided by three fundamental principles — human rights, equality and sustainability — and have four core dimensions: inclusive social development, environmental sustainability, inclusive economic development and peace and security. Mauritius is in broad agreement with those core principles and dimensions, as outlined in the Team's report *Realizing the Future We Want for All*, for guiding this transformation at both the national and international levels.

The war against Ebola demands robust action from all of us and requires exceptional international cooperation. We welcome the initiatives announced last week, and we commit ourselves to giving our full support to addressing this global challenge.

The water we drink, the food we eat and the energy we require are vital to meaningful development. It is estimated that by 2025, 1.8 billion people will be living in countries or regions with absolute water scarcity, and two thirds of the world's population could be living under water-stress conditions. One in eight people in the world today — 842 million — are undernourished. Approximately 2 billion suffer from micronutrient deficiencies. In 2030, it is estimated that food demand will have increased by more than 50 per cent. In that regard, Mauritius supports the Secretary-General's call for a Zero Hunger Challenge. Promoting sustainable agriculture must therefore be an essential component of the new development framework.

It is also estimated that by 2035, global energy demand will have increased by at least 33 per cent. Currently, 1.2 billion people have no access to electricity. Those growing demands will make water, food and energy crucial issues not only on the development agenda but also in the wider context of international peace and security. The international community should support developing countries, particularly vulnerable countries such as small island developing States (SIDS), in their efforts to promote water governance and integrated water resources management, increase the share of renewables in the energy mix and improve energy conservation and efficiency.

In order to support global development, it is crucial that we have an international regime based on structured global cooperation designed to promote technology facilitation, and a technology facilitation mechanism established under the auspices of the United Nations could play a central role in that regard. It is also important that the international community recognize the vital role of women and young people and their enhanced participation and leadership in all areas of sustainable development. Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment should be a core issue on the post-2015 development agenda. All sections of the population should be at the heart of a people-centred vision of sustainable development.

The contributions of all the initiatives launched at the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), including the Open Working Group for Sustainable Development Goals, the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing, and options for a technology facilitation mechanism, should feed into the preparations for a 2015 development summit. They should also be included in the Secretary-General's synthesis report. The deliberations of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, mandated by the Rio+20 outcome document (resolution 66/288, annex), should be reflected in the synthesis report and the post-2015 development agenda.

Since accountability is essential to assessing progress, the post-2015 development agenda should also include an accountability framework that would be universal but flexible enough to take into account different capacities and responsibilities. And we need more accountable and equitable global economic governance that ensures wider, more inclusive participation in decision-making. The United Nations, given its universal membership, should assume leadership and a proactive role in promoting sound and equitable governance in a more resilient global economic architecture.

Beyond those immediate concerns, there are a number of longer-term threats that may dramatically affect all of us, particularly SIDS. One of them is climate change. Climate risks are real and must be addressed. From melting glaciers to more frequent wildfires and intense cyclones, flash floods, extreme heatwaves and ocean acidification, the challenges are not a future threat; they already exist. The latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate*

*Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*, made it clear that an increase in the world's temperature of 2°C would be dangerous, while one of 4°C would be catastrophic.

Climate risks are global challenges that require global solutions. Climate change poses risks to global economic prosperity, development and security as well as to the environment. We must build on the momentum of the Climate Summit and use the opportunity of the 20th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Lima, to raise the level of ambition in the lead-up to a new universal climate agreement in Paris next year.

The strong connections between climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction should be recognized. No country is immune to natural disasters, but it is the most vulnerable countries and people who are hit the hardest. Mauritius looks forward to a renewed and ambitious international framework for disaster risk management that establishes disaster risk reduction as a key element of the post-2015 development agenda. We also believe that the exogenous risks of climate change and natural disasters should be integrated into mainstream economic thinking and assessment of macroeconomic risks.

We welcome the decision of the most recent Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting to establish a Commonwealth climate finance skills hub, to be hosted by Mauritius. It will address critical gaps in building the capacity of SIDS and least-developed countries to identify, access and manage climate finance. The special circumstances, vulnerabilities and low resilience of SIDS should be taken into account with regard to financing and trade issues. SIDS need special and differential treatment to access concessionary sources of financing for sustainable development and to effectively participate in multilateral trade. Mauritius strongly supports SIDS-SIDS partnerships. SIDS can build on their commonality of interests to share experiences, pool resources and act collectively in commissioning technology or formulating legal and regulatory frameworks, for instance.

The oceans are the new frontier for economic development. For SIDS in particular, they are the best scope for expanding economic space. Following a national dialogue on the ocean economy, the Government of Mauritius has published the Road Map for the Mauritian Ocean Economy. The Road Map sets

out the vision, goals and strategies for the development and expansion of a new pillar of our economy. In order to provide the best possible conditions for investors to operate and create wealth, Mauritius is putting in place an enabling environment that will support our ocean economy through an integrated and holistic approach to ensure coherence and balance among economic growth, social development and environmental protection.

Promoting the ocean economy will unleash the potential for SIDS with respect to all ocean-related economic activities, both onshore and offshore. It will also enable them to enhance their nations' food security, harness the winds and waves for their energy needs, develop new ocean-related industries and services that will create opportunities for entrepreneurs and youth employment.

It is essential that we strike a balance between the various uses of the oceans and the need to protect our oceans. At the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in Samoa, the international community agreed to build upon existing partnerships and promote new ones in order to expand the economic space of large ocean States. We wish to reiterate our call for the United Nations to adopt a global oceans strategy that will be the operational counterpart to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). While it will be for individual States to decide on their own ocean economy policies, the global ocean strategy will provide an overall vision and framework for the sustainable development of ocean-related economic activities for policymakers, investors and all stakeholders.

The situation in the Middle East and in certain parts of Africa could not only have dramatic consequences for the people of these regions, but also impact on global development and peace. We urge the international community to spare no effort in resolving the plight of the people of Palestine. Mauritius supports the two-State solution to the conflict. The people of the State of Palestine have suffered for too long from the grave injustice done to them, and must be allowed to live in dignity and peace within recognized borders.

If it is to remain credible and play the constructive role it can and must play in the new world order, the United Nations must respond to the call of its membership for reform. We have a duty to engage in meaningful discussions on the reform of the Security Council, the revitalization of the General Assembly and the working methods of our Organization. Mauritius

reaffirms its commitment to the African Common Position that reform of the Security Council should include expansion in the permanent and non-permanent categories alike. The historical injustice done to Africa should be redressed, and Africa should be accorded permanent representation on the Council. Latin America also deserves permanent representation, and the SIDS should be entitled to a seat on the Council. Mauritius further reiterates its support for India's rightful aspiration to a permanent seat in a reformed Security Council.

In the mid-1960s, when a wave of decolonization was sweeping across the world, the United Kingdom purported to create a new colony, the so-called British Indian Ocean Territory, by carving out part of the territory of Mauritius. Thus, part of Mauritian territory remains under colonial rule. As long as part of Mauritian territory remains under colonial rule, the decolonization of Africa will still remain incomplete. The dismemberment by the United Kingdom of part of the territory of Mauritius prior to independence was and continues to be a blatant breach of international law and total disregard of United Nations resolutions.

Speaking before the Assembly last week, President Obama said that there was

“one vision of the world in which might makes right” [but that] “America stands for something different. We believe that right makes might, that bigger nations should not be able to bully smaller ones” (*A/69/PV.6, p. 10*).

This is why, last year in this very forum (see *A/68/PV.18*), Mauritius urged the United States to be on the right side of history, and not condone illegal acts by maintaining its presence on Diego Garcia under an unlawful arrangement with the United Kingdom that has no valid title to the island, but and instead to ensure that, in the future, the United States presence is on the right side of the law.

Both the United States and the United Kingdom should recognize the sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos archipelago, and engage in meaningful discussions with Mauritius in good faith over arrangements to be made in that regard. Following the statements we have heard over the past year with regard to sovereignty and territorial integrity, there should not be one set of standards for one part of the world and a different one for another part of the world. Those who show no respect for fundamental principles

across the board lose all moral authority to preach to the rest of the world. Following bilateral discussions on Tromelin, which forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius, Mauritius and France agreed on interim measures without prejudice to the sovereignty of Mauritius. An agreement reached in a spirit of cooperation and dialogue is a step in the right direction.

As we embark on a new session that could herald a new chapter in the history of the United Nations, we should renew our commitment to multilateral cooperation for peace, development and prosperity for all nations in the new agenda to be adopted next year.

**The President:** I now give the floor to Mr. José Antonio Dos Santos, Chair of the delegation of the Republic of Paraguay.

**Mr. Dos Santos (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*):** At the outset, allow me, on behalf of the Republic of Paraguay, to offer you, Mr. President, our best wishes for success in your delicate and important tasks at the helm of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I also wish to express my delegation's appreciation to Mr. John Ashe, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, for his significant achievements.

The Government of Paraguay is attending the general debate to reaffirm the importance and call for the strengthening of the United Nations as a forum capable of representing the interests of all Member States in our urgent search for a more just, united and equitable world, guaranteed by the full force of international law. At the same time, and as we approach the seventieth year since the creation of the most important debating forum in the history of humankind, we believe it right to recall that our Organization, the United Nations, was created precisely as a forum for peace among peace-loving nations, as expressed at the various international conferences that led to its creation. That reminder seems even timely and relevant to us, since the concept of peace is now more necessary than ever in various parts of the world such as the Middle East and the Black Sea region.

The Republic of Paraguay reiterates its commitment to ensuring that all social issues are addressed. In that regard, the Government of President Horacio Manuel Cartes Jara is dealing decisively with the development, execution and implementation of social policies that address various demands, with special emphasis on the needs of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged sectors of our population, including the elderly, the

rural population, indigenous communities, migrants, children, adolescents and women. We have an obligation to enable members of those groups to be included as full citizens.

In that regard, I would make a special reference to the World Conference of Indigenous Peoples, held at Headquarters a few days ago, which was convened to listen to the true thoughts and feelings of our native and indigenous peoples. Indigenous cultural heritage has been and remains one of the key elements shaping Paraguay's cultural identity and has led to miscegenation as the main social factor unifying the native Guaraní population and the European conquerors. Our country is proud of the linguistic, cultural and political character of Paraguay, which boasts the native Guaraní language of our ancestors as its everyday language.

In line with the efforts made by the Government since it took office in August 2013, we believe solidarity and partnership is necessary among countries, whether developing or developed, and international financing institutions. We also take into account the fact that, often, vulnerability stems from other areas, such as a lack of decent jobs, educational opportunities, access to international markets and timely cooperation and from issues for which responsibility does not lie exclusively with the State but also with the private sector, as it generates wealth and decent employment. In that regard, we call on the United Nations bodies that work for cooperation to further strengthen their presence in Paraguay and support national policies aimed at strengthening democracy and social justice.

For the first time since its inception nearly a decade ago, my country is aspiring to secure a seat on the Human Rights Council for the 2015-2017 period. For the Republic of Paraguay, the protection and promotion of human rights are the foundation for effective democracy. They are fundamental values that are enshrined and guaranteed in our Constitution, which expressly states that international human rights treaties cannot be rejected except through the procedures governing amendments to our Constitution. On the basis of those constitutional assurances and commitments, we are confident that we can play more than a constructive role and thus consolidate the actions of the Council to effectively strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights around the world.

Paraguay, in accordance with its Government's policy, will continue to continuously support and follow issues in the United Nations relating to the

promotion of youth participation in social and economic development, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, the elimination of violence against women, the rights of the child, the elimination of discrimination on the basis of religious beliefs and the protection of human rights and their relation to extreme poverty.

In Paraguay, we support the globalization of democracy through social development. We also believe in universal security based on respect for human rights as an unwavering commitment to the dignity of human life. We therefore hope to build a regional and global community that, hand in hand and in solidarity, devotes its efforts to eradicating hunger and poverty, effectively cooperating to promote the participation of all, in prosperity, through quality education and a system of inclusive social protection.

As a sign of Paraguay's desire to respond to the changing times, our President recently promulgated the Law on Free Access by Citizens to Public Information and Government Transparency as an important tool enabling every citizen to act as comptroller of public expenditures. The Law, which was recently adopted, states that all institutions must disseminate information as widely as possible. The Law also guarantees access by every citizen to all public information.

We in Paraguay believe that the concept of development should include, as a *sine qua non*, the principle of social inclusion. The major challenge of achieving development that overcomes asymmetries leads inevitably to efforts promoting and achieving an optimal quality of life for all our citizens without exception. We must give a human face to our growth. Our citizens deserve, and have the right to, a more dignified life and overall well-being.

We are currently working to establish a post-2015 development agenda that is sustainable and has a focus on poverty, education, health and social inclusion. We have learned that the Millennium Development Goals have been and are important but not sufficient, and that humankind should be the focus of policy. In that context, we believe that, for the post-2015 development agenda to be successful, it must be accompanied by a better distribution of international financial resources.

Paraguay needs international cooperation that is aligned with its socioeconomic priorities, the development and strengthening of its institutions and preferential treatment for its most vulnerable sectors. We hope that the opening of developing countries

helps bridge inequalities and that the same restrictions that the more developed economies are demanding in the process of their own development will not be applied. Paraguay's position, like that of many developing countries, is that South-South cooperation is not a substitute for but a complement to North-South cooperation and triangular cooperation. We believe that the United Nations, as the universal forum, should play a central role in ensuring success in our efforts to achieve better international coordination and coherence in the economic and financial spheres.

As the high-level Climate Summit was also held a few days ago here at Headquarters in New York, we believe it is necessary to recall that Paraguay is aware that climate change poses a serious and complex threat to the world, as highlighted by the growing negative impacts we are experiencing due to the resulting droughts, floods and other adverse phenomena, which spread poverty, cause forced displacements and may affect international peace and security.

This situation urgently requires a coordinated and responsible global response in order to find ways to mitigate, alleviate and reverse climate change's tragic and devastating consequences. In addition, Paraguay supports the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, on the basis of which countries that have contributed more to the historical and current levels of pollution must shoulder correspondingly greater responsibilities. That principle should be used as an objective criterion, and its implementation will contribute to efforts to mitigate the global impact of climate change.

The issue of landlocked developing countries is of fundamental importance for Paraguay's foreign policy. The asymmetries and disadvantages that that geographical situation brings about will be offset only if there is international recognition of the need for a special and differential agreement on the country's integration into the globalized world. Paraguay, along with other landlocked developing countries in the world, of which there are over 30, faces difficulties in terms of open access to international markets, mainly owing to the restrictions on free transit through transit countries and the lack of special and differential treatment, which would allow them to engage in greater and more competitive participation in world markets.

This year is particularly important for us because in November the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, to be held in Vienna,

will review the Almaty Programme of Action. While the condition of being a landlocked developing country is a disadvantage for Paraguay, we are convinced that we can overcome that adversity. We are working so that our territory can become, in the very near future, a favourable environment for integration and productive communication between the two major oceans, the Atlantic and the Pacific. The new programme of action to be adopted at the Vienna Conference should be the framework for mutually beneficial cooperation between landlocked developing countries and transit countries.

Disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control are not just key factors to ensure international peace and security, but also guarantee that the most vulnerable countries can achieve sustained socioeconomic development. Only by securing a strong multilateral system with strict respect for the rule of law at the international and national levels can we ensure our mutual security. We are convinced that universal and binding international instruments in the area of disarmament and the Arms Trade Treaty, which will enter into force in the near future, will help improve the effectiveness of existing regional initiatives to prevent irresponsible actors from gaining access to weapons.

Again, we urge Israel and Palestine to lay the foundation for social, political and economic reconstruction, which should enable both peoples to live in peace and harmony. Today more than ever, we must promote the negotiation process between the parties, which can lead to lasting peace so that Israel and Palestine can live side by side with secure borders and in peace.

I also wish to note that Paraguay recognizes and welcomes the participation and contributions of the Republic of China (Taiwan) to United Nations specialized agencies, thanks to a rapprochement between the two parties of the Taiwan Strait. In a world beset by conflicts, my Government welcomes the efforts made by the Republic of China (Taiwan) to reduce tensions across the Taiwan Strait, which have contributed significantly to ensuring peace and stability.

The Republic of Paraguay reiterates its commitment to international peace and security. In that context, we reaffirm the political will to increase, to the extent practicable, our contribution of troops to peacekeeping operations and to continue to train and equip peacekeeping forces in accordance with standards established by the United Nations, so as to progressively

increase our participation in those missions. Regionally, we recognize the progress achieved by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, where the presence of specialized personnel in Paraguay's armed forces, working with other countries in our region, have played a significant role in humanitarian assistance and infrastructure engineering projects and in improving the long-term standard of living to benefit many generations of Haitians.

Since its inception, the United Nations has focused all its efforts on constantly evolving so that it can become a global structure capable of meeting the current needs of Member States. It is in the desire for such evolution that Paraguay supports the reform process for the Organization, thereby strengthening the General Assembly, which will lead to the restoration of functions entrusted to that body by the Charter of the United Nations, as the Assembly is the sole body with universal representation. On the issue of Security Council reform, we urge that such reform be done in accordance with the primary purpose of creating a more democratic Council. We can no longer delay expansion of that body. The Council must be more equitable, inclusive and democratic, reflecting the number of members of our Organization. We must improve its working methods and ensure greater transparency in its management.

As we commemorate in 2015 the seventieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations, we hope to celebrate concrete results in the work of the Organization that transcend the mere celebration of the passage of time. We believe that consolidating the substantive post-2015 development agenda should lead to effective and real development for future generations. That is the greatest legacy we can leave.

Finally, we urge the General Assembly to find more equitable and just means for establishing the list of speakers of Heads of State and Government for next year's general debate.

**The President:** I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Fernando Jorge Wahnon Ferreira, Chair of the delegation of the Republic of Cabo Verde.

**Mr. Ferreira (Cabo Verde)** (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): It is with great pleasure, Mr. President, that we participate in the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly under your presidency. My delegation joins previous delegations in congratulating you on your election,

which simultaneously pays tribute to our sister nation of Uganda and recognizes your personal and professional qualities as an experienced diplomat. We wish you success in carrying out your term and assure you, Sir, of the Cabo Verde delegation's support and cooperation.

To your predecessor, the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, His Excellency Ambassador John Ashe, we would like to and express our recognition of and appreciation for the dedicated, dynamic and able manner in which he guided the work of the previous session. We would also like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Government of Cabo Verde, to congratulate and pay tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his efforts in seeking peace and global solutions for the challenges that currently confront us and require shared political will in the pursuit of global solutions.

As a small island State, Cabo Verde is particularly grateful to the Secretary-General and the international community for convening, and the success achieved in, the third United Nations Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in Samoa. We also congratulate the Secretary-General for his initiative in convening the United Nations Climate Summit 2014, as the issue of climate change is of particular importance to island States, due to our specific vulnerabilities. For us, finding solutions to the adverse effects of climate change is not just an option, but a matter of survival and territorial integrity, making it essential to mobilize the political will and international cooperation with respect to that issue. The strategies recently agreed upon in Samoa point to paths, modalities of action and effective implementation that will increase those States' resilience and make them better equipped to deal with the consequences of climate change.

Cabo Verde is pleased with the adoption of urgent measures to face climate change as one of the sustainable development goals. The achievement of that goal requires development strategies and policies that will help create a more resilient planet Earth and strengthen the means of their implementation.

The data recently released in the fifth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change focus our attention on alarming scenarios resulting from the persistent increase in global warming, which will put the more vulnerable countries in situations that may threaten their development. It should be noted that, in addition to other consequences, there will be an increase in tropical cyclones, drought and

desertification, rising sea levels, ocean acidification, loss of biodiversity, weak agricultural production and food insecurity. For the Government of Cabo Verde, it is important to ensure that the negotiations that will take place next December in Lima translate into significant progress with respect to the content of the new agreement to be signed in Paris in December 2015.

Raising awareness regarding the need to reduce the levels of global warming and to foster low-carbon economies must also be taken into consideration. We support reducing global warming to under 1.5°C, which is both economically feasible and a basic requirement for sustainable global development. We also hope that, as we work towards the conversion of our interests, the foundational principle of common but differentiated responsibility will be respected. A compensation mechanism for the effective and full implementation of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage should be considered. We are convinced that, if nothing is done, the consequences resulting from climate change will affect us all and that we all will pay for our inaction. As the Secretary-General of the United Nations likes to say, we are all in the same boat.

International cooperation, both with respect to climate change and in other areas, is key. In order to be effective, it must be more consistent and pragmatic in national systems and international structures alike, and development financing for countries must be based on criteria reflecting their real needs and vulnerabilities.

We hope that clear directives and commitments are agreed upon in the next Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Addis Ababa in July 2015, and that they lead the way to achieving the unfinished business of Millennium Development Goal 8. We hope that they will ensure the redefinition of the criteria for the allocation of financial resources for development based on the principles adopted in Paris and reaffirmed in Busan. For Cabo Verde, a country that recently graduated into middle-income status, albeit lower-middle-income, it is important that innovative mechanisms be designed to provide for greater consistency in development financing and to support economic sustainability.

The previous session of the General Assembly was convened under the theme “The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage”. The theme chosen for this session is “Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda”. We are thus asked to take the next step — that is, to work

on the adoption of a people-centred agenda aiming to eradicate extreme poverty and reduce inequalities among nations. That request is made in a complex and difficult international environment. In our view, it will be achievable only if there is solidarity and if the international community joins forces to promote sustainable development.

The results achieved under the framework of the Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, which conducted its work during the previous session of General Assembly, point to possible actions and options for a truly transformative post-2015 agenda. With respect to Cape Verde, our country is close to achieving all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). For us, the post-2015 agenda must reflect all lessons and assessments of the MDGs and other internationally agreed goals, and the goals for 2030 must provide for the acceleration of the development process.

We would also like to briefly note that the twentieth special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development was held on 22 September. The lesson that we can take away from that important event is that the post-2015 agenda must place people at the centre of the objectives and goals to be agreed upon, which also means rigorous respect for human rights. On the other hand, the common good, progress and the well-being of all citizens must be goals to be pursued by all Governments as we develop and implement our development policies and programmes.

In addition to being a matter of social justice, ensuring gender equality and equity also turns out to be a smart choice, as no country can aspire to develop and establish social peace and cohesion while excluding a significant portion of its population — that is, the female population.

Gender-based violence is an unacceptable phenomenon in our societies. The Government of Cabo Verde is committed to changing the reality in our country in a significant and positive way, even as we are aware that there still is much to do in that regard.

The issues related to international security and the threats against peace that they represent are matters of particular concern. The recent upsurge in acts of terrorism is a genuinely dangerous threat to the territorial integrity of States and to the stability of entire regions. The systematic and massive violation of human rights and the barbarism that has come with it are

altogether unacceptable. The international community cannot allow this challenge to the humanistic values of our civilization, which are also enshrined and promoted by the United Nations. The Government of Cabo Verde therefore vigorously condemns all forms of terrorism and calls on the international community to urgently take appropriate measures to stop such attempts to wreak havoc and mete out suffering to innocent people.

We are particularly concerned with recent developments in the Middle East and Africa. We believe that States have the moral obligation and collective duty to fight against the subversion of the universal principles of peace, tolerance and respect for differences. We believe that the United Nations has an important role to play when it comes to respect for the principles set out in its Charter and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Cabo Verde is a peace-loving nation that favours dialogue and the peaceful resolution of disputes. We believe in and defend the principles of the Charter, as well as observance of the standards of international law, respect for human rights and the promotion of human dignity. As a result, we understand that no State or organization can replace the United Nations in playing its fundamental role of maintaining global peace and security and that any use of force can be tolerated only when exercised within the framework of the principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations.

Cabo Verde sees urgency in finding a solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and believes that there is no justification for the deaths of thousands of innocent people, the unwarranted suffering of an entire population and the desolation and destruction of infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. We therefore urge the parties to begin negotiations that lead to lasting peace and that allow both States, Israel and Palestine, to live side by side in security. We also consider it important to find a negotiated means to end the conflict in Syria and to open humanitarian aid corridors.

We are concerned with the conflicts that persist on our continent, such as in Libya, the Central African Republic and the Great Lakes region, as well as the actions of terrorist groups in Somalia, Mali and Nigeria. We support and stand side by side with the African Union in finding solutions to the problems that affect peace and security in those sister nations and on the continent in general.

In the context of Africa, we also wish to commend the progress achieved in the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, its return to constitutional order and the re-establishment of democracy. We wish our sister nation the greatest success in the pursuit of peace and development.

In the West African subregion, the issue of security in general and maritime security in particular is of particular concern to the authorities of Cabo Verde. Our country is located at the confluence of routes connecting the African, European and American continents, which places us in a vulnerable situation, as these routes are also used by transnational organized crime, resulting in a direct threat to the stability of States and their democracies.

Cabo Verde, in association with other States and organizations in the United Nations system, has attempted to combat the illegal activities that have unfairly punished this part of the West African subregion, such as the trafficking in drugs, arms and human beings, maritime piracy, terrorism and illegal fishing. As those are phenomena of a transnational nature, we believe that no country in the subregion is in a position to effectively combat them without greater international cooperation and the combination of efforts, means and strategies. Therefore, we would like to count on more consistent support from the international community.

The Security Council has rightly determined that the current Ebola epidemic in West Africa is a threat to international security. The situation in the three countries most affected by the epidemic should prompt the international community to engage in more organized and coordinated actions to provide aid, more effectively save lives and prevent the spread of the disease to neighbouring countries, to the rest of Africa and to the world.

Cabo Verde welcomes and supports the efforts made by all nations and organizations involved in that struggle, particularly the Secretary-General's initiatives in that regard. The inclusion of this issue in the Security Council agenda, the adoption of resolution 2177 (2014) by unanimity, and the debate that followed (see S/PV.7268) are an unequivocal expression of the international community's awareness of the priority that must be given to the efforts to halt and control the epidemic, which could have catastrophic consequences for our affected sister nations, particularly the Republics

of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, to which Cabo Verde offers its friendship and solidarity.

**The President:** We have heard the last speaker in the general debate.

Two Member States have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Pavlichenko** (Ukraine): First of all, I would like to thank the delegations of the Member States that strongly supported the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Ukraine in the most difficult time in our history. By their courageous positions, they not only support Ukraine but also uphold key principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations.

As a sign of our deep appreciation, we have presented to each delegation a personalized multimedia album dedicated to the events in Ukraine. We hope that the albums will help foster a better understanding of the very nature of the recent events in my country and demonstrate how important the role of the United Nations could be for preserving the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its Member States, particularly when we all stand united.

We were surprised by some statements made by the delegation of the Russian Federation in this Hall during the general debate as well as at some other high-level events at the margins of the General Assembly. It is trying to convince others that the occupation of Crimea and the aggressive actions in the east of Ukraine were provoked by Western countries and that what is going on in Ukraine is a mere reflection of a confrontation between the West and Russia.

That is a very strange position. The truth is that Ukraine has never been the victim either of Europe or of the United States. It was the Kremlin leaders whose ambitions caused the barbaric aggression and violence against its neighbouring nation. It was Moscow, not the Western States, that grabbed part of our territory and now is trying to justify its deeds by referring to some ambiguous historical justice while flagrantly violating clear norms of international law, including bilateral treaties with Ukraine on friendship and borders between States.

The Kremlin unleashed the brutal war not against the Western world but against formerly friendly Ukraine, a country that is economically and militarily weak, a country whose budget had been systematically and shamelessly plundered by the now-toppled regime of a corrupt and kleptocratic authoritarian leader. The mere reason for this brutal war was the sovereign choice of people of Ukraine to be part of the European family of nations, with a democratic and responsible Government respecting and protecting human rights and freedoms.

Therefore, we find quite cynical the Moscow authorities' initiative to have voted in favour of a General Assembly declaration on the inadmissibility of interference into domestic affairs of sovereign States and non-recognition of coups d'état as a method of changing power. Perhaps I am disappointing some people by referring to the Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention and Interference in the Internal Affairs of States (resolution 36/103), which the General Assembly adopted so long ago.

The Declaration, which the Assembly adopted in 1981, *inter alia* provides for the clear duty of States to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force in any form whatsoever and to refrain from armed intervention, subversion, military occupation or any other form of intervention and interference, overt or covert, directed at another State or group of States or any of military, political or economic interference in the internal affairs of another State.

We do not think there is a need to reinvent the wheel. Rather, it is time to start respecting and observing the decisions taken by the General Assembly and the binding standards of international law. We believe that time will put everything into perspective, and will reaffirm that despite the Moscow authorities' aggressive campaign against my country, the Russian and Ukrainian peoples will remain friends and share common civilized values.

**Mr. Zagaynov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The statement we just heard by the representative of the Ukrainian delegation once again reiterated unfounded accusations directed at Russia. It is regrettable that Ukraine persists in its efforts to use the various forums of the United Nations, including the General Assembly, to repeat its fabrications and an interpretation of events that is wildly distant from reality. The Ukrainian delegation's rhetoric is badly

out of line with the spirit and logic of the ceasefire agreement reached in September on the basis of the initiative of the Presidents of Ukraine and Russia.

Russia's assessment of what has happened in Ukraine and is happening now was laid out in detail in the statement delivered by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on 27 September (see A/69/PV.15), and I will not repeat it. I would merely like to direct the Assembly's attention to his words on the necessity of establishing peace and political order in Ukraine on the basis of a broad national dialogue, and to Russia's readiness to assist in establishing that order, including within the framework of the exceedingly useful Minsk process. I would once again like to urge the Ukrainian delegation to work actively to achieve the Minsk agreement.

### Statement by the President

**The President:** Throughout the past week we have gathered here in this very newly renovated Hall to share our hopes and visions for the future. We reflected collectively on the challenges confronting us, as well as the opportunities we must take advantage of, both as individual societies and members of the greater world community. I thank each and every speaker who participated in the general debate for taking the time to address the Assembly at this pivotal moment in the history of our Organization. The participation of 117 Heads of State and Government, three Vice-Presidents, eight Deputy Prime Ministers, 56 Ministers, seven Heads of delegation, one Head of State and one Head of Government of Observer States and one observer attests to the importance and value that Member States and observers attach to the Organization.

I would like to briefly highlight some of the major issues examined during the debate that will deserve our attention over the next 12 months.

Many speakers focused on the theme of this year's general debate, "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda". They stressed the importance of building on the successes and momentum of the Millennium Development Goals and formulating an ambitious, inclusive and transformative development agenda that can produce tangible benefits and improve the livelihoods of all peoples. They highlighted the importance of placing the eradication of poverty and hunger at the core of the post-2015 development agenda, and underscored the need for adequate means of implementation for the new

development agenda, in terms of financial resources, capacity-building and technology development and transfer. Several speakers stressed the importance of fulfilling overseas development assistance commitments and called for an enhanced global partnership for development. The important role that the private sector, civil society and multi-stakeholder groups should play was also emphasized. Many delegations called for a fairer global trading regime and for continued reform of the global economic governance and international financial institutions, in order to make them more responsive to the needs of all nations, especially developing countries.

Peace and security issues featured prominently in the debate, with many speakers expressing grave concern about the increasing threat posed by terrorists and extremist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, Al-Qaida, Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram and others. Underlining the importance of addressing the danger posed by terrorists, world leaders called for a unified global response to combat them effectively. Many speakers emphasized that such groups did not merely constitute a regional challenge but were a serious danger to international peace and security, and stressed the importance of further strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in order to optimize synergy and their respective capacities.

On health issues, the rampant spread of Ebola in West Africa was prominent during the debate, with many speakers urging immediate, coordinated action to stem the outbreak. Delegations expressed serious concern about the catastrophic loss of life caused by Ebola as well as the unrest, social tension and negative impact on political and socioeconomic progress it has produced in the affected countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The devastation that Ebola has inflicted on already fragile health-care systems in the affected countries was of particular concern. Leaders pledged their support to the Secretary-General's newly established United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response, and welcomed the national, regional and international efforts to combat Ebola. Many delegations stressed the importance of paying greater attention to combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis as well as other communicable and non-communicable diseases.

High unemployment rates were also a key focus in the debate, with many expressing concern about

the destabilizing effects of persistent unemployment. Many speakers said that the increasing levels of unemployment among young people were especially troubling, and called for strategies and policies aimed at creating more job opportunities.

While recognizing that some progress had been made in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, many speakers underscored the importance of greater attention to and action on those issues. A number of delegations stressed that without women's active participation in all facets of life, societies would continue to fail to reach their full potential. Improving the safety and equality of girls' access to education was another common theme.

On the environment, speakers stressed the need for comprehensive action on climate change, calling for a unified approach to the issue, since time was running out for addressing threats such as pollution, rising sea levels, desertification and land degradation. Many delegations welcomed the Secretary-General's Climate Summit initiative and called for a commitment to concluding a global agreement in 2015 under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The importance of promoting the rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights as prerequisites for the achievement of sustainable growth and development was emphasized. Delegations noted that respect for international law, norms and principles were critical to international peace and security. On human rights, several speakers emphasized the central role of human rights as one of the United Nations pillars, noting that discrimination based on religion, gender or any other consideration should not be tolerated.

Many delegations called for Security Council reform and the revitalization of the General Assembly. Speakers emphasized that Security Council membership did not adequately reflect today's realities and called for a more representative Council.

The general debate continues to serve as an opportunity for the international community to come together under one roof to explore the world's current state of affairs. It is a one-of-a-kind opportunity for Member States to share with a worldwide audience

their accomplishments, ambitions, hopes and fears. The general debate is indeed the world's premier global political stage. It serves as a unique opportunity to recall the intrinsic value of our mutual engagement in the work of the Organization.

I would like to suggest that in future we consider rationalizing the number of meetings and side events held in the margins of the general debate to enable greater focus on the matters being discussed here in the General Assembly Hall.

Let me take this opportunity to urge each and every member to approach our work over the next year with a spirit of cooperation and optimism, inspired by the belief that together we can make a difference. As we have seen during the general debate, we certainly have our work cut out for us. Most important, we need to formulate an ambitious and inclusive transformative agenda and accompany it with adequate means for its implementation. Let us take on that responsibility and all the challenges we must address with a wholehearted belief that as a unified body we can make real and meaningful change in the livelihoods of humankind and the health of our planet.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 8?

*It was so decided.*

#### **Agenda item 136 (continued)**

#### **Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations**

##### **Letter from the Secretary-General (A/69/374/Add.1)**

**The President:** In his letter, the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communication contained in document A/69/374, the Central African Republic has made the payment necessary to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in that document?

*It was so decided.*

*The meeting rose at 3 p.m.*