



General Assembly

Seventieth session

20th plenary meeting

Wednesday, 30 September 2015, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Lykketoft (Denmark)

In the absence of the President, Mr. González Franco (Paraguay), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

Address by Mr. Raimonds Vējonis, President of the Republic of Latvia

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

Mr. Raimonds Vējonis, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

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

President Vējonis: As we celebrate 70 years of the United Nations and 70 years since the end of the Second World War, it is time for us all to take stock. What has been achieved? Where have we failed? What is there yet to do to create a safer and better world?

In July, we marked the seventy-fifth anniversary since the Sumner Welles Declaration on the non-recognition policy of the illegal Soviet annexation of the Baltic States. This policy reflected the principle, based on international law, that the change of borders by force is not acceptable. The firm stance of the international

community in support of this principle has been of great importance to us.

Since its completion in San Francisco in 1945, the Charter of the United Nations has embodied the core principles of the international system. However, far too often international order and principles have been violated and the United Nations has been unable to prevent conflicts or build peace or stop atrocities. Past failures must be lessons for the future. The United Nations, and in particular the Security Council, must be able to implement the mission set by the Charter with a renewed sense of responsibility.

It is time to move forward with Security Council reform. We applaud efforts to revive negotiations on this important issue. Latvia supports the expansion of the Security Council in both categories of membership. At least one additional non-permanent seat should be ensured for the Eastern European States. Early action of the United Nations in situations of concern is crucial. Latvia supports the proposal to voluntarily restrain the use of the veto in the Security Council in situations involving mass atrocity crimes. It also supports, for all members of the Council, adherence to a code of conduct that would suspend their right to veto any action designed to end and prevent mass atrocity crimes.

On several crucial occasions in recent times, the Security Council was not able to take timely and decisive action. That has had dire consequences. The Security Council was blocked from playing a role in stopping Russia's aggression against Ukraine and in seeking justice for the victims of the Flight MH-17 in

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an international tribunal that could establish the truth on who shot down that civilian aeroplane. The conflict in eastern Ukraine has cost thousands of lives and led to the suffering of millions of innocent victims. Russia must stop all forms of support to separatists and use its influence to make them adhere to the Minsk agreements. Full implementation of the Minsk agreements by all parties is essential.

The international community, including the General Assembly, supports Ukraine and its territorial integrity. The illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by Russia will not be recognized. We are particularly concerned about the worsening social, economic and human rights situation in Crimea, especially affecting Crimean Tatars and ethnic Ukrainians. Together with the rest of the international community, Latvia will continue to support Ukraine's reform process in order to strengthen its democracy, economy and good governance.

The horrific conflict in Syria has entered its fifth year. It has created a humanitarian catastrophe and destabilized the whole region. The international community must not abandon the people of Syria and must push for a political settlement. Those responsible for using internationally prohibited chemical weapons in Syria must be identified and held accountable. The conflict and fragility of Syria and Iraq have contributed to the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Daesh and the violent extremism spreading globally. Concerted international action is vital to defeat this evil and is key to achieving lasting peace and stability in Syria, Iraq and the wider region.

Latvia welcomes the recent nuclear agreement with Iran. The full and smooth implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Action Plan is now necessary. Only then can a change in the regional dynamics towards more engagement and cooperation, as well as greater stability in the Middle East region, become a reality.

It is commendable that, despite all the existing challenges, the Government of Afghanistan has shown its commitment to the democratic process. Sustainable peace and stability in the country can be achieved only with continued strong commitment from the Afghan side and further international support.

The resolution of protracted conflicts in Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh should remain on the international agenda.

Increased migration from conflict-torn Middle East and African countries to Europe has become one of the greatest humanitarian challenges of our time. Migration challenges also persist in the Asia-Pacific region and in the Americas. Beyond immediate humanitarian responses, the new trends of migration and forced displacement require long-term, comprehensive solutions. The stabilization of political, economic and social situations in the European Union's neighbourhoods must be the ultimate goal. At the same time, a greater focus should be put on addressing the root causes of increased illegal migration, including by strengthening conflict prevention capabilities.

Latvia welcomes the ongoing United Nations review of peacekeeping. Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations is essential to effectively fulfil peacekeeping mandates. Operational tasks need to be effectively synchronized between all involved parties. The European Union is an important partner of the United Nations, as demonstrated in the Central African Republic, Mali and other places. Latvia provides a voluntary contribution to United Nations peacekeeping and intends, for the first time, to participate in a United Nations peacekeeping mission.

International commitment to protect populations from atrocity crimes has been greatly strengthened in the past 10 years. Latvia strongly supports the work of the International Criminal Court as the legal arm of the responsibility to protect and hopes for swift activation of the Kampala amendments to the Rome Statute on the crime of aggression.

This year the international community will conclude two of the most important international processes of our times. We have just adopted the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) for the next 15 years. The Sustainable Development Goals must drive us to make real changes to end poverty and build prosperity and equality for all. With well-thought-out, focused and action-oriented policies we can do it. But most importantly, the involvement and accountability of all stakeholders at all levels will be critical to the success of the Sustainable Development Goals.

These Goals will be greatly reinforced by the approval of a new universal agreement to address climate change at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Paris. Failure to undertake ambitious mitigation actions cannot be accepted. Any

further postponement will make adaptation extremely costly or even unfeasible. Latvia supports the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. It is also important to send a strong signal to investors and business of the plans to move towards a low-carbon, climate-resilient world.

The United Nations has played a crucial role in advancing economic and social development and human rights for everyone. These ideals and values have proven to be timeless and universal. The United Nations will continue to be an important forum in the quest for solutions to future challenges through global discussion, raising awareness, creating expertise and building trust. At the forefront of these issues is the speed at which technology is evolving. Technological development is a source of progress and growth. At the same time, the rapid advancement of technology has exposed significant vulnerabilities and a variety of issues of transnational and cross-sectoral nature.

Nations are facing an increasing challenge in countering cyberthreats. Efforts to prevent the misuse of new technologies, either by State or non-State actors, should be cooperative, international and cross-sectoral and involve all stakeholders. This will not be an easy process. We need to safeguard the right balance between fostering freedom of expression and open innovation on the Internet and ensuring that legitimate national security concerns are taken into account. This year, the General Assembly will review the results of the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society over the past 10 years. It is important that this review process, in which Latvia is playing a leading role, be successful and contribute to the achievement of the overall United Nations goals set forth in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Next year, we shall have to choose the next Secretary-General. It is important that the selection process be transparent and inclusive. Furthermore, it is high time for the Eastern European Group of States to provide the best possible candidate for the post of the next Secretary-General. It is the only regional group that has never been represented in this position.

The people of our nations want to live in a safe, stable and prosperous world where conflicts, hunger and inequalities do not exist. In order to succeed in the task of implementing the new development Agenda, we all have the obligation to work to make the world a better place. Our responsibility is to ensure that the

road ahead is built on the goals that were laid down in the Charter 70 years ago and which remain valid today and in the future.

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

Mr. Raimonds Vējonis, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by the Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia

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

Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

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

President Nikolić (*spoke in Serbian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): Seventy years have passed since the establishment of the United Nations. People live differently now; many changes have taken place and many reforms have been effected. It is time that we reform the United Nations as well. I call on the President to speed up this process during his mandate.

Perhaps no other session in the history of the General Assembly has come at a more opportune time. Last year saw many new developments. Negotiations, which were unimaginable before, were started to end the embargo on Cuba. An agreement was reached to lift sanctions on Iran. We recognize those who took part in making these historic decisions and encourage them to see these changes through to completion. This is very much in line with the policy my country has pursued for a number of decades.

The world of today does not resemble the world of yesterday, and none of us can remain indifferent to this fact. Ours used to be a bipolar world, divided into blocs. We did not thrive because the poles were violently

opposed to one another and had access to the most dangerous weapons the world possessed at the time. But we are also not doing well in a world with one Power that carries out diplomacy by issuing threats, oblivious to the concerns of all others, including those of the United Nations. Peoples and States attend to their own interests and are thereby exposed and open to extremist religious fanatics, giving rise to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham and other extremist movements. These terrorist groups now threaten millions of people and have created a negative image of Islam, the religion on whose behalf they profess to act.

The two key elements of law and ethics were once key in international relations and politics. United States President Woodrow Wilson was a staunch advocate, while the great Serbian poet Njegoš expressed it in verses of *The Mountain Wreath* in the following way:

Along his path who maketh Might his right
 Rise stench of inhuman cruelty ...
 [and]
 As Wolf doth on the Sheep impose his might,
 So tyrant lords it over feebler fellow;
 But foot to place upon the Tyrant's neck,
 To bring him to the consciousness of Right —
 This of all human duties is most sacred!

Today, however, legal and ethical factors are essentially being eclipsed in international politics. Not infrequently, unlawful and exceedingly immoral actions are being taken, purportedly for ethical and legal reasons. This happens most often when a clear legal norm that brooks no exception — such as the need for the Security Council to take a decision, for instance — stands in the way of a major Power achieving its geopolitical goals. International law, therefore, and the moral tenets underpinning a legal norm and its implementation, are deeply in crisis today. There is ample evidence of this, including the most recent large-scale crisis. Some call it a migrant crisis; others refer to it as another wave of people migrating for various reasons.

What worries us, though, is that those who think that efforts should be intensified in the hope of restoring peace quickly and easily and promoting economic progress for all — developing countries, in particular — are few and far between. We ought

to look each other in the eye and assess the past year with an open mind. We ought to announce what has been achieved in our countries. Some of us ought to ask themselves if their actions helped humankind or threatened the future of our children. Can we still begin our speeches with “We, the peoples of the United Nations”? Are we any closer to peace and prosperity or are we rushing, with blindfolds on, towards another 1939, which saw the start of a major world tragedy that lasted six years and whose consequences we shall never be able to erase?

Some of the mighty and powerful seem to believe that the world economic crisis did not do enough to terrify our children and their parents. They continue to use highly sophisticated weapons to drive people from their homes and countries and thrust them, in fear for their lives, into the turmoil of migration, journeying thousands of kilometres in a world without food, water or electricity.

The responsibility for these developments lies not with those who struggle to fight poverty and create conditions in their countries conducive to a dignified human life, or with Serbia, which has opened soup kitchens in order to give many their only daily meal. It lies with those who have much, whether God-given or gained by exploiting others. It lies with those who spend more on arms than all the world's poor countries together spend on food. It lies with all of us, because we cannot contemplate sustainable development without accepting our shared responsibility to tackle one of the world's major challenges — eradicating or at least alleviating poverty.

I often wonder how parents can look their children in the eye as they tell them that school and learning are important for their future and a normal life, and try to convince them that they will have food on their plates once they finish school and acquire learning. We do not learn when we live in fear, have nothing to eat or are threatened by disease, when our parents are unemployed or we face the threat of a terrible war. Those here representing the rich and powerful should think about that as they put their children to bed in a warm room at night and make important decisions during the day. Are profits and political or military superiority really worth so much that we no longer feel the sufferings of others but rather let baser instincts take over? Peace and prosperity cannot be a privilege for the people of certain countries alone; every man and woman on planet Earth has a right to them. That

is why we hold out a helping hand in our quest to achieve the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) through shared actions aimed at creating a better future for humankind, based on principles that can ensure progress and prosperity for all.

Sustainable development is clearly a concept accepted by most of the world. It postulates a global economy linking every region of the world on a basis of trust, ethics, equality and support, as well as a comprehensive approach to managing development by analysing and assessing the efforts of Governments and businesses. All management, however, requires that certain rules be established, and the question therefore is: Who will establish the rules and where? Can individuals, or groups of individuals, foresee all possible future events and developments, and is it possible to control those events and developments at all? Are we simply establishing a new global power centre, oblivious to the individual specifics of States or groups of States, an organization that has only one solution to all problems? What can we do about the fact that some of the Goals do not correspond to some countries' specific situations? We must understand that we cannot control everyone's lives even if we think it may be risky to leave things up to their free will.

Major changes in the way we live demand that we allow time to adjust to ensure that basic values do not collapse. Today, the world is extraordinarily interconnected in miraculous, virtual ways; information is exchanged and people and goods move at unprecedented speed. But the people themselves have never been so alienated. In huge cities, amid millions, people die alone. Individuals, States and international organizations become alienated. There are many reasons for this. Increasingly, relations among States are based on the more powerful, affluent and developed imposing their will on others.

We hope that our new era will usher in a new beginning, a new way of thinking, whose essence will be, as it should, in the best interests of people and their immediate and larger communities. We all understand that this is not easy to achieve, for modern communications can be used to impose a way of thinking aimed at implementing ideas that are not in the interests of the majority. Modern man's urge to conform and daily struggle to meet ever greater demands, along with the spectre of unemployment and hardships in

later life, undermine his resolve to resist increasingly evident violations of basic human rights.

The world today is tragically divided between a few enormously rich individuals and a majority who live outside the boundaries of human dignity. The twenty-first century threatens to be an age in which some countries accumulate and concentrate enormous individual wealth and the rest are consigned to poverty and uncertainty. Among those wealthy individuals is also an entirely new generation of privileged directors who, unjustifiably and immorally, are paid far more than their employees. It seems, however, that the numbers of those willing to protest this phenomenon has been growing to a point where their demands may have to be acceded to. I urge everyone to work together to help to achieve an equitable distribution of the world's assets and resources.

We continue to talk noncommittally about another major challenge, that of climate change, as if its consequences were not patently evident everywhere, and as if we did not see that they are exacerbating the friction caused by the already high level of inequality in the world. In a wake-up call of sorts, the consequences of our past and current actions now have the greatest effect on the weakest of us, the countries that are still undeveloped industrially and struggling to provide their citizens with a better life.

Most developing countries account for just a fraction of global warming. They must be given the opportunity to grow their economies under the same conditions that have already enabled other countries to prosper, even though their greenhouse gas emissions may be higher than the rich would like. We must develop technologies that can enable developing countries to develop while being as environmentally responsible as possible, rather than using concerns about greenhouse gas emissions and global warming as pretexts to allow their industry to stagnate. There are moral reasons, too, for ensuring that countries develop. Politicians should be tasked with providing full support to scientific activities, on the one hand, and harmonizing and coordinating responses to climate change and extreme weather situations, on the other. Adapting and preparing national and social responses to potential scenarios, including worst-case scenarios, should be our most basic and important goal.

Serbia's Government and scientific institutions, in full compliance with the relevant international documents, first and foremost among them the United

Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol, will continue to contribute to the activities of the United Nations and other organizations, primarily through European and regional initiatives on climate monitoring and reducing the negative effects of climate change. Serbia welcomes the forthcoming twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC to be held in Paris later this year. We intend to support and make a full contribution to consideration of this important issue. We will continue to work together with others as a team and an active participant, in hopes that scientists will come up with clear answers and irrevocable proof as soon as possible, while politicians support them and implement speedy, effective solutions.

We can hope for a better future only if we overcome problems such as hunger, wars and diseases. Serbia has therefore actively participated in peacekeeping operations all over the world and has made every effort to train and equip growing numbers of its officers and soldiers to take part in such important assignments. In that regard, this year Serbia's chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe has been universally commended, including by those currently in conflict situations. I should also add that Serbia has been a candidate country of the European Union for more than three years now and has continued to take decisive steps to harmonize its systems and practices with European Union standards. At the same time, Serbia has also continued to maintain its cooperation and friendship with Russia and China.

A State is made up of its territory, its people, its languages and its cultural heritage. Serbia is the only country in Europe that in addition to seeing part of its territory seized, its people expelled and their murders and the so-called harvesting of their organs going unpunished, has now had to deal with attacks on its cultural heritage under the protection of UNESCO. Here I recall that in March 2004, in the face of only sporadic opposition from the Kosovo Force (KFOR), Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija destroyed numerous Christian Orthodox churches, other church buildings, convents, bell towers and monastery libraries and archives, usually by setting fires or explosive devices. That was only the brutal and effective perpetuation of the damage and destruction of over 140 Orthodox sanctuaries perpetrated since the arrival of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and the KFOR in June 1999. In that period, the Albanian

terrorists systematically destroyed the spiritual and cultural heritage of the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija. Their centuries-long existence there is evinced in the many monasteries and churches whose foundations were laid before the ninth century and represent Serbian deeds etched in stone, the testimony of the Serbian presence in Kosovo and Metohija.

At the thirty-first session of its General Conference, UNESCO confirmed that a crime against a cultural heritage was committed in Kosovo and Metohija. In the small territory of Kosovo and Metohija, UNESCO has registered 372 highly valuable cultural monuments of the Serbian people, as clearly defined by UNESCO standards. As many as 49 monuments from the Middle Ages have been identified as a part of European and world heritage in which humankind can take pride and honour. Specifically, they served our pride and honour. These invaluable and unique works of art and architecture have survived five centuries of Ottoman rule, the Balkan Wars and the First and Second World Wars.

Yet, there they were, in 2004, being savagely desecrated and destroyed, buried and ploughed over, as though that undertaking was a part of preparations, designed with meticulous precision, to coincide with the unilateral declaration of independence of the Republic of Kosovo, an event that ensued four years after the barbaric destruction of the patrimony of Serbia's Christian culture and civilization. Not only Serbian, but also European culture and the world's collective memory are preserved in Kosovo and Metohija, representing an important human civilizational achievement on planet Earth. It is therefore important that Serbia, as a member of UNESCO, continues to be the keeper of this cultural treasure, which belongs both to Serbia and to the world.

In an attempt to falsify history — unfortunately with the support of a certain number of countries — Albania has submitted, on behalf of the Pristina Administration, a request to UNESCO that the Serbian heritage be declared Kosovar — that is, Albanian. Those who strategically destroyed monasteries with the aim of marginalizing the importance of Kosovo and Metohija for the Serbs and of establishing a new ethnic and cultural identity for Kosovo and Metohija on the ashes of the history of others, would be rewarded in that way. How is it possible that arsonists and destroyers, with goals that clearly go beyond all the ethical norms and established rules on which UNESCO was founded,

are now trying to project themselves as guardians and protectors?

Should that request be accepted nonetheless, a dangerous precedent would be set and the door would be opened for the legitimization of violence against the national, cultural and religious identity of any people anywhere. By defending the right of Serbia to preserve and proudly present its identity and cultural heritage, as it has done for the past 11 centuries, by preventing the unscrupulous dispossession of one's heritage and its attribution to somebody else, we are defending the underlying principles of international law and human justice, as well as those on which UNESCO was founded. I therefore call on all Heads of State not to allow the Serbian people to have its soul excised, its essence usurped and its monasteries in Kosovo and Metohija, its spiritual backbone, declared the cultural heritage of the Albanian people there. In short, that is neither the truth nor a historical and scientific fact. It is not justice.

Peoples do not acquire history and civilization by snatching centuries of the existence of others or by bribing, with Judas' silver, those to whom the history of others means nothing and who would stand by indifferently if the spiritual and cultural roots of a people — in this case of we Serbs — were removed from the areas from which they had been expelled. The United Nations must preserve its credibility and stand up to the injustice and evil that Serbia would suffer if the Organization acquiesced to that undertaking. I am certain that those gathered here, as responsible and honourable persons of State, will stand up against the injustice and wrong that would be inflicted upon Serbia and could have a domino effect on other nations and States.

Serbia is talking to the representatives of the Administration in Pristina. It will fulfil all its obligations under Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and all its obligations under the agreements reached in Brussels, but it will never, ever recognize the independence of part of its territory, the autonomous province of Kosovo and Metohija, to which its very existence is connected.

The problem of the mass migration from the Middle East is the greatest challenge of our times. We cannot analyse the causes and or identify those directly and indirectly responsible for the migrant crisis here and now. It is an issue of paramount importance and should be addressed at an international forum that would bring

together prominent leaders and eminent scholars and scientists. That is the best way to assess the situation objectively, provide an answer and propose a solution to that complex problem. The humanitarian disaster facing the world is only a consequence of the crisis that has shaken Syria for the past four years, all along without an adequate response from the international community.

Without access to common funding, the situation of Serbia is perhaps more difficult than that of the other countries of the old continent. Despite its difficult economic situation, Serbia is making every effort to provide decent conditions and accommodation for refugees. However, if the international community, and the European Union above all, fails to make concrete efforts to solve the problem, a humanitarian catastrophe of an even larger scale would threaten South-East Europe. The consequences are impossible to foresee, but they would surely affect not only Europe, but the whole world as well. As regards the number of asylum-seekers in the Republic of Serbia, 125,138 persons arrived in Serbia between 1 January and 14 September, and only 524 have submitted asylum requests.

I would like to draw attention to the alarming practice of some Governments that have erected wire and razor fences to ghettoize the asylum-seekers fleeing war and destitution. Such an attitude runs counter to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the proclaimed solidarity of the States members of the European Union with migrants. It also aggravates the situation in countries that respect international law and treat the individuals struck by calamity humanely. The Governments of certain States Members of the United Nations behave as if they had never abandoned the ideology that prevailed before the end of the Second World War, thereby destroying the fragile stability in the Balkans that was achieved through hard work and dedication, to which Serbia contributed the most.

My country has had to cope with a deep economic crisis since 2008. Refugees, therefore, cannot expect to secure much more than their personal safety in Serbia. We will provide it to them irrespective of the fact that certain countries also intervene against people living in Serbian territory. Our care for humankind and our empathy for those in need, as well as our resolve to give those people what we may not need as urgently as they do at the moment, will not diminish. Our borders are open to receive them and to let them through. We need no law for that because that is the way we are. Serbia is

not a member of the European Union, but it consistently implements the proclaimed principle of solidarity, a fundamental value and the supposedly unconditional mainstay of the Union itself. I do not understand this selfishness, and sometimes even the hatred towards those who have nothing that some individuals have come to nurture. If the rapid pace with which the leaders of some countries are losing their cool and composure are any clue, the situation can only deteriorate.

We therefore need a comprehensive plan that would have to be implemented within the shortest possible time. Without such a plan, migrants will be left altogether at the mercy of human smugglers. Passivity and the increasingly inhumane treatment of migrants open a market for smugglers. The sequence of catastrophes that would ensue in such a case, from the Mediterranean to the British Isles, would be tragic, and the tragedy in which over 800 people died would be remembered as just one sad link in that sorry chain.

Even though it was not directly involved in the conflict in the territory of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, started and stage-managed in a similar way to the conflict in Syria, Serbia was labelled guilty. A resolution was even recently submitted to the Security Council to stigmatize the Serbs as an example of a genocidal people, although such a characterization of any people in the world is unjustifiable. The attempt failed, as members of the Security Council were aware of the true intentions and desires of the initiators, as well as the possible catastrophic consequences. What kind of genocidal criminals are we? Is it the image imparted by the footage of migrants in Serbia, undaunted and unworried about the reaction of our people and authorities, unlike elsewhere in the region, or is it the image of a hospitable people with a kind heart? Have Serbian citizens changed? They have not. The people of Serbia of all ethnicities have, now and in the past, been humane and hospitable, as well as good neighbours.

In addition to refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq, Serbia hosts hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons from the territory of the former Yugoslavia. They are preponderantly Serbs, but include also Bosniaks, Croats, Roma and others. Some of these people have gone to third countries, while others continue to live in Serbia. We are still faced with the consequences of these migration as they have altered the demographic, social and other structures of our country and society. Then and now, my country has

not had much to offer to these destitute people who left their homes. It has shared the little it had.

Serbia expects the United Nations Member States to act responsibly and humanely. We should all bear in mind that this situation will have global consequences. Civilization is at a crossroads. Europe is going through serious travails and tribulations. Now is the time for it to show if it still is the standard-bearer in the implementation of human rights and the respect of international law or if it continues to turn a blind eye to the apparent double standards and allows the attainment of civilization to be valid only for some countries and some peoples.

Equality is applicable not only to relations among individuals, but also to relations among States. Our fathers shed blood on many battlefields for the equality of all peoples. They fought for our freedom to speak our mind and for our opinion to be strong enough to change things. Freedom and equality are the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations, of numerous international documents and of national constitutions. We must not allow them to become dead letters.

By taking up these topics and drawing members' attention to them, I hope to motivate us to show genuine empathy and solidarity, to take responsibility for the future and to build, together and indefatigably, true humanism in the Organization that gathered us together here today. I would like us to meet in this place with different messages next year and, if not with our problems solved, then at least with steps made towards solving the problems that burden us today. I would like us to be better every coming year. I would like the States of the world to feel that the ideas of liberty and equality and of a humane and just society are not just empty rhetoric, but instead genuinely resolve to implement them throughout our planet.

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

Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ismaël Omar Guelleh, President and Head of Government of the Republic of Djibouti

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President and Head of Government of the Republic of Djibouti.

Mr. Ismaël Omar Guelleh, President and Head of Government of the Republic of Djibouti, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ismaël Omar Guelleh, President and Head of Government of the Republic of Djibouti, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Guelleh: At the outset, allow me to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, as well as his country, the Kingdom of Denmark, on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly. With his wisdom and experience, I am confident that he will successfully steer the proceedings of the Assembly. I assure him of my delegation's cooperation and support.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa, who has just concluded his mission as President of the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. Mr. Kutesa worked tirelessly to promote the work of the General Assembly and we are grateful to him for his dedicated service.

Finally, I would like to thank our Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his leadership, dedication and personal commitment to advancing the agenda of the Organization.

(spoke in French)

I take this opportunity to pay a warm tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Roble Olhaye, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Djibouti to the United Nations and Ambassador of the Republic of Djibouti to the United States. My country and I myself have lost a brother and a great patriot. The United Nations family has also lost a colleague and a friend. The late Roble Olhaye was the epitome of a seasoned and experienced diplomat. His background is impressive; his life rich in teachings and his success immense. I would like to particularly emphasize his constant struggle for economic and commercial development for the African continent. He represented our country and all of Africa with pride. The grief and

sorrow we feel today following his death are alleviated by the many expressions of respect and compassion we have received from around the world. He be profoundly missed by all. May God Almighty welcome him into his eternal paradise.

It is a great honour for me to take the floor before the Assembly of peoples to celebrate, with men and women of all countries, races, languages and cultures, the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. When the Charter of the United Nations was drafted in 1946, it sent a message of hope for tomorrow from one of the darkest chapters in human history. It symbolized, in fact, the international community's aspiration for peace and cooperation. This year, we celebrate not only the seventieth birthday of our beloved Organization, which is a historic date in itself, but also the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of the Millennium Declaration.

This is a crucial year that carries many hopes. Despite the sustained efforts made to achieve a world of prosperity, equity, freedom, dignity and peace for all people, we all know, unfortunately, we still have a long way to go. The international community undeniably remains faced with an unprecedented range of major challenges: poverty and hunger, persistent unemployment and violent armed conflict, and climate change. As recently as last year, we saw the health-care systems of brotherly countries being overwhelmed by new terrible threats, such as the Ebola virus, while new challenges have emerged constantly threatening peace and security. We will have the opportunity to return to this, but allow me now to address the implications of the macroeconomic fragility in the global economy, the many and varied challenges facing our country and the importance of establishing a credible and beneficial multilateral trading system for all.

The global economic and financial environment is more alarming than ever. The 2008 financial and economic crisis has had multidimensional consequences and many developing countries continue to face difficult macroeconomic situations. Any response designed to resolve this situation should take into account the special needs of Africa, and especially those of the least developed countries, and ensure that the commitments undertaken at international meetings can be implemented.

In that regard, we continue to observe with concern the current difficulties faced by States members of the World Trade Organization in efforts to identify ways and means to overcome the impasse in the Doha Round of negotiations and establish a significant post-Bali programme of work. Major issues are at stake because it is our responsibility to build a credible multilateral trading system that enables everyone, in particular developing countries, to identify their objectives in the areas of industrialization and the structural transformation of their economies.

Climate change is not only the greatest challenge that humankind faces, but also the most important one of our day in terms of development. It threatens to undermine life for future generations. The many meetings on climate change and the lack of progress achieved illustrate the extent to which this issue is a source of controversy and division. It is true that our claims are legitimate and understandable. However, it is also true that Africa has more to lose than others. That is why we are ready to assume our responsibility to reduce our emissions and we hope that the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities will be scrupulously respected.

Each region has its specificities and environmental concerns that are not necessarily the same as those of countries in other regions. My country is particularly exposed to many natural hazards, the most frequent and destructive being droughts and floods. The Republic of Djibouti, despite its marginal contribution to greenhouse gas emissions, is contributing to global efforts to fight against this devastating scourge. To that end, we recently hosted a conference in partnership with the Climate and Energy Institute of the prestigious Yale University, which has developed a very relevant climate model illustrating all the scenarios of the climate change impact on our region.

It is in this spirit that we proposed to establish and host in Djibouti a regional environmental observatory. Moreover, my country has for several years carried out a policy of renewable energy use with the stated goal of excluding fossil fuels by the year 2020. That is why, together with Ethiopia, we have already put in place a hydropower project and begun to use the tremendous potential of our country's geothermal, wind, solar and tidal energy.

The environment is a cross-cutting and transnational element. Consequently and logically, we need cross-

cutting, transnational and interdisciplinary policies commensurate with the challenge. It is therefore time to adopt just, fair and scientific climate goals. We hope that the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will be held soon in Paris, will mark a decisive turning point.

Violent extremism is the product of a deadly ideology that openly advocates the destruction and elimination of others on behalf of a supposed religious belief, whereas Islam is a religion which essentially advocates openness, tolerance and love of one's neighbour. Our region, East Africa, is one of the primary targets of terrorist attacks. Al-Shabaab poses a major threat to our region and is at the root of terrorist attacks and many attempted attacks in most countries of our region. This painful experience has enabled us to develop a knowledge of the workings, practices and strategies of terrorist groups, which deserves to be shared.

The causes that encourage the spread of the scourge of extremism and, in effect, terrorist groups, are deep and diverse. Cracks and fractures seen in the international security architecture and conflict zones in the Middle East and Africa, as well as economic hardship, extreme poverty and the perception, justified or not, of marginalization, all generate a feeling of uncertainty and a strong desire to belong that can make groups sensitive to the extremist rhetoric and lead to violent attacks. We all know the human costs and the countless security, economic and social problems that they bring about.

Yesterday, President Obama took the initiative to organize a summit on this topic, which concerns us all. We thank him for that because the international context shows us the need and relevance of such consultations on a daily basis. No country can fight this scourge alone, because terrorism knows no borders. To neutralize this threat, we must work together concretely and decisively. Strategies to combat and prevent extremist violence must be perfectly calibrated while also avoiding overreaction. They must be based on an analysis of the root causes and an understanding of the reasons driving extremism.

Governments, regional and international organizations, religious leaders and leaders of academia and civil society must join forces to strengthen resilience in the face of terrorism and establish security and stability

in our countries. In that regard, my country will soon create, within the framework of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, a centre of excellence to combat violent extremism. The centre will seek to strengthen the capacities of governmental and non-governmental actors and provide a space for dialogue and a platform for the exchange of information among researchers and specialists.

Since 2008, the Member States represented in this Hall have witnessed the tense and so far unresolved situation prevailing in the north of my country following the unjustified and incomprehensible occupation by Eritrean forces of part of our territory. Members of my Government and I have come here on several occasions to brief the international community about the situation and to inform it about the unreasonable behaviour of Eritrea, which continues to ignore the gravity of the situation and reject any attempts at discussion. To resolve this conflict peacefully, my country, from the beginning, has sought out the good offices of the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the United Nations. We finally agreed to mediation by His Highness the Amir of the State of Qatar, in the belief that Eritrea would listen to reason, but that was in vain.

To date, more than five years after the signing of the mediation Agreement, we are still awaiting the demarcation of the border and the return of our prisoners of war. Despite the call to reason by the international community and the adoption of resolutions 1862 (2009), 1907 (2009) and 2023 (2011), Eritrea has refused to recognize the existence of Djiboutian prisoners, even though two of them have, fortunately, managed to escape. This attitude of denial, even after the return and the testimony of these prisoners, and the refusal of any discussion is contrary to international standards and conduct. It demonstrates the danger that this country represents for the region and the international community as a whole. My country has always managed to preserve peace and we believe in the virtues of dialogue and mediation. However, the territorial integrity of my country is non-negotiable.

With regard to Yemen, we are deeply concerned about the tragic situation currently facing that brotherly country and especially about the deterioration of the humanitarian situation, which has been catastrophic since the beginning of the conflict. The Republic of Djibouti reaffirms its solidarity with the Yemeni

people and has taken all necessary measures to assist and welcome the displaced people fleeing the fighting.

The situation prevailing today in Yemen is the result of the refusal of the rebellion to accept and respect the political transition period, as negotiated during the National Dialogue process. By taking up arms, they have wrought havoc in this country and have forced the legitimate President to leave the country. We condemn the actions of the rebellion and especially the threats that these elements pose to the unity, integrity, stability and sovereignty of Yemen. In addition, the escalating violence in Yemen is a grave threat to the security and stability of the region and opens up a new front of radicalization, including the rise in power of Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula along our eastern border, which poses a distinct threat to my country throughout the Bab-al-Mandab strait.

In this connection, we welcome the military intervention of brotherly countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, led by Saudi Arabia in Yemen, at the request of President Hadi Mansour. We thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and, through him, Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, his Special Envoy for Yemen, for their dedication and the tireless efforts they have shown since the beginning this conflict. We ask the United Nations to redouble its efforts and the activities of its good offices to enable the resumption of a peaceful political transition process because the settlement of the crisis in Yemen requires dialogue. Lastly, we urge all Yemeni parties to participate in good faith in the dialogue being conducted under the auspices of the United Nations.

Despite the difficulties and daily obstacles of which we are all aware, Somalia has made significant progress, most notably in federal training and the establishment of regional administrations and an independent National Electoral Commission. However, the Somali Government still faces significant challenges. It is clear to us that rebuilding Somalia depends on guaranteeing a stable security environment. Of course, over the past two years, great progress has been made on the ground, but the extremist threat remains in view of the increase in attacks in recent months. The attack on 26 July against Jazeera Hotel is proof of that.

Such attacks have demonstrated that the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) needs the support of the Somali security forces. I therefore reiterate our belief that establishing a properly equipped, trained

and led Somali army that, above all, benefits from the necessary financial support is imperative. Indeed, the project to integrate armed elements into a regular force capable of responding to threats to the unity and territorial integrity of Somalia should, in my view, be a priority for the Somali Government and for the international community. I take this opportunity to commend the tireless efforts and heavy sacrifices made by AMISOM troops and Somali forces, despite the gravity of the security situation.

We feel the scale of the Palestinian suffering in our very being. We are all aware that, after more than half a century of tragedy and resistance, the Palestinian people continue to suffer from the Israeli occupation and to live in inhumane conditions before our eyes. Each time a glimmer of hope of resuming peace negotiations appears, the Israeli State puts an end to it by resuming the building of new settlements. We, as Governments and members of the General Assembly, have a moral duty and political responsibility to say “no” and to give these brotherly Palestine people the right to be free from occupation, the right to live in dignity and peace and the right to aspire to the goals that each and everyone of us has. An independent and viable Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital and full membership of the United Nations, is an imperative for peace and stability in that region and will change the course and image of history.

It is undeniable that we are now at a crucial moment in the history of our Organization and that the world in which we live is very different from that of 1945. It is also undeniable that this evolution requires us to adapt to new and changing realities. In that regard, the revitalization of the General Assembly and Security Council reform are paramount. We welcome, in this regard, the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 69/321 on the revitalization of its work. Following the landmark achievement of the founding fathers of creating the United Nations, we must tirelessly pursue our quest to fulfil all the promises contained in their visions.

With regard to Security Council reform, it is imperative that at the start of the seventieth anniversary of the Organization, the African continent, which has the largest number of countries, have a permanent voice in the conduct of international affairs. That is why my country reiterates its full commitment to the conclusions of the Summit of the African Union Committee of Ten Heads of State, held on 9 May in Livingstone,

Zambia, in particular the need to continue promoting the Africa Common Position on United Nations reform and on preserving the unity of the Group of African States. Over 15 years after its adoption, the Ezulwini Consensus remains relevant, especially in this context where African issues are more than ever on the Security Council’s agenda.

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

Mr. Ismaël Omar Guelleh, President and Head of Government of the Republic of Djibouti, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Choummaly Sayasone, President of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic.

Mr. Choummaly Sayasone, President of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Choummaly Sayasone, President of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sayasone (*spoke in Lao; interpretation provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft on his election as President of the seventieth session of the General Assembly. I am confident that, with his extensive diplomatic experience, he will guide this session with great success. I would like to assure him of our full support and cooperation in the discharge of his noble duties. I would also like to sincerely commend His Excellency Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa for his successful completion of his tenure as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session.

This year marks the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations since its establishment following the Second World War. Its main objectives are to promote international peace and security and development cooperation, aimed at ensuring that all humankind lives in peace and in an environment conducive to

development. Despite the conflicts and challenges that have occurred in different parts of the world, in general peace, security and development cooperation among all nations remain the prevailing trends of this era. That has been an important achievement of the United Nations in fulfilling its mandate enshrined in its Charter.

Nevertheless, the international environment continues to face numerous challenges, such as armed conflicts, terrorism, poverty and hunger, infectious diseases, climate change and natural disasters, which have in turn posed major threats to peace and development. I am therefore of the view that we must enhance our political will, mutual assistance and cooperation under the banner of the United Nations in order to collectively address the challenges facing us. To that end, the United Nations must improve its working methods. The Lao People's Democratic Republic hopes that, on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations this year, the international community will collectively make serious efforts to conduct a comprehensive reform of the Organization so that it can respond to emerging challenges in a more effective manner.

I take this opportunity to welcome the successful conclusion a few days ago of the United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development, at which the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) was adopted with a view to further addressing the major challenges the world faces today, including any Millennium Development Goals that have yet to be met. Indeed, the new development Agenda is the outcome of open and inclusive intergovernmental negotiations. If we are to achieve the set Goals and targets within the next 15 years, we need to honour our political commitment to strengthening global partnership and cooperation at all possible levels.

Conflicts are being waged today in many regions of the world, which have caused major concern for the international community. It is therefore important to find solutions and to restore peace and development to those regions. In that context, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has consistently supported the peaceful settlement of conflicts. I therefore praise all parties concerned for reaching an agreement on Iran's nuclear programme, which is of historic significance. It is testimony to the value of dialogue as the best way to address a conflict, which should be taken as a model for resolving hot issues globally.

In addition, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has always hoped that the issue of Palestine, which has been stalled for many decades, will be resolved through peaceful means by the parties concerned with a view to creating two independent States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace, based on the Arab Peace Initiative, and within recognized borders, as stipulated in the relevant Security Council resolutions. The Lao People's Democratic Republic therefore urges the international community to redouble its efforts to help restore Palestine to normalcy as soon as possible.

In the era of interdependence, cooperation and engagement are key factors for peaceful coexistence and mutual benefit. The Lao People's Democratic Republic welcomes the recent re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States of America and the Republic of Cuba, which has opened a new chapter in the history of relations between the two countries, which had been at a standstill for many years. The Lao People's Democratic Republic hopes that the re-established relations will be further enhanced, leading to an end of the embargo and thereby bringing genuine benefits to the people of the two nations, the region and the world as a whole.

Climate change and severe natural disasters, which are occurring more frequently, have had a huge impact on the development of countries, especially the developing and least developed countries, which are most vulnerable due to their limited infrastructure and insufficient technological, financial and human resources to respond to and address those phenomena. It is therefore incumbent upon the international community to help such vulnerable countries through, among other things, long-term capacity-building to tackle such challenges. We hope that the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Paris later this year, will be able to adopt various measures to address climate change in the coming years.

The South-East Asian region, which is now in the process of economic integration through the various cooperation frameworks of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), with a view to building an ASEAN community by the end of this year, has continued to enjoy peace, stability and constant economic growth. ASEAN has broadened its external relations with different countries and regional groups at various levels, as well as with the United Nations.

In 2016, the first year of the ASEAN community, the Lao People's Democratic Republic will have the honour to chair ASEAN for the second time. I hope that the international community, especially the ASEAN dialogue partners, will continue to support ASEAN-led mechanisms, in which ASEAN plays a central role, so that it can become a community based on the ASEAN way and continue to be a regional grouping that contributes to the maintenance of peace and enhancement of cooperation with other regions and the world at large.

This year marks the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Over the past four decades, we have gone through a period of healing the wounds of war and advancing our national development through the implementation of five-year national socioeconomic development plans, especially the seventh five-year plan for 2011-2015, which will be completed by the end of this year. The achievements of the past 40 years can be attributed to many factors, but the most crucial have been political stability and social order, which have provided a conducive environment for economic growth and steadily improved the livelihood of the people.

The Lao Government has maintained its tireless political will to fight poverty, create benchmarks for raising the country's status from that of least developed country, and pursue the path of sustainable development through a three-level development programme known as sam sang, which identifies provinces as strategic entities, districts as comprehensively strengthened entities and villages as development entities. The programme will strengthen my country's cooperation with development partners and pave the way for the industrialization and modernization of the country. Indeed, we are moving in the right direction in our national development.

In addition, in the coming months, coinciding with the eighth five-year national socioeconomic development plan for 2016-2020, the Lao Government will adopt a 10-year socioeconomic development strategy for 2016-2025 and the Vision 2030 programme. Nevertheless, the Lao People's Democratic Republic will undoubtedly continue to face numerous challenges in undergoing socioeconomic development. Those include, among others, the impact of the regional and global economic and financial crises and natural disasters. I therefore call on our development partners and the international community to maintain their

support for the Lao People's Democratic Republic so that we can achieve our sustainable development goals in the coming years.

Although the Indochina War ended four decades ago, the legacy of that war continues to pose serious obstacles to our national development, especially to agriculture, employment, infrastructure development and investment programmes in areas that remain contaminated by unexploded ordinance. Removing those remnants of war will take a long time and require considerable resources. Aware of that serious impact, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has actively promoted the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), which can prevent the further victimization of humankind.

Earlier this month, the First Review Conference to the Convention on Cluster Munitions was held in Croatia to take stock of the progress and shortcomings in the implementation of that important Convention. The Lao People's Democratic Republic takes this opportunity to call upon those countries that are not yet party to the CCM to accede to that universal Convention. At the same time, we encourage friendly countries and international organizations to continue to provide funding and technical support in that endeavour.

This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of Laos as a State Member of the United Nations. Throughout the years, we have actively participated in the work of the United Nations in various areas. Moreover, cooperation between the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the United Nations has steadily grown. The financial and technical support that have been provided by United Nations agencies, funds and programmes have all contributed significantly to the socioeconomic development of our country. We hope that such valuable support and cooperation will continue in the coming years.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic attaches great importance to promoting and protecting human rights and has become State party to seven of the main international human rights instruments. In its desire to contribute to the work of the Human Rights Council, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has presented its candidature for membership to the Human Rights Council for the period 2016-2018. We look forward to receiving the support of Member States and the opportunity to contribute to the work of the Human Rights Council.

This year is of great historical significance to the international community, especially because of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). I believe that it will mark an important milestone in realizing the aspiration of humankind to live in peace, security, prosperity and social justice, while protecting the environment and promoting the sustainable development towards a brighter future for current and future generations. To that end, the Lao People's Democratic Republic will contribute actively to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets that world leaders adopted a few days ago.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Choummaly Sayasone, President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru

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

Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Waqa: It is an honour to be here for the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations. I can only marvel at the scale of that accomplishment. Not only has this institution grown from its original 51 Members to its current 193, but it has also expanded its work to take on a remarkable number of issues facing the world. Our debate here provides an excellent opportunity to reflect on what has made the Organization so successful.

I believe the reason for that success can be summed up in a single word: legitimacy. Only with legitimacy can we expect leaders from around the world to gather here every September. Only with legitimacy can we expect the agreements we reach here to be implemented

in the real world. However, legitimacy is a fragile thing. It takes decades to build, but can be lost in the blink of an eye. Therefore, preserving and strengthening the legitimacy of this institution must be at the centre of our work if the United Nations is to remain a powerful force for progressive change in the world.

Therefore, to strengthen the legitimacy of the United Nations, I propose that the road ahead be guided by three principles: universality, adaptability and accountability. We took an important step in that direction last week with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), which demonstrates our ability to learn from past experience and create an approach that is better tailored to the needs and circumstances of all nations.

The Agenda places the welfare of human beings at its core and lays out a comprehensive set of Goals and targets to help empower every individual to realize his or her full potential. This moves us away from looking at single indicators like gross domestic product or income per capita to measure human progress and focuses our work on building a more robust foundation for sustainability and prosperity. Education, public health, gender equality, clean water, oceans, energy and, more importantly, a strong family unit — those are some of the blocks on which our future must be built.

For my country, the ocean is the source of almost all development possibilities. Unlike large countries, we do not have a diversified portfolio of industries. Phosphate mining and fishing constitute the large bulk of economic possibilities for Nauru, along with less than a handful of other sources of income. It is all the more concerning, therefore, when vessels come to our waters and engage in illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Regional estimates put earnings lost to IUU at anywhere from millions to over \$1 billion. For economies like ours, those numbers are staggering, and if we are to be true to the 2030 Agenda and the commitments made to the small island developing States, we must do much more to eliminate IUU fishing and ensure that the income from fishing goes to the rightful resource owners.

That and other issues from the 2030 Agenda will require us to rethink the way we cooperate at the international level. Our international and regional bodies must be fit for purpose. The universality of that endeavour will require them to respect national differences and move away from one-size-fits-all

strategies. Thematic silos must be replaced by cross-cutting networks. Implementing agencies at every level must become both more nimble and more robust.

All partnerships — whether multilateral, bilateral or public-private — must be based on mutual respect that recognizes genuine development partners, such as the Republic of China on Taiwan, a democracy that can contribute meaningfully towards development and prosperity in the world. Needless to say, Taiwanese technology and know-how can make a lot of difference towards helping the needy, and, as such, I call for the inclusion of Taiwan in the development agencies of the United Nations.

Aid must be predictable and sustainable. It should not be wielded as a weapon to advance partisan political ends. Predatory relationships that pit one group against another have no place in the 2030 Development Agenda. History has demonstrated that openness and engagement have proven far more effective strategies for positive change than isolation and exclusion. Only in such an environment can we hold one another accountable for the full implementation of the Agenda.

That is the vision that Nauru has embraced for the 2030 Agenda, and back home we are taking steps to move forward. Like the United Nations itself, we will need to build strong domestic institutions to achieve our goals. Their legitimacy will similarly rest on their inclusiveness, adaptability and accountability. Therefore, in implementing the 2030 Agenda, we must go beyond capacity-building. We must engage in the difficult task of institution-building. International and regional agencies and development partners should back those efforts with real resources that include long-term, in-country engagement when appropriate, so that they leave behind durable domestic institutions run by a skilled national workforce.

Nauru is asking for a lot from its development partners. We want to be better partners ourselves. And at the end of the day, implementation of the 2030 Development Agenda will happen mostly at national and local level. On that note, let me thank our partners Australia, Taiwan, Russia, Cuba and others for their support towards our sustainable development priorities.

Our efforts to improve the legitimacy of international institutions must extend beyond those most directly involved in the 2030 Development Agenda. The Security Council in particular must better reflect the geopolitical realities of the world today.

Therefore, the list of permanent and non-permanent members should be expanded. We support the inclusion of Germany, India, Japan, Brazil and others in the permanent category. In addition, the Security Council must continue to adapt and respond to the most pressing issues of today. That is why Nauru calls on it to make climate change a permanent agenda item. It should be supplemented by the appointment by the Secretary-General of a Special Representative on climate and security. In addition, relevant organs of the United Nations should assess their capacity to respond to the security implications of climate change.

The governance of the Bretton Woods institutions should also be made more representative, with developing countries given a greater presence. The global economy has become more reliant on the flow of international capital, and with the frequency of financial crises increasing, the legitimacy of those institutions will continue to be tested.

However, climate change will be the largest test of our international and domestic institutions. We have already seen how some climate impacts can overwhelm the capacity of even the most powerful among us. Clearly, a strong, legally binding agreement in Paris is absolutely critical, with ambitious mitigation contributions from all countries. The agreement should be guided by a temperature-increase goal of 1.5°C, consistent with our vision of a safe and secure world. It must also ensure that climate financing is available for adaptation, particularly for the most vulnerable countries. And for dealing with the impacts that exceed our adaptation efforts, it should anchor an international mechanism on loss and damage.

The United Nations was created

“to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind”.

At present, climate change, if left unaddressed, promises impacts no less catastrophic for many of our nations.

Today marks the lead-up to a very important milestone in my people's history — the seventieth anniversary of our return home. During the occupation of my country in the Second World War, Nauruans were forcibly evacuated to what is now Chuuk state in the Federated States of Micronesia. Due to widespread food shortages and the harsh conditions imposed by our

captors, our population fell to below 1,500. We were in danger of extinction. Nauruans know very well what happens to small, vulnerable countries when the big ones fail to address their problems in a responsible manner.

I strongly believe that many of the major economic Powers want to reach an agreement at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) in Paris. Many have already come forward with meaningful mitigation contributions that will certainly require a great deal of effort to achieve. While we know it is not enough, I do not doubt their sincerity. However, I am starting to doubt whether they are willing and able to make the fundamental changes in their political and economic systems required to achieve our ambitious goals. The intense lobbying to accept an unsatisfactory outcome has already begun, and in the international process, that has often meant that we will be presented with a take-it-or-leave-it deal at COP21. Would such an agreement have any legitimacy? Can we solve the climate problem without it?

The number 70 has biblical significance in the Christian faith, as it is composed of the numbers 7 and 10. The number 7 often represents the concept of completeness, while the number 10 often refers to law and responsibility. It is fitting that during the seventieth session of the General Assembly we will complete our work on a new set of global agreements to tackle the challenges of our generation. The number 70 can also represent a period of judgement. We stand at a critical moment in history as civilization outstrips the natural boundaries of our planet. Our response during the next few years will determine the fate of future generations for the next thousand years. Will we continue to march to an inexorable decline? Or will we join together to meet the challenges before us? Thankfully, we still have a choice, and the widespread recognition of the need for change I have heard during the past week gives me hope that we will make the right one.

May God bless the Republic of Nauru and may God bless the United Nations.

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

Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Agila Saleh Essa Gwaider, Acting Head of State of Libya

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Acting Head of State of Libya.

Mr. Agila Saleh Essa Gwaider, Acting Head of State of Libya, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Agila Saleh Essa Gwaider, Acting Head of State of Libya, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Acting Head of State Gwaider (*spoke in Arabic*): As the General Assembly gathers this year, we celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations. Certainly, we have accomplished a lot during the past 70 years in the economic field, in the protection of human rights and in the maintenance of international peace and security. However, the Organization also experienced failures because of the lack of appropriate structures to effectively deal with the continuous increase in the magnitude and number of challenges as well as their nature, compared to those that existed at the founding of the United Nations.

It goes without saying that the maintenance of international peace and security remains the first priority for the Organization. It is also the biggest challenge we face in an evolving world that is confronted by new complications, such as terrorism, the proliferation of armed conflicts, natural disasters and climate change. All these result in humanitarian crises that have manifested themselves in different forms, such as refugees, internally displaced persons and illegal immigrants.

Today, the United Nations Member States are in need more than ever of consultation, cooperation and mutual assistance to address common challenges and to ensure a better future for the generations to come. The Charter of the United Nations stipulates that the Organization was established to save future generations from the scourge of war. However, that goal remains elusive. Although armed conflicts between nations

have been reduced, ideological, ethnic and sectarian conflicts within States continue to spread dramatically. That spread is accompanied by unprecedented violations of human rights over and above the spread of terrorist organizations. The emergence of terrorism is a key driver of conflict and instability in many countries, especially in the Middle East and Africa.

We in Libya represent a fledgling democracy seeking to find its way in order to take hold as an added value in the minds of the people and to transform the country into one with transparent, democratic, effective and stable institutions. However, the spread of weapons and armed groups, some of which have turned to criminal and terrorist behaviour, in addition to the country's exploitation by some people with personal interests, have all resulted in the spread of chaos in the country and weakened the central authority. In addition, that spread has constituted a real threat to democratic transformation and has encouraged the emergence of terrorist organizations and the recruitment of additional foreign terrorist fighters.

During the past year, Libya has witnessed the emergence of the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, or Daesh, an outcome of and ally to Ansar al-Sharia, which asserts control over the towns of Derna and Sirte, with a view to taking the two towns as starting points to assert full control throughout Libya and to exploit Libya's resources to finance the establishment of an extremist entity that refuses to recognize the national State and fights against democracy. That entity harbours the aim of extending from Mauritania to Bangladesh, thereby subjecting the entire region to the law of the jungle, while claiming to follow the law of Islam. However, that ideology has been totally rejected and resisted by the Libyan people by way of every force available under the leadership of the legitimate authorities, represented by the elected House of Representatives and its duly formed Government.

Those groups have been and remain an essential part of the militia alliance of Libya Dawn, which has seized the capital, Tripoli, and repeatedly announced that it will continue to support Ansar Al-Sharia in Benghazi, while describing them as revolutionaries.

We realize that all of those terrorist and extremist groups are nothing but tools to implement the policies of foreign countries that have persisted in providing them with arms and ammunition. Furthermore, they have facilitated the arrival of foreign fighters in Benghazi,

Sirte and Derna, to participate in the fighting against the Libyan army, which is locked in a fierce war to rid Libya of terrorism by whatever modest means it has at its disposal.

The efforts of the Libyan authorities in the fight against terrorism and to protect Libya from terrorist attacks is being hampered by external support for terrorism activities, in addition to the continuing arms embargo and the insistence of the Security Council in contradicting its decisions by its non-approval of the Libyan Government's requests for an exemption from the arms embargo, in order to arm the Libyan army.

Unfortunately, some of the permanent members of the Council have justified such conduct as if to avoid a negative impact on the Libyan political dialogue, which we understand has led to a draft political agreement on 11 July that was accepted by the legitimate authority after it made significant concessions, and initialled by most of the parties involved. However, that same agreement has been rejected by the so-called General National Congress (GNC), which represents the militias that occupy Tripoli. Those militias are allied with Al-Qaida and Ansar Al-Sharia, supporting them with arms and fighters in the war against the Libyan army that is taking place in the cities of Benghazi and Derna.

The threat of terrorism on the part of the Islamic State, Al-Qaida and Ansar Al-Sharia is not limited only to Libya. The terrorists view Libya as nothing more than a base camp rich with significant resources ripe for exploitation to finance its operations in North Africa and the Sahel region, as well as Europe, if they were to control it. All United Nations States Members should be aware of the gravity of the position taken by the Security Council. Therefore, with respect to matters of international peace and security, they should exercise pressure towards the lifting of the arms embargo on the Libyan army, accelerate the approval of the application for exemption from the arms embargo and provide assistance to the Libyan Government in the area of security, according to the provisions of Security Council resolution 2214 (2015).

I can assure the Assembly that nothing divides the Libyan people and that the vast majority is seeking any possible means to put an end to the unjustified fighting among brothers, and restore the security and stability of the country. Nevertheless, they are hostage to the armed groups, and thus unable to express their views.

Hundreds of thousands of Libyans have become internally displaced persons or refugees aspiring to return to their homes as soon as possible. That could be fulfilled only through an agreement on a strong Government that enjoys the confidence of all Libyans, controls all of the Libyan territory and is supported by the international community. We appreciate the effort made by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya to facilitate dialogue among the Libyan parties and form a Government of national accord that represents all Libyans, while placing the national interests above all other considerations.

The House of Representatives, as the legitimate authority elected by all Libyans, was and remains supportive of dialogue as a strategic option to resolve the political and security crisis in Libya. The House of Representatives made every possible concessions to encourage the illegitimate party to disassociate itself from terrorism and join the dialogue table, with the aim of sparing Libyans from more bloodshed and putting an end to the destruction of Libyan cities.

However, we have noticed increasingly intransigent positions and misinterpretations of the flexibility shown by the House of Representatives. It seems that such flexibility has been misunderstood, even by Mr. Bernadino León, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, who tried to bring us back to square one by unraveling all that had been achieved in the past 10 months through dialogue and negotiations. In that regard, I want to emphasize from this rostrum the following.

The House of Representatives is committed to dialogue as an approach to resolving the security and institutional crisis in Libya, but it will not agree to any regression regarding that which has been approved by the majority so far.

No agreement may be imposed on a future Government to take any step whatsoever in favour of any terrorist organization that has been listed by a Security Council sanctions committee.

The war against terrorism in Benghazi, Derna and Sirte cannot be part of a ceasefire arrangement under the agreement, unless it includes surrender on the part of the terrorists and the turning in of their weapons.

The House of Representatives hopes to receive a final draft of an agreement that does not reward the

perpetrators of crimes, including the destruction of State property and forced, armed seizure of the capital.

In the case of the continued intransigence of the General National Congress in rejecting the agreement, the House of Representatives calls on the boycotting members to advance the national interests and the interests of their constituents on any and all matters. They are called upon to disassociate themselves from the extremist militias and to join the House of Representatives in order to participate in the selection of an inclusive Government of national accord that excludes the terrorist groups. We call on the international community to exercise influence in that direction.

This year, the Mediterranean Sea has witnessed an unprecedented wave of illegal migration coming from Africa and Asia and heading towards Europe. Sadly, we have taken note of the loss of thousands of lives by drowning at sea. In that regard, we express our condolences and sympathy to the families of the victims.

We reiterate Libya's position in support of all international efforts seeking to reduce the risks to illegal migrants in the Mediterranean, based on respect for the principles of international law, particularly respect for sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

We express Libya's readiness to contribute, within the limits of its capacity, to prevent the smuggling of migrants and to rescue lives in the Mediterranean. We also emphasize that the humanitarian crisis must be addressed comprehensively, in consultation with the countries of origin, transit and destination, and while taking into account the need to address the root causes of illegal migration in general and reasons for the large increase in the numbers of migrants passing through Libya in recent months.

The security approach to the problem of migrant smuggling is insufficient. Libya believes that using force against smuggling boats off the Libyan coast may increase the complexity of the Libyan crisis, and will not contribute to reducing the migrant phenomenon. That can be achieved only by providing the legitimate Libyan Government with the capacity to extend its authority over all Libyan territory and to control its borders, including the necessary capacity-building assistance in that area, especially the arming of the Libyan army with the necessary equipment and training.

Libya cautions against any foreign military activity conducted without its consent and control in Libyan territorial waters or within its exclusive economic zone that could harm fishing activities and lead to the plundering of its marine living resources.

Peace in the Middle East cannot be achieved in the midst of the ongoing Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, which denies the rights of the Palestinian people and seeks in all possible ways to Judaize the city of Jerusalem. The occupation flies in the face of all international resolutions on the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, in particular on the right of return and the right to establish an independent State with full sovereignty over its territory, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Libya demands that the siege imposed on the Palestinian people be lifted and that they be provided with protection. The Israeli occupation authorities must be compelled to stop all acts of violence and intimidation against the Palestinian people and to comply with all international resolutions, especially with regard to the return of refugees to their homes and the cessation of settlement activities and of the repeated attacks against the holy sanctuary of Al-Haram Al-Sharif in Jerusalem.

We condemn all atrocities against the Syrian people and express our support for all international efforts aimed at finding a peaceful settlement that will affirm the rights of the Syrian people to live in a dignified and democratic system that respects human rights and fundamental freedoms.

With regard to brotherly Yemen, we hope that the Arab coalition will restore security and stability to Yemen and help reach a peaceful solution to the crisis, under the supervision of its legitimate Government and on the basis of Security Council resolution 2216 (2015).

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Acting Head of State of Libya for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Agila Saleh Essa Gwaidar, Acting Head of State of Libya, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Christopher J. Loeak, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands

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

Mr. Christopher J. Loeak, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Christopher J. Loeak, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Loeak: I bring the General Assembly the warm greetings of “Yokwe” from the people and nation of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer small island States a powerful tool with which to shape and adjust our own domestic strategies. The international community has spoken, and a changing world is mapping a visionary landscape that reaches into the distant years that have too rarely been part of our own national discussions — beyond 2020, beyond 2023, towards 2030 and even farther, to the middle of the century.

In adopting the SDGs, the Marshall Islands cannot afford a set-it-and-forget-it mentality, which has too often marked past international efforts. We now have a powerful opportunity in which to merge recent national planning improvements and construct an architecture for measuring progress and pinpointing gaps. Such gaps are not only our own, but also those of our partners. Too often, we have — all of us — operated with goodwill, but without accountability for our collective performance. Our post-2023 national trust fund deserves a strong support system and also represents an opportunity, if we use it, to work towards specific goals and benchmarks. If we can jointly harness our national and global priorities, if we can commit our own efforts and national resources, however small they may be right now, and if our close partners can work with us to restructure assistance-delivery to target the SDGs, then my nation too can climb the development ladder.

I welcome the establishment of a comprehensive assistance programme with the International Atomic Energy Agency that will not only enhance our national

capacity to monitor and evaluate serious issues of nuclear contamination but that will also address health strategies and other key SDG benchmarks.

The Marshall Islands faces some of the more complex development, security and planning challenges in the world, but we lack the full tools available to tackle them. A nation struggling to attain basic social development goals will not be equipped to resolve any other challenge.

Progress in education is key. Firm efforts are under way to correct our course and to provide better opportunities for our youngest and future generations. We have found new pathways for building on our traditional knowledge and culture to enable our education system to draw on our own Pacific story and strength. But our efforts and good intentions alone cannot ensure that every willing student has an opportunity to succeed. We need international support.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands has one of the world's highest rates of diabetes, which has led my Government to declare a state of emergency. Non-communicable diseases remain a primary threat to our national well-being. Without transformative partnerships, and without extending more closely to our shores the renewed United Nations 2008-2013 Action Plan for the Global Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases, we risk a tragic downward spiral.

The term developing nation implies forward movement, yet for far too long the Marshall Islands has been only treading water. We have promising opportunities and aspirations for improving our investment platforms, but our untapped yet substantial resource base is often coloured by larger international influence.

Our fisheries represent not only a vital sector for our own development, but also a wider contribution to international food security, because the Pacific is steward of half the world's commercial tuna. Our foreign fishing nation partners, who not by accident are also the drivers of global influence, have held the purse to our own future for far too long. Key stocks in the Pacific are being plundered at unsustainable rates that jeopardize our future.

Already, higher returns from foreign licenses have benefited our own national fiscal future, yet that is only a fraction of the true potential. It is unacceptable that,

on the one hand, we are expected to achieve the SDGs and to demonstrate dramatic development progress while, on the other hand, we are blocked from further gains from our own resources by the self-interests of distant fishing nations.

The Marshall Islands and the States parties to the Nauru Agreement Concerning Cooperation in the Management of Fisheries of Common Interest remain firmly committed to the benefits of the Vessel Day Scheme and targeted high seas closures as a condition for fishing our waters. The tables have turned and, if others wish to fish our waters, they must now do so on our own sovereign terms.

As a low-lying island nation with no higher ground, climate change poses a severe threat to our security. Some have said that there is no more hope and no more time. I forcefully disagree. The future of my nation — the future of our very land — may rest more in the hands of my fellow world leaders than in my own. There is still hope — hope that my nation will be able to tackle the most difficult planning challenges and to build resilience wherever we can, and hope that the world will not turn a blind eye. I can assure the United Nations that the Marshall Islands refuses the very notion that we would willingly relocate wholesale to another country, or resign ourselves to saying that if the water comes, it comes.

As we move to the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) later this year, in Paris, I am proud that climate change is now recognized by all world leaders as a reality that deserves, and is receiving, a firm and collective response. Everyone must act. Many, including my own nation, have already committed to emissions cuts well into the future of 2025, 2030 and beyond. But the world's initial efforts are falling significantly short. Instead of indifference or fumbled excuses, we must achieve true leadership that provides a direct response to closing the global emissions gap.

As the broader United Nations debates Security Council reform to adjust it to the modern world, the nations that portray themselves as deserving leaders have an excellent opportunity to demonstrate their leadership by not ducking the bill or pointing fingers, but by embracing the challenge of the global emissions gap. They should begin to speak about opportunities for new forms of energy, instead of dancing around perceived threats to growth. For the island nations, a

world without a true commitment to decarbonization and meaningful strategies for its attainment is ultimately no world at all.

As dramatically different as our landscape is today, the tensions of an earlier age continue to resonate, from the time when the Pacific islands region served as the horrific theatre for a global power struggle. Decades later, we again face the complex push-and-pull of larger international politics. Our regional baseline is often one of severe fragility. We have sharp exposure to external shocks, and some of our emerging and future security challenges not only extend beyond our capacity but push the envelope of international precedent.

The treatment of our security as small-island and large ocean nations cannot be considered apart from that of much larger interaction across the Pacific. Some may view political alliances, borders and, in some cases, significant marine mineral resources as mere possessions ready to be plucked by the highest bidder or the strongest military force, just as one might pick ripe fruit from a tree. That contradicts the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations.

I offer my firm support for the initiative proposed by New Zealand during its Security Council presidency, when it convened a Council meeting on small island developing States and threats to international peace and security (see S/PV.7499). That meeting revealed issues that slip under the global radar but that cannot be ignored. I urge the Council's establishment of a regular agenda item on security issues in small island developing States.

I am proud to announce the formal establishment, earlier this week, of diplomatic relations between the Republic of the Marshall Islands and Cuba.

Everyone should participate on the international stage. The Republic of the Marshall Islands supports Taiwan's meaningful participation in the specialized agencies of the United Nations, including the World Health Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization and the UNFCCC. It is imperative that the global community fully recognize and evaluate Taiwan's important commitment to reduce its emissions. Furthermore, I call for Taiwan's involvement in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, and urge recognition of the important assistance it has provided to my country in the areas of health, education and energy. The Marshall Islands welcomes Taiwan's efforts as a regional peacemaker, including in cross-

strait issues, and urges that States Members of the United Nations recognize and encourage such progress.

Like many other countries, the Republic of the Marshall Islands believes that awareness of the catastrophic impacts and humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons must underpin all efforts towards nuclear disarmament. As a former United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, the Republic of the Marshall Islands has a unique legacy shared only by a few other nations. Even while the United Nations was supposed to be furthering our development, 67 nuclear tests were conducted in our nation between 1946 and 1958 by our former administering Power, the United States of America, under our United Nations trusteeship status, including through authorization under two United Nations resolutions. That was the only time the United Nations ever explicitly authorized the use of nuclear weapons, and the results were, and remain, beyond tragic.

If our own past and its contemporary impact continue to bear that heavy burden, the whole world should know our story. I would therefore strongly urge Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to include the powerful and specific example of the Marshall Islands and the related role of the United Nations in his statements aimed at encouraging progress on nuclear disarmament and test bans.

It is essential for the survival of humankind that nuclear weapons never be used again under any circumstances. The universal way to accomplish that is through the total elimination of such weapons. I am deeply disappointed that political distractions resulted in the lack of an outcome from the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons earlier this year. It should be our goal as the United Nations not only to stop the spread of nuclear weapons but also to pursue peace and security in a world without them.

This year, I look forward to a truly united United Nations with the courage not only to address the immediate emergencies at hand but also to move us forward into our dynamic century.

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

Mr. Christopher J. Loek, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Union of the Comoros.

Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Dhoinine (*spoke in French*): As I take the floor for the last time before the General Assembly after five years in office as President of the Union of the Comoros, I wish to discharge the duty of conveying to the General Assembly a message of solidarity from the Comoran people. In the name of the Government of the Comoros, and on my own behalf, I would also like to express our sincerest thanks to Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and to all those who have helped to make our stay in New York so warm, in particular the authorities of the United States of America. Lastly, I would like to congratulate the President on his election to lead the General Assembly at its seventieth session, the importance of which is manifestly clear.

This session opens at a crucial moment in the development of humankind. Since man first appeared on Earth, we are the first generation in the vast expanse of time — perhaps 3 million years after the appearance of our remote ancestors — to be aware of the physical laws that govern us and of the unfortunate effects of the irrational use of natural resources. As in 1918, after the Great War, that incomparable horror, and as in 1945, after the victory over fascism, that base ideology, but also as in the 1990s, when we faced the absurdity of an arms race in weapons of mass destruction, today as before, nothing prevents us from uniting to effectively combat pollution and poverty.

As world leaders aware of our responsibility in the face of impending disaster, we must rationally work here and now to save humankind, and we are capable of

doing so. We must take advantage of this unprecedented international setting to harness the efforts of all nations to make our planet sustainable and equitable before 2030, through a programme of surpassing ambition. Therefore, at the moment when the Assembly has just adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), I wish to commend the outstanding and consistent work that was done under the impetus of the Secretary-General.

My country, the Union of the Comoros, fully endorses the agreed Agenda, which consolidates the gains of the Millennium Development Goals while paving the way to a new era through 17 Sustainable Development Goals to be met over the next 15 years. We must therefore commit ourselves to putting a definitive end to poverty in all its forms, to eradicating hunger and to promoting sustainable agriculture in order to guarantee food security, good health and the well-being of all. We must also guarantee a quality education for all without exception, promote lifelong learning opportunities for all and ensure gender equality, as well as the full empowerment of women.

It is also our duty to ensure the availability, sustainable management and cleanliness of water for all and to guarantee access to clean, affordable and sustainable energy in order to promote sustained economic growth. To that end, several countries should immediately begin work on major projects to build resilient infrastructure, to promote sustainable, inclusive industrialization and to encourage innovation everywhere that will reduce inequalities within and among countries. We cannot imagine that humankind will thrive on Earth unless urgent action is taken to combat climate change and its impacts, while conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

It is in this way that we will promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, manage forests sustainably, combat desertification, combat and halt land degradation and put an end to the loss of biodiversity. We will need to find ways and means to continue to build peace throughout the world in the framework of sustainable development. And we must have access to justice for all, and establish effective and accountable institutions at all levels. Lastly, we must build a world without poverty or inequalities, a sustainable world through a new road map that will save humankind. Therefore let us take on ambitious goals, for our very survival depends on it.

As I stressed earlier, we face a situation similar to that which our very close ancestors experienced with sadness and suffering, but against which they struggled until victory was achieved. I call it slavery, a system that almost exterminated a large part of humankind, quite simply because one side thought itself superior to all the others. We face a situation somewhat similar to that experienced by our countries during the two world wars, but for which our peoples gave their lives with courage and temerity until the final victory to save humankind from chaos. We face legitimate questions that were asked by our ancestors when, for half a century, they powerlessly bore witness to an arms race that was leading humankind inexorably towards its own destruction, but where common sense eventually prevailed. We face a situation akin to that faced by almost all African countries, including my own, which for decades were subjected to the misdeeds of colonialism, but against which the valiant peoples of Africa, Latin America and Asia fought until acquiring their sovereignty and the independence of their territories, thereby saving humankind from indignity, decadence and shame.

Today, the world is directly following the consequences of wars that forced millions of men, women and children to leave their homelands, to board makeshift boats and to take refuge and live in inhumane conditions, and sometimes even to remain indigent. If we add to that the barbaric acts perpetrated by terrorist movements, which are increasing throughout the world, especially in Africa, it is time for that international community to speak with one voice and with firm conviction and to decisively say, "never again".

In a world of complete deprivation, where each nation must take part in safeguarding international security, how can we, in a small country like mine, be engaged in the fight if, at the same time, we must be on the front lines to defend our dignity, which has been disregarded by a permanent member of the Security Council of the Organization, whose primary role is to ensure compliance with the norms of international law?

I must underscore that the Union of the Comoros is the only country in the world, which, at the time of its accession to independence, did not benefit from respect for the law. Unlike all former colonies, the archipelago of the Comoros, composed of the islands of Mayotte, Anjouan, Moheli and Grande Comore, which was admitted to the United Nations as an independent State and subjected to international law, has been separated

from a part of its territory by the former colonial Power, France, in contravention of all norms and principles governing international relations.

Those present here will recall that, against the will of the Comorian people, France exercised its veto and continues to exercise its power over our territory. Given what is happening in Eastern Europe today, we wonder what significance the European Union gives to compliance with international law by accepting the Comorian island of Mayotte as a European outermost region, contrary to the relevant resolutions of the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Non-Aligned Movement.

At previous sessions, I informed the Assembly that we had signed a political declaration with President François Hollande in Paris that enabled us to hope that bilaterally a solution could be found that would give Comorians back their dignity. Unfortunately, to date France has refused to acknowledge that all Comorians, from whichever island they come, may freely move around the islands. Separated families, abandoned minors, displacements of populations in makeshift boats, precisely as is occurring in the Mediterranean Sea — all of that leads me to urge the Secretary-General to demand the application of international law, as France itself is rightly claims each time that international norms governing international life are contravened.

Of course, the main objective of the high joint council established between France and the Comoros is to facilitate bilateral dialogue and rebuild the trust that had disappeared between the two countries. However, we must note that the main mission assigned to that Council — facilitating movement of goods and peoples — has still not been accomplished. By continuing to defy international law on the issue of the Comorian Island of Mayotte, France has prevented the expected results and progress from being achieved in the dialogue between the two parties. From this rostrum, therefore, I once again appeal to the French authorities for us together to find ways and means to put an end this human tragedy, which every day causes Comorian families to plunge into mourning. I also address the community of nations, which those in this Hall represent, to ask that international law be applied so that a lasting solution to this dispute can be found.

With political will, nothing is impossible. I therefore welcome the fact that Palestine has finally been able

to hoist its flag at the United Nations. I also welcome the fact that Cuba and United States of America have proved that, even after half a century of conflict, States can find formulas adapted to overcome deadlocks and foresee a peaceful future for their peoples. Lastly, I welcome the historic agreement concluded between Iran and the countries of the P5+1 on the nuclear issue, which augurs well for a calmer international cooperation.

In a few months, after five years in office in a rotating presidency that fell to the island of Moheli, a Comorian from the island of Grand Comore will succeed me, in accordance with our Constitution. In that electoral democratic process under way, I would appeal for support from the international community and from the friends of the Comoros for the victory of our young democracy. I also appeal to everyone here that, after the scheduled elections, Member States will support our country on the path towards stability, development and well-being of the Comorian people.

As my country stands ready, after 40 years of independence, to begin the second phase of its history, I remain confident that in the future the next President of the Comoros will be able to say from this rostrum of free countries,

“We have now achieved the territorial integrity and unity of my country, the Comoros, within its borders inherited from colonization.”

I also remain confident that my successor will be able to say from this rostrum of free countries,

“I thank the United Nations for having actively acted for the achievement of the main goals inscribed in our common Charter.”

Lastly, I remain confident that a President from the Comoros will be able to say to his compatriots from the four islands,

“The time has come for all of us to work together to build our free, open and prosperous country, one which is confident in its future and in its people’s destiny.”

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

Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue, Vice-President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Vice-President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

Mr. Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue, Vice-President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue, Vice-President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Obiang Nguema Obiang Mangue (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a pleasure for me to take the floor before the General Assembly on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, who, due to numerous duties of State, is not able to be here today.

Equatorial Guinea is participating at this session of the General Assembly in a renewed spirit of faith and trust in the relevant role played by the Organization in promoting peace, security and stability among our nations in order to create the basic conditions for the well-being of humankind. Motivated by that trust, my delegation wishes to warmly congratulate Mr. Mogens Lykketoft for his unanimous election, which reflects the trust that the international community has in the rigour shown by his country in its treatment of international affairs. I am sure that, during his tenure as President of the General Assembly, he will always be able to count on the support and cooperation of the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea. We would like also to congratulate Mr. Sam Kutesa, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, for the commendable work carried out during his term, with the important decisions taken that will trace out the path for the United Nations towards the democratization and revitalization of its institutions, as well as for the

universal scope of its decisions. I would also like to take this opportunity to warmly congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon for his tireless efforts to face up to the complex challenges facing the Organization. We extend to him our support and cooperation to achieve every success in his endeavours.

Despite the attempts of some to monopolize the United Nations system with their undeclared interests, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea has never lost its faith and confidence in the relevant role that the United Nations must play with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security and in the promotion of fundamental human rights to guarantee the overall well-being of humankind. The United Nations is the only world body in which all States must have faith and trust, as is stated in its Charter. All countries are represented according to the principle of sovereign equality among States, including the democratic principle of respect for the majority opinion and for countries' own decisions.

The events that have occurred in the first quarter century of this century show a degree of weakness in the role of the United Nations when it comes to preventing and eliminating conflicts between States, in the maintenance of international peace and security and in promoting the economic well-being of States. We are concerned at the proliferation of armed conflicts in Africa, Europe and the Middle East, as well as instability caused in countries of the developing world; the progressive advance of terrorism in various parts of the world; and drug trafficking and uncontrolled immigration caused by those conflicts. All that would suggest that the United Nations has much more to do. Its Members must act in solidarity and according to the purposes and principles of the Charter, which should unite them in their actions.

In our view, the United Nations is not a police force acting to avert conflicts between States. The States Members of the United Nations must submit themselves to the norms of international law, to justice and respect for human rights, as well as strict respect for those standards. Consequently, they must work towards peace, stability and the development of nations. However, today it would appear that the law of the strongest and the most astute prevails, a situation that naturally leads to rebellions, which could lead to terrorist movements.

We believe that the success of the United Nations does not depend on the skill of the President of the General Assembly or of the heads of United Nations organs, or much less does it depend on the intelligence of the Secretary-General. Many of the denunciations made against the actions, purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations happen on a daily basis, without those leaders being in the least concerned, because they feel that their interests lie above those of the principles of the United Nations.

The results are before our very eyes: the large number of wars and conflicts that give rise to refugees and concentration camps and the massive migrations of people looking for a place of refuge in countries that have a degree of stability and economic prosperity. The drop in the price of oil and other internationally traded commodities has a negative effect on the economic development of producer countries. That is the result of the pillaging recorded in the countries that have fallen victim to armed conflicts, the natural resources of which are being seized as trophies of war. Certainly, we are reaping the bad fruits of our own negative destructive action, and that is not in line with the aims of the United Nations.

Equatorial Guinea is a small African country that survives thanks to the cautious approach of its Government, the good graces of its people and the cooperation and solidarity of friendly countries. We have suffered attempted invasions by mercenaries, supported by weapons-producing Powers who had no other aim in mind than to take control of our oil resources. Fortunately, however, the preventive and precautionary measures that we took put an end to the schemes of the aggressors. Not satisfied with that aggression, our country is now subject to a systematic campaign of unfounded accusations concerning human rights violations and abject poverty. We are not ashamed to denounce those accusations here, because the Republic of Equatorial Guinea is open to the world and everyone is familiar with our successful achievements in sociopolitical development.

With the programme adopted by the United Nations on the Millennium Development Goals having come to an end, Equatorial Guinea is pleased to have achieved greater levels through the implementation of the Goals. Equatorial Guinea's Development Plan — "Horizon 2020" — sets out the following goals: to build international standards of basic infrastructure in order to improve productivity and speed up economic growth;

to strengthen human capital and improve the quality of life of our citizens; to build a diversified economy based on four sectors, energy and mining sector, fishing and aquaculture, agriculture and livestock farming, and, finally, the service sector; and to establish quality governance at the service of the citizen. Success thus far in the implementation of that programme made it possible for us to achieve the priority Millennium Development Goals.

With regard to the reform of the organs of the United Nations, Equatorial Guinea reaffirms its firm commitment to the African Union position, based on the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, consisting in the demand for two permanent seats and five non-permanent seats on the Security Council, with all the obligations, rights and privileges that those seats entail.

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Governments of the United States of America and the Republic of Cuba for the restoration of diplomatic relations. We ask that this culminates in the lifting of the embargo against Cuba.

With regard to climate change, Equatorial Guinea fully shares the concern of the rest of the international community, namely, that the very existence of planet Earth is under threat. In order to combat this everyone should contribute according to their abilities to arrest this phenomenon. That being the case, the Amazon area, in South America, and the Congo Basin, in Central Africa, which constitute the world's lungs for the preservation of the environment and biodiversity, deserve special attention at the upcoming twenty-first session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris.

I would like to conclude by expressing our wholehearted willingness as a State Member of the United Nations to contribute to all processes that would help to improve the functioning of this world Organization. We wish this session of the General Assembly every success.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, for the statement he has just made

Mr. Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangué, Vice-President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Miro Cerar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia

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

Mr. Miro Cerar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Miro Cerar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Cerar (Slovenia): We are at a historic junction for the United Nations, which will turn 70 next month. This occasion is an opportunity for stocktaking of the Organization's past achievements, missed opportunities and challenges ahead. The United Nations has been making outstanding efforts in paving the road ahead for peace, security and human rights. At the same time, profound changes have taken place in these seven decades. The United Nations has been successful in adapting to some, whereas it lacked creativity, political will and flexibility to effectively face others.

Ten years ago, leaders met here in New York with a vision to increase and promote international security and advance human rights and development with a bold plan known as the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, which led to the establishment of the Human Rights Council and Peacebuilding Commission. We collectively endorsed the concept of the responsibility to protect human beings from mass atrocities and systematic violations of human rights. We have also committed to reform the Security Council, as well to revitalize the General Assembly, as part of a comprehensive, overall reform of the Organization. The United Nations has to continue to adapt to new challenges, and it would therefore be important to make progress in that respect. We have the mandate and responsibility to act, based on global solidarity and the vision of a fairer and more secure international community.

We welcome the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). However, by the end of

the year, at the twenty-first session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference, in Paris, we will need to adopt an ambitious, durable, universal and legally binding climate agreement that addresses mitigation, adaptation, financing and technology development in a balanced and cost-effective manner.

Slovenia remains strongly engaged in protecting the environment and in ensuring its sustainability, both in national and international contexts. Based on our extensive experience with beekeeping, and in view of multiple threats to bee populations, we wish to raise awareness of the critical importance of bees for sustainable food production and biodiversity. The Slovenian Government therefore decided to propose the proclamation of "World Bee Day", for which we will seek the endorsement of the United Nations.

There can be no security or economic and social development without respect for human rights, and vice versa. I wish to express our support for the excellent work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, and to encourage him to continue to exercise his leadership in the field of human rights. Almost a quarter of a century ago, when Slovenia gained independence, respect for human rights was a pivotal founding principle of our newly formed State. Since then, our commitment to promoting human rights, especially by protecting the most vulnerable groups, including children and the elderly, has intensified and represents one of the core elements of our foreign policy. Slovenia will continue to advocate a progressive approach to human rights issues and strive to enhance international norms and standards. We are confident that we can also successfully contribute to that goal by serving as a member of the Human Rights Council from 2016 to 2018.

This year is particularly significant for women, since it marks the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Just a few days ago we participated in the event commemorating it and reaffirmed our commitment to gender equality, human rights and the empowerment of women. And in October we will mark the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), the first resolution to stress the role of women in peace and security. But while we acknowledge the progress that has been achieved, our quest for gender equality must continue.

Respect for the rule of law and international law is an essential condition for nations' development and peaceful coexistence. One of the aims of the United Nations, enshrined in its Charter, is that of working to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained. Slovenia believes firmly in the paramount importance of international treaties. It is through them that we can enhance universality, ensure reliability and provide accountability. Every society should make justice, truth and reconciliation a major focus and strive to attain them by every possible means, including international courts and tribunals. We continue our strong support to the International Criminal Court, which plays an important role in affirming the rule of law. Slovenia will continue to advocate for a strong and independent Court as well as for the universality of the Rome Statute and the Kampala amendments, and we call on States to cooperate fully and promptly with the Court. But the primary responsibility for prosecuting international crimes rests with States. Slovenia is actively engaged in efforts to ensure mutual legal assistance and extradition agreements between States for crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide, through the initiative in that regard.

Time and again, no matter how often we insist that mass atrocities and systematic violations of human rights should not be repeated, we still witness events that shock the conscience. In the past few years we have witnessed war in Syria and raging conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Gaza, Yemen, South Sudan, the Central African Republic and elsewhere, with spillover effects in their immediate neighbourhoods and consequences felt around the world. Such situations have been worsened by the escalating violent extremism and crimes committed by Daesh and other terrorist groups and organizations. This must be stopped. We call on the Security Council, and its permanent members in particular, to overcome their divisions and find a way to deal more effectively with the deteriorating situation, in line with the Council's primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Nor has Europe as a continent been spared. The conflict in Ukraine goes on and its sovereignty and territorial integrity remain under threat. We therefore call for the full and timely implementation of the Minsk agreements.

These wars and conflicts have dramatically increased the displacement of people on a large scale, reaching levels unprecedented in recent history. We are faced with immense humanitarian challenges. Refugees and migrants are fleeing their homes in massive waves, and hundreds are dying in their quest for a better life. The magnitude of the current humanitarian crisis requires a determined and immediate response on the part of the entire international community, based on the common principles of solidarity, humanity and shared responsibility. We should help these people in need. We should increase assistance to countries that are hosting large numbers of refugees. We should also act more decisively in refugees' countries of origin by pushing for sustainable political solutions to ongoing conflicts and by countering the spread of radical ideologies.

Slovenia is committed to conflict prevention and peaceful conflict resolution. Wherever possible and applicable, we should opt for diplomacy, mediation and conflict prevention. The recent historic agreement on the Iranian nuclear issue proves that even the most complex issues can be resolved peacefully. Considering that positive outcome, we hope that the Middle East peace talks will also resume soon, with a view to bringing stability and security to this tormented region.

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

With regard to disarmament and arms control, I would like to welcome the early entry into force, last December, of the Arms Trade Treaty and to call for its full implementation. That will enable us to regulate the international arms trade effectively, and thus make a substantial contribution to international peace and security. My country also remains committed to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

I would like to conclude by underlining that Slovenia will continue with activities aimed at bringing the global community closer to achieving universal standards of human rights and a decent life for all. We will remain a strong supporter of an environment in which every human being can feel safe. We will continue to advocate for strong partnerships, inclusive dialogue and constructive cooperation. We are determined to work with all partners to ensure that the Organization delivers tangible, meaningful results that can advance peace, security and human rights for all. Slovenia will do its share in shouldering its responsibility to act.

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

Mr. Miro Cerar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Meltek Sato Kilman Livtuvanu, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu

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

Mr. Meltek Sato Kilman Livtuvanu, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Meltek Sato Kilman Livtuvanu, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Livtuvanu (Vanuatu): Vanuatu is honoured to join previous speakers in congratulating the President on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventieth session, and I would like to assure him of my delegation's full support. Under his leadership we are confident that he will guide us successfully through the session. I would also like to offer warm thanks to the previous President of the Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa. His exemplary leadership has produced many important achievements that will continue to shape and strengthen the United Nations and enable it to execute its mandate effectively.

We are meeting today at a critical crossroads in history that presents us with a unique opportunity to change the lives of millions of people around the world, especially the most disadvantaged, for the better. The 2008 world financial crisis dramatically changed the global financial landscape. The banking crisis resulted in unprecedented unemployment and low economic growth around the world. The effects of the financial crisis are still being felt, and the recent volatility of the global financial markets has created further uncertainty.

Apart from that global economic challenge, we are witnessing an unprecedented humanitarian crisis caused by conflict and violence. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there are currently more than 60 million refugees in the world, a number unequalled since the Second World

War. Climate change continues to be a major challenge for the world generally, and a major threat to small island developing States (SIDS) in particular. Its impact cannot be understated. The rise in sea levels and the effects of El Niño and unfavourable weather conditions point to a bleak future for humankind.

The uncertain global economic outlook, the adverse impact of climate change and the humanitarian crisis mean that the task ahead of us in implementing the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) is all the more daunting. That stark reality calls for immediate collective action. If we do not resolve this global crisis today, we run the risk of creating a world with no prospect of sustaining peace and security. For the world community, that blunt reality calls for global action to ensure that peace, prosperity and security can continue to be maintained in the future. That is the most important gift we can give our future generations.

I welcome the theme of the General Assembly's seventieth session, "The United Nations at 70 — the road ahead for peace, security and human rights". It is timely and relevant to our current global development challenges. Peace, security and human rights are the mutually reinforcing pillars of successful sustainable development and consistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. This year we are celebrating the 70 years of the existence of the United Nations, and on reflection, we can see that much has been achieved. We have experienced no major wars so far; millions have been lifted out of extreme poverty and remarkable progress has been made on the human rights front. Despite those achievements, however, significant challenges remain ahead.

The humanitarian crisis that has resulted from the conflict and violence of recent years has revealed a dark side of humankind, a world of haves and have-nots. The major Powers must do more to assist the surging refugee population, and I urge the most financially able countries to seriously consider donating to the coordinated Humanitarian Programme Cycle of the United Nations. What we need now is to address the underlying root causes of such conflicts — extreme poverty, hunger, the lack of good governance, a lack of adherence to the rule of law, poor economic growth, rising inequality and youth unemployment. Sustained and inclusive development is therefore extremely important to preserving peace, human rights and stability around the world. I commend the Secretary-

General's approach to addressing this humanitarian crisis from a human rights perspective.

In the light of these global challenges, the role of preventive diplomacy as a key instrument in the maintenance of peace and security around the world is critical. Women's role in this area should be enhanced, and we should focus most of our efforts on preventive diplomacy. Vanuatu will always play its part in maintaining international peace and security, and our deployment of peacekeepers to Côte d'Ivoire and Haiti reflects our commitment to that endeavour.

As part of the international community's response, we have embarked on three important and ambitious global agendas, adopting the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, as well as drafting an agreement on climate change to be concluded in Paris at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) later this year. The 2030 Agenda promises to be transformative, particularly for those at the margins of society. While the Millennium Development Goals contributed immensely to human progress in areas such as gender equality, extreme poverty reduction and improved access to basic social services, there is room for more to be done. The 2030 Agenda covers a wide range of areas that are pertinent to my country's sustainable development and a good complement to our national sustainable development aspirations.

We welcome the establishment of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, on the conservation and sustainable management of oceans and seas. For too long we have observed the decline of the health of the oceans and seas as evidenced in dying coral, a profusion of marine pollution, damaged coastal ecosystems, declining fish stocks and ocean acidification. We recognize the need for a framework within which the implementation of SDG 14 can be progressively assessed, benchmarked and driven forward for the duration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We therefore support mandating the proposed triennial United Nations conference on the oceans and seas as the driver of progress evaluation for SDG 14.

I am delighted to see that a focus on gender remains an integral part of the 2030 Agenda. Achieving gender equality in my country, given our tradition and cultural makeup, continues to be a challenge. However, the political will to continue to advance women's interests remains steadfast. We have made notable progress

on women's access to basic education and health services and their assumption of leadership positions in municipal councils, and today women have better access to basic financial services than ever before. As one of my country's leaders, I want to see more tangible progress made in the advancement of women and girls and their active participation in national leadership. That can be expedited if more financial resources can be made available for helping my Government to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

The success of the 2030 Agenda will depend on access to affordable financial resources and appropriate technology and on substantially improving national capacity. Regarding access to financial resources, the recently adopted Addis Ababa Action Agenda reflects most of the pertinent issues, and it is important for us to implement it swiftly. I join other global leaders in calling on all developed countries to meet their official development assistance (ODA) commitments, as agreed on in the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Declaration. The ODA target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income (GNI), as well as the increased target of 0.2 per cent of GNI to least developed countries (LDCs) by 2020, must be met, for they are crucial to realizing the 2030 Agenda.

Development financing initiatives through South-South cooperation are complementary to this and will remain critical. On that note, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the President of China, His Excellency Mr. Xi Jinping, for his recent announcement at the SDG Summit (see A/70/PV.7) that China will provide \$2 billion to developing countries. That type of gesture and goodwill demonstrates real action and genuine partnership.

Access to technology is critical to the achievement of sustainable development. I welcome the United Nations initiative, launched in Istanbul, aimed at establishing a technology bank for least developed countries. My Government would greatly appreciate its speedy realization. In the area of technology, and particularly the development of information and communication technologies (ICT), Vanuatu has made tremendous strides in recent years. Our efforts were recognized last weekend when Vanuatu, along with a small number of other countries, received a United Nations award for ICT development, thus demonstrating the transformative role that ICT is playing in improving our people's lives. It will continue to be a key tool for us in our implementation and achievement of the SDGs.

Regarding improving country capacity, I urge the United Nations to assist developing countries, particularly SIDS and LDCs, in developing their statistical capacities. For small island developing States, that remains a challenge and, as we know, it is the most important basis for formulating evidence-based policy, as well as assessing progress on the 2030 Agenda.

For small island developing States such as Vanuatu, climate change remains a major threat to our achievement of sustainable development. I am therefore grateful to see that Goal 13 of the 2030 Agenda highlights the importance of climate change. However, we should note that this Goal can be meaningful only if we reach a favourable agreement in Paris in December. The connection between climate change and sustainable development is clear. If we do not address climate change, SIDS cannot achieve sustainable development. In March, Vanuatu experienced a category-5 tropical cyclone that affected 60 per cent of the population and 64 per cent of its economy. According to our current assessment, it will take many years and more than \$500 million to rebuild our economy. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the international community for its swift response in assisting us immediately after the cyclone hit with disaster relief and operations. We look forward to its continued support for our recovery and reconstruction efforts, which we have just embarked on.

Our Pacific island leaders have continued to voice their concerns about climate change in regional and international forums. We are calling for a legally binding agreement limiting the increase in the average global temperature to well below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and for anchoring loss and damage provisions in the agreement. We are also calling for a financial package that will commit countries in the UNFCCC's annex I category to providing \$1 billion a year by 2020 in order to finance our adaptation and mitigation needs. These declarations represent our collective voice in the lead-up to the Paris Climate Change Conference and our call to ensure that the planet is saved for us and future generations.

Apart from focusing on climate change, we have also agreed to strengthen regional connectivity, improve productivity and boost economic growth to ensure peace and security in our region, all initiatives that are consistent with the 2030 Agenda. The relationship between the United Nations and the Pacific-based regional organizations is critical to the implementation

of the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway. We welcome the recent adoption of resolution 69/318, on the relationship between the secretariat of the Pacific Islands Forum and the United Nations, and we hope that cooperation can now be translated into concrete action.

My delegation would like to remind the United Nations not to lose sight of decolonization issues, in the light of the emerging challenges that have been presented to us to address collectively. Vanuatu calls on the United Nations family to remain equally focused on finding ways to address this long-overdue issue. The United Nations membership must bring closure to its work on decolonization. The right to self-determination has been a fight endured by many generations. While many have lost their lives in the process, the dream continues for the United Nations and all nations advocating and promoting the democratic principles that still linger in the hearts of many, in the hope that one day their cries will be heard and the promise of a self-determined future delivered. The United Nations must continue the work of the Special Committee on Decolonization in order to maintain a meaningful dialogue on the question of New Caledonia. We thank the Government of France for its cooperation in moving the decolonization process forward. It is therefore important that all parties maintain a dialogue and ensure that all the issues are addressed.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome President Barack Obama's recent decision to re-establish diplomatic relations with Cuba and reopen diplomatic missions between the two nations. We hope the process will be completed soon with the lifting of the embargo on Cuba.

Like other small Pacific island countries, Vanuatu is a small, open and vulnerable economy. Its openness and small size mean that it is highly vulnerable to external shocks and that opportunities to exploit economies of scale are limited. Despite those challenges, we have been able to record economic growth for the past 10 years. The recent impact of Tropical Cyclone Pam, however, has erased the gains made over that decade. It will take many years to recover, making our efforts to achieve sustainable development somewhat daunting. As a result of this difficulty, my Government recently made a decision to request the United Nations to consider postponing our graduation from LDC status for some years. That will give us ample time to recover fully from the effects of the cyclone and rebuild our economy. I urge the membership of the United Nations

to support our draft resolution on the matter during the Assembly's seventieth session.

My Government and people will work to mobilize domestic resources and ensure that our institutional capacity is geared to meeting the new development Agenda. Like many other developing countries, we acknowledge that we cannot achieve our sustainable development plans alone, and we therefore call on the international community to help us achieve those goals.

My Government believes that the ongoing tensions between the issues of the freedom of the seas and territorial claims has placed the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and other relevant international conventions under huge pressure. However, I also believe that States must be willing to cooperate and seek peaceful solutions to any disputes that may have arisen. Umaenupne and Leka islands, commonly known as Matthew and Hunter islands, south of Vanuatu, have been a repository of our cultural heritage since well before the colonial era. As in the other 83 islands, people would use the freedom of the seas to visit their claimed cultural sites. For several decades now, my people have been denied their right to enjoy the freedom of the seas and their claimed territory. I would like to thank and commend the United Nations and the Republic of France for their willingness to hold a dialogue and allow my people their right to visit their claimed territory to perform cultural rituals. The Government of France is to be commended for its important role in advocating for the rights of indigenous peoples in our region and around the world.

I would like to place it on record that Vanuatu has declared the two islands and the water surrounding them a cultural and marine protected area. Cultural visits to the island will be undertaken to revive and empower our indigenous and cultural system. I also wish to put it on record that the Government of Vanuatu will strengthen its ties with its French counterpart in collaborative efforts to ensure that our ocean is safe from terrorism, piracy, climate change and illegal fishing.

In conclusion, the global challenges before us are overwhelming. The global economic uncertainty, the impact of climate change and the unprecedented humanitarian crisis at hand remind us that we need to think differently and adopt innovative approaches to resolve those challenges. We need to deviate from business as usual. That is important especially when implementing the ambitious 2030 Agenda for

Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the soon to be adopted Paris climate change agreement. What we need are revitalized partnerships, international cooperation and collective wisdom to address those challenges. When we stand together, there is no limit to what we can do together.

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

Mr. Meltek Sato Kilman Livtuvanu, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 6.40 p.m.