



General Assembly

Seventieth session

66th plenary meeting
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New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Lykketoft (Denmark)

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 3 (continued)

Credentials of representatives to the seventieth session of the General Assembly

(b) Report of the Credentials Committee (A/70/573)

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly has before it the report of the Credentials Committee circulated in document A/70/573, containing a draft resolution recommended by the Committee in paragraph 11 of its report. The draft resolution reads as follows:

“The General Assembly,

“Having considered the report of the Credentials Committee and the recommendation contained therein,

“Approves the report of the Credentials Committee”.

I now give the floor to the Chair of the Credentials Committee, Mr. Jan Kickert, Permanent Representative of Austria.

Mr. Kickert (Austria), Chair of the Credentials Committee: On behalf of the Credentials Committee, I have the honour to introduce the report of the Committee concerning the credentials of the representatives of Member States to the seventieth session of the General Assembly, contained in document A/70/573.

Having considered the credentials of the representatives at its meeting of 24 November, the Credentials Committee adopted without a vote a draft resolution accepting the credentials. The Committee also recommended to the plenary of the General Assembly the adoption of the draft resolution concerning the credentials of representatives to the current session of the General Assembly contained in paragraph 11 of the report of the Committee.

I should like to note that since the meeting of the Credentials Committee, formal credentials in the form required by rule 27 of the rules of procedure were received by the Secretary of the Credentials Committee regarding Saudi Arabia. The General Assembly is therefore requested to adopt the draft resolution approving the report of the Credentials Committee and the additional credential submitted subsequent to the meeting of the Credentials Committee.

Finally, I should like to express my gratitude to the members of the Committee and to the Secretariat for facilitating our work.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution entitled “Credentials of representatives to the seventieth session of the General Assembly”, recommended by the Credentials Committee in paragraph 11 of its report. The Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 70/18).

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The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran has asked to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted. I remind him that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Dibaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation joined the consensus on the resolution just adopted. However, I should like to express my delegation's reservation on those parts of the report contained in document A/70/573 and the resolution that may be construed as recognition of the Israeli regime.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 3?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 16

Culture of peace

Report of the Secretary-General (A/70/373)

Draft resolutions (A/70/L.20 and A/70/L.24)

The Acting President: I am pleased to deliver the following statement on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft.

“Today we discuss the report of the Secretary-General on the promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace. At the outset, I should like to commend the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the various United Nations entities that are committed to promoting the values of the culture of peace. I should also like to highlight the role played by the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh in introducing this draft resolution.

“I also thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/70/373), which, given recent terrorist attacks and reports of intolerance towards forcibly displaced persons, is extremely timely. Recent events demonstrate very clearly that achieving a culture of peace and strengthening intercultural and interreligious dialogue is perhaps more important today than at any time in our past.

“The challenges we face in building a culture of peace, however, are visible across our world today. They are visible in the conflicts that rage across the world, that are pulling societies apart, where innocent civilians are targeted, humanitarian law is flouted and the foundations for development are destroyed. They are visible in the violence, death and inhumanity arising from the acts of violent extremists. They are visible in the continued actions of organized criminal gangs, of corrupt and fraudulent Governments and of those who attack culture and diversity. They are visible in the injustice of endemic poverty, a lack of opportunities or access to basic services; in ever increasing environmental degradation, and in the discrimination borne by millions of women and girls worldwide.

“The Secretary-General's report captures the dynamics that are giving rise to these instances of conflict, violence, discrimination and intolerance. It highlights also key trends in migration, media, trade, tourism, urbanization, climate change and new technology that give rise to new opportunities and tools for advancing mutual understanding and respect.

“At the same time, the report recognizes that in addition to inequality, prejudice, intolerance and conflict, means of communication such as the Internet are often being seized upon as vehicles for divisiveness and incitement to hatred and violence. There is a clear need, therefore, for the international community to adapt to the current trends in the world today, align strategies and provide resources commensurate to the task.

“During this anniversary year, there are a number of opportunities for Member States and the United Nations system to further advance a culture of peace based on respect for and the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The rapid implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) is one such opportunity.

“The inclusion of goals and targets that seek to both build peaceful, just and inclusive societies and to address drivers of conflict and violence such as exclusion and inequality or an absence of the rule of law or inclusive and accountable institutions, will greatly advance a culture of peace in line with

the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures 2013-2022.

“In this regard, it is imperative that every effort is made during this first year of the Sustainable Development Goals to bring all actors on board and to get implementation off to the best possible start. There is also a need for the international community to urgently support efforts to bring an end to protracted conflicts such as that taking place in Syria.

“At the same time, not all differences and conflicts in a society can be managed by external mediators or peacekeepers. National capacities for managing conflict and for building dialogue are as vital as a revived economy or infrastructure. Conducting wider civil dialogue, building effective and sustainable capacities for conflict prevention and resolution contribute to the transformation of governance institutions. These issues are particularly relevant in the context of the ongoing reviews on peace building, peace operations and on women and peace and security. They are also relevant for the forthcoming Secretary-General’s plan of action on preventing violent extremism.

“These are but a few of the opportunities before us to build the mindset of a culture of peace which is the most constructive and preventive approach for reducing conflict. All of us must work to further embrace that mindset whether in our domestic, regional or international policies. And in the face of threats from those who wish to divide us, the General Assembly can contribute to the rise of a culture of peace by demonstrating the power of solidarity, by cherishing our diversity and by continuing to make progress towards our common objectives of peace, human rights and sustainable development.”

(spoke in Arabic)

I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh to introduce draft resolution A/70/L.24.

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh): It is an honour for me today to introduce, on behalf of all the co-sponsoring Member States, the draft resolution entitled “Follow-up to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace” (A/70/L.24), in my maiden statement at the General Assembly as the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh takes pride in having introduced this text to the Assembly since 2001. We are pleased that it has been receiving the overwhelming support of Member States and has been adopted every year by consensus.

Peace is integral to human existence. Inculcating a mindset of a culture of peace is an aspiration of all humankind. It is also the essence of the Charter of the United Nations. The world today faces too many problems of narrow-mindedness that disrupts our shared objective of a peaceful, sustainable, progressive society. Inequality and discrimination, intolerance and hatred throughout the globe are generating new dimensions of conflicts. Today the number of displaced populations is the highest in recent history. Climate change poses formidable challenges to the global community. Terrorism and violent extremism remain major impediments to global peace and development. In this context it is an imperative in today’s world to inculcate a mindset of a culture of peace to address the menace.

Bangladesh is committed to promoting the culture of peace and non-violence. More than four decades ago, the father of our nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in his maiden speech to the General Assembly, envisioned the establishment of a global order based on peaceful coexistence, social justice and freedom from poverty, hunger, exploitation and aggression. The present Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, is also committed to promoting peace not only at the national level but also at the regional and international level and maintains a zero-tolerance policy to all forms of terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization.

In this context, I should like to express my delegation’s deepest condolences to the bereaved families of the innocent victims of yesterday’s senseless killings of disabled persons. That is more painful as we are observing today the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

We thank the Member States and their delegations for their active participation in the negotiation process this year. Draft resolution A/70/L.24 elaborates different elements for promoting a culture of peace. Let me highlight four elements that have been recognized in the draft resolution.

First, it welcomes the inclusion of the promotion of a culture of peace for sustainable development

in Agenda 2030. Secondly, the draft resolution underscores education as the most critical element for institutionalizing a culture of peace for mutual understanding, active citizenship and human rights. Thirdly, it highlights the role of women and youth in advancing the culture of peace and in particular the importance of greater involvement of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Fourthly, the draft resolution also notes the initiatives of civil society in collaboration with governments to strengthen civilian capacities to enhance the physical safety of vulnerable populations under threat of violence and to promote the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The high-level forum organized on 9 September by the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session provided us with a unique opportunity to bring together Member States and stakeholders and to reinvigorate our common endeavour for promoting a culture of peace. Holding such events every year will convey a strong message to the world and especially to the youth that the United Nations is truly committed to nurturing a culture of peace. We look forward to holding the high-level forum by the President of the General Assembly during the seventieth session and hope that it will make a meaningful contribution in furthering a culture of peace for a pro-people, pro-planet, inclusive, peaceful and sustainable world for all.

Just two months ago, the world leaders adopted the historic 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which depicts a critical linkage between peace and development. The peaceful coexistence of people, societies and communities has been underscored as an essential element for development in this transformative Agenda. While we see Agenda 2030 in its entirety, its target 4.7 has specifically recognized the importance of learning a culture of peace and nonviolence for sustainable development.

In the context of the ongoing peacebuilding architecture reform process, draft resolution A/70/L.24 bears significance, as building the mindset of a culture of peace is the basic, most constructive and preventive approach for reducing conflict. The culture of peace begins with each one of us. Unless we are ready to integrate peace and non-violence as part of our daily existence, we cannot expect our communities, our nations, or our planet to be peaceful. We should be prepared and confident in resolving the challenges of our lives in a non-aggressive manner.

The text receives the support of a large number of Member States every year. I am pleased to mention that this year more than 90 countries are sponsoring this important draft resolution. We express our sincere thanks and commendations to all the sponsors for their support and commitment. I hope, as in past years, we will be able to adopt draft resolution A/70/L.24 by consensus.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Philippines to introduce draft resolution A/70/L.20.

Mrs. Natividad (Philippines): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/70/L.20, entitled “Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace”, under agenda item 16, “Culture of peace”.

In 2004, the Philippines first introduced to the General Assembly a resolution on the promotion of interreligious dialogue (resolution 59/23). We did so in the firm belief — shared by many partners in the United Nations — that one of the ways of achieving global peace would be through drawing the human family closer in greater understanding and respect for diversity.

Our initiative to pursue global peace through greater understanding of our religious and cultural diversity has grown from strength to strength, garnering interest, participation and ownership by more and more stakeholders. Now in 2015, we have adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), which includes among its goals the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. That is in perfect harmony with the vision of the draft resolution that we introduce today.

The draft resolution recalls the invitation of the General Assembly to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to play a leading role in the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022). Two new UNESCO activities — Unite for Heritage, which celebrates and safeguards cultural heritage and diversity throughout the world; and its conference on youth and the Internet: fighting radicalization and extremism — are noted in the draft resolution. Various initiatives of Member States are also noted, such as the fifth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, held in Kazakhstan in June, and the international symposium to launch the African

Initiative on Education for Peace and Development through Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue, held in Benin in May.

The text further builds on nearly a decade of experience on interreligious and intercultural dialogue. I cannot overemphasize the value of what we continue to do in promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue, and how that dialogue serves as a foundation for a just and lasting peace. As we all say, without peace there can be no sustainable development.

The Philippines and Pakistan thank all Member States that have traditionally co-sponsored and supported this resolution through the years. Allow us also to welcome and thank those Member States that are co-sponsoring the draft resolution for the first time.

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): My delegation would like at the outset to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on agenda item 16, "Culture of peace". We commend UNESCO and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations for their valuable contribution to interreligious and intercultural dialogue and commend Member States which have undertaken various initiatives to advance this objective. I should also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank all delegations which took part in the negotiations on this year's draft resolution and contributed to its updating and further enrichment.

Our common aspiration and vision of a peaceful and harmonious world is far from being realized. Armed conflicts continue to rage in several parts of the world. Poverty persists. Some conflicts have unleashed human dislocation, refugees and forced migrants, on a scale not witnessed for more than half a century. Gross violations of human rights are rampant. Terrorism continues to pose a global threat and seems to be taking an even more deadly form. That poses an unprecedented challenge.

At the same time, we are witnessing a growing trend towards xenophobia and religious intolerance with new kinds of extremist ideologies spreading in different parts of the world. These complex, though related phenomena require concerted global action and a comprehensive long-term strategy. This strategy should not only respond to symptoms but also address the root causes and underlying drivers of violent extremism and terrorism. That surely must include meaningful and greater dialogue among the world's different religions and civilizations.

The world's great religions rest on common values that should unite and not divide us. We need to identify and build on these commonalities. Cultural diversity can be used as a positive force to promote harmony and cooperation in multicultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic societies. To make this happen we have to join forces and summon our collective will and energy to eliminate bias and prejudice, shun stereotypes and engage in genuine and constructive dialogue across cultures and religions.

Interreligious and intercultural dialogue should be pursued in a structured, multi-tiered and inclusive manner, including but not limited to religious and community leaders, scholars and civil society organizations. The ultimate goal of such dialogue should be to promote peace and prevent conflict by removing mutual suspicions and mistrust and promoting understanding across civilizations in order to build a global culture of peace.

The draft resolution we are going to adopt today calls on the nations of the world to facilitate and strengthen various channels and dimensions of this dialogue with the full involvement of all relevant stakeholders. It also calls on the relevant United Nations agencies to support and facilitate this dialogue at regional and international levels. It is our earnest hope that the General Assembly will once again lend unanimous support to this important resolution.

Mr. Sarubbi (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Paraguay thanks Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his very detailed report on the promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace (A/70/373). This is the second occasion on which a combined report on the implementation of resolutions 69/139 and 69/140 has been submitted.

When the nations of the world joined together to create the Organization, we did so with the idea of preventing recurrence of the catastrophes that had occurred in the first half of the twentieth century. Today, as we commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations and new challenges are emerging every day, Paraguay believes that we need to redouble our original commitment and continue to strive to achieve those ideals in order to ensure that all human beings can live a better life.

We are bearing witness to significant progress, but at the same time we are at a difficult moment in which

thousands of human lives are being lost every day, families are being expelled from their homes and entire populations are being forced to migrate. The impact of these tragedies, alongside the irreparable damage that is being done to our environment and cultural heritage and will be very difficult to mitigate, has made the current situation one of enormous gravity.

The issue under consideration today, a culture of peace, is defined by the United Nations as a set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflict by addressing their root causes through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations. The scope of this definition has shown with time that the appropriate path along which to seek peace is also that upon which we need to address the root causes that start or perpetuate conflicts.

To that end, it is critical to promote development and eradicate poverty and inequality. Our efforts need to give priority to the immediate and long-term needs of the most vulnerable populations, because we have learned that peace is not only the absence of conflict and that poverty and inequality also threaten peace. In that regard, States are obligated to reduce the inequalities of all types that exist within countries so that individuals can fully enjoy their rights. Fortunately, today we have the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), which we hope will contribute to resolving inequalities within nations and between them, with special attention to developing countries, small island developing States and land-locked developing countries.

Paraguay believes and trusts that the multilateral system will promote and guarantee a culture of peace through clear guidelines that will allow countries to take concrete action. That is why, as a member of the Human Rights Council, we are promoting a view of human rights that is universal, indivisible and inalienable, as well as the improved functioning of and coordination among human rights mechanisms at the regional and global levels. In that regard, Paraguay, alongside other States members of the Common Market of the South, promoted the adoption of Human Rights Council resolution 18/15, entitled "The incompatibility between democracy and racism", which reaffirms that racism and other related forms of intolerance threaten human rights and are incompatible with democracy and the rule of law. Paraguay believes that individuals' lack of access to their fundamental rights erodes trust in

national institutions and organizations and undermines the path towards the peaceful coexistence of peoples.

In addition, and bearing in mind that education is one of the fundamental means of building a culture of peace, Paraguay since its recent election as a member of the Executive Board of UNESCO, has been committed to promoting cultural diversity by safeguarding all aspects of heritage and by improving cultural expression. Understanding and accepting that diversity enriches our habitat rather than divides us should to contribute to building peace.

In order to contribute to a culture of peace, my country proposed that the General Assembly designate 30 July as the International Day of Friendship. That proposal was adopted by consensus as resolution 65/275. It is our conviction that the universal value of friendship inspire peaceful initiatives, promotes tolerance and builds bridges among communities, honouring cultural and religious diversity. It also contribute to the efforts of the international community, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, to promote dialogue among civilizations, solidarity, mutual understanding, reconciliation and peace.

We have no doubt that we have learned some lessons. We have overcome obstacles and made progress on important issues, but much remains to be done. Let us learn from our mistakes, share good practices, accept diversity, respect cultures and instil values that contribute to building a better and fairer world for all of humankind.

Finally, I should like to inform the Assembly that my country is among the sponsors of the draft resolutions introduced by the delegations of Bangladesh and the Philippines, and looks forward to their adoption by consensus.

Mr. Ismail (Brunei Darussalam): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the 10 States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam and my own country, Brunei Darussalam.

At the outset I should like to thank the Secretary-General for his annual report on the work of the Organization (A/70/373). The report provides a comprehensive and detailed overview of the activities, achievements and challenges of the Organization on

a wide spectrum of issues of common interest and concern to all.

I should also like to take this opportunity to commend the Philippines, Bangladesh, Iran and Pakistan for their efforts in facilitating the draft resolutions under agenda item 16 “Culture of peace”.

On 22 November, ASEAN leaders adopted the 2015 Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the Establishment of the ASEAN Community at the twenty-seventh ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which formally establishes the ASEAN Community on 31 December 2015. The ASEAN Community underlines our aspirations for a truly rules-based, people-oriented, people-centred community. Our leaders also adopted ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together declaration, and we remain committed to the ongoing process of ASEAN community-building, guided by the purposes and principles of the ASEAN Charter.

An ASEAN Community is characterized by the rich diversity of people with different backgrounds, ethnicities, languages, religions and cultures living together in a region of lasting peace, security and stability, sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and social progress. Since the establishment of ASEAN in 1967 its member States have been able to coexist in relative peace despite the multiracial, multi-religious and multicultural societies in the region. ASEAN cannot stress enough the importance of creating and maintaining a culture of peace in the region, as well as beyond. The ASEAN Declaration of 1967 and the ASEAN Charter of 2007 enshrine ASEAN’s commitment to maintaining peace, security and stability.

ASEAN is committed to promoting its fundamental principles, shared values and norms, as well as the principles of international law governing peaceful conduct among States, and thereby enhancing regional peace and stability. ASEAN also strives to strengthen its centrality, unity and cohesiveness towards a democratic, transparent, just, rules-based and inclusive community comprising three important pillars: first, the ASEAN Political-Security Community; secondly, the ASEAN Economic Community; and thirdly the ASEAN Socio-cultural Community. This is further cemented by the ASEAN Community Vision 2025: Forging Ahead Together, which embeds the culture of peace, including the values of tolerance and moderation, as a force for harmony, peace and stability in the ASEAN region and

beyond, and to promote respect for diversity, tolerance and understanding of people of different faiths, religions and cultures.

ASEAN commends the role of the United Nations in addressing conflicts throughout the world and promoting the culture of peace. In commemorating the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations we were encouraged by the achievements of this body over the past seven decades. We also highly appreciate the ongoing efforts of the United Nations to promote a culture of peace through dialogue and negotiation; enhance tolerance, trust and mutual understanding; and address all forms of political and religious disputes and radicalism.

ASEAN recognizes the importance of Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), which promotes peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provides access to justice for all, and builds effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. We see the complementarity of the 2030 Agenda with our own community-building efforts. We therefore reaffirm our commitment to strengthening the existing multifaceted partnership between ASEAN and the United Nations.

ASEAN welcomes the active involvement of the United Nations in the South-East Asian region. ASEAN will continue to strengthen cooperation and institutional ties with the United Nations within the framework of the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between the two organizations signed in 2011. We look forward to further collaborating with the United Nations in various areas of mutual interest including strengthening cooperation to address transnational threats such as violent extremism and international terrorism. In this connection, we were pleased that the United Nations participated in the ASEAN Regional Seminar on Preventive Diplomacy and Mediation Training in Brunei Darussalam in October 2014.

ASEAN welcomes the efforts of various regional and international organizations in the promotion of the culture of peace. ASEAN member States have been participating in the activities of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC). We appreciate the role of UNAOC in promoting greater understanding and respect among civilizations, cultures, religions and beliefs. These principles have also been reiterated in the Bali Declaration as the outcome of the sixth Global Forum of UNAOC last year. In this connection we look

forward to engaging with other United Nations Member States at the seventh Global Forum of UNAOC in Baku, Azerbaijan, in April 2016.

ASEAN also welcomes the programme of action adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in November 2011, aimed at promoting wider engagement with a culture of peace and non-violence. UNESCO plays an important role in the efforts to counter radicalization and extremism, especially among young people. We applaud the conference organized by UNESCO on “Youth and the Internet: fighting radicalization and extremism” in Paris, as well as the launch of the UNESCO Unite for Heritage campaign this year. We believe these initiatives are important as they focus on areas that the youth can relate to and the important role that they play in efforts to counter extremism.

Without a doubt, the positive interaction and synergy of the peoples of the South-East Asian region have contributed to the success that has made ASEAN what it is today. As home to more than half a billion people, South-East Asia is a mosaic of religions and cultures and home to many ethnic groups. That diversity is also our source of strength and harmony in the region. A big part of this is the practice of moderation in the region in all dimensions. Embracing moderation and understanding are fundamental ASEAN values which have been inculcated in our everyday lives.

In this regard, we condemn and deplore the violence and brutality committed by extremist organizations and radical groups, whose impact increasingly poses a threat to all regions of the world. We denounce all unlawful acts of destruction, violence and terror in all its forms and manifestations and reiterate our commitment to combating terrorism, including our support for Security Council resolutions 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014), which call on the international community to suppress the flow of foreign terrorist fighters.

ASEAN believes that every single act of terror is an act of cowardice and should be strongly condemned. The acts of terror in France, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and other parts of the world serve as a stark reminder of the need for us to remain vigilant and resolute in our fight against terrorism. We need to coordinate more closely to stamp out terrorism and violent extremism. In addition, we will continue to share best practices on counter-radicalization and tackle roots of extremism in various forums such as the East Asia Summit

Symposium on Religious Rehabilitation and Social Reintegration, held in Singapore in April.

ASEAN adopted the Langkawi Declaration on the Global Movement of Moderates at the twenty-sixth ASEAN Summit in April, which outlines measures to promote moderation and curb extremism throughout the region. ASEAN is encouraged that the Global Movement of Moderates has received widespread support from the international community, including academic institutions and civil society organizations. We were encouraged by the initiatives by relevant stakeholders and civil society actors, including the Global Movement of Moderates Foundation, in advancing the philosophy of moderation in ASEAN as an all-encompassing approach not only to resolving differences and conflicts peacefully, but also to ensuring sustainable and inclusive development and equitable growth, and promoting social harmony and mutual understanding among countries and regions.

To conclude, ASEAN takes this opportunity to reiterate our commitment to upholding a culture that promotes peace and tolerance. We are resolute in playing an active role in realizing the objective of the culture of peace. We also believe that ASEAN’s collective efforts will contribute to the work of the United Nations in promoting peace, security and stability in the world. In this regard, ASEAN stands ready to work with regional and international partners in supporting the efforts of the United Nations towards achieving these goals.

Mr. Plasai (Thailand): The Kingdom of Thailand aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Brunei Darussalam on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/70/373).

As we celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations, we are witnessing considerable achievements in the maintenance of peace and security. Over the past decades, the United Nations and the international community have worked together relentlessly to promote peace and tolerance through various means. However, in many parts of the world, much still needs to be done to resolve or to prevent conflicts or to cope with emerging threats to peace, due to intolerance of religions, faiths or other cultural differences. Peace is not simply a state of the absence of violence. Rather, peace is a process that ensures political and social inclusiveness, access to justice,

respect, the promotion of human rights, the right to development, sovereign equality and tolerance through constructive engagement and dialogue based on mutual respect and understanding. Allow me to highlight some of Thailand's perspectives on this issue.

First, Thailand firmly believes that a culture of peace is a set of values, attitudes and ways of life based on the principles of freedom, justice, democracy, tolerance, solidarity and respect for diversity. We share the view of the Secretary-General that we should move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention, which is the true culture of peace. We therefore strongly urge political and spiritual leaders to work hand in hand to promote mutual respect and bridge the gap of understanding among people of different religions, races, faiths or beliefs, in particular through interfaith and intra-faith dialogues to prevent possible conflict that may arise from disrespect of differences.

In support of our belief, Thailand will host, early next year in Bangkok, an international symposium on interfaith dialogue — a track 1.5 event to be co-organized by the Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture, which is a subsidiary body of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. We hope that this effort will contribute to enhancing dialogue across different cultures.

We also welcome the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC). As an original member of the Group of Friends of UNAOC, Thailand has proactively promoted the culture of peace and interreligious, interfaith and intercultural dialogue. We commend the commitment and the active role of UNESCO, as the lead agency, and other United Nations entities in this regard.

Secondly, young people have a vital and leading role to play as a present and future driver of change, an inclusive and peaceful society, and sustainable development. Therefore, it is vital to cultivate a seed of tolerance and mutual respect in their hearts and minds through education, training and capacity-building programmes. In this respect, Thailand last month hosted an international event entitled "One Young World Summit 2015", which gathered young leaders from throughout the world, with a view to cultivating a culture of peace, enhancing skills needed to become successful social entrepreneurs, establishing friendly and long-lasting connections and developing solutions to some of the world's most pressing issues.

Thirdly, we are of the firm conviction that women are agents of peace by nature and thus can significantly contribute to cultivating a culture of peace in both conflict and non-conflict situations. We have therefore spared no effort to empower women and enhance their participation in the policy and decision-making process at both the national and local levels and to enable them to reach their full potential as productive members of society.

Fourthly, we must promote the role of the media in communicating the message of peace and mutual understanding, eliminating hatred and prejudices, and promoting respect and tolerance among people of different identities. Responsible media can make a lot of difference in preventing conflict as well as countering incitement and dissemination of violent ideology and terrorist propaganda.

Peace is multidimensional. It must be cultivated and fostered in a comprehensive manner. Thailand shares the view, expressed by many, that peace, security and development are mutually reinforcing. Sustainable development enables an environment for peace. We therefore strongly support and urge full implementation of Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as it serves as a blueprint for global governance conducive to a peaceful society and a peaceful existence among nations.

The Kingdom of Thailand, as traditional sponsor of all General Assembly resolutions under this agenda item, hereby reaffirms its commitment to promoting a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace.

Mr. Mohammad (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to begin by thanking Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his report (A/70/373), which outlines the subjects addressed by and activities of the main bodies of the United Nations to foster a culture of peace, dialogue, understanding and cooperation among religions and cultures in the ultimate aim of promoting peace. We also commend the efforts, good offices and crucial role of UNESCO in implementing the working programme on peace and rejecting violence, as well as the Action Plan for the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures.

We live in a world where peace is threatened by conflicts between States and societies, as well as between individuals, and undermined by racism, extremism, violence and religious tension. This all

exacerbates the conflict between ideas. Our world today is living through a rejection of the way in which other people live — the language of exclusion. What that means is that today we need to look into the causes of intolerance, why other lifestyles are being rejected, and consider the causes that lead people to extremism. That requires a considerable effort at the local, regional and international levels to transition from a culture of hatred and racism towards a culture of intellectual coexistence.

Our world is facing a number of grave dangers, including extremism and terrorism. No State is spared the scourge of extremism and terrorism, which challenge the culture of peace and dialogue and requires us to promote a message of peace, coexistence, dialogue, understanding and cooperation among religions and cultures. Recently, we have seen criminal terrorist acts in a number of States and attempts to sow chaos and fear in our societies, including in Kuwait, where last June a heinous terrorist attack was carried out at a holy site, claiming the lives of 27 martyrs. This was an attempt to create interreligious tensions, but national understanding and awareness of the values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence served as shields against the attempts of these criminals to sow discord among our ranks. That act will not intimidate us but will consolidate our determination and cohesion in facing terrorism and extremism.

Many countries are trying to make progress in drafting constitutions that will contribute to building a modern State. The State of Kuwait also seeks to promote tolerance and freedom so as to improve the conditions of our society. Our Constitution enshrines these values through various provisions stipulating the rights and responsibilities of citizens, without discrimination on the basis of gender, origin, language or religion. Our Constitution reiterates that justice, freedom and equality are the pillars of our society. Cooperation among citizens is essential. It also states that peace is the State's objective. The safety and security of our State are the responsibility of citizens as well. Our Constitutions guarantees freedom of opinion, expression and belief.

We seek to promote moderation in conformity with the noble religion of Islam. We have established a commission to promote moderation and address racism and terrorism in all of their manifestations, as well as unity among the different categories within our society.

The culture of peace and dialogue was anchored in Kuwaiti society long before the creation of our modern State. We have set an example of acceptance, tolerance and dialogue among different cultures and religions. The history of our ancestors is rich in demonstrations of rapprochement and openness to other civilizations and other populations. Our country is small in size but is a meeting point for different peoples and brings together different nations and cultures representing the majority of religions and cultures in the world. We try to ensure safety and security in an environment of security and mutual respect.

With regard to the Sustainable Development Goals, we stress the creation of a peaceful and inclusive society. Our State emphasizes the need to promote efforts to build peace and dialogue among different civilizations; stresses moderation, tolerance and mutual respect; and rejects extremism and violence as the main causes of conflicts. Our State seeks to promote the efforts of the Organization. We believe in the lofty values of the Charter of the United Nations. The Alliance of Civilizations can help to promote international efforts in that regard. Kuwait is a member both of the Alliance and of its Group of Friends. The Alliance promotes dialogue among civilizations and communication among peoples.

We have adopted a national plan in conformity with the objectives of the Alliance of Civilizations to promote the values of moderation and peace and combat terrorism and extremism. We have created an international centre for moderation that promotes these and analogous values and modern ideas on the basis of dialogue, acceptance of and respect for others' opinions, and peaceful coexistence. The centre has organized a number of conferences at the regional, international and local levels.

Finally, the culture of peace and respect for human rights, freedom and expression are essential values in the context of equality, justice, eliminating unemployment and raising awareness of issues relevant to the search for peace. That requires serious work and joint efforts on the part of the international community. What is at stake here is an essential element in promoting societies and their capacity to survive. Without peace, we will not be able to achieve development.

Ms. Konurbayeva (Kazakhstan): My delegation supports all the draft resolutions under the agenda item "Culture of peace" being adopted today, as they advance

understanding, tolerance and solidarity within and among nations, so acutely needed in today's world torn by strife, conflicts, terrorism and religious intolerance.

Implementing these resolutions calls for well-coordinated action by the United Nations system, its Member States, regional organizations and all other stakeholders to reduce poverty which breeds conflicts, to foster social cohesion and inclusion, pluralistic and democratic participation, and sustainable development of all segments, including those of women, youth and children. Focus must also be on ethnic and religious minorities, indigenous peoples, refugees and displaced persons and migrants.

Today we have the possibility of minimizing extremism and prejudices through education and the promotion of values, the appropriate use of new technologies and the dissemination and free flow of information. We must concentrate on building respect for human rights, pluralism and gender equality while stepping up our efforts to end all forms of xenophobia, racial discrimination and intolerance.

Kazakhstan, as a nation with about 130 ethnic groups and almost 20 different religious denominations, has established a unique mechanism of inter-ethnic and interfaith dialogue — the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan — that plays an important role in statehood development and decision-making, including through direct participation in the legislative processes in the Parliament of my country. Kazakhstan has enacted new legislation and instituted new Government agencies and mechanisms protecting mutual respect and understanding. My country is highly committed to providing ethical and spiritual education to help children and young people overcome the spiritual vacuum of human values and to strengthen the moral fabric of its society.

Making use of the wisdom and influence of spiritual leaders to foster peace and stability, Kazakhstan triennially convenes a Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions. The Congress created the Council of Religious Leaders to focus on cooperation with other forums and international organizations. It also established a dialogue platform for spiritual and political leaders in their quest for peace and stability. We look forward to enhanced cooperation between the Congress and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations to promote further intercultural and interfaith dialogue. Kazakhstan has also initiated

the United Nations International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures within the years 2013-2022, aimed at providing space for decade-long events and activities, to move from tolerance to an actual culture of peace.

Terrorism, while threatening the entire world, actively abuses religious rhetoric to expand its influence and justify violence and barbarism. It is no secret that terrorists use Islam as their ideology, thereby distorting perceptions of that religion. But as the Secretary-General rightly said during the high-level debate on promoting tolerance and reconciliation in April, religions do not kill; people do. To bridge the gap and to overcome mistrust and hatred the President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan initiated the convening in the near future of a United Nations high-level forum on Islam against terrorism. We invite all Member States to support this initiative and unite against the destructive nature of radicalism and violent extremism.

To conclude, I should like to reiterate my country's strong commitment to continuing to support joint global efforts in promoting peace and stability and creating a better future for all.

Mr. Mwinyi (United Republic of Tanzania): My delegation welcomes the opportunity to participate in today's debate on the very important subject of fostering a culture of peace. We see today's meeting as an opportunity to reaffirm the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which have been immaculately summed up in the draft resolutions set for adoption.

Like many delegations in this Hall, we are deeply concerned about the growing wave of extremism, violence and conflicts that are engulfing many societies, including Africa's, whose people have for the past 400 years endured the horrors of slavery, colonialism, apartheid, resource plunder, chronic poverty and protracted conflicts. In joining the United Nations, our young independent nations firmly believed that our people and countries would never again see conflicts and wars that have repeatedly brought untold sorrow to humankind. Yet, we continue to witness such horrors and their attendant ramifications, including the recent unprecedented migration and refugee crisis in Europe and other parts of the world.

What is more shocking is the emergence of non-State actors whose brutal transnational operations pose an imminent threat to our collective security.

Terrorist groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab and others are everyone's worst nightmare. Yet we cannot simply wish them away. We need to act collectively and resolutely to suppress their criminal activities by blocking their means of survival, namely, weapons, funds, supporters and ideology.

It is worth recalling that military measures are not by themselves an antidote to terrorism. Far from it! As the Secretary-General once reminded us, "missiles may kill terrorists, but good governance kills terrorism". Military measures can only lead to further radicalization and the spread of violent extremism, the dispersal of the problem, and an upsurge of terror sympathizers.

In addition to good governance at all levels we need to promote inclusive economic development, eliminate all forms of discrimination, eradicate poverty in all its forms, end illiteracy, and reduce inequalities within and among nations. We also need to strengthen local, national, regional and international institutions, improve global governance, and silence the guns.

We underscore the importance of international cooperation in addressing violent extremism, especially by tackling the root causes. We welcome several interventions to this end, including those spearheaded by the United Nations entities at regional and national levels. We wish to underscore, however, that these interventions must take into account national and regional contexts and priorities. Whereas some countries may require assistance to build or rebuild national institutions others may wish to focus their attention on socioeconomic ways of addressing the underlying causes of violent extremism.

For instance, Tanzania attaches great importance to youth empowerment as a means of addressing violent extremism. Consequently, we recognize and appreciate the important role of education in nurturing the competencies of tomorrow's global citizens, including their aptitude to understand others, empathize, think critically and exchange ideas peacefully. When we empower young people with the relevant knowledge and skills of mutual respect and tolerance and the responsible use of the Internet and social media, we literally open up a window of opportunities for employment and decent work, constructive engagement and self-affirmation. By the same token, this investment can prevent their involvement in nefarious activities.

It can also limit the likelihood of their succumbing to terror networks, which increasingly use the Internet and social media to foment extremism and radicalism, especially among young people.

Likewise, we are fully aware of the important role of faith-based organizations and religious leaders who exhibit tremendous influence in our communities. It is important therefore to engage them in our efforts to foster a culture of peace, mutual respect and tolerance. Tanzania has witnessed at first hand the effectiveness of interfaith dialogue in addressing a myriad of challenges facing our communities, including violence and violent extremism. Among the lessons learned is that associating any religion with terrorism can undermine trust, mutual respect and cooperation, which are necessary precepts for defeating extremism and radicalism.

In addition, we must take full advantage of all social, cultural and diplomatic tools at our disposal for building tolerant and responsible societies. We believe that tourism can be an important vehicle for cultural dialogue and mutual understanding among the peoples of the world. Tanzania welcomes cultural tourists from all corners of the world to visit our country and intermingle with our people, enjoying their food, music, sports, legends and rich traditions. We have also opened our doors for cultural diplomacy, whereby many countries have established cultural centres in the country. We are ready to learn from other cultures without necessarily abandoning our own.

I cannot conclude my statement without expressing our utter dismay at the escalation of the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage as part of a cultural cleansing strategy. We note that such acts may constitute a war crime. We therefore call for the perpetrators to be held accountable. We also call for the return of stolen artefacts to their countries of origin and restoration or rehabilitation of damaged heritage sites. The work of UNESCO in that regard is indeed commendable.

Finally, we wish to reaffirm Tanzania's readiness to work with other Members of the Organization, the United Nations system and other stakeholders in formulating, implementing and strengthening measures aimed at fostering a culture of peace at all levels. We keenly await in this regard the finalization of the Secretary-General's plan of action for preventing violent extremism. As Mwalimu Nyerere, the founder of independent Tanzania, once remarked: "Violence is

unnecessary and costly. Peace is the only way". Let us invest in peace.

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): To understand the importance of the culture of peace for the work of the United Nations, all it takes is to examine its founding document, the Charter. Establishing peace and a culture sustaining it is the essence of the Charter of the United Nations and the basis of all the lofty goals enshrined therein.

It is important to realize that peace, as meant by the Charter, is not a static state of affairs achieved by imposition and domination but a dynamic one, characterized by tolerance and respect for each other. The Charter seeks not to eliminate differences for the sake of peace but to ensure that all have the right to live and flourish despite differences. To practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours is the means the Charter adopts for achieving a lasting and noble peace.

Today, 70 years after its adoption, global developments attest to the rightfulness of the paths the United Nations has chosen. As the dark forces of violent extremism from Syria to Iraq and from Paris to Beirut try to impose their absurd views upon all nations by resorting to savagery and terror, the merits of safeguarding and celebrating our unique identities become more and more clear. When considering a solution to the menace of terrorism, we should face reality. If wars and military might were able, as some Powers assume, to solve human problems, we would not face such brutality. Indeed force is not a panacea for all problems and the huge machinery of war cannot build; it can only destroy.

If we are to construct a culture of peace in the minds of men, it is not only the minds of terrorists and extremists that need to be changed. Change in the mindset of those who prefer to solve each and every problem by the use of force is also an imperative. We need to realize that, to build a culture of peace, we should have the courage to tackle the underlying causes which need and legitimize extremism and terrorism. Only if we take serious action to address poverty, discrimination, injustice and occupation will the culture of peace get the oxygen it needs to breathe. We need to plant the seeds of peace in the soil enriched by tolerance, justice, mutual respect, instructive interaction and dialogue among cultures and civilizations.

Some days ago, in the wake of the terrorist attacks in Paris, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran wrote his second letter addressed to young people in the West. The need to change mentalities was among the points raised in that letter, which seeks to provide its young audience with a genuine perspective from inside the Islamic world on the heinous phenomenon of terrorism. His Eminence writes that:

“the first step in creating security and peace is reforming this violence-breeding mentality. Until ... terrorism ... is divided into ‘good’ and ‘bad’ types, and until governmental interests are given precedence over human values and ethics, the roots of violence should not be searched for in other places.”

Two years ago, based on the initiative of His Excellency Mr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, my Government introduced to the General Assembly a resolution on a world against violence and violent extremism, which was adopted as resolution 68/127. Developments since the adoption of the resolution bear witness to the relevance of the call and the necessity for urgent action by all nations to curb violent extremism. To follow up on this same path, we have proposed an updated draft (A/70/L.21) of the same resolution which is being negotiated and will be ready shortly for action by this Assembly under the current agenda item, “Culture of peace”. This year’s draft resolution reflects the developments of the past two years while renewing the call to counter violent extremism and following up on the ideals proposed in the first resolution.

We look forward to continued support from Member States for the initiative, which should help all of us close ranks with a view to fighting violent extremism in the interests of saving humanity from this scourge and promoting peace, moderation, dialogue and understanding among cultures, religions and civilizations.

Mr. Khiari (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to thank the President for the invitation to participate in the debate on agenda item 16, “Culture of peace”. We wish to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his efforts in the preparation of his second report on the promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace (A/70/373). I thank Bangladesh

and the Philippines for the introduction of the draft resolutions under discussion.

The alarming increase in the phenomena of radicalization, violent extremism and terrorism, underpinned by intolerant ideologies based on exclusion, hatred and the rejection of others, unfortunately finds fertile ground in the lack of respect for human rights, lack of social justice and disparities in the levels of development at the international level. All these factors require us, now more than ever, to make concerted efforts at all levels to address these phenomena, which threaten international peace and security in general and the stability and safety of our peoples and societies.

In this context, my country, Tunisia — with a history spanning more than 3,000 years in which it has played a vital role as a bridge between successive civilizations — sees the need for concerted efforts and cooperation in order to increase rapprochement and coexistence among States and nations so as to deepen the concepts of peace, tolerance and dialogue among the civilizations and to consecrate the humanitarian values of the promotion of peace, development and stability.

We have enshrined the culture of peace and tolerance through the national dialogue that we convened in one of the most difficult periods in our democratic transition over the past few years. I recall the important role played by four national bodies in the success of our national dialogue, which led to our being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2015 in recognition of our democratic experience and appreciation for an innovative peaceful national dialogue that sends a message to a world in dire need of hope, tolerance and dialogue in the face of raging conflicts and violence.

The international community is now called on, more than at any previous time, to spread the culture of dialogue among religions and civilizations and to benefit from available mechanisms, especially those provided by the United Nations and its different agencies and programmes. We value the central role of UNESCO in promoting peace and rapprochement among civilizations, especially through its promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, the Action Plan for the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), and the strategic Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace.

We reiterate our support for the efforts of the United Nations in the spread of the culture of peace, especially the strategic plan 2013-2018, in promoting education,

youth and the media, with a focus on immigration. Harnessing the United Nations and its agencies in the promotion of tolerance and peace in order to address extreme violence and terrorism and promote dialogue and interconnection among religions and civilizations is a preventive measure of extreme importance and scope in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. In reiterating our commitment to the Strategy, we call for more concerted efforts to counter the increasing danger posed by terrorist organizations in many regions, particularly our own. I therefore renew our call on the international community to step up its efforts to find radical solutions to current conflicts and to meet the aspirations of our people to security, stability and development.

We stress the importance of coordination at all levels in fighting terrorist organizations, supporting the countries and their neighbours that are affected by terrorist groups, and focusing on development and social and economic progress. We look forward to the action plan that the Secretary-General will propose early next year and hope that it will include elements that meet the aspirations of all nations to stability and security.

In closing, I wish to express our appreciation for all efforts aimed at spreading the message of tolerance and dialogue in our world. We underscore our commitment to participating in these efforts on the basis of our historical role and as a follow-up to our efforts to promote peace and security throughout the world.

Mr. Abdelkhalek (Egypt): Allow me at the outset to extend my thanks to the President of the General Assembly for his report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 69/139 and 69/140, entitled “Promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace” (A/70/373).

I should also like to thank the delegations of Bangladesh, Pakistan and the Philippines for their facilitation of the aforementioned resolutions. We praise the efforts of the various United Nations entities to create and promote a culture of peace and engage in interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

As delineated in the report, the magnitude of global transformation has given rise to new opportunities as well as threats. While global trends in certain areas — such as media, trade and technology — have brought the international community closer together, it

is beyond doubt that the events taking place in many parts of the world are a clear manifestation of the unprecedented challenges we face. The gravity and complexity of these challenges require the combined efforts of the international community. These efforts can succeed only through close cooperation between governments and civil society organizations.

Despite the commendable progress that has been achieved in the realm of the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, it has nonetheless become increasingly apparent that there is a resurgence of xenophobia, intolerance and discrimination across many parts of the globe. These phenomena contravene fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as human dignity. They also pose a challenge to international peace and security, development and social stability.

It is imperative to recognize that democracy and the rule of law are incompatible with all forms of discrimination and intolerance. In this light, the proliferation of radical and extremist movements in many societies represent an alarming trend, as these movements build their political and social platforms on incitement, hatred and social exclusion. In this regard, the promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue across and within societies is essential to discredit violent and intolerant ideologies. Increasing incidents of intolerance, discrimination, violence and negative stereotyping against persons based on their religion or belief as well as an increased incidence of religious hatred, are also a matter of concern.

A clear manifestation of this lies in the insistence by some to defame religions under the guise of freedom of expression, which undermines the values of tolerance, coexistence and mutual respect for others. Equally alarming are attempts by some to conflate between the fight against terrorism, on the one hand, with unjustified discrimination against individuals or groups on ethnic or religious grounds, on the other. The ensuing refugee crisis has also raised concerns regarding the treatment of such refugees, who have become victims of xenophobia, exploitation and discrimination.

Our societies remain plagued by violence, extremism and terrorism. It is important to note that any attempt to eradicate such phenomena must strive to address their root causes, including foreign occupation, so that these challenges can be diagnosed effectively and the means to

overcome them determined. A comprehensive approach should be adopted that is not limited to military and security aspects but also includes economic and social development and cultural aspects, notably rectifying religious discourse, improving the quality of education, and disseminating a culture of tolerance, acceptance of others and peaceful coexistence.

There should be a concerted effort to change the intellectual structure that reinforces violence and accuses others of heresy, coercion and terrorism. What is needed is a new mental structure that can respond to ideas with ideas and to logic with logic, not with violence, force and the terrorizing of people. The promotion of a culture of peace by stressing the notions of tolerance, respect and understanding among peoples and mutual coexistence is therefore vital to combating terrorism. In this regard, we look forward to the plan of action on preventing violent extremism to be presented by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly for its consideration.

Intellectuals, cultural leaders, the media and educators also have a great responsibility to confront ideas that provoke hatred, promote ignorance, reject diversity, exclude others and disseminate values of moderation and tolerance. In this regard, the role of the media should not solely be confined to relaying realities in an objective and neutral manner, but also playing its part in this new cognitive framework by raising awareness, combating extremist and destructive ideas and disseminating noble values. It is important to note that efforts should also be made to prevent the misuse of modern technologies, particularly social media and the Internet, to spread incitement and hatred and to recruit under the guise of false religious claims, as highlighted in the report. We must ensure that such technologies are used in the way they were originally intended — namely, to disseminate culture and knowledge and enhance positive interaction among peoples and civilizations.

To conclude, I should like to reiterate Egypt's strong support for endeavours throughout the United Nations system to promote a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue. Only through a concerted effort of the international community and continued dialogue can peace prevail and our efforts to eliminate intolerance, prejudices, negative stereotyping and discrimination succeed and endure.

Mr. Atlassi (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): My delegation is pleased to take part in this morning's debate on agenda item 16, "Culture of peace", which is an issue very dear to the heart of Morocco owing to the fact that its objectives coincide with our own foreign policy, which is based on the principles of dialogue, openness and tolerance.

My delegation takes this opportunity to express its gratitude to Ms. Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, and Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, for their efforts to disseminate a culture of peace, dialogue and respect for differences. We also take note with interest of the report of the Secretary-General (A/70/373) on the main activities carried out by the United Nations during the past year to promote dialogue among cultures, civilizations and religions.

Dialogue among cultures, religions and civilizations is a fundamental principle underpinning the promotion of understanding among peoples, tolerance and solidarity and countering violence, extremism and fanaticism. As the entire world is aware, a significant number of initiatives have been undertaken by the international community, United Nations agencies — UNESCO in particular — and civil society initiatives to strengthen objective, transparent and constructive dialogue among civilizations.

Nevertheless, despite the progress that has been made, mutual misunderstandings, a lack of understanding and unfounded prejudices persist and remain a reality today. Religious intolerance has become a worldwide scourge and has even intensified in recent years. Violence and terrorism, which have assumed alarming proportions, are deplorable and reprehensible and need to be stopped regardless of their perpetrators, their motivations or where they occur. Foreseeing the rampant dangers of intolerance, obscurantism and terrorism, in June 2007 His Majesty the King alerted the international community in the following terms:

"The world is grappling with the weakening or even disappearance of benchmarks and reference points, characterized by a faltering belief in religious and human values and by the awakening of the demons of fanaticism, extremism, violence and terrorism, and the spreading of myths about a so-called clash of civilizations.

In our tormented world, it is the duty and responsibility of all international Powers,

enlightened intellectuals and media leaders to address these dangers to peace, security and regional and international stability."

We are all at an historic global, political and economic turning point. Spaces for dialogue, such as the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, must be preserved. It is by remaining within the Alliance and by continuing to focus our efforts on our initial objectives — rapprochement among cultures, enhanced mutual understanding and the fight to prevent populations and religious beliefs from being held hostage by minorities that hold extremist ideologies — that we will be able to achieve our universal goals. It is in that regard, and through its experience, its ancestral values and its political will that Morocco is working to preserve spaces for peace and prosperity in the Maghreb, Africa, the Euro-Mediterranean region and the Middle East. Morocco is also working tirelessly and constructively to establish relationships of good-neighbourliness and trust with all of these cultural spaces.

It is in that spirit, and with a view to thwarting the champions of radicalism, terrorism, dissent, separatism and obscurantist doctrine, that His Majesty the King inaugurated on 27 March this year the Mohammed VI Institute for the Training of Imams, a pilot project designed to teach imams from Morocco and other Arab, African or European countries the values of Islam, moderation, tolerance and openness that have always been practised in Morocco and constitute the best defence against deviant extremist behaviour throughout the world. Morocco has also established a national programme to integrate a culture of peace into school curriculums, and organized periodic meetings on a dialogue among cultures and civilizations that focus on strengthening the role of the media in disseminating a culture of peace, tolerance, openness and cultural pluralism.

The main source of wealth of any country is its young people, who are best placed to have a significant impact on their own future if they are given the means to have do so. Neglected or abandoned young people can undoubtedly be the greatest source of unrest. Young people therefore need to remain at the heart of the priorities of all peace processes so that they do not fall easy prey to those who would indoctrinate or exploit them.

In order to improve mutual understanding and promote the development of values, attitudes and

behaviours centred on non-violence and solidarity, we must strengthen the involvement of young people in education and peace processes, and ensure that the media plays its full role in encouraging collective awareness-raising, building bridges, promoting dialogue and silencing hate speech, provocation and incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

The Kingdom of Morocco is pleased to co-sponsor draft resolutions A/70/L.24, entitled “Follow-up to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace” and A/70/L.20, entitled “Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace”, and recommends that they be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia): Indonesia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Brunei Darussalam on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Indonesia wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/70/373) on the promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace.

Indonesia fully supports the work of UNESCO in the implementation of the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace and the Action Plan for the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures. Indonesia also values the work of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in support of the culture of peace and dialogue, particularly in the areas of youth, education, media and migration.

More than 15 years ago this body adopted by consensus resolution 53/243 on the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. Since then, the implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace has become more pertinent and relevant in today’s world. There are some basic principles that my delegation would like to highlight on this matter.

First of all, my delegation stresses the importance of the Declaration and Programme of Action, which carries the universal mandate for the international community, particularly the United Nations system, for the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence.

Secondly, my delegation is of the view that the current work across the United Nations system on a culture of peace should provide important elements to the Organization’s ongoing and future work in the area

of conflict prevention, peacebuilding and the promotion of sustainable peace.

Thirdly, my delegation believes that education, dialogue and cooperation are the ultimate means to promote a culture of peace. Education at all levels is essential, especially in shaping the minds of youth, our future generation, by cultivating understanding and respect for religious and cultural diversity. Cooperation within and across communities and among various stakeholders at the domestic, national, regional and international levels should also be enhanced and developed to ensure that peace and non-violence are fostered. Therefore, the promotion of a culture of peace should be mainstreamed in the cooperation framework between the United Nations and regional organizations and other relevant actors.

Fourthly, the promotion of a culture of peace could not be more relevant than in today’s world, where there is widespread polarization both across and within communities due to basic identities, including religious, cultural and ethnic. Such polarization jeopardizes the potential for the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and also impedes development. With regard to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), given that the Agenda itself stresses that the linkage between peace and development is inevitable and should be mutually reinforcing, the global effort to promote a culture of peace is indeed timely.

Fifthly, my delegation underlines the significant role of various stakeholders in promoting a culture of peace. In this regard, the inclusive participation of all stakeholders is vital to achieving the peaceful and resilient communities that are needed as enablers of sustainable development. This is with particular reference to religious leaders and faith-based organizations in engaging in dialogue at the grassroots, identifying potential conflicts that may emerge, preventing extremism, and resolving conflicts. These stakeholders can act as bridge-builders between Governments and society towards a lasting peace. The role of the media has also become more important than ever in promoting a culture of peace and tolerance by combating hate speech or incitement against certain religious or cultural values.

Above all, my delegation is also of the view that the main responsibility for advancing a culture of peace rests on the shoulders of Governments. As a country

with immense diversity, Indonesia is committed to promoting a culture of peace domestically, as well as in the region and the larger international forums. For Indonesia, the promotion of a culture of peace is indeed embedded in the vision and mission of its national long-term development plan 2005-2025, which prescribes a self-reliant, just and democratic and peaceful and united society. As the country with the world's largest Muslim population, Indonesia continues on its path to spread the message of tolerance and inclusiveness and contributes to global efforts to counter violent extremism, which currently represents one of the most serious challenges to the promotion of world peace and security.

In conclusion, my delegation supports and co-sponsors the draft resolutions under this agenda item, and commends the efforts of Bangladesh, the Philippines, Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran for facilitating the draft resolutions on this matter.

Mr. Tuy (Cambodia): At the outset, I wish to associate myself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Brunei Darussalam on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and I wish to share our views for consultation on the culture of peace as follows.

My delegation looks forward to the consensus adoption today of the draft resolutions to promote the culture of peace, contained in documents A/70/L.20 and A/70/L.24.

My delegation highly values the report of the Secretary-General (A/70/373), which highlights United Nations activities in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, environmental protection, an approach to peace and intercultural dialogue, as well as activities carried out in connection with counter-terrorism and violent extremism. Despite the challenges ahead, my delegation shares the views of the report that the cycles of deadlock and conflict must be eliminated if we are to achieve longer-term peace and lasting development. That will require the political commitment of all intergovernmental organizations and national Governments.

As a post-conflict country that was ravaged by the scourge of war in recent decades, and in working to rehabilitate its nation, Cambodia envisages the culture of peace as our core value. This year, my Government has given increasing priority to young people as a driving force towards maintaining a culture of peace in the country. With Internet communications

being widespread, we see young people as the future leaders of countries. Currently, more and more young leaders have high portfolios both in the executive and legislative branches of my country. People and youth are even encouraged to raise issues of concern through direct contact with the Prime Minister via Facebook and to provide views on how the Government could better serve the people and the country. This, I believe, would contribute to addressing internal conflicts and thereby bring about peace and stability to societies.

This year, it is with honour that Mr. Hun Many, a member of the National Assembly and President of the Union of Youth Federation of Cambodia, among 18 other winners in the world, won an international award in the Philippines, the GUSI Peace Prize International 2015, becoming the first Cambodian to win the prize since the Federation was inaugurated in 2002.

In the international context, it is unfortunate that nowadays armed conflicts continue to rage and claim the lives of both combatants and civilians, including children in some parts of the world. Violent extremism, which continues to pose threats to peace and security, has diminished our hope. It is my view that some conflicts arise from people being left out, marginalized, excluded and malnourished. These people can easily fall into the hands of groups of violent extremists, organized crime and terrorists. These factors could result in slowing development. The terrorist attacks that have occurred recently in some countries of Africa and Europe add fear to the whole community, and indeed put our unity to the test.

United Nations peacekeeping operations have been playing an important role in ending global conflicts and establishing peacebuilding principles in many regions. I believe that good governance and the rule of law are essential preconditions for stability, without which societies cannot function, let alone flourish. All Governments need the stability and predictability of good governance to advance. Such partnerships at all levels of Government and society will be essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the broader 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). I therefore believe that we are compelled to work towards achieving the 2030 Agenda, which would put us on the path to equitable sharing and caring — the building block to the maintenance of international peace and security. We have a long road to go, and rigorous actions are needed.

In the wider context, my country believes that the culture of peace must be cherished in the hearts of all people, regardless of their religious beliefs. Confidence-building measures and preventive diplomacy through multilateral and regional mechanisms must be established. Likewise, mediating the interests of all social groups, whether they are poor, unequal or of any ethnic society, and adopting reconciliation in a step-by-step process at a variety of levels will bring about durable peace and security.

Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): The world today is a crucible of destructive conflicts, old and new, that are unfortunately the fruit of suspicion and mistrust arising from divisions between religions and civilizations that lead to killing, atrocious human suffering and economic loss. The current trend towards the growth of xenophobia, religious intolerance and the dissemination of new extremist ideologies in different parts of the world, including Africa, justifies efforts to address disputes and divisions creatively with the aim of promoting and inculcating a state of mind based on a culture of peace. These efforts must be pursued.

The terrorist sect Boko Haram is raging in the far north of my country and must be vigorously combated. It is an outgrowth of Islamic State, which is plunging many families in regions throughout the world into mourning. As the President of my country, Mr. Paul Biya, has said time and again, a global threat requires a global solution. My country therefore welcomes the current international cooperation to eradicate this scourge, and the inclusion of peace in the post-2015 development programme, in particular in Goal 16.

The International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World has ended, but the international community must keep the culture of peace at the heart of its concerns. We welcome the recent adoption by UNESCO of the Action Plan for the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), which reflects the commitment of United Nations institutions to easing social tensions and fostering openness to others and the acceptance of difference. These efforts can bear fruit only if they are nationally enshrined, allowing each person to take ownership of this ideal.

The challenges to the international community concerning issues of peace remain significant. It remains necessary to create platforms allowing the dissemination of values based on understanding,

mutual respect, tolerance and intercultural dialogue in order to combat extremism, intolerance, xenophobia, Islamophobia and other forms of discrimination. Cameroon is a stakeholder in the plan of action for a culture of peace and non-violence initiated by UNESCO. My country has also acceded to the global citizenship education programme. In Cameroon, citizenship education is part of the official education curriculum from primary school, which is compulsory and free for all, to the last year of secondary school. It is a form of education that transmits values such as the understanding of others, tolerance, knowledge of and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and acceptance of difference as a source of wealth. I also note the important and growing contribution made by UNESCO clubs of students from different secondary schools in communicating the values promoted by UNESCO.

Together with the international community, every year on 21 September Cameroon celebrates the International Peace Day, and on 2 October the International Day for Non-Violence. These are opportunities to restate the values that are dear to our Organization. These are joint values, such as peacekeeping, peacebuilding, conflict prevention, sustainable socioeconomic development, the promotion of human dignity and human rights, democracy, the rule of law, good governance, tolerance, gender equality, non-violence and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

To be sustainable, peace must be inclusive. That is why we must promote peaceful coexistence among different cultures and religions. That is the rationale of ecumenical interreligious and intercultural dialogue, which can make a valuable contribution to promoting social cohesion and harmony. These are the pride of Cameroon, which is Africa in miniature. Such dialogue allows us to challenge prejudices and to improve mutual understanding. I stress the important role of education and awareness-raising played by the media and information and communication technologies.

It is certainly true that peace begins in the mind, but no effort to make manifest a culture of peace can be long-term without global partnership among all Member States to achieve the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals. When peace is cultivated through dialogue, tolerance and respect for others, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals will allow us to create an atmosphere conducive to peaceful coexistence among all. I therefore take this

opportunity to launch a fervent appeal to all Member States and relevant United Nations bodies to ensure that the implementation of the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace is a driving force in achieving the post-2015 development agenda.

Peace is broken first in the mind, and that is why it needs to be entrenched and cultivated there. Cameroon is constantly cultivating this value in a triptych of peace, work and fatherland, which is the sacred motto of my country. We are co-sponsors and support both draft resolutions under agenda item 16, and call for their adoption by consensus by the community of nations meeting in this Assembly. We love peace. We have a culture of peace. We have a duty towards peace. Let us act on those.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the observer State of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): Peace is impossible in the absence of respect for international law. Peace is impossible in the absence of respect for human rights. Peace is impossible in the absence of freedom. Peace is impossible in the absence of respect for our common humanity and inherent dignity. These are harsh facts reaffirmed every single day in the international community as we witness the many dilemmas and challenges plaguing our world today and preventing the flourishing of a genuine global culture of peace.

The State of Palestine is fully committed to peace. The establishment of just, viable peace and true coexistence are among the top priorities of the Palestinian Government, guiding our course of national and international action and efforts over the many decades. Peace has been our strategic choice, political choice and moral choice, and the Palestinian people and their leadership have exerted endless efforts and sacrifices to realize it.

Indeed, we chose the path of compromise decades ago with the specific aim of achieving peace and justice. And despite the fact that this has regrettably been to no avail, and despite the many setbacks and painful tragedies endured since, we remain committed to this path for the sake of peace. This remains our chosen path for resolving all core final status issues of the question of Palestine. It is our chosen path for bringing an end to the Israeli foreign military occupation of the Palestinian land and subjugation of the Palestinian people since 1967, and securing a just, lasting and comprehensive peace that will end the grave injustice inflicted on the

Palestinian people, including the Palestine refugees from the 1948 Nakba until this day.

This injustice and conflict have confounded and undermined the United Nations since its inception and tragically remain unresolved, undermining the Organization, our international system and efforts to establish a real culture of peace in the international community. Yet the Palestinian people remain patient and resilient in pursuit of their inalienable rights, including to return and self-determination, and pursuit of freedom and peace based on international law, the Charter of the United Nations and relevant resolutions. That patience and resilience is greatly strengthened by the near-consensus support for Palestine and solidarity with the Palestinian people from around the international community, whose commitment to justice for Palestine is clearly fundamental to the commitment to realizing peace in the Middle East and globally.

In the past year, Palestine's commitment to peaceful, legal means of conduct and resolution of conflict was further reaffirmed in the decision to accede to the core instruments of humanitarian and human rights law, as well as to other international treaties, including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. We retain a deep conviction in the primacy of international law and its centrality for a peaceful, stable and just world.

We are firm in our conviction that waging war, entrenching occupation, imposing settlements and walls and blockades, and denying the rights and humanity of others will never bring peace and security. Such policies may illegally establish a specific reality on the ground, but they neither establish a right nor negate the rights enshrined in international law. Moreover, such policies, devoid of legitimacy, cannot enforce peace and security and are incapable of suppressing the legitimate aspirations of a people for freedom and their rights.

We insist that a just peace is the only remedy for the conflict and the violence, deprivation and instability it engenders. As affirmed in our application for United Nations membership on 23 September 2011, the State of Palestine is a peace-loving nation and seeks to promote friendly relations and a culture of peace with its neighbours and all members of the global community.

As we witness the extreme distress in occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem, due to the illegal, destructive actions of Israel, the occupying Power, as well as in the region as a whole, it is clear that we

do not have the luxury to further delay peace and allow extremists and peace rejectionists to gain more ground. The Palestinian people can no longer delay the realization of their rights or accept empty excuses to rationalize the ongoing violations and indignities, while the occupying Power is appeased, not even held accountable for its most flagrant shameful crimes, and while the prospects for peace are further disfigured and destroyed.

Time is running out and the window of peace is rapidly narrowing. There is unanimity that the situation is unsustainable and a solution must be achieved without delay and is critical for regional and international peace. To allow the continuation of this conflict and the deepening of the human suffering and injustices caused by it are totally contradictory to the purposes and principles of the Charter, the international laws that guide and bind us, and the requirements for building a lasting peace between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples and in the region.

In the quest to establish a global culture of peace, the question of Palestine must remain a priority on the international agenda. The international community must urgently act to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to bring an end to its occupation of Palestine and oppression of the Palestinian people, and compel it to respect international law without exception. Moreover, civilians must be protected and human rights must be respected. These are vital matters that cannot be postponed until the end of the conflict. We thus implore the international community once again, and foremost the Security Council, to uphold the responsibility to redress the root causes of this conflict, which continues to threaten international peace and security.

Establishing a culture of peace requires tackling even the most difficult of issues, not allowing them to fester without untold consequences. It requires upholding political, legal and moral obligations and we appeal to the General Assembly to do its part to promote this path as a matter of urgency.

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/70/L.20 and A/70/L.24.

The Assembly will first take a decision on draft resolution A/70/L.20 entitled "Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. Herity (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors of A/70/L.20: Austria, Bahamas, Belarus, Benin, Brunei Darussalam, Cameroon, Chile, China, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Jordan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Morocco, Myanmar, Peru, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, Tunisia and the United Republic of Tanzania.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/70/L.20?

Draft resolution A/70/L.20 was adopted (resolution 70/19).

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/70/L.24, entitled "Follow-up to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. Herity (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors of A/70/L.24: Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Hungary, Lesotho, Mali, Malta, Mozambique, the Netherlands, Palau, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Seychelles, South Africa and the United Republic of Tanzania.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/70/L.24?

Draft resolution A/70/L.24 was adopted (resolution 70/20).

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of position, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote or position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Maes (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union on resolution 70/19, entitled “Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace”. The European Union thanks the delegations of Pakistan and the Philippines for presenting the resolution, and acknowledges that its text has continued to improve over the years.

Given this positive evolution, we regret this year’s limited negotiation timeline and the fact that our primary concerns were not reflected in the text. In particular, we regret specifically that no changes have been introduced to the fourteenth and twenty-second preambular paragraphs. We trust that next year the facilitators will give positive consideration to our suggestions. In this context, we stress that the European Union continues to attach importance to always referring to religion or belief in conjunction, and that freedom of religion or belief applies to individuals as rights-holders who may exercise this right either in community, including in religious minorities, with others or individually.

Ms. Derderian (United States of America): The United States firmly supports efforts to promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue and cooperation. We are pleased to have joined consensus on resolution 70/19. The United States strongly believes in encouraging a culture of peace through the promotion of freedom, justice, democracy and human rights, rejecting violence and addressing the root causes of conflict.

We are encouraged by this consensus-based effort to promote tolerance, dialogue, reconciliation and respect for cultural diversity. As a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-religious nation, we also believe that dialogue, understanding and cooperation among and between individuals from different religious and cultural backgrounds are important to the development of peaceful and harmonious relations between groups and between States.

We understand that resolution 70/19, entitled “Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace”, takes note of the fifth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions held in Astana, Kazakhstan in June 2015. We thank the Government of Kazakhstan for convening the international community to promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

While we join consensus today on this resolution, that does not imply that the United States is in full agreement with the declaration arising from the fifth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, which contains certain terminology and statements concerning multilateralism and international cooperation, peace and security, as well as interpretation of human rights law, which in our view do not reflect broad international consensus on these issues.

We understand that the resolution also reaffirms the international community’s recognition that article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in its entirety provides the international framework for the protection of freedom of expression. In that regard, the United States reaffirms its well-known position that the exercise of the right to freedom of expression should be afforded the maximum possible protection, and our support for the freedoms of religion and expression, including respect for all opinions and beliefs without regard to their content.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position.

The representative of Israel has asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I remind him that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to ten minutes for the first intervention and five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Barkan (Israel): The Palestinians may well have decided on the strategy of peace but are not implementing it on a practical level. What delays progress towards peace is their refusal to conduct negotiations on the two-State solution and their incitement to violence against Israelis and Jews in their own media.

Moreover, the statement made here today about the need for the return of the refugees of 1948 is nothing but a call for the destruction of Israel. A mild way of delivering it should not mislead us. The wave of terrorism that Israel has been facing in the past several months, and that has already cost 40 Israelis of all ages, combines religious incitement and nationalist incitement and is leading Palestinian children to murder women and children from Israel. That does not support any culture of peace.

The world’s international law does not give legitimacy to the duplicity of talking here nicely

about peace but practically working against it on the ground. The Palestinian Authority must realize that peace will come only through negotiations and not through violence. Israel is committed to this ideal and welcomes unconditional negotiations. The Palestinians must stop the incitement and turn away from it towards negotiations. They should not rely on outside compulsion for making peace because that will not come, and time

is indeed running out for them. We urge them to return to the negotiation table.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 16.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.