



General Assembly

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Friday, 27 September 2019, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Muhammad-Bande (Nigeria)

The meeting was called to order at 4.20 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

Address by Ms. Delcy Rodríguez Gómez, Vice-President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

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

Ms. Delcy Rodríguez Gómez, Vice-President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Delcy Rodríguez Gómez, Vice-President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Ms. Rodríguez Gómez (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I greet with great respect everyone meeting in this Hall, which is sacred for public international law. I come on behalf of the one Venezuela, which is worthy, brave and does not kneel before any imperial Power. I convey the greetings of President Nicolás Maduro Moros and the Venezuelan people, as well as the Bolivarian tidings of the spirit of our Commander, Hugo Chávez Frías.

We have come here with the purpose of announcing some very good news about the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The first item is that Venezuela is at peace,

as witnessed firsthand by the 120 delegations that recently participated in the ministerial conference of the Non-Aligned Movement held in Venezuela — very much despite the media war that powerful media corporations have unleashed to tarnish the reputation of Bolivarian Venezuela and despite the attempted coups d'état by extremist Venezuelan political factions, including even assassination attempts against the Head of State, the entire military and political command and the Venezuelan State authorities, as well as Ambassadors accredited in the country.

The world media says nothing, which is why I commend this space in which peoples can speak to one another, as they are unable to access that same apparatus, which is exclusively at the service of the world hegemonic Power and its satellites. The world media says nothing about the social-protection system in Venezuela, which covers almost 19 million Venezuelan women and men without distinction. This model of inclusion, justice and social protection has been designated as a target for destruction by the Government of the United States of America, and is the true threat posed to its model of capitalist supremacy. The Bolivarian model runs intrinsically contrary to the project set in motion by the Monroe Doctrine, which seeks to show that the rest of the Americas is the United States backyard.

Within the framework of extraordinary social programmes, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development stands out as a joint commitment of the General Assembly and as the way forward for this Organization. Here, in this home of the international

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community, we encourage the development of shared cooperation mechanisms to address the urgent need to preserve our environment, which has been gravely impacted by the devastating capitalist model. We express our solidarity with the brotherly Caribbean people of the Bahamas, recently fallen victim to the ravages of climate change. Moreover, as a country of the Amazon, we raise our voices against the barbaric commercialization of our Amazon, led by the President of Brazil, Mr. Jair Bolsonaro, who has used his extremist ideology to attack the natural lungs of the world. We therefore proclaim that nature is an inalienable right of all peoples.

We also come to this Organization to effectively tackle the urgent issues of poverty and inequality, in a world where 26 individuals possess the same amount of wealth as the 3.8 billion poorest people in the world. We agree with the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, in his call to States to come here with concrete actions, not florid speeches. I would add that they should also not come here with falsehoods and lies as they address the General Assembly. The point is precisely how to achieve these noble and commendable commitments as an international community that has seen grave damage done to its multilateral and legal structure.

I wish to spend some time exposing the coercive unilateral and therefore illegal measures to which millions of people throughout the world are subjected. These measures constitute the use of force that is prohibited by the Charter of the United Nations and international law, which is an attack on peace and security and a massive violation of human rights. Between 2015 and 2019, the Government of the United States has adopted more than 350 unilateral coercive measures against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, including the illegal and undue appropriation of all our resources and assets abroad and a comprehensive financial and commercial blockade that affects health, education and food and which is aimed primarily at suffocating the Venezuelan economy and bringing our people to their knees.

I wish to share some terrifying data with the General Assembly on the dimensions that unilateral coercive measures represent in comparison to conventional wars. It is well known that the use of armed force by the United States military-industrial complex means big business. The past three Presidents of the United States have increased the number of illegal bombings, thereby violating the Charter of the United Nations

and without any authorization whatsoever from the Security Council.

Between 2001 and 2009, President George W. Bush launched 70,000 bombs in total, or an average of 24 bombs per day. In the period between 2009 and 2017, under the leadership of President Barack Obama, the United States Government launched 100,000 bombs, raising the daily average to 34 bombs. More recently, with Mr. Donald Trump as President, 44,096 bombs have been launched, breaking the record, with an average of 121 bombs per day. These bombs have caused the entire civilian population to suffer, indiscriminately affecting boys and girls and the elderly.

However, there is a new type of State terrorism being imposed upon our citizens — one that does not involve the use of bombs: in this digital era, banks and insurance companies are able to do damage with the touch of a button. These are precisely the measures being taken by the United States as it exploits the dominance of the dollar as the world's reserve currency. The United States Department of the Treasury is the economic Pentagon militarizing international relations and punishing millions of innocent people by enforcing doctrines of regime change and blatantly stealing the resources of other nations.

The fact that these measures even exist is proof of the collapse of the international legal order. In this regard, Venezuela has become the greatest evil experiment against multilateralism. Economic terrorism against Venezuela has caused its income to drop by more than a factor of nine. It is estimated that, between 2015 and 2018, the total losses for the Venezuelan economy reached \$130 billion owing to the brutal financial blockade imposed by the United States Government, which can only be characterized as a shameless robbery and plundering of our resources.

But Venezuela is not alone. Donald Trump's supremacist hatred has hooked its imperial claws into the revolution in our sister nation of Cuba, savagely intensifying the extent of these coercive measures in the form of illicit sanctions. It appears that five decades is not long enough for the United States to realize that Cuba will never surrender. Fidel Castro's Cuba will never submit to any imperialist design after having spent over five decades resisting the economic blockade. What will make them realize that they will never be able to defeat the revolution led by José Martí?

Our sisterly nation of Nicaragua was also destined for a similar fate. These three revolutions on our continent — the Sandinista revolution, the revolution led by José Martí and the Bolivarian revolution — served as the basis for the project motivated by the Monroe Doctrine. Indeed, the United States Government judges us, promulgating indicators of democracy that it does not even adhere to itself. They judge us when there are 400 people in that country holding more wealth than 240 million others, thereby forming an oligarchy that controls the political life of the majority. A society whose political system is dominated by plutocratic minorities is not a democracy, let alone one with the authority to impose its model on other nations. We call on the United States to be less arrogant and more tolerant in its coexistence with the free nations of the world.

Along the same lines, I want to highlight the special relationship that exists between the primary cocaine producer in the world and the primary consumer of this drug on the planet — I am referring to the narcotic relationship that exists between Colombia and the United States. It has been broadly documented that Colombia produces 70 per cent of all cocaine being consumed in the world, having increased its production in the past year by more than 30 per cent, which is higher than ever before in its production history. I wish to recall that the United States contributed more than \$10 billion to the Plan Colombia initiative in order to combat this scourge. United States citizens — the vast majority, not the oligarchy — must feel as though this is a waste of taxpayers' money and wonder when this is going to stop.

Thanks to Commander Hugo Chávez and President Nicolás Maduro, Venezuela was a supporter of peace agreements praised by this Organization and the global advertising machine. But today, in one fell swoop, President Iván Duque Márquez is blatantly violating and tearing up those agreements.

Since the signing of those accords, the United Nations has confirmed the murder of 123 former combatants and 739 social leaders in our fellow country Colombia over the past year. Colombia has the highest number of internally displaced persons of any country, at almost 8 million. There are almost 6 million Colombian men and women living in Venezuela alone. The mass media, which serve the interests of the global hegemon, will never report those number.

I wish to dwell on this because two days ago the President of Colombia stood before the General Assembly spewing lies about Venezuela (see A/74/PV.5). He brought here several pieces of what he claimed was evidence that we in Venezuela are harbouring Colombian irregulars. Have we stooped to such a level of disrespect — to come lie to the Assembly?

A brief examination of those photographs — which all members will recognize because the scandal was covered by the media worldwide — reveals that they in fact depict Colombian territory, not that of Venezuela as Mr. Iván Duque had claimed, in the cases of Cauca and Catatumbo. This violates all mutual assistance mechanisms existing between countries under conventions governing reciprocal cooperation between police and legal systems. The appropriate path is that of diplomacy. What is needed is for countries to establish respectful means of communication in accordance with international law.

I suggest that President Duque grab a pencil because he has forced us to come before the General Assembly to provide specific coordinates for the camps where terrorists are being trained to attack Venezuela. There are three sites in the north-east of President Duque's country: Santa Marta, Riohacha and Maicao. Let me provide the coordinates for the camps, which will also be given the Secretary-General: Santa Marta, 11°14'19" N 79°6'15" W; Riohacha, 11°32'3" N 75°55'14" W; Maicao, 11°22'39" N 72°13'58" W. We will also provide photographs of the camps, where, again, mercenaries are being trained to attack Venezuela.

Venezuela, for its part, has taken appropriate actions. We turned to public international law and presented the evidence to the Government of Colombia. The Venezuelan public prosecutor also provided all evidence of the presence of persons in the process of committing serious crimes against the constitutional order in Venezuela — terrorism, the attempted assassination of Venezuelan State officials and of President Nicolás Maduro. The official response of the Government of Colombia was to shelter and grant safe harbour to those individuals being sought by the Venezuelan justice system, in flagrant violation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001).

With those lies, President Duque proved himself not only a bad comedian but also an awful liar. It took less than 24 hours for the truth to come out: that truth is that Venezuela's robust rule of law guarantees that our

inviolable territory has never been used to commit any abuses or crimes against a brotherly country. And I say that fully conscious of my responsibility. The United States and its regional satellites are preparing an act of aggression against Venezuela from Colombia, putting the security and stability of the continent at risk.

As far back as 2015, when President Barack Obama issued the infamous executive order labelling Venezuela as a threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States, President Nicolás Maduro warned us what was on the horizon. That was the starting point of the most obstinate exercise ever carried out by the Organization of American States (OAS), of which Venezuela is no longer a member, when it adopted the provocative and obsolete Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, laying the groundwork to justify armed intervention in Venezuela led by the United States and carried out through other Governments. It is worth noting that all of the measures provided for by that Treaty have already been used against Venezuela except one: armed intervention. That is why we have come before the Assembly to issue a warning in the hope of preventing the conflict that they wish to sow in our region.

Action taken by several parties does not make it multilateralism; it is group unilateralism, intended to bypass the rule of international law. A glance at the history of the OAS is enough to realize that such group unilateralism is responsible for turning that organization into what it is today, that is, a mere spectre of what it once was.

Amid today's global realities, our Organization, this shared home, is being called upon to play a more proactive role in tackling issues with a direct impact on international peace and security. One of the issues that stands out most — and shamefully so, I would say — is that of the question of Palestine. All of us owe a debt to the Palestinian people, now dating back more than 50 years. They have been denied their inalienable right to self-determination in a free, sovereign and independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

We also reject any form of trade war against China. We repudiate the illicit sanctions against Russia. These are two developing world Powers engaged in building a new multipolar and multcentred world with respect for international law.

We likewise reject the sanctions against Iran, North Korea, Syria and Zimbabwe. More than 30 countries have been targeted with such illegal criminal sanctions.

We welcome the election of our brotherly country Mexico to the presidency of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, the legacy of great men like Fidel Castro and Commander Hugo Chávez, who had a great vision of how to reclaim the deepest roots of the freedom and greatness of our lands. We welcome Mexico's presidency and condemn any kind of offence against the dignity of its people and its name.

We also reaffirm our historic rights over Guayana Esequiba and recall that the Geneva Agreement of 1966, duly deposited with the United Nations, is the only valid and legally binding instrument providing for bilateral negotiations for the resolution of this territorial dispute.

The present massive anti-Venezuelan operation dates back to 2002, when the United States led a coup d'état against President Hugo Chávez, with the support of the very same actors today unfortunately attempting to overthrow our legitimate Government. Something occurred in Venezuela on 23 January that is without precedent in the world: a member of Congress elected with fewer than 90,000 votes stood in a public square and proclaimed himself president of Venezuela. That member of Congress is an imperial puppet. He has no political legitimacy in Venezuela; he is nothing more than an illegitimate and criminal tool, created to undermine stability and peace in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

His self-proclamation was recognized by a minority of Governments of this unequal world, in perhaps one of the worst mistakes in their diplomatic history. But while the unequal world that favours the few supported that illegal conspiracy, the legitimate Government headed by President Nicolás Maduro received the support of almost two thirds of the States Members of the United Nations allied as the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Exactly eight months have passed since that vile, twisted turn in the history of our republic. The legitimate constitutional Government with effective territorial control and the institutional mechanisms of the rule of law continues, and will continue to be, that of President Nicolás Maduro, chosen by us Venezuelans through the exercise of our sacred right to self-determination.

Most of the world supports Venezuela and is well aware that this imperialist farce is tantamount to organized crime. Even graver still was the coordination among that puppet, Colombian paramilitary groups and the Government of Iván Duque. I take this opportunity to show this photograph of the self-proclaimed president together with a leading member of the Rastrojos paramilitary group. I am showing this to the Assembly to illustrate what we are facing. We are facing the use of criminal gangs and drug-trafficking paramilitary groups to destabilize Venezuela.

This is familiar enough from history. Our sister Nicaragua recalls only too well when the Government of the United States used the Contras to overthrow the Sandinistas. The countries of the Middle East likewise endured terrorist organizations created, armed, financed and used to overthrow Governments that were not in the orbit of the hegemonic Power.

In that regard, I wish to inform the international community that on Wednesday our Ambassador to the International Criminal Court delivered a video containing the full confession of a leader of the Rastrojos paramilitary gang for consideration as part of the preliminary examination on Colombia and paramilitary activities.

Precisely with a view to achieving, guaranteeing and preserving peace and order in our republic, President Nicolás Maduro invited all segments of society to participate in a sovereign dialogue. Our commitment to a constitutional approach is unshakable.

We have brought this story to light in order to warn the world and the international community about these twisted machinations, on the edge of legality, which tomorrow could, without any justification, impact any other country the global hegemon might decide to openly rob of its resources or change the Government at any cost. Venezuela is and will continue to be united, unique and indivisible. We are the Venezuela that Bolívar and our liberators would never surrender to any empire.

The Government of the United States has supported this illegitimate enterprise by the brutal and criminal imposition of an all-out embargo. The United States had imposed 6,000 coercive measures against dozens of countries around the world by 2014. Today, in 2019, the number of illicit unilateral coercive measures has risen to 8,000. Such measures constitute the preferred

weapon for domination in the twenty-first century, with least cost and greatest benefit in neocolonialist terms.

Thirty-two countries are today subject to such economic aggression by the United States Government and, according to the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations on the negative impact of the unilateral coercive measures, one third of humankind is suffering the consequences of this form of collective punishment. The Non-Aligned Movement just yesterday approved a statement firmly rejecting the application of such illicit sanctions. This is a new form of economic terrorism that uses the suffering of innocent civilians to generate political benefits for the global hegemon. Moreover, in our digital age, it illegally yields billions of dollars at the touch of a button.

I brought with me to read out two statements made in 2018, the first from the United States Department of State:

“The pressure campaign is working. The financial sanctions we have placed on the Venezuelan Government have forced it to begin becoming in default, both on sovereign and PDVSA, its oil company’s debt. And what we are seeing [...] is a total economic collapse in Venezuela. So our policy is working, our strategy is working and we’re going to keep it”.

There can be no doubt this criminal confession flagrantly violated the Charter of the United Nations.

The second statement was made by former Ambassador William Brownfield:

“We must treat this like an agony, a tragedy that will continue until it comes to an end. If we can do something that will bring that end quicker, we probably should do it, but we should do it understanding that it’s going to have an impact on millions and millions of people who are already having great difficulty finding enough to eat, getting themselves cured when they get sick, or finding clothes to put on their children before they go off to school. We don’t get to do this and pretend as though it has no impact there. We have to make the hard decision — the desired outcome justifies this fairly severe punishment.”

And what outcome does the United States of America desire? It seeks to defeat the Bolivarian Revolution and maintain its hegemony in every corner of the world. It also attacks Iran, Russia and China — countries

engaged in building a new world. It pursues nefarious policies to effect the illicit doctrine of regime change.

Given these grave claims, Venezuela calls for the investigation of all these blatant violations by the United States of the Charter of the United Nations. There can be no doubt they constitute crimes against humanity in respect of Venezuela and the world — the perpetrators have admitted as much.

What measures must we take to correct the abusive conduct of the Government of the United States, which causes such suffering even to its own people? I would say to President Trump that his people expects its leaders to be truly committed to democracy and to eradicating poverty and inequality. They expect not to be drawn into wars of any kind. The people of Walt Whitman has more in common with its poets than with the arrogant and supremacist prose its Government brandishes so recklessly. The world expects the United States to change course immediately, to subject itself, once and for all, to international law and to show respect for our common home.

Seventy-five years since the founding of the United Nations, we aspire to a robust Organization, free of unjust constraints and able to restrain the illegitimate exercise of power. Let us have less ostentatious rhetoric. As the Secretary-General has said, let us say yes to more concrete and effective action. Let us, in chorus, form a common front in defence of the Charter of the United Nations and its principles and purposes, which are the basis of international law and the *raison d'être* of the Organization. Only in this way will we guarantee the survival of the human species and the harmonious and lawful coexistence of the community of nations.

I conclude my statement by reaffirming that Venezuela is and will remain at peace, cared for by a dignified, courageous people that steadfastly rejects submission. We are an infinite legacy of the sword that we inherited from our liberator and father Simón Bolívar. By his spirit we entered the world so as to never give space to the Santander and oligarchic betrayal of the free peoples of the great homeland. Let us build a common front to defend the United Nations Charter and the happiness of our peoples. In the words of the poet Benedetti, happiness should be defended as a trench, as a principle, as a flag, as a right. With our Bolívar, let us shed our fear and save our homeland. Today we say, let us shed our fear and save the world from capitalist violence.

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

Ms. Delcy Rodríguez Gómez, Vice-President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by José Ulisses Correia e Silva, Prime Minister and Minister of Reform of the Republic of Cabo Verde

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister of Reform of the Republic of Cabo Verde.

Mr. José Ulisses Correia e Silva, Prime Minister and Minister of Reform of the Republic of Cabo Verde, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. José Ulisses Correia e Silva, Prime Minister and Minister of Reform of the Republic of Cabo Verde, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Silva (Cabo Verde) (*spoke in Portuguese; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): It is a privilege for me, as a Cabo Verdean, to greet all the peoples of the United Nations represented here by their highest dignitaries. I extend a special greeting to Secretary-General António Guterres in recognition of how he has been leading and elevating the United Nations system to new heights in all areas, from human rights to peace and from the struggle against inequalities and injustice to sustainable development.

I welcome the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 73/339, on cooperation with the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries.

Cabo Verde congratulates Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande of Nigeria on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. He can count on the support of Cabo Verde. We agree with him on the virtues of multilateral diplomacy in the service of peace and development.

Cabo Verde is a country with 559 years of history. Our history is one of ambition, resilience, triumph and adaptation. We have lived for centuries in a country where rainfall is sparse and uneven. We experienced hunger in the 1940s. Today, we are much more resilient and face periods of drought, always with the assurance

of food security. Since the late seventeenth century, Cabo Verdeans have emigrated for economic reasons and today we have a vast diaspora in the United States, Europe and the African continent that contributes to our economy and the presence of Cabo Verde in the world. We have progressed from a very poor country to a middle-income country and now, in this generation, we legitimately aspire to development.

We have always had a difficult yet passionate relationship with nature. The good news, in what is a major trend moving forward, is that the world now values the resources found in Cabo Verde that caused trouble for past generations. The sea, which our musicians and poets sang about as the path to emigration and longing, has become an asset for the blue economy and tourism. The wind and the sun, which used to signal drought, now produce renewable energy. Our location, distant from the rest of the world, is now an important resource, positioning Cabo Verde as a platform in the mid-Atlantic, connecting Africa to Europe, the United States and Brazil.

We did not invent a new country; we adapted to living in it. We overcame the challenges and made a patriotic commitment to development, in the conviction that no one will do for us that which we cannot do for ourselves to drive the structural changes that our country needs in order to develop. The most secure foundation on which those changes can occur is political stability, good governance and trust rooted in the rule of law and the integrity of our institutions. Those are the most important assets that we in Cabo Verde are determined to preserve, watch over, value and improve.

We face the same economic, social and environmental challenges as all small island developing States (SIDS). We face the development challenges of a SIDS that has graduated to middle-income status. Our goal is not to grow out of less-advanced country status and remain a middle-income country under more punishing financing and cooperation conditions. Rather, our goal is to achieve development and high income. We therefore need development to be the goal of the transition process and for financing mechanisms and conditions to be coherent and consistent with that goal.

The revision of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway currently under way is an opportunity for us to step up actions that may help island nations to develop their economic competitiveness,

promote social inclusion, foster resilience in their exposure to climate change and other extreme events, as well as access and judicious and sustainable financing.

We welcome the vision that Mr. Muhammad-Bande has brought us and the theme that has been proposed for our general debate, namely, “Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion”, without forgetting peace and security as essential conditions for those efforts to succeed. These are global issues that require local responses in a context of global solidarity as they have implications for global security in the broadest sense.

Cabo Verde is implementing its strategic sustainable development plan, which is fully harmonized with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Cabo Verde takes a cross-cutting gender equality and equity approach in our planning system, State budget and public policies. Cabo Verde guarantees the right to education for all by ensuring the universalization and funding of preschool education, providing free access to basic and secondary education and responding to special education needs. Cabo Verde has invested in social protection and care for the most vulnerable sectors of our society, including children, the elderly and persons with disabilities. Cabo Verde is betting on autonomy and self-sufficiency for families through policies that promote job creation, entrepreneurship and productive inclusion.

Cabo Verde is implementing a water and energy transition strategy aimed at reducing reliance on rainwater and fossil fuels, and improving people’s economic capacity to access water and energy. We introduced the first seawater desalinator 50 years ago. Today, 70 per cent of the population in Cabo Verde uses desalinated water for consumption. In coming years, as a result of current investments, we will reach 90 per cent. We are implementing strategies to diversify sources of water for agriculture through desalination, the reuse of wastewater and the dissemination of drip irrigation together with renewable energy.

Mr. Fialho Rocha (Cabo Verde), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We are implementing an energy transition strategy in order to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. From the current level of 20 per cent, our goal is to reach 30 per cent power production from renewable sources by 2025, exceed 50 per cent by 2030 and reach 100 per cent renewable resource use by 2040. We are the first

African country to join the Transport Decarbonisation Alliance. As part of our energy transition strategy, we intend to gradually replace all internal combustion vehicles with electric vehicles by 2050. That is our modest contribution to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in transportation.

Cabo Verde has demonstrated its alignment, commitment and credibility with respect to the broader ideals of the United Nations. We wish to position Cabo Verde as a useful interlocutor in promoting dialogue, peace and tolerance among nations and as a credible ally for cooperative security against such transnational crimes as drug trafficking, trafficking in persons and terrorism. We are taking all steps to implement the 17 Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in an effort that involves Government, companies, civil society organizations and international partners. We seek even greater commitment in order to achieve our ultimate goal of developed status. For the United Nations, which will celebrate 75 years of existence in 2020, and for each country individually, this is a great moment to accelerate our actions towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals if we actually wish to leave no one behind and achieve one of the more humanistic goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Time is short and we need concrete action to reverse the direction and breadth of climate change. Time is short and we must implement effective responses to the challenge of poverty and its consequences. Time is short and we must commit to peace. The current generation of political players does not have all the time in the world and must be held accountable to humankind. The time has arrived for us to move beyond intentions. It is time for us to undertake concrete, measurable and committed actions to fulfil the aspirations of our peoples and our global needs. It is time to improve the world.

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

Mr. José Ulisses Correia e Silva, Prime Minister and Minister of Reform of the Republic of Cabo Verde, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia

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

Mr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Mohamad (Malaysia): I would like to join the others in congratulating Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. I would also like to thank Her Excellency María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés for her dedication and stewardship in successfully completing the work of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

Malaysia welcomes the theme of this year's General Assembly, which is "Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion". The key message of that theme is "galvanizing multilateral efforts", which is what the United Nations stands for. I will propose a few.

Almost three-quarters of a century ago, five countries claimed victory in the Second World War. On the basis of that victory, they insisted on the right to practically rule the world, and so they gave themselves veto power over the rest of the world in the Organization they built — an Organization they claimed would end wars and solve conflicts. The veto power, as they must know, was against all the principles of human rights of which they themselves claim to be the champions. It killed the very purpose of the great Organization that they had created. It ensured that all solutions to all conflicts could be negated by any one of them. Broken up into ideological factions, they frustrated all attempts to solve problems.

Each one of them can negate the wishes of the nearly 200 other members. It is totally and absolutely undemocratic. Yet, there are among them those that berate other countries of the world for not being democratic or democratic enough. How much longer should that group be allowed to exercise that power? How long? Forever? The unspoken time frame seems to be eternal. That very power has resulted in an arms race. Each one of the five rely on its military might in

order to challenge any attempt to take its power away. They feel that they must be well armed to retain their right to be the privileged five.

It is that structure of the United Nations that renders it incapable of achieving its principle objectives of preventing wars between nations. Indeed, the structure has enabled the promotion of war within countries and between countries. True, the warlike European countries have not gone to war with each other over the past two-thirds of a century, but elsewhere there is evidence that European countries have caused wars to break out and arms and funds to be supplied, and have actively participated in prolonging those wars. It is apparently good for business and for weapons sales.

The first act engineered by the Western countries was the creation of the State of Israel by the seizure of Palestinian land and the expulsion of its 90 per cent Arab population. Since then wars have been fought in many countries, and many have been related to the creation of the State of Israel. And now we have terrorism where there was none before, or at least none at the present scale. Military actions against acts of terrorism will not succeed. We need to identify the cause and remove it, but the great Powers refuse to deal with the root cause. They prefer military action and sanctions, and they will continue to fail to stop terrorism.

Malaysia accepts the State of Israel as a fait accompli, but it cannot the blatant seizure of Palestinian land by Israel for its settlements or its occupation of Jerusalem. The Palestinians cannot even enter the settlements that are built on their land. Because of the creation of Israel, there is now enmity towards Muslims and Islam. Muslims are accused of terrorism even if they do nothing.

Muslim countries have been destabilized by the campaign for democracy and regime change. Muslims everywhere have been oppressed, expelled from their countries and refused asylum. Thousands have died at sea and in the severe winters of Europe. It is undeniable that in the past there was no such massive migration. Now the wars and instability caused by regime changes have forced people to run away from their countries.

I will admit that democracy is a better form of Government than dictatorship, but democracy is not the easiest form of Government to operate. That is especially true when it is adopted overnight. Time should be allowed for a gradual transition to democracy. Indeed, the very countries that promote democracy became

democratic over a period of decades, if not centuries. The result of an overnight switch to democracy is destabilization and civil war, reducing some countries to governmentless wilderness. Some have even reverted to authoritarian regimes that are worse than those that were displaced. Unable to withstand the suffering of war and violence, their people are forced to migrate.

The great democracies talk incessantly about the rule of law, but they are selective. Their friends may break any law and get away scot-free. Israel can break all international laws and norms of the world and will continue to be supported and defended. Unfriendly countries can do nothing right. There is no justice in this world.

I must again refer to the fate of the Rohingya in Myanmar. Many colonies of the West expelled non-natives from their countries upon independence, but no country has ever been as brutal as Myanmar. Even the natives of the land were massacred, brutally killed and raped in full view of the world, against the backdrop of burning houses and villages of the victims. They were forced to migrate and now dare not return to Myanmar even when offered the chance. They cannot trust the Myanmar military unless some form of non-Myanmar protection is offered.

The helplessness of the world in stopping the atrocities inflicted on the Rohingya in Myanmar Regard has reduced regard for the resolutions of the United Nations. Now, despite United Nations resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir, the country has been invaded and occupied. There may be reasons for this action, but it is still wrong. The problem must be solved by peaceful means. India should work with Pakistan to that end. Ignoring the United Nations would lead to other forms of disregard for the Organization and the rule of law.

Mr. Inguanez (Malta), Vice-President, took the Chair.

All countries of the world wish to prosper and grow their economies. In colonial days, the wealth of colonized lands was exploited to enrich their colonial masters. We cannot expect much from their former colonial masters, but they do expect to be allowed to develop their own country for themselves. However, they are hampered from doing so. There is much talk about free trade, but new regulations are constantly being introduced that are detrimental to the development of poor countries. This is because proposals, rules and regulations are made by the rich, often secretly, and the poor are practically forced to accept them.

One example is the Trans-Pacific Partnership. It was cooked up in Washington, D.C., with input from big business. In the agreement, the Governments of small countries could have been forced to greatly compensate big foreign companies with huge sums of money should their decisions affect the profitability of those companies, including future profits. Fortunately, now the powerful country that prepared the agreement has rejected it. With the exclusion of that country, the agreement has become more palatable, but it still lays down trade conditions that negate free trade. We are told that we must remove duties on imports or reduce them so that foreign products can knock out our infant industries. We are reduced to exporting only raw materials. How do we industrialize and create jobs for our people?

A classic case of the denial of free trade is the ban on the import of palm oil, proposed by European countries. Unable to sustain the competitiveness of their own edible oils, they campaign to ban palm oil. It is said that palm oil is poisonous, destroys the habitats of long-nosed monkeys, reduces carbon dioxide absorption and so on. European products are labelled palm-oil free to show their dislike of and ban on palm oil. Malaysia produces palm oil; many poor countries produce palm oil. Malaysia will not clear more forests for palm oil plantation. We are just as concerned as the Europeans about our environment.

At the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, Malaysia pledged to maintain at least 50 per cent of its land mass under forest cover. We have made good on our pledge and even surpassed it. Our forest cover is currently at 55.3 per cent, exceeding our Rio pledge. Palm oil is still a big contributor to our economy. There is no evidence that it is poisonous. Millions have consumed palm oil and have not fallen ill. We appeal to the good sense of the rich not to impoverish us and prevent hundreds of thousands of our workers from earning a living. Consuming palm oil will constitute a good deed.

In keeping with the objectives of the United Nations, Malaysia has launched a campaign to criminalize war. It is ridiculous to hang a murderer for killing one person and yet glorify those who are responsible for the deaths of millions of people. Modern wars are total in every way. Not just combatants, but innocent people — children, the sick and the incapacitated — are killed and wounded. Whole countries are devastated and trillions of dollars are lost. In the end, both the victors and the losers suffer. We consider ourselves

civilized, but we are still very primitive, given that we accept killing people as a way to settle disputes between or within nations. There are other ways of settling disputes. We can negotiate or submit to arbitration by third parties or we can resort to the courts of law, for example the International Court of Justice.

Malaysia does not just talk; we take action. We settle disputes with our neighbours through negotiation and through the International Court of Justice. We have won some and we have lost some, but no one has been killed. All this talk about not giving up one inch of territory is ridiculous. We know that, if we go to war, that inch is going to cost us far more than it is worth. When we go to court, we do not always get what we claim to be rightfully ours, but it is the same with war — we do not always win. In a contest between two parties, one must lose if the other is to win, but if we use peaceful means even if we lose it will cost us much less. No one dies, nor is any land devastated.

The world is experiencing climate change. Malaysia is hotter than ever before. We do not seem to be returning to previous temperatures; in fact, it seems to be getting hotter and hotter. Elsewhere, powerful typhoons and hurricanes are destroying whole towns, killing thousands and wreaking havoc of unprecedented proportions. Flood waters from storms inundate huge areas of land. Sometimes there is a dry spell and wildfires destroy forest and towns, creating haze and potentially causing hundreds of deaths. Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are more frequent and destroying towns and cities. Melting snow in the Arctic and Antarctic is causing sea levels to rise and threatening to overrun islands. I have a feeling that these disasters are part of the cycles of change that our planet has been going through for millions of years.

Could it be that the stable, salubrious climate that we have been enjoying has come to the end of its cycle? Could it be that the cycle is changing, as it did in prehistoric times, millions of years ago? Is it possible for temperatures to rise to a level where living conditions become unbearable? I think that, instead of preparing for war, we should be paying attention to climate change and the natural disasters that accompany it. We should be preparing to combat climate change in order to bring back the normal environment we have been used to for thousands of years. We should be preparing ourselves for major earthquakes, typhoons and hurricanes, floods and landslides, inter alia. We should learn how to mitigate these natural disasters.

We should be constructing shelters, making rain and growing food without sunlight and evacuating coastal areas, among other things.

We should have teams of well-equipped and trained disaster experts ready to rush to disaster areas. Every disaster is a world disaster. All these natural disasters may not happen, of course, but we cannot rely on that. We are wasting our money preparing for wars and inventing more new destructive weapons when we could all be wiped out by natural disasters as the planet goes through its next cycle. We human creatures are clever. We can still survive the next cycle if we task our researchers with coming up with defences against catastrophes. If we reduce our budgets for killing people, we will have the funds for research and preparation.

Malaysia is a middle-income country that depends on trade to grow. Naturally, our markets are the rich countries. Now the rich want us to balance the trade and to buy more of their goods to correct the imbalance. To do this, we will have to spend the money we earn from trade to import the goods of the rich. Our growth will be stunted so that those who are already rich can become richer. Trade enriches everyone. That has been shown through the ages. Malaysia is a trading nation. Our population is too small to provide a good domestic market, so we need the world market. With new communication technologies, we can increase our trade with the world. Therefore, I ask our partners not to impoverish us by forcing us to buy what we do not need or to reduce our exports. Trade wars are wasteful. Now that the entire world has become a market for everyone, trade wars will stultify the potential of everyone to become rich.

We are also seeing sanctions being applied to countries. We do not know the laws under which such sanctions are applied; it appears to be a privilege of the rich and the powerful. If we want sanctions, let us have a law to govern them. The fact is that when a sanction is applied to a country, other countries get sanctioned as well. Malaysia and many others lost a big market when sanctions were applied to Iran. I believe in capitalism, but capitalism has gone mad. They are already talking of making trillions of dollars. It is dangerous for a person or a company to have so much money. It can influence things and it can buy power; hence the need for anti-trust laws. We saw what happened with the Trans-Pacific Partnership, whereby rich companies gave themselves the power to sue Governments. The terms of the agreement were drawn up by them, and

they are not all like Bill Gates, who spends some money on charity. Most are bent on exploiting the power that money gives them.

The United Nations has failed to protect the poor from the scourge of war, but in other fields it has done much better. It has contributed to better health and to alleviating the suffering of some of the poor and the needy. It provides a degree of security and stability in places plagued by internal conflicts. It can do more, but it is short of funds. Certain countries, including those that are very rich, are not paying their dues. It is shameful. We need to support the United Nations, even though it has failed to banish wars. Its work on health, education and social security make the United Nations worth having.

I would like to thank the staff and officers of the United Nations for their work and dedication in all those fields. Malaysia has been able to contribute by carrying out peacekeeping activities in many countries. I look forward to the time when those services will no longer be needed and when countries will be able to ensure their own security.

The United Nations should play a major role in the restoration of failed Governments. Many countries have failed because their administrative machinery does not function well. Modern technology can help, but there is a need for good training. Countries and people should be allowed to retain their cultures and ways of life. The General Assembly should authorize international interference only if those ways of life involve taking away the rights of people.

As for the Security Council, the time has come to modify the veto power if it cannot be done away with completely. The veto should be valid only if two permanent members and three non-permanent members of the Security Council agree to apply it. That way, abuses would be less frequent.

Three-quarters of a century is a long time. We cannot be held to ransom by events of the distant past. The members of the Security Council with the power of the veto should not think that they will always be above international laws and norms. New, cheap yet powerful weapons have been invented that even the poor can produce and use. If we do not make wars a crime, our security cannot be sustained. We must resuscitate the original purpose of this great Organization — the United Nations. We must punish warmongers. We must make the world peaceful for all. That was our mission,

and that must remain our mission. Only if we succeed can we claim to be civilized.

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

Mr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Allen Michael Chastanet, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia.

Mr. Allen Michael Chastanet, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Allen Michael Chastanet, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Chastanet (Saint Lucia): I am pleased, on behalf of the Government and the people of Saint Lucia to once again address this global community of nations. It was a pleasure for me and for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to have had Secretary-General António Guterres join us in Saint Lucia this past July for the meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community. At that meeting, the Secretary-General acknowledged the challenges faced by small island developing States (SIDS), especially that of climate change. Importantly, he noted the other obstacles to sustainable development for countries like ours, notably the urgent need for reliable access to development finance.

We thank the Secretary-General for his words of support and for his visit to our brothers and sisters in the Bahamas, and we note first-hand how tenuous our grip on development can be in the face of climatic events. We are very encouraged by his commitment to supporting the advancement of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean proposal on debt for

climate adaptation swaps for SIDS. That initiative will go a long way not only towards freeing up domestic fiscal space, but also towards establishing a resilience fund to finance adaptation projects. Saint Lucia looks forward to engaging with the international financial institutions and our partners to forge ahead towards the implementation of that critical initiative.

We opened this high-level week with a focus on climate change and climate action. Saint Lucia, along with our fellow small island developing States, continued to make a strong case for urgent action. The disturbing fact is that every September when we gather here, it is against the backdrop of yet another devastating extreme weather event. Have we already forgotten what befell Dominica in 2017, when Hurricane Maria ravaged that island, causing a loss of 226 per cent of gross domestic product? Have we already forgotten Barbuda, laid to waste by Irma, or the British Virgin Islands and Anguilla?

I saw the devastation in the Bahamas first-hand when I visited that country in my capacity as Chairman of the Caribbean Community. I saw the faces of people, absolutely lost and desperate, as they attempted to rationalize what had happened to them and, more importantly, what would happen next. As expected, they cried and they yelled, but ultimately, after the initial reflex empathy and emergency aid, they remain voiceless. We need to let them know, through our actions, that we hear them, we see them and we will not forget them.

Many of the victims of these devastating extreme weather events have to focus on surviving from one day to the next. They no longer have the luxury to anticipate and plan for the future when they cannot contemplate where their next meal will come from. We should act with the same urgency as a mother searching for her lost child. We should act with the same desperation as a father who has seen the roof of his family's home blown off. Let us recognize the awesome responsibility that has been placed on us — those of us in a position to give hope to the hopeless and tangible assistance to those most in need.

To date, despite the overwhelming evidence, the tragic loss of lives and the destruction of people's dignity, we unfortunately have failed. We are failing as world leaders to act with urgency. Instead, we are too often allowing the denials of a few to paper over the real and existential threat to the lives and livelihoods of

so many. Where is the action to deploy, with immediate effect, the resilient solutions and the commitment to wrestling to the ground the fact that a heating planet is to blame and the fact that we are the ones who are heating it? As for the few who stand with us and have provided tangible assistance as we fight for our survival, we are grateful for the support provided, thus far, but I daresay that, given the magnitude of the problem, we have only begun to scratch the surface.

It is abundantly clear that the international financial architecture — the systems, mechanisms and rules that govern global finance — that are associated with our fight for survival are moving too slow to pivot to address the new normal for small island developing States like mine. The inability and, at times, unwillingness to change the status quo as it relates to graduating countries out of programmes and creating new financing vehicles can no longer be tolerated. While we face the reluctance of global financial institutions to heed our calls, we are left to attempt to develop our own solutions and lean on new friends in our times of need. In fact, in the face of this new climate change reality, we are being forced to consider every all options to ensure our survival and that of our people. One such step is the establishment of a special purpose vehicle dedicated to SIDS, through which we hope to mobilize financing for resilience. We truly hope that we will be able to interest Member States in joining us in that very vital initiative.

My island home of Saint Lucia is small, just 238 square miles, with a population of fewer than 200,000 people. However, we are fortunate to be members of strong regional institutions. If one explores a little, one will note that, as a subregion, eight countries within the eastern Caribbean, including Saint Lucia, use what has become one of the most stable currencies in the world — the Eastern Caribbean dollar. We share a single court system, and we pool our resources to provide a large number of services for our people. In our wider Caribbean community, we cooperate in even more areas — a university of international renown, our own development bank, a common market and a regional security mechanism are but a few of our successes.

I highlight those achievements to signify that we are not a region of people who sit on our hands, waiting to be rescued. In fact, as a region, post-independence we have worked diligently to establish the institutions and fashion the responses to deal with the challenges that confront us, and we have achieved much success in so doing.

Like all other nations of the world, Saint Lucia has a goal to chart a sustainable development path that benefits every last citizen, leaving no one behind, a goal to ensure that all are clothed and fed and have a roof over their heads, with access to education, health and security, and to provide those basic needs that lay the foundation for a better future. Is that not the aspiration that, as leaders, we all have for our people? Yet, in the face of our ambitious Sustainable Development Goals, as SIDS, we continue to have to battle with insurmountable challenges, many as a result of rules and systems that do not create the mechanisms and the requisite urgency to address our unique challenges.

Some of those rules impose restrictions on States in the absence of credible evidence to support claims of wrongdoing. Our islands are being blacklisted, which is a demeaning and unfair practice that results, in some instances, in effecting irreversible damage to our reputations. Countries such as Saint Lucia, which has the ambition to be self-sufficient and aid-free, cannot therefore exercise the will to participate in financial services, an area in which we have a comparative advantage.

Our Government in Saint Lucia believes that every single person matters and that every person has a contribution to make. However, to genuinely say they matter, we must give them the ability to be able to participate. If we are constantly moving from one crisis to another, our people are not going to be able to participate in such necessary changes. For the past three years, Saint Lucia has been focused on trying to take control of its own destiny.

One such way is our new partnership with the World Economic Forum to be the first country to implement the Country Financing Roadmap. The Roadmap is a platform to support countries in making a transformative shift from funding to financing. It will harness the collective intelligence from the World Economic Forum's expansive networks and promote consensus on the main challenges that limit capital flows to Saint Lucia. It will also leverage coordinated action to move from a holistic diagnostic to a country-specific tangible action plan. We are grateful for this opportunity to be the test case for that initiative and look forward to its success and, once successful, to its being replicated across other States.

Last April, the Foreign Ministers of the Group of Seven (G-7) expressed their support for the substantive

participation of Taiwan as an active member of the international aviation community in forums of the International Civil Aviation Organization. Saint Lucia endorses that call, as we believe that the exclusion of active members for political purposes compromises aviation safety and security. The G-7 has now added its voice to those that have long advocated for the inclusion of Taiwan in the work of the global community.

As we continue our strides to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the participation of all States, including small States, in the various United Nations agencies and processes is critical to achieving our collective goals. We remain true to the Agenda's clarion call to leave no one behind. Similarly, we express our solidarity with the people of Cuba and we question the continued application of the embargo.

On the issue of Venezuela, Saint Lucia continues to believe that this crisis should be resolved peacefully and through dialogue. Military action is not an answer. But let me be clear. The continued instability in that country is a threat to us all in the hemisphere. That cannot be overlooked or swept under the table.

I would like to be able to boast of a United Nations where small nations such as mine receive a fair hearing and genuine empathy when appropriate, a United Nations where, once the case is made, there is an examination of conscience followed by a commitment towards change. To some, that may seem like a high ideal but I submit that it is the minimum owed to States like Saint Lucia. It is indeed the object and purpose of the United Nations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Allen Michael Chastanet, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister

for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa.

Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Malielegaoi (Samoa): Today, the General Assembly will adopt the Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting to Review Progress Made in Addressing the Priorities of Small Island Developing States through the Implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (resolution 74/3). Its value is to hasten the attainment of the sustainable development agenda of small island developing States (SIDS) agreed in Samoa five years ago.

Endorsing the Political Declaration is the easy part. Claiming ownership of it takes courage. Delivering on promises and making good on undertakings pledged to fully implement the SAMOA Pathway by 2024 is the seal of true leaders.

The themes of our high-level meetings this week are well and truly intertwined. Issues from addressing a climate emergency to providing rights-based universal health coverage and calling for increased resources to fast track collective action, underpinned by a desire for a peaceful and secure world, are the pillars of the SAMOA Pathway, the blueprint for the sustainable development of small island developing States.

As a Pacific island leader, today my main message will again be, as it has consistently been for the past 21 consecutive years that I have attended the general debate in this Hall, on climate change — the embodiment of Samoa's realities, aspirations and priority policy concern now and well into the future.

When SIDS first told the world that their coastlines were eroding, the sea level was rising and climate change was humanly induced, some Member States scorned the notion and did not take our concerns seriously. Instead, they wanted scientific evidence to back up our claim, probably as a cover to stall and frustrate our resolve. Yet when the world's top scientists — including some of their

own nationals — scientifically validated our concerns, including in the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on the imperative of keeping global warming below 1.5 °C, some countries refused to accept the evidence and continue to use every opportunity to discredit such reports.

Science has spoken. The message is loud and clear. We cannot use it selectively or only when it suits a specific agenda. Climate change is real. Climate change is here. It is having an impact on us with far greater frequency and severity. It is a security risk of far greater proportions than many people are willing to admit. Sadly, it could lead to the demise of some sovereign nations that are low-lying atolls and small island States. There is a misguided notion that portrays climate change as a concern only of the small island developing States; nothing could be further from the truth. Climate change crosses borders uninvited and does not discriminate by size or economic status. It has an impact on every country, although it affects some — such as small island developing States — more extensively than others, owing to their particular and unique vulnerabilities.

Times are changing. The world has witnessed epic occurrences of horrific natural disasters in recent times, on a scale unprecedented in the 74-year history of our Organization. Tsunamis, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, flooding, bush fires and droughts have resulted in the loss of countless lives and untold suffering, setting back the development of some countries by years. Climate change will impact all of us sooner or later. Climate change is a global problem requiring a decisive response from the world community. It should unite rather than divide us. The challenges posed by and solutions to climate change are already common knowledge, yet we have failed to deliver the ambitious global actions that are necessary to address the root causes of climate change through compromise. We must accept basic climate logic. We need to shift the focus in the climate change relationship from a donor-victim to a partnership approach. Owing to the universality of climate change, partnerships should provide the impetus to finding solutions in a decisive manner.

Apportioning blame for past wrongs will not restore our environment to its early, pristine state. Our focus should always be on today and tomorrow, and not on yesterday and what should have been. Entrenched positions that are devoid of today's realities and in

pursuit of unrelated agendas do not have a role in our collective effort. No one should stay detached from and unconcerned by our common plight. We must work together with a sense of urgency and commitment in order to address climate change now. It should not be the science alone that recommends what we should do, but also our conscience and the political will to follow through.

The United Nations remains our last and best hope to provide the political will and commitment necessary to turn the tide against climate change. Nations in leadership roles are called to account in doing the right thing for our global family. We want leaders who view the world as a single constituency in which everyone must work together within the limits of their capacity and capability to be part of the total solution. Leadership is calling. True leaders should lead from the front, all the time. The cooperation of every country will be necessary if we are to win the climate change battle.

We must be innovative and listen to the voices of our young people. Their voices ring of boldness, passion and honesty. Their advocacy is untainted by ulterior motives or hidden agendas. They are determined to do the heavy lifting and prepared to go the extra mile in order to ensure that we do not irreversibly ruin the future of the planet that rightly belongs to them. They deserve nothing less.

Samoa is thankful to the United Nations for the vital role it has played during our journey as a mandated territory and independent State. As a small island State with no defence force and an unarmed police service, our membership of the United Nations is grounded on the promise of peace, the rule of law, equality and justice, which the United Nations offers to all of its States Members. The dynamics of the new global agenda continue to test the resolve of our Organization. Unity for the common good is needed now more than ever so that nations and peoples can live in peace and advance towards a common prosperity. Only through cooperation and multilateral joint effort can we hope to guarantee human rights, achieve peace and security and effectively pursue sustainable development. The United Nations remains uniquely suited to the pursuit and coordination of global initiatives to attain those objectives, including efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion, as highlighted in the theme of this year's session.

The Secretary-General's visit to the Pacific this year was timely, given his leadership in calling for ambitious and transformational climate action. The visit allowed him to see and experience first-hand the scale of the challenges facing Pacific small island countries, and we commend his determination to share the messages of the Pacific peoples through the recently concluded Climate Action Summit. The Secretariat and agencies of the United Nations are key partners for the blue Pacific continent in addressing some of our regional priorities, such as climate change, resilience, oceans, fisheries, gender equality, human rights, SIDS and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Pacific Resilience Facility is a game-changing regional initiative for the blue Pacific and its peoples. Its key purpose is to provide predictable, sustainable, accessible and accountable grant funding for disaster-risk preparedness to ensure that Pacific communities are safe and resilient. It fills a critical financing gap in the Pacific, as the Facility focuses on small-scale and low-quantum disaster-risk preparedness projects that are not widely supported or financed by major development partners, including multilateral development banks. It also complements the existing priorities and efforts of national Governments and development partners in building the resilience of Pacific countries and communities. There is room for support from the international community. Furthermore, during this week we have heard of the importance of deepening dialogue to find solutions to the challenges of the practice of de-risking, considered to be an existential threat to small island States by putting them at risk of losing access to the global financial system and by enhancing vulnerability.

We welcome the recommendation for the establishment of a United Nations multi-country office in the northern Pacific. That is an important delivery of the promise for better engagement, presence and United Nations system support for the Pacific region. It is also a tangible contribution to some of the asks of the SAMOA Pathway.

On the United Nations development system reform, we welcome the support extended to the United Nations Resident Coordinators in their new role, with real additional human resources on the ground to implement other aspects of the reform. The United Nations should deliver as one, both in rhetoric and in practice, to avoid duplication of responsibilities and a clear definition of roles against diminishing resources. We hope that the

Resident Coordinator reform will provide a harmonized, effective and efficient response to the priority needs of Member States. Close collaboration with the Pacific regional organizations is critical.

I wish to re-emphasize the importance of the multi-country office based in Samoa given our firm commitment to the partnership with the United Nations and our confidence in what we can also contribute to the United Nations agenda for Samoa's people, as well as for the Pacific, SIDS and the United Nations family.

Development, security and human rights are mutually reinforcing pillars of the United Nations. Equal progress on all three fronts should be the norm, not the exception. As the Secretary-General rightly put it during his opening statement this week, every measure to uphold human rights helps to deliver sustainable development and peace (see A/74/PV.3).

The sector-wide approach that Samoa has adopted in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) allows us to enforce the three pillars of sustainable development. That will be an important part of our preparations for our second voluntary national review in 2020 given our commitment to adopting a human rights approach to the implementation of the SDGs. Aligning the reporting and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the SAMOA Pathway with the Universal Periodic Review under the Human Rights Council and the other human rights conventions will be a challenge. However, this will not be insurmountable. If successful, it will be an important development in meeting our international obligations and in utilizing our limited resources efficiently.

We believe in embracing inclusiveness and ensuring citizens' rights to development, including through the proper engagement of the key vulnerable groups, such as women, girls, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities. Transparency and accountability are also crucial to the implementation process. In Samoa, our audit office has therefore recently prepared a performance audit of the preparedness for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals for our country. Building on synergies and addressing gaps to ensure better prioritization will definitely help to galvanize support for implementing the SDGs, thereby addressing poverty eradication, supporting quality education, mobilizing climate action and leading to more effective inclusion.

In addition to the climate crisis, we see continued conflicts, rising terrorism, disrupted peace processes, mass displacements, trade wars and growing tensions worldwide. Even our usually peaceful Pacific region was not spared from the reaches of terrorism, as witnessed in the Christchurch terrorist attacks. No country can win the war against terrorism on its own and only by pooling our resources and working collaboratively do we stand a chance of defeating that senseless menace.

We continue to look to the United Nations to bring Member States together to be part of the solution to make it an agent of change and an assurance of hope during these challenging times. All contributions matter and are very important. We take pride in our police peacekeepers deployed to the Sudan and South Sudan, including our active engagement in the disarmament agenda. We continue to advocate for respect for the rule of law and we recently co-hosted the women, peace and security summit for the Pacific. That was to support the promotion and implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on the United Nations women and peace and security agenda. The Pacific highlighted the importance of heeding the call of the Pacific Islands Forum leaders to ensure that traditional and cultural norms be acknowledged and considered as an underpinning imperative of all security initiatives under the regional security plan.

In addition, we hosted the second Pacific Islands round table on international humanitarian law, which looked at ways to promote the principles of the Geneva Conventions, as well as encouraging the region to ratify key weapons treaties, such as the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the Arms Trade Treaty.

This year we ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, bringing to six the number of core human rights conventions to which we are a State party. We are endeavouring to meet our commitment to ratifying all nine core human rights conventions before our next Universal Periodic Review and will continue to advocate for the importance of our Samoan culture and the role of the churches in promoting human rights for all in Samoa.

Let me conclude by again referring to the SAMOA Pathway, with which I started my address. I am very pleased that five years since its adoption through resolution 69/15, there has been positive progress and

concrete developments in terms of not only the United Nations system response to SIDS issues but also the dedicated attention of the international community to SIDS priorities. While there is still more to be done, I am confident that, in the spirit of genuine and durable partnerships, exciting developments are taking place to further assist SIDS in the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals, as encapsulated in the SAMOA Pathway.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Charlot Salwai Tabimasmas, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu

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

Mr. Charlot Salwai Tabimasmas, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Charlot Salwai Tabimasmas, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Salwai (Vanuatu) (spoke in French): First of all, allow me to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande of Nigeria on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. I assure him of Vanuatu's support during his mandate. I firmly believe that his presidency will be successful and effective.

I would also like to express my deep gratitude to Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, outgoing President, for her leadership and the exemplary manner in which she steered the work of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

Let me express Vanuatu's solidarity with the Government and the people of the Commonwealth

of the Bahamas, who are affected by the destruction caused by Hurricane Dorian.

At the start of the month, the Pacific region lost one of its leaders — the Prime Minister of Tonga. I would like to convey to the people and the Government of Tonga our deepest condolences and sympathy. I would also like to convey my sincere condolences to the Government and the people of France following the death of Mr. Jacques Chirac, a friend of Vanuatu and a well-known figure in the fight against global warming.

The theme of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly — “Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion” — is relevant, given the challenges currently faced by the international community, and fully in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We meet as the world faces complex challenges: conflicts with humanitarian crises are on the rise, there is an increased risk of an arms race, terrorism remains a threat, human rights violations are widespread, the environment is undergoing rapid change due to the impacts of climate change, the technological revolution is redefining the future of work and the global economy is increasingly uncertain. Such complex global challenges come at a time when the multilateral environment is under enormous pressure owing to the increase in populism and xenophobia, which calls for more multilateral. These developments reflect the erosion of trust in multilateral institutions, including the United Nations, to provide lasting solutions for peace, security and development.

We all know that the world is increasingly interconnected and that global challenges cannot be solved by any one country alone. Multilateral institutions — first and foremost, the United Nations — are becoming increasingly necessary to address those challenges. Continued unilateralism will lead to an unsafe world. We witnessed it in Europe during the twentieth century, with its two world wars. We are also in a world where, while some fear the effects of climate change, many are dying of hunger, the atrocities of wars, natural disasters and non-communicable diseases. To address these challenges effectively and to build confidence in the current multilateral order, it is essential that multilateral institutions, such as the United Nations, continue to undergo reform in order to become more inclusive.

In its 39 years of existence, Vanuatu has been a small open island economy and, in recent years, we have experienced sustained economic growth, underpinned by good macroeconomic stability and a responsible and effective Government. Our growth projections remain promising. While we are satisfied with such achievements, Vanuatu still has a long way to go to achieve its stated objectives. And that is complicated by the fact that we are extremely vulnerable to natural disasters and external shocks in the global economy. The United Nations has described Vanuatu as the most vulnerable country in the world and, given this harsh and complex reality, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be difficult.

The recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change highlighted that the world is moving towards a rise in temperature of 3°C and that small island developing States, such as Vanuatu, will continue to face natural disasters, sea-level rise, droughts and ocean acidification. For small island developing States, climate change remains the greatest threat to achieving the goals we have set. The challenges we face were presented to the Secretary-General during his recent visit to the Pacific Islands, including to my country, Vanuatu. I would like to sincerely thank the Secretary-General for his visit and I hope that our concerns will be integrated into the agenda of the United Nations and that the appropriate measures will be taken to resolve our challenges.

Our extreme vulnerability means that we will be increasingly dependent on the multilateral system. Even though we are not a major contributor of greenhouse gases, we are committed to working with the international community to redouble our efforts to reduce the rise in global temperatures, so that, by 2030, 100 per cent of our electricity will be generated by renewable and sustainable energy. This effort is part of our nationally determined contributions.

The health of our oceans is threatened by irresponsible human activities and climate change, which is particularly worrisome for Vanuatu, a part of whose economy depends on marine resources. Vanuatu therefore developed an ocean policy in 2017. We put in place a planning process for the marine space to help balance the need for the protection and sustainable use of our marine resources. We have also banned the use of single-use plastics and will intensify our efforts in that area. Vanuatu will submit a report at the second United Nations Ocean Conference, to be held in Portugal in

2020. In addition, there are some maritime conventions that Vanuatu will ratify before the end of the year.

In view of the complex sustainable development challenges that small island States must face, I would like to highlight five main areas, which I believe require that substantive partnerships be forged among the United Nations and other multilateral forums. First, we must ensure that vulnerable countries, such as Vanuatu, continue to have access to subsidized funding. Secondly, we must increase funding for addressing climate change, provide for the rapid replenishment of such financial facilities as the Green Climate Fund, and simplify access to those funds. Thirdly, we must establish innovative instruments for financing the risks of natural disasters. Fourthly, we must find solutions to better manage the risk-reduction measures adopted by major international banks, which prevent correspondent banking relationships with our national banks. These measures limit our trade with the world and slow our efforts to achieve the SDGs. Fifthly, we must propose innovative solutions to the challenges faced by the markets in small island States, which, in particular, prevent other key players from participating in our economies and contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

In August, the leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum met in Tuvalu and adopted the Kainaki II Declaration on the need to act quickly to combat climate change. Vanuatu supports regional commitments endorsed by the Blue Pacific and made 10 global appeals for urgent action on climate change. We seek the support of our development partners in order to achieve these objectives, in partnership with multilateral bodies.

The role of the multilateral system in managing our challenges through the United Nations remains, above all, broad and crucial. It is therefore essential to provide unstinting support to the Secretary-General in his efforts to reform the Organization, strengthen its role and provide it with the means to enable it to carry out its mandate appropriately. Similarly, we support the establishment of a United Nations office in the North Pacific, which will enable the Organization to strengthen its presence and extend its services to Pacific island countries.

Vanuatu is a young country, with 60 per cent of the population under the age of 15. Given the young population, we are fortunate to be able to harness the genius and potential of this young generation so that it

can make a significant contribution to the development of our country. My Government's current priority is to ensure that our young workforce is well equipped and productively integrated into the labour market. We are realizing that by investing very heavily in technical and higher education. The Government's policy of universal access to education through public subsidies covers preschool, primary and secondary education and will help us achieve the SDGs and be well prepared to meet future economic requirements.

Since our country is an archipelago, it is very expensive and difficult to provide affordable universal health-care services to our population. Vanuatu is facing an increase in non-communicable diseases that is weighing heavily on our meagre financial resources, competing with resources that should have been invested in primary health care. We have an important task ahead of us to train our health professionals and improve our medical infrastructure to meet the growing demand for health care. Even with a promising economy, we must ensure that our growth is sustained and inclusive. Inclusiveness remains my Government's priority, particularly to ensure that women and persons with disabilities participate fully in the economic and political development of our society.

Many countries in the world are now free from colonial rule; however, in my region, New Caledonia, French Polynesia and West Papua are still struggling for self-determination. Vanuatu calls on the administering Powers to respect the processes established by the United Nations that allow peoples to express their views on the self-determination of their country, such as in the recent referendum in New Caledonia. The same process should be followed in the case of French Polynesia.

Human rights violations are taking place in the world today. Vanuatu strongly condemns the human rights violations committed against the indigenous people of West Papua. We call for the United Nations system to be used to find solutions to these human rights abuses. Accordingly, the resolution of the leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum calls on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to visit the province of West Papua to conduct an assessment, supported by concrete evidence, of the human rights situation. Vanuatu supports this resolution, and calls on Indonesia, as a neighbouring and partner country in the region, to do the right thing and to act responsibly and authorize such a mission. I would like to recall the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and

reaffirm our faith in fundamental human rights, the dignity and worth of a human person and the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.

I firmly believe that we have an obligation to work together towards lifting the economic, trade and financial embargo imposed on Cuba. Lifting the embargo will, inter alia, allow the Cuban people to have access to and enjoy fundamental human rights.

In recent years, the world has undergone rapid and profound changes that present complex challenges, including climate change. These challenges urge us to collaborate and create innovative and sincere partnerships in order to achieve our SDGs. We must raise our ambitions and renew our commitment through concrete actions if we are to win the fight against poverty and climate change and to ensure inclusive economic growth that takes into account our people's aspirations to well-being.

The development concerns of small island States, whether in regard to climate change, the ocean or poverty, are real, and we will resolve them only at the global level. These challenges make us extremely vulnerable. As small countries, we do not have an army or nuclear weapons. The world community may mock us, look down on us and not consider us as strategic partners, but one thing is certain: our development concerns are also those of humankind. Shying away from the challenges hindering our development also means ignoring humankind's hope.

After all, the global community as a whole stands together if it collaborates for the well-being of the vulnerable and the most disadvantaged. Such efforts will ensure peace, security and prosperity in the world. The United Nations Charter is our moral compass — a compass that, among other things, reminds us that we must save future generations from the scourge of war, reaffirm our faith in fundamental human rights, and promote social progress and better standards of life in a freer world. Let us all work together to realize the hope embodied in the United Nations Charter.

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

Mr. Charlot Salwai Tabimasmās, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, and inviting her to address the Assembly.

Sheikh Hasina (Bangladesh) (*spoke in Bangla; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I would like to congratulate Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his election as the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. I take this opportunity to express my appreciation to Ms. Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garcés for her strong leadership over the past year. I extend my heartfelt thanks to Secretary-General António Guterres for his dynamic leadership.

As I stand here at this august podium, I recall the architect of Bangladesh, the father of our nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. In 1974, before the General Assembly, he said,

“In a world that is marked by strife and human misery, the United Nations remains the focus of man's hope for the future. Despite the many difficulties and obstacles placed in its way, the United Nations, during the more than quarter-century of its existence, has significantly contributed to human progress in the political, economic, social and cultural fields.” (*A/PV.2243, para. 21*)

In fact, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman envisaged a leading role for the United Nations in pursuing development, peace and justice.

In Bangladesh, we are now preparing to celebrate the centenary of the birth of this great leader, beginning in March 2020. Reflecting on his vision and aspirations, we wish to bring this celebration to the United Nations in the next year.

The President's call to galvanize multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion could not have been more relevant. As the world's principal multilateral body, the General Assembly is perfectly suited to steer the actions that would promote international cooperation to achieve

development, peace and security. The emphasis given to the specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion, are critically important for our civilization.

Our shared aspirations and commitment to realizing the SDGs are reflected in the election manifesto of the Bangladesh Awami League, with which we earned the confidence of the people to grant us our third consecutive term in office. Our 21-point political commitment is dedicated to the well-being of people.

Bangladesh has often been cited as a development miracle. Despite turbulence in the rules-based international order and fears of a gradual economic slowdown, Bangladesh has continued to prosper over the past 10 years. According to the Spectator Index 2019, Bangladesh recorded the highest economic growth of 26 listed countries in the past 10 years, with the 188 per cent expansion of its gross domestic product (GDP) at current prices. Our GDP has grown from \$102 billion in 2009 to \$302 billion this year.

We continue to pursue a pragmatic programme for achieving rapid economic and social development. Poverty eradication, sustainable growth, the protection of the environment and human-resources development are some of the key features of our development strategy. Over the past 10 years, we have adopted progressive and timely policies and taken measures that have resulted in impressive development. Our exports grew threefold for the period from 2005 to 2006, reaching \$37 billion in 2017-18. Per capita income grew by a factor of three and a half. Our GDP growth has now reached 8.13 per cent. From 2005 to 2006 and from 2018 to 2019, our investment rose from 26 per cent to 31.5 per cent of GDP. Private-sector investment increased by a factor of five to \$70.8 billion. The foreign exchange reserve grew by a factor of nine to \$33 billion.

Poverty and inequality are the two major obstacles that stand in the way of development. Bangladesh has achieved one of the fastest poverty-reduction rates in the world, with the poverty rate dropping from 41.5 per cent in 2006 to 21.4 per cent in 2018, and with extreme poverty decreasing from 24 per cent to 11.3 per cent for the same period. Extensive rural development, embedded in the concept of “my village, my town” and home-grown and pro-poor village projects like the Ashrayan and Amar Bari Amar Khamar projects have contributed to our inclusive development.

Bangladesh was ranked thirty-fourth in the World Economic Forum’s *Inclusive Development Index 2018*, significantly surpassing other South Asian countries in this ranking.

A key development strategy in Bangladesh has been addressing inequality through social security, decent work and financial inclusion. The current safety-net system provides special consideration for vulnerable groups. Support comes in the form of cash, food, assets, employment wages, training, savings and community support. These programmes are expanding, currently serve almost a quarter of the population and account for 2.58 per cent of our GDP.

Having achieved the milestones of gender parity and 100 per cent enrolment, we are now focusing on enhancing the quality of education, with an emphasis on e-learning and qualified teachers. Our school drop-out rate has decreased from 50 per cent to 18 per cent. In 2010, we initiated a free book-distribution programme for all students up to tenth grade. To date, 2.96 billion textbooks have been distributed free of cost, of which approximately 352.2 million books were distributed in 2019 alone, 2.3 million students in primary and higher levels of education were awarded scholarships, and 12.3 million mothers are receiving stipends by mobile phone.

We have created an extensive network of 18,000 community clinics and union health centres to provide the entire population with health-care coverage. The centres provide 30 different types of medicine and primary health-care services free of cost to people living in rural areas, 80 per cent of whom are women and children. The number of cases of maternal, infant and child mortality, malnutrition, stunting and low weight continue to decline thanks to these measures. We have put special emphasis on the inclusion of persons with autism, disabilities and special needs in our development journey. Currently, 1.645 million people with such disabilities and needs are receiving Government allowances.

We are investing in human capital to create an inclusive society through equal access to technology. Countrywide, 5,800 digital centres are bringing 600 e-public services to people’s doorsteps. The number of Internet users has crossed the threshold of 90 million people, and teledensity has surpassed 93 per cent. The Bangabandhu Satellite-1, which we launched last year, has facilitated the expansion of broadcast-based

services in remote areas and improved communications for development.

The blue economy is our new frontier for opportunities. We have developed a policy and a plan of action to tap our marine resources in the Bay of Bengal. We are contributing to the United Nations norm-setting exercises on protecting marine biological diversity in areas within and beyond national jurisdiction.

We are building our first-ever nuclear-power plant in Rooppur, based on the principle of the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Some 93 per cent of our population is covered by the electricity grid. Bangladesh is now the second-largest user of solar-powered household systems in the world. Bangladesh's commitment to the peaceful use of nuclear energy is enhanced by its consistent position against nuclear armament. We recently ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

The global stand for taking climate action fostered by the Climate Action Summit, concluded just days ago, will translate into genuine impetus for the implementation of the Paris Agreement in the broader context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As a partner country in the Coalition for Climate Resilient Investment and the Global Commission on Adaptation, Bangladesh has advocated addressing the special challenges and vulnerabilities of countries such as our own and adopted transformative and innovative climate-resilient technology and crops to reduce disaster risks.

Our long-term plan for adaptation and resilience is anchored in our Delta Plan 2100, a comprehensive and long-term technoeconomic plan for the Bangladesh Delta. The Plan focuses on food security, water safety, climate change, environment sustainability, disaster management and sustained economic growth. Following the recent Dhaka meeting of the Global Commission on Adaptation, we are working on setting up a global centre for adaptation in Dhaka.

As the second largest troop- and police-contributing country, Bangladesh continues to respond to the call for troops to participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations. We support the Secretary-General's initiatives to make United Nations peace operations fit for the future. In responding to his call for the implementation of the Action for Peacekeeping agenda, we have come on board as a champion country. We have also been playing an important role in the evolution of the sustaining-peace conceptual framework.

We continue to promote the idea of the culture of peace, which has withstood the test of time and become a dominant theme at the United Nations. Earlier this month, in this Hall, we celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. Our strong actions against extremism, terrorism, drug trafficking and corruption have restored peace in our society and among its people. We shall persist in our actions.

Bangladesh promotes safe, orderly and regular migration. Following the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, we have spearheaded the development of modalities for its implementation. At the national level, we are mainstreaming migration into national development strategies. Irregular migration and human trafficking are global menaces rooted in complex nets of syndicates and criminal networks. In order to prevent and suppress human trafficking nationally and foster international cooperation in tackling human trafficking, we recently acceded to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, also known as the Palermo Protocol.

The value of the role of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security is enormous. During the 1971 war of liberation, 3 million innocent people were killed in a genocide orchestrated by the Pakistani occupation forces and their local collaborators. Some 200,000 women were violated. Our painful experiences have emboldened us to continue to speak out for the oppressed. We will stand firm in our support for our Palestinian brothers and sisters until their just and rightful struggle comes to fruition.

As the Rohingya crisis remains unresolved, I am unfortunately compelled to raise the issue in the Assembly again. We continue to host 1.1 million Rohingya who were forced to leave Myanmar owing to atrocities committed against them. The crisis is now entering its third year. Yet to date not a single member of the Rohingya people has been able to return to Myanmar due to the absence of safety, security and freedom of movement and an overall environment that is not conducive to the return of the Rohingya to the Rakhine state of Myanmar. I urge the international community to understand that the situation is untenable. The crisis is now going beyond the camps; indeed, despite all our efforts to contain it, the crisis is now becoming a regional threat. Moreover, increasing congestion and

environmental degradation is challenging the health and security of people in the host area.

We are bearing the burden of a crisis that is of Myanmar's own making. It is an issue solely between Myanmar and its own people, the Rohingya. They themselves have to resolve it. The voluntary return of the Rohingya to their homes in Rakhine state in safety, security and dignity is the only possible solution to the crisis. We will continue our engagement with Myanmar to ensure the repatriation of the Rohingya.

In my address to the seventy-second General Assembly, I presented a five-point proposal to resolve the crisis, which included the full implementation of the recommendations of the Kofi Annan Foundation Advisory Commission report and the establishment of civilian-monitored safe zones in Rakhine state (see A/72/PV.14). Today I would like to reiterate some of the actions I proposed.

First, Myanmar must manifest clear political will that is supported by concrete actions for the sustainable return and reintegration of the Rohingya to Myanmar.

Secondly, Myanmar must build trust among the Rohingya by abrogating and ending discriminatory laws and practices and granting the Rohingya representatives go-and-see visits to northern Rakhine.

Thirdly, Myanmar must guarantee the security and safety of the Rohingya by deploying civilian monitors from the international community in Rakhine state.

Fourthly, the international community must ensure that the root causes of the Rohingya problem are addressed and that the human rights violations and other atrocity crimes committed against the Rohingya are held to account.

We appreciate the Secretary-General's initiatives aimed at reform, particularly those of the United Nations development system. We have high expectations that the new generation of United Nations country teams and the reinvigorated resident coordinator system will be able deliver results that are better aligned with national priorities and more accountable to host countries. We will continue to lend our support to the bold and constructive actions of the Secretary-General to make the Organization fit for purpose and strengthen people's trust in it. As an expression of our support for the reforms and to ensure the effective functionality of the new resident coordinator system, we will make a financial contribution to the special purpose trust fund.

For us, multilateralism remains a panacea for resolving the problems of the world and creating global goods. The United Nations is the symbol of hope for peace, stability and prosperity, as envisioned by the father of our nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in his address to the General Assembly in 1974. Bangladesh will continue to support the United Nations as a strong multilateral body that is fully equipped to deal with the tasks and responsibilities assigned to it under the Charter of the United Nations. With the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations approaching next year, let us call for collective action to build a stronger United Nations so that our civilizations may deal with emerging challenges throughout the next century. May Bangladesh live forever.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for the statement she has just made.

Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Browne (Antigua and Barbuda): It will surprise no one that climate change and its catastrophic consequences are foremost in my mind. As the leader of a small island State, which, two years later, is still suffering the damaging consequences of Hurricane Irma, we know and live the terrible reality of climate change. Those who continue to deny its existence cannot gainsay the massive destruction to property and loss of life that so glaringly stare them in

the face year after year. No one can repudiate the awful scenes flashed globally across television screens and through social media of the decimation of the Abaco islands and Grand Bahama in the Bahamas island chain. The lament of the people of the Bahamas, as that entire nation suffered in hopelessness, should echo in the ears of all who feel any compassion for their fellow human beings.

The consequences of climate change have become our annual Hiroshima. The effects are as horrific as any battleground and as devastating and long-lasting as the detonation of an atomic bomb. But, in this war that we did not start, that we do not wage and that we do not want, the peoples of small island States have no means to defend themselves and little means to recover. We are simply the hapless victims of those Governments whose destructive climate policies are killing small island States, with brutal storm after brutal storm, each more destructive than the last.

The economies of Caribbean small island States are rooted in tourism and agriculture, which are sectors that are very dependent on stable climate conditions. Already, these activities are being persistently disrupted, causing our countries to lose revenue and incur large recurring debt to finance both reconstruction and resilience-building. With few exceptions, pledges of assistance, when they have been made, are inadequate and slow to be delivered, if they are delivered at all.

Despite all the targets set by climate-change conferences to limit global warming to 1.5°C over pre-industrial levels, every nation on this earth, and all the people within them, should understand that, even if that small level of ambition is achieved, these climate effects will continue for at least a thousand years. That is correct: a thousand years. The Assembly should take urgent and special note of the special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on the impacts of global warming, entitled *Global Warming of 1.5°C*, and the recent *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*.

In small island States, we have come to the painful conclusion that 30 or more generations of our people will, year after year, suffer from conditions already created by the harmful greenhouse-gas emissions of a handful of countries. We also know that, if this profligate behaviour does not stop, many of our island States will not last another thousand years. We also fear that the necessary action to halt greenhouse-gas

emissions might only come when a few countries and coastal communities are entirely washed away and eliminated from the face of the global map. Even then, after a ritual wringing of hands and pledges to act to stop the obliteration of small island States, business may well continue as usual.

That is the sad reality. And it is not, of course, a prospect that the Governments and peoples of small States will contemplate for a second, which is why this is pre-eminently a time to speak the truth — the whole truth — frankly and boldly in this Assembly, without fear or favour. The very existence of our small island States and our civilization are imperilled. However, we will not sit idly by in silence. Action is imperative, and we certainly will act now.

This year, we mark the thirtieth anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, the activities of a handful of nations are making a mockery of the Convention, which asserts that improving the living conditions of children in every community is crucial, especially in developing countries. The prospects for the world's children are impaired, and they are being robbed of a bright and prosperous future. That is correct — we are robbing our youth of a bright and prosperous future. I congratulate Ms. Greta Thunberg and all the children she motivated globally, including those in my own country. In fact, I congratulate all those who acted in solidarity on 20 September to warn our Governments to take bold action against climate change. I remind the Assembly that young people are watching and that Governments choosing to turn a deaf ear to them will surely pay a price.

The protection of fossil-fuel economic interests at the expense of climate justice is unfair, unjust and unconscionable. If Governments have lost their moral compass in a world where multilateralism and common interests are being discarded, we must hope that Governments realize nonetheless that global cooperation is still required to preserve national interests. We should remind ourselves of the wisdom of the poet John Donne's *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions, and severall steps in my Sicknes*: "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main."

Whether they like it or not, refugees from the countries that are decimated by hurricanes will wash up on their shores. It is inescapable. The internally

displaced persons forced to leave their homes due to hurricanes in 2017, and also in 2019, were cared for mostly within their own national boundaries. But there were others who had to seek refuge elsewhere — refuge that was not provided within a legal and predictable framework but was offered by other nations in a spirit of generosity and compassion. This is not an acceptable basis for going forward. With the best will in the world, generosity is constrained by capacity, and compassion is tempered by reality.

This Assembly should recognize that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which operates under the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, contemplates refugees only in the context of conflict and/or political upheaval. However, the number of refugees already created by climate change and the potential for greater numbers in future demand that the legal recognition of a refugee includes persons forced to seek refuge outside of their national borders. In this regard, my Government proposes that Member States agree at this Assembly that the matter of climate refugees be taken up in all the appropriate committees to secure an agreed definition of the term “climate refugee”, which could be adopted in international law where it does not now exist.

My Government is perfectly aware that this proposal will be resisted by those Governments that deny climate change and are fearful of acknowledging its consequences. Nonetheless, we will put it forward, seeking support from countries that are similarly threatened and from States that recognize the potential threats. We will act to protect lives and safeguard order. But if this matter is left unaddressed by the United Nations, then it will certainly carry the indelible stain of guilt for the catastrophe that will befall us because we failed to act to establish a global framework to manage cross-border climate refugees.

In this Hall, in the presence of high representatives of the world’s peoples, I invoke the words of United States President Franklin Delano Roosevelt who said, at a time of crisis, in 1933:

“In the field of world policy, I would dedicate this nation to the policy of the good neighbour, the neighbour who resolutely respects himself and, because he does so, respects the rights of others, the neighbour who respects his obligations and respects the sanctity of his agreements in and with a world of neighbours.”

There is only one common homeland and one human race. There is no Planet B, or any viable alternative planet on which to live. The worst and immediate victims of climate change are small island States, where a history of human exploitation and neglect has left significant numbers of our population poor and without resources to build climate-resilient infrastructure and homes. That is our inheritance but, eventually, climate change will make victims of people who live in the large land masses too, and not only their coastal areas but their hinterlands as well. That process has started already, on every continent and across every border. The only solution to the harmful effects of climate change is to stop the greenhouse-gas emissions. There is no other choice. And that is what the heavy users of fossil fuels must do. They must lead by example to achieve a carbon-neutral world.

President Roosevelt’s summons to every nation to be a good neighbour is more relevant now than it was 86 years ago. In Antigua and Barbuda, we are playing our part. My Government has banned the importation of single-use plastics and is actively transforming our marine environment into a plastic-free one. We are also actively making the transition into alternate energy with intended nationally determined contributions that will make our country carbon neutral by 2040.

Earlier this year, we were pleased to host an international concert, the Play it Out concert, in collaboration with the Government of Norway and the former President of the General Assembly, Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, to heighten global awareness of the harmful effects of plastics on our oceans. Antigua and Barbuda is standing up to be counted among those countries that are doing — and will continue to do — all in their power to curb pollution in all its aspects.

There is a notion abroad that developing countries, especially small ones, operate on a premise that rich and powerful nations are to be blamed for their problems of underdevelopment and lack of capacity to produce and compete, and that, consequently, we the developing countries live in a state of paralysis, waiting for aid. That notion is extremely flawed; it is very different from reality. Our small nations are not beggars; we are not mendicants. But, where there is injustice, we must fight for justice. Where there is inequity, we must fight for equity. Whereas most countries have access to cheap funding on the capital markets, needy small island States have had to borrow at commercial rates to fund their development. Where is the justice in that? That is

why we have to fight for change. That is why we have to fight for equity. What we want is access to financing on fair and concessionary terms, commensurate with our size and vulnerabilities. That is not too much to ask.

We have a proud history of seizing the reins of our independence and sovereignty against all odds. We have done so to develop our countries rapidly after centuries of colonial or hegemonistic exploitation. But we know that our underdevelopment and financial vulnerability were created by centuries of exploitation in slavery and bonded labour for which no compensation was paid. That is why Caribbean countries, in all sectors driven by non-governmental organizations, have urged the relevant European Governments to repair the debilitating socioeconomic conditions, the destruction of resources and the dehumanization and genocide of Caribbean people resulting from the slave trade, slavery and the ravages of colonialism. That is why I take the opportunity of the Assembly to do so again.

The relevant European nations should provide reparations, not only because, at last, it would compensate for their development on the backs of our people, but because it is the morally correct thing to do to restore equity and justice. And we should be clear: reparation is not aid and it is not a gift. It is compensation to correct the injustices of the past and restore equity. That is what we want. We want equity. Similarly, the provision of finance to support mitigation, adaptation and resilience in small States, such as Antigua and Barbuda, is not aid. It is compensation for the damage done to our countries, for the reversals in our economic gains and for the additional money we must spend to counter the further injurious effects of climate change, in which we play little part.

My country and others in the Caribbean are intent on promoting economic growth, social development and resilience by internal action. We will do so even as we expect developed countries to meet their obligations. We do not depend on them exclusively. But it seems that every time we achieve a high level of competitiveness with rich regions of the world, they impose arbitrary measures to undermine and shackle us. Indeed, in the financial services sector, anti-competitive actions have been forced on us by the European Union in the area of taxation, despite the fact that our countries have been compliant with standards set by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Further, despite our vulnerabilities as remote islands, confronted with high interest and insurance costs, unsustainable

debt and frequent disasters arising from climate change, we are disqualified from access to concessional financing based on a single criterion — per capita income. That cannot be fair. That cannot be just.

Today, we reiterate our call for the removal of the per capita income criterion, which precludes vulnerable small island States from accessing much-needed concessional funding. In addition, climate funding to adapt, mitigate and build resilience should not be subject to any conditionality, but be based exclusively on vulnerability and need. That is what is equitable.

Another injustice the Caribbean is confronting is the phenomenon of the withdrawal of correspondent banking relations — in essence, the financial abandonment of our region by banks in the United States and some parts of Europe. That is based primarily on profit motives and the false allegations that our countries are major money-launderers and tax havens, which is simply not so. Both the Financial Action Task Force and the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development have assessed and found most of our countries to be fully compliant with rigorous international standards. Yet the process of withdrawing correspondent banking relations continues unabated, thereby threatening to exclude Caribbean countries from the international payment system and de-banking our nations, with the potential to plunge all of them into poverty. Again, that is an inequitable approach. Let me make the point here that correspondent banking is a public global good and a fundamental human right that must be available to all countries and regions.

Unless that process is stopped and reversed, it is not only Caribbean countries that will suffer, but so too will the developed countries in which the global banks are located. For the Caribbean's exclusion from the world's trading system and the resultant economic collapse will create poverty, unemployment, crime, including drug trafficking, underground money-laundering and refugees — all of which will challenge the security of wealthy neighbouring States in this hemisphere. If those countries will not act in our interest, they certainly should act in their own interests. The fire in our house, which we did not start, will inevitably spread to theirs. The time to extinguish it is now.

Our small island States could be forgiven for their belief that the cards are being deliberately stacked against them. No evidence is available to contend otherwise. In

this connection, my Government is obliged once again to draw to the attention of the Assembly the fact that 15 years ago my country won an arbitration against the United States, the most powerful country in the world, at the World Trade Organization (WTO). The matter was appealed twice, and twice the arbitral award was given in Antigua and Barbuda's favour. The final award was made 12 years ago, imagine that — 12 years ago.

The World Trade Organization gave my country the right to sell United States copyright material on an annual basis, and it did so in order to help us recover the full costs of our trade losses. However, we decided not to do so but to negotiate with the United States Government, since the former option would have deprived United States copyright holders of deserved income from their intellectual property, through no fault of their own. We thought that we were doing the sensible thing. But advantage has been taken of our forbearance and our magnanimity. Despite the ruling of the WTO, my small country has not been able to bring the representatives of the United States to the table to settle this arbitration award. This is a typical example of might is right, and of "to whom much is given, much is expected". The arbitral award due to us has been ignored, while the perennial trade surplus that the United States enjoys with my little country has exceeded \$3.53 billion during the past 12 years. This, too, is unfair, it is unjust and it is unconscionable. How many times do we have to come here to the United Nations and ask the United States to settle? We want justice.

Once again, we urge the United States to respect the decision of the WTO and settle its obligations as soon as possible. Twelve years is too long. Let me make it abundantly clear that our country cannot forgo legally awarded recompense for the trade losses we have suffered as a result of United States action — and we will not. We are not afraid of its might. We are standing on principle. In fact, let me make it clear that we, too, have a duty of care to our people. So, just as how it is protecting its interests, we must also protect our national interests. The last time I checked, we live in a democratic world, so those who want to take punitive action against us for speaking out for what is right can do so. But we will stand in any forum and defend the interests of Antigua and Barbuda.

My Government is deeply concerned about the trade contention between the United States and the People's Republic of China. Trade wars invariably push up the cost of living for peoples across the world,

especially the poor and vulnerable, and, ultimately, they cause the entire global economy to suffer. There are no winners in this. We are already in that spiral. Confrontation instead of dialogue and cooperation is exacerbating risks, eroding confidence and weakening the prospects of global economic growth. There will be no winners if this continues, only losers. Unfortunately, among the hardest hit will be small island developing States, with their open and vulnerable economies. So there we go again, suffering from the injustices of the mighty. The international system, which has never been perfect, is now being dangerously weakened. A handful of powerful nations are seeking to violate international norms and the rule of law to advance narrow political agendas — concerned more with getting rid of Governments that they dislike than with advancing human rights, under whose guise they seek cover. We are not stupid; we know exactly what they are doing, and we are watching them.

Only this week, 16 countries, a few of them perhaps coerced into participation, maybe by threats or promises, invoked the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance as a weapon against the sovereign nation of Venezuela. The Treaty is a 72-year-old anachronism that encourages the use of force against a sovereign State, contrary to international law and not within the concept of the legitimate defence set out in Article 51 of our United Nations Charter. Without producing a shred of evidence to support their allegations, those 16 nations have arbitrarily decided to impose sanctions against Venezuela, with the sole intention of regime change. They are doing so against all international standards. We all know that United Nations standards call for non-interference and non-intervention in the affairs of other States. In fact, significantly, we should note that the International Contact Group on Venezuela, at a meeting on the same day, reaffirmed that the only sustainable solution to the Venezuelan crisis was a political, peaceful and democratic one, excluding the use of force and through credible and transparent presidential elections. Now that position is sensible and in keeping with international law.

My Government protests the arrogance inherent in the belief of 16 countries that they have the right to decide for the rest of the world. How can they believe that they can ignore the United Nations, be contemptuous of the Security Council and act to harm a country on a spurious charge of drug trafficking, money laundering and organized crime? That action

follows the same formula that has destabilized Cuba, robbing that country of the possibility of fulfilling its considerable potential to contribute fully to global advancement, peace and security. Why can we not live in peace and harmony? Why can we not resolve our conflicts through diplomacy and dialogue? My Government once again calls on the United States to lift the debilitating sanctions against Cuba and those against Venezuela. It is killing innocent people.

We are also troubled by events in the Middle East and the overall heightening of tensions in the world, in which multilateral solutions are being discarded in favour of unilateral action, and even the contemplation of war. The world is not the O.K. Corral, and a gunfight should not decide who wins and who loses. My Government calls on all Governments to return to the rules-based system of international relations, which was meticulously established to settle disputes and resolve conflicts. The rules are there to protect all of us. A world of prosperity will not be sustained without global cooperation, global peace and global justice.

In this context, I recall the words of Nelson Mandela, who knew much about working with the enemy — real, perceived or created. He said: “If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner”.

The world needs partners, not enemies. Our planet and all our peoples depend on it.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Keith Rowley, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

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

Mr. Keith Rowley, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Keith Rowley, Prime

Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Rowley (Trinidad and Tobago): It is indeed a distinct honour to address, for the first time, the General Assembly, which is entrusted with the responsibility of charting the way forward on the wide array of issues that impact our collective development. On behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, I extend sincere congratulations to Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. We look forward to the excellence that he will demonstrate and thank him for the steady hand of leadership he brings to that high office. Allow me also to extend our gratitude to his predecessor, Her Excellency María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés of Ecuador, who served with great distinction as the first female from the Latin American and Caribbean region to be elected President of the General Assembly.

As we approach the seventy-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations, a challenging road lies ahead unless we collectively do what is necessary to alter the current trajectory of global events. We continue to note with alarm the number of persons living in poverty, the innumerable threats posed by the effects of unmitigated climate change and the continued exclusion of the most vulnerable in our societies with respect to access to education, social protection and health care. Migration, violent extremism, the scourge of terrorism, the threat of violent conflict and the spread of communicable diseases — such as the recent resurgence of Ebola and measles — are pressing challenges that transcend the borders of individual countries.

We have witnessed extreme flooding, droughts, coral bleaching, rising sea levels, heatwaves and devastating hurricanes with increasing strength and frequency in many parts of the world. In that regard, it was with profound sadness that we witnessed, just a few weeks ago, the horrific destruction of our Caribbean Community (CARICOM) neighbour by Hurricane Dorian, which sat on the small islands of the Bahamas for almost 30 hours. I join with other speakers in offering our deepest condolences to the Government and the people of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas on the loss of life and extensive destruction of property and livelihoods as a result of that unprecedented weather event. Trinidad and Tobago stands in solidarity

with and strong support of our brothers and sisters in the Bahamas.

As a family of nations, the challenges we face require us to place emphasis on multilateral approaches rather than unilateral ones. We should be strengthening our partnerships through mutual respect and cooperation. That approach would allow us to regain some ground in reversing the current patterns of growing inequality and insecurity and transform current circumstances for the benefit of all humankind. It is against that backdrop that I welcome the opportunity to share the perspectives of Trinidad and Tobago on the appropriately selected theme of this general debate, namely “Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion”.

In Trinidad and Tobago, our citizens have been central to our development since 1956 and, in fact, our people remain our greatest assets. We must create a society in which all basic needs are met and each individual is valued and given the opportunity to participate and contribute. That means that we must ensure food security and eradicate poverty, inequality, discrimination and disease, and address the lack of access to health care as well as substandard and inhumane living conditions. We must build a society that shares the principles and cultural norms of trust, goodwill, honesty, respect, tolerance, integrity, civic pride, social justice and community spirit. Accordingly, Trinidad and Tobago has adopted an integrated national poverty-reduction strategy that is collaborative, sustainable and meaningful for all stakeholders involved.

The consolidation of our economic stability and capacity to remain effectively integrated into the global financial and trade architecture remains a priority for my Government as we continue the quest for measures to strengthen our fiscal resilience through diversification. Our national development ambitions should be buttressed by an enabling international economic environment through international trade, development cooperation, business activity and finance.

We are well aware that financial services play an important role as contributors to economic growth and international trade and investment. It is in that context that we express grave concern regarding the unilateral insertion of some CARICOM member States, including Trinidad and Tobago, on the list of non-cooperative tax jurisdictions by a number of our international partners. The label of non-cooperative tax jurisdiction has the

potential to inflict irreparable damage to the reputations and economies of small island developing States such as ours. Trinidad and Tobago therefore calls upon its international partners to adopt a more collaborative, just and fair approach in addressing that issue.

Trinidad and Tobago also remains deeply concerned about the progressive decline in correspondent banking services by international banks. That is particularly problematic for CARICOM member States, as it threatens our financial stability, impedes our efforts to alleviate poverty and limits our achievements with respect to socioeconomic growth and development. Further, the withdrawal of correspondent banking services undermines the region’s efforts to consolidate a global partnership that will achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Trinidad and Tobago joins with other CARICOM member States in calling for international banks to engage collaboratively with affected member States to restore mutually acceptable financial relationships.

We welcome the observation by Secretary-General António Guterres at the CARICOM Conference of Heads of Government in July that eligibility for official development assistance and other forms of concessional financing should include vulnerability criteria. Trinidad and Tobago therefore takes this opportunity to reiterate its call for the international community and international financial and development institutions to consider the formulation of new, multidimensional parameters in determining access to concessional financing. We continue to endorse the view that the United Nations development system should be driven by a multidimensional approach to development assistance, which is more appropriately suited to each country’s specific needs and national priorities.

We remain troubled at the fact that, even as we approach the third decade of the twenty-first century, women, girls and persons with disabilities in many parts of the world are unable to enjoy basic human rights and freedoms. In our effort to combat that challenge, Trinidad and Tobago reaffirms its commitment to delivering improved health care, the continued enhancement of the educational system and increased accessibility and support to persons with disabilities. Women and girls must also be equal partners in our collaborative efforts to build peaceful and sustainable societies and promote and protect human rights. The promotion of gender equity and equality is essential in that regard. It is equally important to consolidate an

integrated social protection system that improves living conditions and creates opportunities for women and girls so that they can achieve their full potential.

We have no doubt that climate change represents a very real threat that jeopardizes our pursuit of sustainable development. In the circumstances, my Government is moving towards the deployment of a multi-pronged approach to adapt to and mitigate the negative impacts of climate change. Trinidad and Tobago recognizes that climate change adversely affects all countries, regardless of how much they contribute to global emissions. In that respect, I wish to reiterate my Government's unwavering commitment to addressing the adverse impacts associated with climate change through a combination of collaborative approaches, improved partnerships and networking with stakeholders in order to meet our international obligations, in line with our national laws, policies and priorities.

For us in Trinidad and Tobago, the marine environment and its resources remain critically important to the livelihoods of our people, our cultural and social identity and our sustainable development ambitions. Trinidad and Tobago therefore remains hopeful that the adoption of an international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdictions, under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, may become a reality in the not-too-distant future. We maintain that that agreement would establish a platform for both the achievement of sustainable development and the protection of the common heritage of humankind for this and future generations.

The foreign policy of Trinidad and Tobago is guided by the tenets of respect for the sovereignty and sovereign equality of all States, non-interference and non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States and respect for and adherence to international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. As a small island developing State, we remain fervent in our conviction that despite existing in a world where the well-established principles of multilateralism are under threat, our right to be heard ought not to be diminished or dismissed.

For us in the Caribbean region, our sustainable growth and development hinge on the maintenance of peace and security. In that context, I wish to turn to

the situation facing our closest neighbour, Venezuela, which is located only seven miles off the coast of Trinidad. Earlier this year, Venezuela became the epicentre of a global stand-off that saw the threat of the use of force by external forces against the country. As that worrisome development continued to escalate, Trinidad and Tobago joined with fellow CARICOM member States to push for an urgent de-escalation of tensions and build a platform for dialogue and negotiations, with a view to achieving a peaceful resolution of the situation. Arising out of CARICOM's non-interventionist stance and diplomacy of peace, the Prime Ministers of Barbados and Saint Kitts and Nevis and myself, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, met with Secretary-General Guterres, the Permanent Representatives of several influential Member States and other stakeholders — as mandated by CARICOM — to underscore our concerns about the volatility of the Venezuelan situation, the safety of the citizens of Venezuela and the stability of our region.

We remain resolute in our conviction that for our region to remain a zone of peace, dialogue is critical and indispensable. Trinidad and Tobago therefore remains in full support of the Montevideo Mechanism and any other suitable initiatives that seek to bring about a peaceful resolution through meaningful and constructive dialogue. In that regard, I wish to make special mention of the Norwegian Government and applaud its efforts so far in bringing both sides to the negotiating table, most recently in Barbados. We recognize that in order to achieve meaningful progress, the negotiation process requires time and patience, and all parties must engage in good faith. We therefore urge external forces not to further engage in unilateral intrusions, which could potentially undermine the negotiations and ultimately cause further hardship for the Venezuelan people. The objective of the international community should be to ensure that both parties are allowed to arrive at conditions of progress in Venezuela, with the ultimate aim of achieving political stability, peace and economic well-being. The initiatives of the Norwegian Government, CARICOM and the Montevideo Mechanism are worthy of support to that end. We are saddened by the recent withdrawal of one party from that sane and sober initiative, but we trust that that development will be temporary, because only Venezuelans can take proper ownership of their situation, and we in the Organization can only help them along the path to security and economic stability.

For us in Trinidad and Tobago, our sustainable development would be difficult to attain without successfully managing irregular migration. Trinidad and Tobago has not been unaffected by the influx of migrants from Venezuela. To manage that situation, my Government implemented a migrant registration framework system for both documented and undocumented persons who have entered our country. The aim of the framework is to safeguard the human rights and humanitarian needs of Venezuelan nationals within our borders, while also safeguarding national interests such as national security. Those registered have been granted approval to work for one year, in the first instance. It should be noted that the registration process has afforded those persons the opportunity to be self-funded through employment during their stay in Trinidad and Tobago.

As a responsible member of the family of nations, the Government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago recognize our duty to assist our neighbours in their time of distress. We are undertaking to do that for just over 16,000 of our neighbours from Venezuela, despite our small size and very limited resources. Experience has shown that there are both opportunities and challenges with respect to migration. Our policy is rooted in the human attributes of respect and dignity and ensuring that empathy shines through as a beacon to the destitute.

Those challenges are magnified for countries like Trinidad and Tobago, with limited resources and other capacity constraints. We note with concern that criminal activity has moved from random acts of criminality to criminal networks, the activities of which are being carried out in an organized, highly sophisticated and technological global environment. It is Trinidad and Tobago's experience and that of the Caribbean Community as a whole that these compounded challenges represent a threat to our socioeconomic well-being, the rule of law and our peace and security.

While it is important to tackle violent extremism from a security perspective, the threat and effect of the phenomenon should be neither overlooked nor dismissed. The global threat of young people being lured by extremist groups remains a major concern. In that regard, Trinidad and Tobago reaffirms its commitment to joining the international community in building an alliance for a strategic, collective security architecture that addresses the conditions that give rise to violent extremism. That framework ideally ought to be buttressed by a robust international legal system

that allows all people to live freely and in dignity, with equal protection before the law and without fear of persecution or xenophobia.

History has taught us that the maintenance of international peace and security cannot be separated from sustainable development. In that regard, we maintain that the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba, a Caribbean nation, which has been in place for almost six decades, undermines the country's potential to achieve sustainable development and economic growth. Trinidad and Tobago further maintains that the imposition of unilateral coercive measures against Cuba under the Helms-Burton Act is inconsistent with international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Trinidad and Tobago thus reiterates its call for the unconditional lifting of the economic, commercial and financial embargo on Cuba.

Trinidad and Tobago supports the mandate of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which is to help put an end to impunity for perpetrators of the most heinous crimes of concern to the international community, as well as to contribute to the prevention of such crimes. As a country that advocated for the establishment of the ICC through the pioneering work of the late Arthur N. R. Robinson, former President and Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, we remain resolute in our commitment to support the mandate of the Court. Despite its detractors and other challenges, the ICC continues to be a ray of hope for all victims who are seeking justice for crimes falling under its jurisdiction. For that reason, we continue to encourage those countries that have not yet submitted to the jurisdiction of the Court to do so, sooner rather than later, so that it can aptly and fully fulfil its mandate as a universal court.

Trinidad and Tobago maintains that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons constitutes a crime against humanity and a violation of international law, including international humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations. Lamentably, we have witnessed in recent times the elimination of restraints on nuclear weapons at both the bilateral and the multilateral levels. Trinidad and Tobago, as part of the Caribbean Community, participated in the 2017 United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, and welcomed the adoption of the historic Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. In that regard, I am proud to announce that yesterday,

26 September, Trinidad and Tobago signed and deposited its instrument of ratification for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

The reform of the Security Council continues to be an area in which CARICOM remains actively engaged in advocacy for early and comprehensive reform. We look forward to the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform at the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, building on the work done at the seventy-third session. We therefore reiterate our call for all Member States to work collaboratively in the spirit of compromise to reform the Security Council in a manner that would effectively address its functioning and credibility, making it more relevant to the United Nations and better equipped to fulfil its mandate in today's context.

As CARICOM, one of our positions for the reform of the Security Council has been to advocate for the guaranteed representation and inclusion of small island developing States through a dedicated seat to be rotated among SIDS across all regions. While we remain hopeful that such a proposal will eventually find favour among Member States, at this moment it is with great pride that we congratulate CARICOM nation Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on becoming, earlier this year, the smallest nation ever to secure a seat on the Council. This historic achievement has convincingly demonstrated that our small islands remain indomitable as we continue to make noteworthy contributions in all spheres. At this juncture, I would like to assure the General Assembly of Trinidad and Tobago's continued dedication to the maintenance of international peace and security, as evidenced in our candidature for membership in the Council for the period 2027-2028, for what could be the second time in our nation's history.

As the United Nations stands on the threshold of celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary, Trinidad and Tobago is pleased to recommit itself to the purposes and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. As States Members of the United Nations, we need to recalibrate our efforts towards ensuring that our Organization is effective, relevant and fit for purpose and that no one is left behind. I am confident that we possess the inherent desire, the will and the impetus to achieve those goals.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the

Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Keith Rowley, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, the Public Service, National Security, Legal Affairs and Grenadines Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, the Public Service, National Security, Legal Affairs and Grenadines Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, the Public Service, National Security, Legal Affairs and Grenadines Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, the Public Service, National Security, Legal Affairs and Grenadines Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Gonsalves (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): As Robert Nesta Marley, a great poet of our Caribbean civilization, once paraphrased the Book of Psalms in song, "the stone that the builder refuse, will always be the head cornerstone". As it was in biblical and musical verse, so it is in modern geopolitics. Small island developing States (SIDS), ignored by the architects of the modern world order, are now increasingly indispensable to understanding and solving the challenges of our day. As the original builders of our global economic and political architecture descend into jingoistic isolationism and succumb to the narrowest pursuits of short-term self-interest, it is the small, the poor and the historically marginalized States of our global village that present the last, best chance to restore the crumbling edifice of international cooperation and the principles on which that cooperation rests. With multilateralism battered by a resurgence of base, dishonest pandering to narrowly partisan interest groups, and with great-Power intrigue driving nations further apart, by necessity small island developing States will prove to be the glue that holds together

this international experiment in unity, discussion and joint action.

The rapid acceleration of climate change is the menacing manifestation of a failed multilateralism. Faced with a common threat, ample warning and overwhelming scientific consensus on its past causes, future effects and present solutions, the international community has dithered endlessly and impotently. As emissions continue to increase, legally binding limits are recast as voluntary targets and the worst offenders hypocritically highlight the specks of pollution in others' eyes to distract from the beam in their own. At the same time, many needlessly suffer and die while indisputably urgent global action is intentionally thwarted by selfish short-termists and convenient climate-change deniers.

Today we are gathering in the wake of indescribable horror in the Bahamas, whose citizens and residents were terrorized by Hurricane Dorian. Weeks after the storm, hundreds are still missing. At United Nations gatherings, this tale has become sickeningly familiar. Only the names and locations change. Sadly, hurricanes are merely the most violent manifestation of the insidious effects of climate change. The floods, land degradation, droughts, landslides, coastal erosion and unreliable weather patterns across our region and elsewhere around the globe create increasingly insurmountable daily obstacles to life, living and production in vulnerable nations, particularly small island developing States. For us, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change are a composite, integrated whole on which our very existence depends.

This week, the Secretary-General held a Climate Action Summit to confront our persistent paralysis in the face of the accelerating climate catastrophe. Stripped of the crafted eloquence, the Summit reconfirmed that there are basic litmus tests for a commitment to climate action — the enforcement of binding emissions targets aimed at keeping global warming below 1.5°C, investments in clean air and renewable energy, and the provision of easily accessible adaptation financing that prioritizes the most vulnerable nations.

Surely the catastrophe in the Bahamas must finally put to rest the fiction that arbitrary and inaccurate measures of wealth are of greater import than the self-evident vulnerabilities of small island developing States. Measured by gross domestic product per capita,

the Bahamas is a high-income nation, too rich to be eligible for many forms of concessional financing, assistance in building resilience or post-disaster support. Measured instead by size, location, geography and the immutable laws of nature, its vulnerabilities are starkly apparent. Before the fury of Mother Nature, our islands are equally vulnerable and must be equally assisted by any mechanism that purports to address the impact of climate change. There is a small island State exceptionalism that must be factored — juridically, and in a non-discretionary manner — into the architecture of global partnerships on this existential matter.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has long considered the failure of major emitters to set and honour ambitious mitigation pledges to be an act of hostility towards the very existence of small island developing States. As hundreds lie dead in the Bahamas and thousands more climate refugees are denied safe, temporary haven in the industrialized capitals of the nearest major polluter, those acts of hostility are brought into sharper relief. No nation that contributes to killing us and closes its eyes, ears and doors to our suffering can truly proclaim friendship with us with a clear conscience. I refer to a neighbour that pollutes our residence, sends noxious emissions into our homes or facilitates it, burns fires at our boundaries and smokes us out, commits egregious wrongs against us and is justly subjected to the requisite remedies of compensatory damages and restraining injunctions.

A different type of metaphorical storm is wreaking havoc with the bedrock principles that undergird this Organization. The rising tide of hegemonic, unilateral and interventionist interference now threatens to inundate entire nations, while responsible States turn a blind eye to their responsibility to speak and act in defence of central tenets of the Charter of the United Nations. North, south, east or west, the hegemonic imperial hand is visible everywhere and the metaphoric eagle often threatens to unleash war and disorder in unilateralist vainglory. What all the world's peoples want is simply peace, dialogue, security and prosperity. That is all we want.

The sustained and coordinated attempts to engage in externally imposed regime change in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela are only one egregious example of the current trend. We are witnessing an illegal economic blockade eerily similar to the one of Cuba that we annually and overwhelmingly decry as immoral and anachronistic. We possess indisputable evidence of

extensive foreign interference in the sovereign affairs of the Venezuelan people and frequent, unambiguous threats of military intervention. We are complicit in an international farce where the members of the General Assembly seat one Government as representative of the people of Venezuela while the Organization of American States, a self-described regional agency within the United Nations, seats a different, ill-defined entity, a fictitious creation of foreign Powers. We are mute in defence of the principles that have bound us together and steered us clear of world wars for the past 74 years.

Principle and international law cannot be sporadically or selectively applied. Whatever the challenges facing Venezuela, they are exacerbated, not remedied, by hegemonic interventionism and compounded by our inconsistency. The solutions to the conflict in Venezuela are well known, as are those for other conflicts — facilitating peaceful dialogue, refraining from outside interference or threats of intervention and ensuring firm adherence to the principles of the Charter, including respect for sovereignty. Those who advance a different agenda are acting against the interests of the Venezuelan people and are becoming witting or unwitting co-conspirators in undermining multilateral diplomacy. The vulgar and unjustifiable imperialist weaponizing of trade and the banking system must be condemned by all right-thinking nations anxious to uphold internationally agreed, rules-based global trade and financial systems as fundamental to peace, security and prosperity.

Without hyperbole, we must now all recognize that the Palestinian peace process is mortally wounded and near death. Our silence is complicity in the increasingly brazen unilateral usurpations of international law. Neither a two-State solution nor regional peace can survive the ongoing disavowals of bedrock agreements and the enabling silence of our international community. The Palestinian people deserve more than lip service and hand-wringing. The General Assembly and the Security Council must be heard unambiguously on this matter.

This year, as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines celebrates the fortieth anniversary of its reclamation of independence from a lengthy but temporary colonial rule of 216 years, it is continuing the process of removing historical blinders, reassessing its challenges and opportunities and renewing its linkages with continental Africa. This year, after separate visits

to the Caribbean by our brother Presidents of Ghana and Kenya that captured the region's imagination, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) approved the establishment in principle of an Africa-Brazil-Caribbean diaspora commission for further practical development with the African Union, Brazil — which is home to more than 100 million people of African descent — the 25 members of the Association of Caribbean States, and the African diaspora elsewhere, particularly North America and Europe. The Africa-Brazil-Caribbean diaspora commission places the fractured global might of peoples of African descent within a single institutional framework. Within that unity is undeniable and untapped strength. This is a concrete proposal for further uplifting the goals and targets of the United Nations Decade for People of African Descent. Africa's centrality is a core feature of CARICOM's public policy.

Those efforts add to the political and administrative structure and respond to the abiding yearning for reconnection manifest in the Caribbean Community's formal demand for reparative justice for the crimes of native genocide and African slavery. As increasing numbers of venerable private institutions come to terms with the myriad ways in which they profited from or contributed to the transatlantic slave trade, the Governments of many States continue to dodge and dissemble when confronted with the indisputable evidence of their past actions and current impact. Caribbean nations will continue to push patiently but insistently for acknowledgements and actions to remedy this colossal historical injustice. This justifiable demand for compensatory resources to repair the legacy of underdevelopment that is the consequence of native genocide and the enslavement of African bodies is urgent and compelling. It is linked inextricably to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and their financing.

The eradication of poverty and the deepening of sustainable, people-centred development remain my Government's central drivers. Amid the ominous ubiquity of climate change, the unpredictability of escalating trade wars and the daily uncertainties of erratic global policy shifts, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines must seek increasingly creative pathways in pursuit of its people's right to development.

Alongside our continuing efforts to engender growth and development through greater investments in agriculture, education, health, housing, tourism and

the blue economy, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has established a well-regulated, export-oriented medical-cannabis industry that seeks to marry the latest scientific and pharmaceutical knowledge of cannabis with the long-standing expertise of our traditional cultivators of the plant. In defining the parameters of our medical-cannabis sector, we have made great efforts to scrupulously comply with international law, while taking into account the specific needs and characteristics of our country, culture and people. Undoubtedly, the rapidly shifting medical and legal landscape will eventually require the international community to revisit the long-standing treaties governing the use of and trade in cannabis. In the interim, it is crucial that the enforcers and interpreters of those international agreements refrain from a brand of hard-line orthodoxy that disproportionately affects small States, while accommodating a disdainful disregard for the law on the part of more powerful nations.

The General Assembly must stand resolutely against the thinly veiled war being waged on small island developing States on the pretext of combating tax evasion and reducing so-called illicit financial flows. The constant bullying by ruffians — and the original meaning of the word “ruffians” is “bully boys” — particularly the ruffians who are the bureaucrats of the European Union, has revealed that the unambiguous objective of the European Union is not well-regulated Caribbean financial centres but a decimated and discredited sector, while it panders to the thriving centres that exist within its own borders or in other more powerful locales. The war being waged on legitimate commercial activity in the Caribbean by the European Union traffics in outmoded stereotypes and is accompanied by the unmistakable whiff of a paternalistic bias that romanticizes the Caribbean servant or subsistence labourer but instinctively rejects the concept of a Caribbean banker. In other words, we must continue always to be hewers of wood and drawers of water and not use our brains to do things.

It is self-evident that opaque, non-inclusive and undemocratic entities are presuming to impose an illegitimate rule-making authority on island States in the hope that their financial sector will collapse under the weight of onerous regulation, rapidly changing requirements and the threat of unilateral blacklists. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is under no illusion. Our financial-services sector and those of our Caribbean brothers and sisters are experiencing

a synchronized political assault masquerading as an objective bureaucratic regulatory exercise. Let us be clear about that. Similarly, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines wishes to formally place the issues of de-risking and the loss of correspondent banking relations firmly on the agenda of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. Well-meaning but ill-fitting regulatory attempts to combat terrorism and money-laundering have had the unintended effect of making it prohibitively expensive for banks to operate in small island locations. The flight of those banks and the withdrawal of relationships with other financial institutions threatens to disconnect island States from international trade and commerce, with disastrous consequences for development.

International cooperation is essential to addressing these vexing challenges of modern globalization and sustainable development. Some of our allies, such as Taiwan, have been exemplary in offering their perspectives and support to our development aspirations, and have proved time and again that they are more than deserving of a meaningful role in the specialized agencies and bodies of the United Nations. Indeed, South-South cooperation is moving increasingly from the periphery to centre stage of the global political economy, to the benefit of SIDS such as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

The President’s well-chosen thematic focus on inclusion and multilateralism is an apt encapsulation of the ambitious attempts of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to advocate for its right to be seated and heard at the highest levels of multilateral decision-making. This year Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was proud and humbled to be elected by the General Assembly to serve as a non-permanent member on the Security Council. Our overwhelming mandate remains an important endorsement of our nation’s historic quest to become the smallest nation ever seated on that important global peacemaking body. More importantly, it is an unequivocal acknowledgement of the right and ability of small island States to participate meaningfully in the weightiest matters at the core of the *raison d’être* of the United Nations. We hope that our presence will buttress the view of the overwhelming majority of nations that the membership and working methods of the Security Council should be reformed to reflect current global realities and the invaluable perspectives of small island developing States. So, too, must we right the historic wrong of the exclusion of Africa and others

from permanent membership. We thank the General Assembly for voting so overwhelmingly to repose its trust in us. We ask for its continued support.

The President returned to the Chair.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines based its Security Council campaign on the assumption that we are friends to all and strive for a better world. We support it with the belief that problems have solutions; with our love of peace and abhorrence of war; our reliance on the timeless principles of sovereign equality, non-interference and non-intervention; our confidence in systems of global governance based on transparent rule-making and equitable enforcement, irrespective of power disparities; and an unshakeable conviction, as enunciated by Martin Luther King, Jr., that the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is a country with a small population, a small economic footprint, a small geographic area and a magnificent part of our legitimate and authentic Caribbean civilization. Our small islands, mere irrelevant pebbles in the eyes of some of the large, rich and powerful who ought to know better, must now form part of the new foundation of international cooperation. Our challenges must be acknowledged, and our voices, long humoured but unheard, must be listened to as consistent advocates on behalf of people, progress, partnership and principle. Too often the founding principles of the United Nations, like small island States, have been cast aside in the precipitate pursuit of convenient or expedient solutions. Too often the world has come to regret such reckless haste. Today we must recognize the folly of assuming that our Organization's institutions can withstand the challenges of unilateralism, isolationism and inactivity. The proper responses to those challenges are a reinvigorated Assembly, a recommitment to principle and international law and a renewed focus on the diverse voices of all Members of our noble institution.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, the Public Service, National Security, Legal Affairs and Grenadines Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for the statement he has just made.

His Excellency Mr. Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, the Public Service, National Security, Legal Affairs and Grenadines Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Abdalla Adam Hamdok, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Sudan

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

Mr. Abdalla Adam Hamdok, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Sudan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Abdalla Adam Hamdok, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Sudan, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Hamdok (Sudan) (spoke in Arabic): On behalf of the Government and the people of the Sudan, it gives me pleasure to express my sincere wishes that the deliberations of the General Assembly during this session will be successful, and to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to lead the Assembly at its seventy-fourth session, along with the other members of the Bureau. I would also like to express my appreciation for the efficiency and experience shown by Ambassador María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés of Ecuador during her presidency of the seventy-third session.

The great people of the Sudan have revolted in order to rebuild and restore our country's values of human coexistence and social cohesion, as well as to end three hateful decades of repression and oppression, discrimination and infighting. They have sought to open a new chapter in their history written in their blood and sacrifice. For more than three months, starting in December of last year, unarmed men and women of the Sudan confronted one of the cruellest terrorist regimes in history with unparalleled courage. They had no weapons apart from their desire to uphold their peaceful revolution, their unity and their determination to advance towards the future.

The flame of the revolution continues to burn as a guarantee of the achievement of its goals. While the great French Revolution in the eighteenth century adopted liberty, equality and fraternity as its slogan when it sought to liberate the people, the revolution of the Sudanese people in the twenty-first century adopted the slogan of freedom, peace and justice, thereby reviving the principles of that great revolution in order to free the Sudanese people from the shackles of oppression and indignity. The goal is to enable them to build their homeland and contribute, along with other

nations, to the advent of a prosperous world that can accommodate us all, a world that befits the human race and the human conscience everywhere.

We are confident that what made our revolution victorious is the direct support of the international community, as represented by the Security Council, the General Assembly, the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the European Union and the troika of the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Norway, as well as our brothers in Ethiopia, Egypt, South Sudan, Chad, Eritrea, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Qatar. I would like to thank them all. We also thank all our friends and partners that have been supporting us.

I stand before the Assembly today representing the will of my dignified people, whom I am proud to see marching resolutely towards the future as a friend and partner on equal footing with all peace-loving nations. After three decades, the people of the Sudan are seeking to begin a new phase by reaching out to all our neighbours and to all the countries of the world, guided by the principles of humanity and our own wisdom. We are determined to implement the principles of international law and human rights law along with the efforts of the judiciary in order to eliminate discrimination, exploitation, injustice and inequality. We are also committed to effective participation in establishing and promoting the relevant instruments and conventions. We commit ourselves as well to all diplomatic and international norms of good-neighbourliness and respect for the fundamental principles of friendship and cooperation among nations, namely, respect for the sovereignty and independence of other States as well as non-interference in their internal affairs. We remain principally committed to effectively maintaining international peace and security. We in the revolution's transitional Government believe that relations among nations must be based on mutual and common interests, as well as positive cooperation, for the good of the people. Our world, with its resources and its wealth, is large enough for all of us to live in prosperity and peace.

With our glorious revolution, the Sudan seeks to put an end to a dark era of regional and international isolation that led to the Sudanese Government inheriting a long list of international sanctions and penalties, most prominent of which is the inclusion of the Sudan on

the list of State sponsors of terrorism. Let me say it to the Council loud and clear: the Sudanese people have never been a sponsor or a supporter of terrorism. It was the regime that our people revolted against and toppled. Those sanctions have caused tremendous suffering to the people of the Sudan. We in the transitional Government call on the United States of America to remove the Sudan's name from the list of State sponsors of terrorism and to stop punishing the people of the Sudan for the crimes committed by the very regime that harmed them, of whose evils we have rid the world. We hope that our just request will be urgently met so that we can accelerate the reconstruction and development process in the Sudan in order to eliminate the effects of the three decades spent under the former regime.

We fully understand the daunting challenges facing our country, foremost among which is the need to end the war and to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting peace. To that end, we are well aware that we must achieve comprehensive justice by addressing the root causes that led to the war in the first place, including economic marginalization and cultural, ethnic and religious discrimination. Moreover, we need to restore social cohesion and promote peaceful coexistence, as well as a culture of peace and tolerance among all the constituents of the Sudanese population. We are determined to build a State based on the rule of law, citizenship and balanced development, one that can safeguard the rights of the Sudanese people and their interests both in their country and around the world. We also stress the need to address the situation of internally displaced persons and refugees while compensating them for the war damages incurred. Improving the standard of living and ensuring a better and dignified life, especially in the regions affected, will be a priority for achieving peace in the Sudan. Managing the ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity of the Sudanese people as a source of strength and national pride rather than of strife and division will bolster the pillars of lasting peace and provide the environment necessary for the development, interaction and prosperity of Sudanese cultures.

During the transitional period, the Sudanese Government will seek to ensure that the Sudan makes great strides on the path to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. We support the theme of the current session, "Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion", and have launched a

comprehensive national development plan based on promoting economic governance, combating corruption and committing to transparency and integrity, as well as judicious planning in terms of natural resources in order to ensure self-sufficiency, better exchanges and smart partnerships with the countries of the region and the world. We are also committed to supporting health and education services while providing drinking water as well as other social services. These are not merely services and obligations towards our people; they are also an investment in their future and that of their children and youth.

Addressing those challenges requires support from the international community, especially in the upcoming short-term period. In this context, we refer to the accumulating foreign debt of the Sudanese State, exacerbated by the policies of the former regime, which overlooked its international commitments and mismanaged its financial dealings with both local and various international parties. This is an urgent issue that must be addressed at the international level, taking into account the current living conditions in the country, which require the State to continue providing the necessary social services and meeting basic needs. The civilian Sudanese Government that resulted from the glorious Sudanese revolution, in which all male and female Sudanese participated, will leave no one behind and will ensure that, despite all the challenges, everyone can benefit from the development process launched by the revolution.

I would like to pay tribute to the women and men of the Sudan, especially the *kandaka* women, who have shown unparalleled courage in their active participation in the Sudanese revolution. I want to announce from this rostrum that during the transitional period the Government is committed to eliminating all forms of institutional and social discrimination against women. We have already begun taking practical measures to do that. Today two of the 11 members of the Sovereign Council are women, one of them a Coptic Christian from a small community. We are very proud that for the first time in our modern history we have a woman Foreign Minister.

Young men and women, who make up a majority of the Sudanese people, were the most affected by the Sudan's overall collapse during the past three dark decades. They were left to die in death boats on unregulated migration routes in their quest for ways of salvation and forced to participate in civil wars. It is

time to end that situation forever. The young men and women of the Sudan brought about this revolution and they will create their own future according to their own desires, and the State will be there to help them.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate that we are committed to achieving the goals of our revolution and translating our legitimate aspirations into solid reality so that in the coming years the Sudan can regain the status that it naturally deserves, one befitting our peoples' civilizations and glorious history. With an open mind, we call on the international community and all States Members of the United Nations to join us in building a new world of prosperity, peace and love among the peoples of the world, in line with the slogan of our glorious revolution — freedom, peace and justice.

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

Mr. Abdalla Adam Hamdok, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Sudan, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Antonio Rivas Palacios, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Paraguay.

Mr. Rivas Palacios (Paraguay) (spoke in Spanish): Paraguay reaffirms its commitment to multilateralism as the most effective tool for tackling global challenges and to the importance of strengthening the international legal architecture and respecting international law and universally applicable principles and values. We emphasize the value of the United Nations in promoting justice, development and peaceful relations among the nations of the world, as established in the foundational Charter of the United Nations.

As they work to achieve sustainable development, landlocked developing countries face specific challenges that require special attention. In that context, the commitment of the international community, and particularly of neighbouring countries of transit and partners, is essential. We want to emphasize that the right to development protects all peoples and must be guaranteed, especially for the most vulnerable. We would like to express our solidarity with the least developed countries and small island developing States, with whom we will continue to work jointly and in

coordination to ensure that the special needs of all of us are duly addressed.

It is Paraguay's spirit of progress that drives its participation in regional and inter-regional integration processes. We are working to use those platforms to contribute to internal and international peace and prosperity with a proactive, participatory and dynamic approach. Those efforts have resulted in the recent conclusion of negotiations for free-trade agreements between the Southern Common Market and the European Union, as well as the countries of the European Free Trade Association, agreements that represent a firm commitment to liberalizing trade and removing obstacles to free trade.

Paraguay is determined to generate inclusive opportunities for the benefit of its citizens and is working to gain control of its future by strengthening its capacities and economic competitiveness and promoting active participation in processes that will help to improve the international legal system. Through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we are seeking a new model of governance for Paraguay whereby we can ensure that social welfare reaches all of our people without discrimination. Paraguay has chosen to progress along this path towards sustainable development by implementing the valuable set of tools represented by the 2030 Agenda under the leadership of the United Nations and through State action in every area, while integrating every sector of society and working to generate a real and lasting impact in every corner of the country. However, we will not be able to achieve that without a real transformation of the paradigms currently influencing the behaviour of our citizens. Paraguay is committed to the 2030 Agenda as a fast track towards its institutional goals, and we see the Sustainable Development Goals as key to eradicating poverty, hunger, disease, ignorance, discrimination, unemployment, inequality and shortages, among the evils that afflict millions on a daily basis. In Paraguay, it is our responsibility to leave no one behind.

We believe that South-South cooperation should be strengthened. In line with the conclusions of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, we therefore want to add our offer to share good practices and lessons learned with the global space and reaffirm our commitment to continuing to institutionalize South-South and triangular cooperation at the regional and international levels.

This year is a very important one for Paraguay, a multicultural country that has Guaraní and Spanish as official languages. Amid the celebration of the International Year of Indigenous Languages, we are warned that the hundreds of indigenous languages are dying every day. The 19 surviving indigenous languages in my country are a cultural treasure and are part of our identity. We will therefore continue to work to protect, respect and promote them.

As a form of Government and a way of life, democracy cannot be shaped simply by exercising the right of suffrage. It is an organized system, in which men and women can elect and be elected, where all citizens, without distinction, can access the material benefits of progress and where the rule of law prevails, without exception, for the body of society over sectarian interests.

Democracy cannot be interpreted. Its definition is not malleable or adaptable to the needs of tyrants or autocrats. It is a concept that does not respond to whims or opportunistic or capricious decisions. Democracy is built on legal norms and is achieved through institutions governed by law because politics cannot, and should not, be above the law. As a system of Government, democracy is achieved by empowering citizens, enforcing their rights and strengthening the institutional structure. Similarly, it is achieved by easing political and social tensions by using the tools provided for in the legal system.

My country has continuously demonstrated its strong will to strengthen its democracy and to preserve and keenly foster the legitimate expression of the people. The international community has played a key role in cooperating with the citizens and the Government of Paraguay, helping to preserve the democratic order and civic responsibility without disruptively interfering in internal affairs. We therefore believe in that cooperative approach, which we see as an antidote to anti-democratic upheaval.

That line of thought represents the basis of Paraguay's position on the tragedy experienced by the sisterly Republic of Venezuela, causing a deep regional crisis, the consequences of which are felt throughout the world. The news, reports and images that circulate through various media faithfully portray the sad reality of so many people who today suffer at the hands of a regime that openly flouts human rights and democracy.

We need to join forces to restore democracy in Venezuela to ease the humanitarian crisis that is severely affecting its population and to reverse the exodus that is forcing thousands of people to leave every day. The tragedy today is in Venezuela but the crisis is regional.

Anyone who expels his fellow countrymen through hunger, poverty or oppression spreads suffering and discontent, becomes the executioner of the poor, the sick and the hungry, denies rights and eliminates any chance for a better future.

We need to jointly respond to the migration and humanitarian crisis that has led to the flight of millions of people who are forced to leave their homes to flee poverty, violence and extreme hardship. That has become particularly evident in Latin America, which, despite its own difficulties, has generously and magnanimously opened its arms to its brethren migrants.

Paraguay is an open-door country that believes in the ability of migration to contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of all countries. Consistent with that conviction, we call for the decent treatment of migrants, in particular children and young people in displacement.

We are facing difficult times for human beings and the planet. The adverse effects of climate change have an impact throughout the world. While some countries have more resources than others to cope with post-disaster reconstruction, if we continue along this path, we will reach a point of no return, where no one will be able to escape the consequences of environmental degradation.

As a landlocked developing country, Paraguay is severely affected by such consequences. Recently, hundreds of thousands of hectares of forests were devastated by fierce fires that destroyed much of the rich ecological diversity of the Gran Chaco Americano. I would like to thank all the countries that offered us their help in such difficult times.

The changes that the planet so badly needs will be achieved through joint efforts developed in global platforms, where each State will have to responsibly address the immediate and medium-term challenges in line with their capacities and resources. Strategic partnerships will also assist that effort. In that regard, in cooperation with the Green Climate Fund and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Paraguay has recently concluded negotiations

to establish a special reforestation fund and to thereby combat extreme poverty, which affects the most vulnerable in society.

Similarly, the hydroelectric project that Paraguay shares with Brazil, known as Itaipu Binacional, is part of that initiative. It was developed to promote the benefits of shared natural resources and is a successful example of an initiative to produce clean and renewable energy.

In the near future, together with Brazil, we will promote a process to review the financing of Itaipu Binacional. We will work to ensure that such an exercise leads to a fair and balanced approach to economic development and well-being.

The Republic of Paraguay affirms its commitment to non-proliferation, disarmament, the rejection of war and the peaceful settlement of conflicts. Paraguay calls on the international community to avoid escalations that fuel tensions and threaten international peace and security, while reaffirming the need to use dialogue and diplomacy as tools for resolving disputes. In that regard, we reaffirm our belief in the principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations to those ends.

Paraguay recognizes the important role that peacekeeping operations have played, and continue to play, in helping many countries to resolve conflict situations and to protect civilians and the most vulnerable. We therefore maintain our political commitment to continuing to contribute qualified personnel trained prior to their deployment.

We need an effective, agile Organization that responds to the calls for peace, justice, freedom and development of all peoples of the world. We therefore strongly support the revitalization of the General Assembly, its most democratic and representative organ. It is a space that belongs to all nations, in which we can express our views, our demands and our needs on an equal footing and in a sovereign way. We support the reforms proposed by the Secretary-General, including repositioning the United Nations development system, in order to appropriately address the challenges of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other international development frameworks.

Paraguay joins States that advocate Security Council reform so as to thereby transform the Council into a more inclusive and transparent body, capable of addressing threats to international peace and security.

Before concluding, I wish to congratulate Ambassador Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his recent election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session and to wish him every success in his new functions. Similarly, Paraguay recognizes the work done by the former President of the General Assembly, María Fernanda Espinosa, and her team, who guided the work of this organ magnificently and efficiently. I commend Secretary-General António Guterres, who has shown great leadership and vision in continuing to promote a more efficient and transparent organization that is closer to the people it is intended to serve. As Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, Paraguay urges for the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda. Its midterm review will take place on 5 and 6 December, and we invite all delegations to participate in that review at the highest possible level.

In conclusion, I want to reaffirm Paraguay's unwavering commitment to multilateralism and diplomacy in support of peace and sustainable development. We will continue to work to preserve the United Nations and its tireless work for the noble and just causes of humankind. That is one of the best legacies we can offer to our current and future generations.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Gudlaugur Thór Thórdarson, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iceland.

Mr. Thórdarson (Iceland): Next year we will celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations. This fundamental cornerstone of the international rules-based order, along with other important building blocks, has served us well. We live in a world that has become ever more interconnected, and the most demanding challenges of our times call for even greater unity and global action.

Nevertheless, that architecture is being tried and tested. It remains our responsibility to ensure that the principles, rights and obligations enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including safeguarding peace and promoting development and human rights, are fulfilled and carried out in good faith. History tells us that those goals are best achieved in open democracies in which fundamental freedoms are respected and individuals and nation-States are allowed to prosper, and most importantly, in which politicians

are accountable for their words and deeds, both at home and abroad. We need to safeguard the international rules-based system, with the United Nations at the helm. But we also need to pursue reforms if the system is no longer serving the very ideals on which it was founded or is even rewarding States that violate our principles.

Small and medium-size States, which in fact constitute the vast majority of the States Members of the United Nations, should not shy away from taking on a more active role on the global scene. For its part, Iceland is prepared to shoulder its responsibility and has steadily increased its contributions to United Nations funds and programmes. We have also taken on a more active role within various United Nations and other international and regional bodies. Last year Iceland became a member of the Human Rights Council for the first time. It is a privilege and a responsibility that we take seriously. Upholding human rights and treating one another with respect and fairness are part of the basic DNA for progress, peace and development. During its tenure on the Council, Iceland has actively promoted gender equality, children's rights and the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex individuals. We have also advocated for much-needed reform in the work and composition of the Council, where we continue to see certain Member States elected as full members and passing judgment and casting votes on issues abroad while their own human rights records at home should be on trial. The Human Rights Council is the focal point and driving force for protecting and promoting human rights and ensuring that all States honour the commitments that they have voluntarily signed up to. While it is true that Member States are diverse and face different challenges, regional groups and Member States should make sure that those serving on the Council are truly committed to upholding human rights.

In Iceland, our experience shows that both individuals' rights and human rights are essential to positive economic and social development. That is particularly true for gender equality, which has enabled our society to prosper and thrive. But this is not a competition. Our goals should be shared, in order to ensure that women everywhere can realize their individual strengths and pave the way for achieving a sustainable development that leaves no one behind. Next year, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action will provide an

important opportunity to reflect on our progress and shortcomings and to chart the way forward.

Iceland is committed to pursuing and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, both at home and through international cooperation. For Icelanders, sustainability is not a new concept. We began using geothermal power to heat our houses more than a century ago. And decades ago we realized that our essential fish stocks would have to be protected and harvested in a sustainable way. Sustainability has been the key to our survival for a long time, and that is not going to change. In July we presented our first voluntary national review. So far, the sustainable development record seems a mixed one, but important achievements have been made in some areas, including gender equality, child mortality and communicable diseases. However, we need greater efforts and more research in order to address non-communicable diseases and neurological disorders, including spinal-cord injuries, which affect as many as a billion people worldwide. Iceland will continue to promote cooperation in research and raise awareness in that important field.

Iceland will also continue to share its insights and expertise in the areas of renewable energy, gender equality, land restoration and fisheries, all of which can act as powerful levers for sustainable development. United Nations training programmes in Iceland have played an important role by exporting know-how in all of those fields, but there are still many untapped opportunities for closer partnerships to be developed in trade, development and business. Such synergies should be promoted, and it remains my firm belief that open, fair and free trade is the single most important driver of economic growth and stability and for breaking the bonds of poverty. We must ensure that all States can reap the benefits of the multilateral trading system, and we must build bridges, not barriers, if we want to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Climate change is one of the most important challenges of our times, if not the most important. It affects global security, sustainable development, the health of our environment and ultimately human civilization. That is not a distant abstraction but a stark reality. In the Arctic, including in my country, we are witnessing glaciers melting and vanishing, and our seas and marine life are rapidly changing. And let us keep in mind that these developments in the world's northernmost region have global repercussions. What happens in the Arctic does not stay in the Arctic.

Iceland is firmly committed to reaching the goals of the Paris Climate Change Agreement by 2030. We have done quite well so far, with almost 100 per cent of our electricity and heating now based on renewables. But we can do even better, and we are therefore aiming to reach full carbon neutrality by 2040. Climate change and the health of our oceans are a key priority in our foreign policy, including in the Arctic Council and the Nordic Council, which Iceland currently chairs. More than 70 per cent of the surface of our planet is covered by water, and yet we tend to think of climate change only in connection with the atmosphere. Our oceans are of crucial importance to any meaningful discussion on climate change and have too often been on the margins instead of at the centre. Climate change is also ocean change.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the global constitution for our oceans, is the most important tool for ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of our marine environment. It is our firm belief that more effective implementation of the Convention, along with regional management of the conservation and sustainable use of our oceans, is the best way to ensure their long-term health. A new international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction is being negotiated at the United Nations, and could become an important tool for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity on our high seas if it is based on consensus and universal participation.

The fight against climate change should begin at home, but high-income countries should also support lower-income countries in addressing the causes and consequences of climate change. That is an areas for focus in Iceland's new development cooperation policy, and earlier this week my Government announced that we will double our contribution to the Green Climate Fund. We should also bear in mind that some of the most effective solutions are low-cost, simple and nature-based solutions such as land restoration. And we should work more effectively with the private sector to achieve our common goals. In that connection, the Climate Action Summit earlier this week was an important event. We must now build on the momentum and push for further action. We have no time to spare.

The connection between climate change, human rights, development and security is evident in many conflicts and demands a holistic approach. We support

the Secretary-General's in-house reform agenda and believe it will make the United Nations more fit for purpose. However, the Security Council, and not least its permanent members, must take a more active role in preventing and resolving these crises and live up to its responsibilities, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter. We must act and make full use of the tools available to hold to account those responsible for breaking international law, including bringing them before the International Criminal Court.

In Syria there seems no end to the carnage. Attacks on civilians have been occurring on a regular basis, leaving the country in ruins and large parts of its population displaced. With the current surge in fighting in Yemen, there is a real risk that the hard-won gains of the efforts to establish peace and political progress will be ruined, again adding to the already immense suffering of the civil population. The regional power brokers that are fuelling tensions and funding the warring parties must step back in support of a peaceful political process. In that context, the recent drone attacks on Saudi Arabia, which have intensified an already intense situation, are very worrying.

The fighting in Libya also continues and a ceasefire is urgently needed to pave the way for the United Nations-supported political process. The issue of Western Sahara remains unresolved, and developments in Israel and Palestine seem to take us ever further from a two-State solution, the only viable way to achieve peaceful coexistence. In Venezuela, the appalling humanitarian situation, driven deeper and deeper by the Maduro regime, continues to be of great concern, with 4.3 million people fleeing the country and its ongoing crisis. In Myanmar, we must keep our focus on the plight of the Rohingya population. Nor have we forgotten the blatant disregard for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and Georgia. Those and, sadly, other protracted conflicts, amid the growing distrust between major Powers, call for greater commitment, creative thinking and the allocation of more resources, both to the traditional arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation agenda and to emerging technologies, cybersecurity and hybrid threats.

The great generation that built the United Nations after the horrors of the Second World War is gradually leaving us, a generation that witnessed the arms race and the worst tensions of the Cold War and fought for many of our civil liberties. Their legacy will never die. As we celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of this

great Organization next year, we should remember their achievements, but we should also look ahead and into our hearts and discuss how we can best promote the values and principles of the United Nations. We must never forget that our rules-based international system is based on determination and awareness that derive from one of the greatest tragedies in human history. We must never take it for granted.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal.

Mr. Gyawali (Nepal): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, and the members of the Bureau on your election, and to assure you of our full support in the discharge of your responsibilities. I also appreciate the role played by Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés as the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. We commend Secretary-General António Guterres for his reforms aimed at making the United Nations fit for purpose.

Today the world stands at a crossroads. The landscape of the global order is undergoing profound transformation. The problems of yesterday have not subsided and yet new challenges are looming. Our inequalities in income, opportunities, technology and capabilities are increasing. Trade tensions among the largest economies create unpredictability and the risk of recession. The ensuing insecurity and disorder hurt least-developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing States the most.

The peril of climate change is outpacing our response. Its threat is truly existential in terms of the sustainability of the planet and the future of humankind. It is the poorest and most vulnerable countries that are hardest hit by the effects of climate change. Despite their negligible emissions, they face consequences that are disproportionate, unjust and undue. In that context, Nepal appreciated the Secretary-General's leadership in convening the Climate Action Summit on 23 September. It was another milestone in charting a sustainable path in the face of obstinate ignorance of climate science. Nepal, as home to Sagarmatha, also known as Mount Everest, the highest peak in the world, lies at a hotspot of climate change. The Himalayas, as a barometer of such change, are seeing glaciers melt and fresh water dry up at an accelerated rate. A report published this year by the International Centre

for Integrated Mountain Development predicts that one third of glaciers in the Hindu Kush and Himalaya ranges will melt away by the end of the century even if we meet the 1.5°C commitment. That is alarming. Climate-induced disasters wreak havoc every year. This year alone, several of our citizens were killed by floods and tornadoes. Bearing in mind the seriousness of the issue and our own responsibility, the Government of Nepal has decided to convene a global dialogue in April under the theme of climate change. It will be the first in a series of Sagarmatha dialogues, established by Nepal to deliberate on critical issues of current importance.

Nepal pins great hopes on the centrality of the United Nations in galvanizing multilateral efforts to address cross-cutting and global challenges such as reducing poverty and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We have an abiding trust in multilateralism and believe that there is no alternative to it other than a better and more effective, inclusive and responsive multilateralism. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was a display of inclusive multilateralism at its best, but it can be implemented only if a similar spirit guides our actions with a renewed sense of partnership and with all stakeholders assuming responsibility for it.

In the past four years the SDG scorecard has shown mixed progress. Poverty has decreased, but the rate of its reduction is slowing. Unemployment rates have dropped, but wages remain stagnant. Food insecurity and hunger are getting worse. Greater collaboration is critical to mobilizing the resources needed to attain the SDGs and to ensure universal health coverage. Countries like Nepal need many resources if they are to fully realize the SDGs by 2030, and while mobilizing domestic financial resources is a priority for us, our national efforts, particularly those of LDCs and LLDCs, will have to be complemented by international support measures in the form of technical, financial, investment and other means of support.

The world has made great strides in wealth creation and the advancement of technology, and advances have also been made in life expectancy, literacy, basic education and the reduction of maternal and infant mortality. Sadly, that progress has not been evenly distributed. Women and girls, people with disabilities and the elderly still bear the brunt of poverty and inequalities. Inequality within and between countries is growing. In that context, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the

adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the International Conference on Population and Development, as well as the midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, will provide important opportunities to take swift action. In that context, Nepal appreciates the Secretary-General's strategy on ensuring gender parity.

We welcome the reforms aimed at creating synergy and coherence within the United Nations system, in line with the principle of ensuring that all its activities are people-centred, and we hope that the new generation of country teams and Resident Coordinators can live up to expectations by delivering more. We also hope that the renewed thrust of United Nations reforms will propel the reform of the Security Council. We must focus on making the Council representative in structure, transparent in function, democratic in character and accountable in performance. The revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, including enhancing its role and authority, is long overdue, and we must make it a priority. However, the Organization's deteriorating financial situation is a matter of serious concern, as it can only impede the fulfilment of its mandates and responsibilities.

Heightened geopolitical complexities, a defunct disarmament architecture, and the absence of order in cyberspace and outer space endanger international peace and stability. The intensifying arms race, coupled with growing distrust among major players, seems symptomatic of new forms of division with regard to the critical issues of peace and security. That is why a stronger and effective United Nations is critical to promoting trust and cooperation. Nepal supports the general and complete elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. We are concerned about the collapse of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the withdrawal of an important party from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear programme, and the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament. Such trends should not be permitted to encourage a penchant for nuclear weapons. Nepal supports effective and verifiable nuclear-weapon-free zones and a legally binding multilateral disarmament regime for ensuring global security and stability. As a signatory to the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, we expect to complete our internal legal process for its ratification soon. In addition, for the greater benefit of humankind, we reiterate that

outer space must not become a weaponized arena. As the host country for the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, Nepal calls for strengthening regional approaches to disarmament, including the Kathmandu Process, in order to complement global initiatives.

The problems of transnational organized crime, human and drug trafficking and terrorism transcend national boundaries. The flow of illicit money for financing crimes must be countered with stringent measures and cooperation among States. Nepal condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. In that regard, we call for the effective implementation of the relevant existing conventions and resolutions, including the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The conclusion of a comprehensive convention against terrorism should be delayed no longer.

The violent conflicts in Libya, Syria, Yemen and elsewhere continue unabated, leaving human suffering in their wake. Conflict-related issues, including human rights violations, exoduses of refugees and forced migration, have global ramifications. We believe in the peaceful settlement of conflicts and disputes through negotiation and dialogue, without external interference. Robust conflict prevention and peacebuilding measures are critical to sustaining peace. The underutilized tool of mediation can potentially help to bring about a mutually agreeable solution to conflicts.

We want to see meaningful steps being taken to resolve the protracted Middle East issue. We support a two-State solution for Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security with secure and recognized international borders based on the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Nepal welcomes the dialogues between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and between the two Koreas. We hope that the initiatives will lead to lasting peace and stability on the Korean peninsula.

True to our commitment to the Charter of the United Nations, Nepal has rendered one of the most dedicated, reliable and professional services to United Nations peace operations for more than six decades. Our peacekeepers have been deployed without caveats at the shortest notice, even in fragile and asymmetric threat environments. The safety, security and dignity of peacekeepers are therefore critically important to us.

In that spirit, we endorsed the Declaration of Shared Commitments in support of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative last year. We appreciate the role of the Department of Peace Operations, the Department of Operational Support and the United Nations as a whole in maintaining peace and security through peacekeeping operations.

Peace operations require predictable, adequate and sustained resources for their success. The timely and full reimbursement to troop- and police-contributing countries is essential to ensure that those brave personnel continue to give their best performance, even in adverse situations. Troop- and police-contributing countries should receive their due share of leadership positions, both in the field and at Headquarters.

Nepal is committed to progressively deploying more women peacekeepers. We do not condone sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping missions. We have therefore endorsed the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 calls for global cooperation in order to reduce the risk of large-scale natural disasters. Nepal has harmonized its national strategies on disaster risk reduction with those of the Sendai Framework, the SDGs, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit. Learning lessons from the 2015 earthquakes, Nepal has focused on the resilience of infrastructure.

Even as a landlocked country, we care equally about oceans. We believe that there is an organic linkage between oceans and mountains. We are concerned because the health of the oceans is deteriorating alarmingly mainly due to climate change and reckless human activities.

We are confident that the new international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction currently under negotiation will prove to be a milestone in international law for the protection and conservation of marine biodiversity.

Migration, a phenomenon as old as human civilization, is a defining megatrend of our time. Ensuring the rights and well-being of migrant workers is a matter of priority to us. The Global Compact for

Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (resolution 73/195, annex), adopted in December last year, is an important stepping stone and a good example of multilateralism at work. We urge all Member States to own the process and to be part of the outcome. As host to a large number of refugees for decades, Nepal firmly believes in the right of refugees to return to their home country in safety and dignity.

Nepal's commitment to the universal values of human rights is total. The Constitution of Nepal is founded on the fundamentals of inclusive democracy, pluralism, the rule of law, secularism, representative and accountable Government, social justice and human rights.

We are fully committed to concluding the transitional justice process in line with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of Nepal and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), a directive of the Supreme Court, the relevant international commitments, the concerns of the victims and the realities on the ground. We hold that democracy, development and respect for human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

As a member of the Human Rights Council, we have been promoting those ideals in an independent, apolitical and objective manner. In order to contribute further, Nepal has presented its candidature for re-election to the Human Rights Council for the term of 2021-2023. We greatly count on the valuable support of all United Nations Member States.

Nepal's foreign policy is guided by the five principles of peaceful coexistence, non-alignment, the United Nations Charter, international law and the norms of world peace. "Amity with all, enmity with none" has been our guiding motto. We believe in an inclusive, just and fair international order.

Nepal believes that regional processes complement global efforts for peace, security and economic development. We strive to enhance regional economic cooperation under the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multisectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation and the Asia Cooperation Dialogue. As the current Chair, we are striving to revitalize the stalled SAARC process.

Nepal's democratic transformation presents a uniquely successful, nationally led and owned peace

process. We would be happy to share our experience, which may be useful to those in conflict.

Building on the historic political transformation, the Government of Nepal is now focused on an economic agenda to sustain the political gains under the overarching national aspiration of "Prosperous Nepal, happy Nepali". We have created an investment-friendly atmosphere with substantive policy and legal reforms. One window service is operational, with almost all sectors open for 100 per cent foreign investment.

We have recently adopted the fifteenth five-year plan with a longer-term development perspective. Graduation from the status of a less developed country is part of our plan. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other internationally agreed goals and targets have been integrated into our national plans and programmes.

Peace, tolerance and harmony are intrinsic to Nepali culture and way of life. Lumbini in Nepal is not only the birthplace of Gautam Buddha but also a fountain of peace, the ultimate destination for tranquillity of mind and spiritual fulfilment. We want to promote that world heritage on the international stage. We aim to host the International Day of Vesak in 2021.

Before I conclude, let me reiterate Nepal's profound commitment to the principles and purposes of the United Nations. We firmly believe in the centrality of the United Nations in promoting multilateralism. Viewed from the crossroads of history, we see no alternative to multilateralism to ensure peace, security and order in the world.

It is incumbent upon us, the Member States, to make the Organization a strong platform of collaboration and dialogue for resolving differences and finding solutions to the challenges. Only an empowered and reformed United Nations, reflective of the present-day reality, can achieve those critical responsibilities.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Palamagamba Kabudi, Minister for Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Kabudi (United Republic of Tanzania): I bring fraternal greetings from His Excellency Mr. John Pombe Joseph Magufuli, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, who, although he so much wished to personally attend this very important gathering, was not able to do so due to other exigencies at home. He

therefore asked me to represent him and deliver this statement on his behalf.

In that respect, I would like first of all to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your well-deserved election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. I would like to assure you that you can count on the full support and cooperation of the Government and people of the United Republic of Tanzania as you discharge your responsibilities. I also want to pay a glowing tribute to your predecessor, Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés — first for being only the fourth woman in the history of the United Nations to hold such a prestigious position, and secondly for the efforts, commitment and effective leadership that she demonstrated during her tenure.

The theme of this year's Assembly session is "Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion". Needless to say, it is very appropriate and timely. It is appropriate because, as we are all aware, four years ago, in September 2015, the Assembly adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which integrates three key dimensions of sustainable development — economic development, social inclusion and environmental sustainability. Coincidentally, in November of that same year, Mr. John Pombe Joseph Magufuli assumed the presidency of the United Republic of Tanzania. The new Administration brought new strengths, thoughts and zeal to the work of the economic transformation needed to improve the welfare of the people of the United Republic of Tanzania, especially vulnerable groups.

The Administration's main agenda is eradicating corruption, instituting ethics and discipline in public service and increasing tax collection as a strategy for achieving quick socioeconomic growth. Its efforts are also aimed at improving the quality of education in the country, eradicating poverty and tackling unemployment. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that over the past four years, the Government has been able to live up to its promises by delivering for its citizens in many ways. In July we presented a voluntary national review of our SDG progress at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, highlighting our achievements in the implementation of the SDGs in both mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar.

Our Government, in the understanding that good governance is critical to eradicating poverty and achieving socioeconomic development, has taken bold measures to fight corruption at all levels, including by establishing a corruption and economic crimes division in the High Court of Tanzania. We have also taken measures to prevent wasteful Government expenditures, including by improving the management of fiscal and financial discipline and ensuring accountability and transparency in the Government. In addition, over the past four years the Government has been implementing various reforms. In 2017, for example, to ensure the proper management of natural wealth and resources, it enacted laws on natural wealth and resources and on contracts for such resources. That legislation is inspired by and premised on resolution 1803 (XVII) of 1962, on permanent sovereignty over natural resources, and on the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States, adopted in 1974 in resolution 3281 (XXIX).

Those reforms, among other things, have helped to increase Government revenue collection from an average of TSh850 billion per month to TSh1.3 trillion per month. Thanks to the new mining law, revenues from the mining sector have also increased exponentially, from TSh191 billion in the 2016-2017 financial year to TSh335.18 billion in the 2018-2019 financial year. As a result, the Government has been able to increase its development budget allocation to 40 per cent, as compared to 25 per cent in 2015. Consequently, we have been able to implement strategic economic infrastructure projects, improve social services to our citizens in terms of education, health, water and sanitation and increase the availability of electricity.

Since December 2015, the Government has embarked on providing free education in public primary and secondary schools. Through that initiative, pupils' enrolment in primary schools has increased by 35.2 per cent, providing access to basic education for children from extremely poor households and those living with disabilities. The Government allocates about TSh23.865 billion every month to implement the programme. Since 2017, the Government has employed 18,181 new primary and secondary schoolteachers in order to improve the quality of education and reduce pupil-teacher ratios. It has also built new school infrastructure and provided educational equipment and materials. At the tertiary level, the number of students who benefited from higher-education student loans has also gone up, from 98,300 in 2015 to 122,663 in 2019,

as a result of a budget increase from TSh365 billion in 2015 to TSh455 billion in 2019.

With regard to the health sector, it is gratifying to note that one of this year's main themes of discussion of the General Assembly is universal health coverage. Through its two major public health prepaid schemes — the community health and national health insurance funds — the Government increased the number of beneficiaries from 20 per cent of the population in 2015 to 33 per cent in March of this year. In addition, as of March, 352 health facilities — 304 new health centres, nine hospitals and 39 dispensaries — had either been constructed or rehabilitated countrywide since December 2015, bringing the total number of health centres in the country to 696. Furthermore, the Government is building 67 new district hospitals. We have reformed procurement and logistical processes for medical supplies and thereby increased the supply of medicines in our health facilities, so that the availability of 312 essential medicines in the country is now at 79 per cent.

With regard to the energy sector, the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania has embarked on a major programme of rural electrification through which 5,109 villages have been supplied with electricity since December 2015, bringing the number of our villages with electricity to 7,127 out of a total of 12,259. As a result, 67 per cent of the population now has access to electricity, as compared to less than 50 per cent in 2015. In order to guarantee affordable and reliable energy, the Government is implementing several power-generation projects, including the Nyerere hydropower project, which, when completed, will produce 2,115 megawatts, more than the amount of electricity that Tanzania currently produces in total.

With regard to water supplies, about 71 per cent of the population now have access to clean and safe water, as compared with 56 per cent in 2015. In addition, new water projects are being implemented across the country at an estimated cost of TSh1.666 trillion, which is equivalent to around \$650 million. With regard to transport infrastructure, since December 2015, the Government has constructed more than 2,000 kilometres of tarmac roads and expanded its major airports in Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar, Mtwara and Tanga. In August we inaugurated the new terminal 3 at the Julius Nyerere International Airport in Dar es Salaam. The expansion or upgrading of other airports in the country, including terminal 3 at the Abeid Amani Karume International

Airport in Zanzibar, is still ongoing. In addition, the construction of 722 kilometres of two phases of standard-gauge railway for our central corridor is progressing well and is expected to be completed in 2021 at an estimated cost of \$3 billion.

Climate change and environmental conservation are a priority of the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, 38.12 per cent of whose total land is designated as protected. That includes national parks, game reserves and natural protected forests. In that regard, this year the Government established four more national parks, increasing the total number of national parks to 24 in order to protect our ecosystems, forests, biodiversity and land as part of our environmental conservation. In addition, in June we banned the use of plastic bags in the country and have continued to reduce our use of fuel-oil and diesel-propelled electricity, which now accounts for only 5.6 per cent of our electricity. Furthermore, in order to reduce the impact of climate change, the United Republic of Tanzania is investing in renewable energy. However, our efforts have been constrained by the high cost of renewable energy technologies. We therefore urge the international community to collaborate in order to make renewable energy technologies accessible and affordable.

The Government of the United Republic of Tanzania remains committed to promoting democracy, good governance, human rights and the rule of law. Indeed, those democratic principles are guaranteed in our Constitution. As I speak, there are 21 registered political parties operating freely in the country, and some are represented in Parliament. In the case of Zanzibar, three opposition party leaders are in Government and one of them is here with us today. The United Republic of Tanzania also has a vibrant and diversified media representing different expressions of opinion, as evidenced by our 152 registered radio stations, only three of which are State-owned. In addition, Tanzania has 34 television stations, only two of which are State-owned, and we have also granted 172 newspaper licences. In order to improve the investment and business climate in Tanzania, beginning on 1 July of this year the Government started implementing a blueprint for regulatory reforms to improve the business environment. Through our fiscal policies, we have abolished more than 154 taxes, and we are convinced that efforts such as these will propel our country towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We are unfortunately witnessing an increasing trend within the international system towards unilateralism. In that regard, the United Republic of Tanzania once again reiterates its commitment to multilateralism and calls on all members to embrace multilateralism, not only in order to eradicate poverty, improve the quality of education, combat climate change and achieve inclusion, but also to maintain international peace and security and achieve a just and better world.

In August, at the thirty-ninth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), held in Dar es Salaam, the United Republic of Tanzania assumed the SADC chairmanship. Among other things, the Summit adopted the theme of our chairmanship, which is “A conducive environment for inclusive and sustainable industrial development, increased intra-regional trade and job creation”. The theme is premised on the fact that although the SADC region and the African continent in general are not poor, they have been compelled to be poor — despite being rich in terms of farmland, with 30 per cent of the world’s arable acreage, and possessing 30 per cent of the world’s known mineral resources, a population of about 1.3 billion people, a wide diversity of wildlife, ecozones and plant species that are extremely important, livestock and marine ecosystems, and hydrocarbon and mineral resources. Africa has continued to be a source of raw materials for other countries and a destination for manufactured goods and services from other countries. Ironically, Africa produces what it does not consume and consumes what it does not produce. That must change.

In that regard, Africa must vigorously pursue a path of industrialization, which will also create jobs for our young people, who constitute 60 per cent of the continent’s population. I appeal to the international community to provide African countries with fair and better terms of trade. That will enable our countries to participate in the global value chain and increase the purchasing power of our people.

The Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, as Chair of SADC, would like to urge the international community to call for lifting the unilateral sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe. For far too long, Zimbabwe has been under sanctions that have negatively affected its people, especially vulnerable groups such as women, the elderly and children. Those sanctions have also negatively affected other countries in Southern Africa and should now be unconditionally removed.

This year, the United Nations celebrates its seventy-fourth anniversary. Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations stipulates that the purpose of the United Nations is to maintain international peace and security. In that respect, it goes without saying that since its inception in 1945, the United Nations has recorded some important milestones, but some challenges still remain. In that respect, I wish to bring up the Democratic Republic of Congo, which has been mired in a conflict situation that has persisted despite various efforts for so long. In that regard, the United Republic of Tanzania believes that support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be genuine and aimed at addressing the challenges facing the country comprehensively and holistically, with a view to helping it attain durable peace, stability and prosperity. To that end, we pledge to work together with the United Nations and other members of the international community to restore peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and turn it into an exporter of peace and shared prosperity.

In conclusion, I would like once again to reiterate our support to the United Nations and the ongoing reforms to make the Organization more relevant and representative of the global community.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Soroi Eoe, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea.

Mr. Eoe (Papua New Guinea): Today I am honoured and privileged to address the General Assembly on behalf of my Prime Minister, Mr. James Marape, and the Government and the people of Papua New Guinea. I would like to warmly congratulate you, Mr. President, and the Government and the people of Nigeria, on your election to lead the Assembly. We share the spirit of this session’s theme of “Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion” and the priorities you have set, Mr. President. You have our trust and confidence in leading our collective work and, as one of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly for the current session, my country stands in solidarity with you and all the States Members of the United Nations. I also want to express our gratitude to the outgoing President, Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, for her vibrant leadership, commendable commitment and tireless efforts, including in strengthening the hand of multilateralism, inclusivity and humanity over the past year. I wish her all the best in her future endeavours, and Papua New Guinea hopes that it will not take

another decade or more for a female President of the General Assembly to be elected once again.

I would like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his exemplary leadership, selfless service and stellar work in many important areas, such as climate change, during the past year, and his continued diligent work for the greater good and welfare of we the peoples of the United Nations. At the regional level, Papua New Guinea was heartened and inspired by his very timely and welcome landmark visit in May to the Pacific region, to bear witness to our sustainable development challenges, vulnerabilities and opportunities and the clarion call to step up the fight and do better, work harder and act more urgently to combat the adverse effects of climate change. At our national level, the United Nations remains a trusted and highly valued partner for us. The development, peacebuilding, human rights and humanitarian support under the reformed United Nations system that is now functioning in Papua New Guinea continues not only to expand and deepen but, more importantly, to strategically complement my Government's development priorities. But while we are moving in the right direction, there is still much to be done. I would like to assure the Secretary-General and the United Nations system that they have my Government's undivided support.

A localized and integrated 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development remains an important priority for Papua New Guinea under my Government. Currently, measured progress continues to be made in specific areas, such as education, primary health care, gender equality and empowerment, and peace and security, but more work needs to be done. For instance, in health and education services, our Government's policies on free education and health care continue to gain momentum countrywide. More Papua New Guineans, particularly girls and children, are benefiting from these strategic interventions.

My Government remains committed to ensuring the provision of quality education and primary health care as a solid foundation for a better future for all our citizens. Working towards achieving those goals is important as part of our preparations to present our voluntary national review on the status of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to the High-level Political Forum for the first time in July 2020. Meanwhile, we continue to be inspired by our national Vision 2050 and our National Strategy for Responsible Sustainable Development and guided by our Medium-

Term Development Plan and a paradigm shift, including a generational change of political leadership, which is being done to strengthen national-level implementation in the context of core development priorities under the new vision to "take back Papua New Guinea", with a view to making it prosperous, peaceful and secure through inclusive sustainable economic growth.

The objective is, first and foremost, to strategically position the country's sustainable development in order to empower our citizens at all levels so that they can take national ownership and leadership of our development pathway and destiny, while also protecting our abundant natural resources. Secondly, in taking back New Guinea, we have ambitious plans to achieve economic independence and self-reliance in the coming decade. We recognize that a healthy and educated population supported by quality infrastructure, broad-based agriculture and just, fair, equitable and inclusive development serve as the engine of sustainable development. This will secure and empower the future of our children, while ensuring that we do not erode and compromise our environmental capital.

In order to achieve our national agenda as part of the wider 2030 Agenda, we have established the following priority areas of focus. First, we will focus on the revitalization of the agriculture sector as a key driver for inclusive economic growth. This approach is intended to harness the productivity of our rural communities, particularly women and girls — who constitute 80 per cent of the country's population — by empowering and enabling them to participate in income generation and job opportunities, with a view to improving their standard of living and eliminating poverty. Sectorial plans are also being established covering the marine sector and fisheries, forestry, mining, oil and gas and primary industry products. These plans include gender equity and social inclusion components.

Secondly, we are committed to downstream-processing our natural resources in order to add value and build our human capital and manufacturing capacities and capabilities, thereby industrializing our economy. In adopting such measures, we are striving to become a middle-income country by 2030. We therefore welcome genuine and durable development partners from bona fide foreign investors to develop downstream-processing facilities in the country.

Thirdly, we are embarking on reviewing and reforming our legislative infrastructure on renewable

and non-renewable resources. This objective aims at finding the right balance that fairly and equitably accounts for all stakeholders' interests. We do not have such a balance at present, which is disempowering our people who are the true owners of the natural resources.

Fourthly, we have prioritized building resilient economic infrastructure projects, such as roads, airports, wharves, and electricity and telecommunications facilities. This infrastructure will support economic corridors throughout the country that will enable our citizens to obtain market access for their primary produce and basic services. We recognize the importance of the digital economy and are therefore working earnestly with our development partners to harness the added value to the economy and our people's lives through the information and communications technology sector. The recent completion of the submarine fibre-optic cable between Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, and Sydney, Australia, is particularly noteworthy. This cable will significantly boost information and communications technology services in the country and globally. My Government greatly appreciates the strong and valued partnership of our closest neighbour, Australia.

As an integral part of enhancing the rule of law and order in my country, my Government is seriously committed to strengthening governance, particularly through combating corruption at all levels. We have made it a key priority to finalize the organic law on the Independent Commission against Corruption, which we are aiming to establish soon. This will be pivotal to halting the insidious drain on resources associated with corruption and to redirecting those resources to the areas where they are most needed. Another key part of the measures my Government has taken is in strengthening public-sector reform to ensure that it is fit for purpose for service delivery. This will be guided by economic drivers and social need, and where necessary, we will outsource or establish partnerships with the private sector and civil society organizations.

We recognize the value of development partnership for our national development, as called for in multilaterally agreed frameworks. We urge our development partners to align their development assistance with our national plans and policies, in accordance with our national development cooperation policy. Let me take this opportunity to convey our appreciation to all our bilateral and multilateral development partners, including Australia, New

Zealand, China, Japan, the United States, the European Union (EU), India, Israel, the Republic of Korea and the United Nations. I would also like to recognize the important and enduring role of faith-based organizations and civil society agencies, inter alia, in supporting our socioeconomic development agenda.

I want to address the critically important issue of equality and the empowerment of our women and girls. Based on our recent thorough review and evaluation of Papua New Guinea's socioeconomic development over the past decade, we have not measured up to our full potential in this area. With the right leadership, commitment, requisite resources and a holistic and inclusive approach, we can do better in meeting the needs of our women and girls. We have put in place such laws, policies, plans and strategies as the National Public Service Gender Equity and Social Inclusion Policy, which champions workplace gender equity, inclusiveness and leadership. The National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence 2016-2025 complements our international human rights and gender-equality commitments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

What is now needed is to better translate these existing national frameworks and related international commitments into meaningful actions, thereby supporting the equality and empowerment of women and girls. That is exactly what our five-year Medium-Term Development Plan III is addressing through an approach that seeks to secure our future by way of inclusive, sustainable economic growth. An integral part of this approach is the clear recognition of the importance of gender as a cross-cutting development issue.

This year marks 18 years of unbroken peace in my country's Autonomous Region of Bougainville, which followed the signing of the Bougainville Peace Agreement between the Government and the people of Bougainville in August 2001, after a civil conflict claimed scores of lives and livelihoods and necessitated the involvement of the United Nations. As an integral part of the Peace Agreement, a referendum will be conducted on 23 November to decide the future status of the Autonomous Region, subject to the final decision of the national parliament of my country. Papua New Guinea is steadfastly committed to upholding the Peace Agreement, and we are doing everything possible to ensure that the referendum is free, fair and transparent. I would like to thank the Secretary-General and the

United Nations system, as well as our bilateral and other multilateral development partners, including, again, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Ireland, Norway, Germany and the EU, for their enduring support that has enabled the peace that we continue to witness today.

On climate change, let me begin by joining others in conveying my Government's and my people's sincere sympathies and condolences to the people and the Government of the Bahamas for the unprecedented loss of lives and devastation caused by Hurricane Dorian. As a fellow small island developing State, we stand in solidarity with them.

We support and congratulate the Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit and the inclusion of youth in championing the fight against climate change. We are proud today to have heard such a call for urgent action in the context of small island developing States from a young Papua New Guinean woman. The courageous and uncompromising stance of youth is a good omen for the world. We also thank those funding the support for youth and others in this rallying call.

At the recently concluded fiftieth Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting, in Tuvalu, the Pacific leaders agreed to build on the blue Pacific's call for urgent global climate change action through the Kainaki II Declaration for Urgent Climate Change Action Now. This instrument is now our moral compass and the authority we will use going forward in the run-up to the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Climate change is the defining issue of our time. It requires that all States Members of the United Nations and all stakeholders take urgent and concrete measures individually and collectively under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and through the revision of nationally determined contributions by 2020. Such an approach will effectively address the adverse impacts of climate change for the sake of our planet. The important outcomes from the Climate Action Summit earlier this week paves the way for us to take the measures necessary to saving ourselves. We cannot continue to be morally irresponsible about this existential threat to the planet. Moreover, it is utterly unfair and unjust for those that contribute the least to greenhouse-gas emissions to pay the highest price. It must stop.

We take seriously the importance of being a party to the Paris Agreement by adopting the measures needed both domestically and globally. For instance, Papua New Guinea was one of the first few countries in the world to submit its nationally determined contributions, and we are currently in the process of revising them. At the Climate Action Summit, my Government's three initiatives were accepted under the nature-based solutions track and the resilience and adaptation track.

The nature-based solutions track focuses on harnessing our abundant tropical-rainforest resources as the lungs of the Earth and carbon reservoir through sustainable forest-management practices. These ends can be met, first, by implementing our national strategy for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, as well as conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks. Secondly, with respect to our renewable energy plan, we are endeavouring to tap into our rich hydroenergy and solar-energy sources. Thirdly, we are looking to climate-proof infrastructure in the country; pilot projects in this area are well under way.

Under the Paris Agreement, we commit to reducing greenhouse-gas emissions in the energy sector. Papua New Guinea's Vision 2050, national development strategic plan 2010-2030 and national energy policy outline our national goals to assist us in making the transition from our current energy sources to 100 per cent renewable sources by 2050. Climate funding is a necessity for us to be able to fully implement the Paris Agreement.

Papua New Guinea wishes to express its appreciation to those Governments and organizations that have pledged additional funding to the Green Climate Fund and encourages others who have the financial capacity to contribute to do so as well. However, Papua New Guinea aligns itself with statements already made relating to accessibility of the funds. If our nationally determined contributions are going to be ambitious, we must not be constrained by difficulties in gaining access to climate funds.

My country considers the ocean as an integral part of our past, present and future. Ocean resources are vital to the economic, social and cultural values central to our people's lives and livelihoods. In this spirit, we are now mapping out our institutional framework and national oceans policy, which are intended to develop and establish an integrated ocean-management system

within and beyond our national jurisdiction. As a State party to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, this approach will also strengthen the implementation of the Convention in our maritime zones and support core development policies and plans.

I am also pleased to note that as an integral part of this priority we submitted to the Secretary-General our national maritime-boundaries delimitation charts in April. In addition, we took positive steps in March 2017 to secure an extended continental shelf in the Ontong Java Plateau area, in a first-ever trilateral joint submission submitted together with our Pacific neighbours, the Federated States of Micronesia and Solomon Islands. A highly technical and sophisticated effort that spanned over a decade culminated in recommendations published by the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.

The fisheries sector is a major contributor to our economy, and to ensure its sustainability, we are committed to combating illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing and are working towards the adoption of the Agreement on Port State Measures of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations by the end of this year. Doing so will ensure downstream processing to add value to our resources. In this spirit, we call for the successful conclusion of the World Trade Organization negotiations on fishery subsidies in order to halt improper practices in this sector.

We also share the stewardship of our ocean with our Pacific Islands Forum neighbours under the strong Blue Pacific Continent regional architecture, designed to ensure a secure, peaceful and prosperous Pacific. The regional architecture will enable our people to live free, healthy and productive lives, on our own terms and in ways that recognize the richness of our cultures, national circumstances and oceanic resources, as well as the importance of conservation and sustainable use.

We welcome and support the convening of the second United Nations Ocean Conference to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, to be held in Portugal in June 2020. Similarly, we are pleased to note the positive progress made in the third intergovernmental conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. As we move towards the final negotiations in early 2020, we encourage all

stakeholders not to be narrow-minded in order to protect their petty national considerations but, rather, to view the global commons as one shared ocean deserving of our collective protection and sustainable use.

Based on our own domestic and regional experiences, my Government values the critical importance of the role being played by United Nations peacekeeping operations. We contribute in a modest way to United Nations peacekeeping operations, and I intend to increase our support in future as our capacity expands.

Let me take this opportunity to express my Government's sincere condolences and sympathies to the families and friends of the peacekeeping personnel who made the ultimate sacrifice of their lives for the sake of peace this year. Our prayers and thoughts are also with peacekeeping personnel who have been injured.

We are also grateful for the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund, from which we have particularly benefited in the context of the implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement. We look forward to continuing to work in close partnership with them.

As we prepare to mark, in 2020, the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, the Security Council must be reformed. We are heartened that the review of multi-country offices recognized and reinforced that the United Nations must do more and better to support small island developing States, especially those covered by multi-country offices, in the pursuit of sustainable development.

In our Pacific region, while we face common challenges, each country also faces specific and unique challenges. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. To meet current development challenges, the United Nations development system needs to operate in the context of the unique development dynamics in each country. In this regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's decision to establish a dedicated multi-country office in the North Pacific region for our Pacific neighbours of the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru and Palau.

We remain concerned about sporadic terrorist attacks around the globe. We stand in solidarity with the countries and peoples affected by such acts and strongly condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We also continue to be concerned over

tensions in various parts of the world, as they have the potential to have unintended consequences for others. We therefore encourage peaceful dialogue in order to resolve such issues.

In closing, Papua New Guinea's long-standing view on disarmament is that the world should be rid of all weapons of mass destruction. As long as nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction exist, there is a very real danger that such weapons will again be used one day, whether by design or by accident.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Simeon Oyono Esono Angue, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

Mr. Esono Angue (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to convey greetings of peace and brotherhood from His Excellency Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, Head of State of Equatorial Guinea, to all Heads of State and Government, along with his wishes for every success at the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly. We congratulate His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, on being unanimously elected to direct the work of the seventy-fourth session of the Assembly. We would also like to acknowledge and congratulate his predecessor, Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, on her work, and His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres, for his remarkable achievements during the year that is ending.

The meeting of the General Assembly is held every September for the purposes of seeking and debating solutions to the main problems and challenges affecting humankind and, to the extent possible, for greatly improving our existence and coexistence through positive and useful proposals. It is no coincidence that it is precisely here, in New York, that the United Nations was established for that purpose 74 years ago. The curious thing is that the problems that adversely affect human coexistence and existence have the same author and origin, namely, human beings. It is therefore imperative that together we strengthen the United Nations and make its work more effective as, thus far, even with its limitations, the Organization has proved to be the most valuable tool in the search for solutions to the important challenges facing humankind.

Since the creation of the United Nations, there has not been a single day that there have not been human

casualties resulting from the various armed conflicts in the world. Let us begin with the fact that the United Nations itself was born from the rubble of one of the bloodiest armed conflicts in history, the Second World War, which in itself must have served as an example and warning of what a destructive malevolent action by human beings can be, costing more than 60 million lives. We do not appear to have drawn positive conclusions from that tragedy.

The efforts deployed by the United Nations to resolve each of the problems that has arisen have been colossal. However, we believe that these efforts cannot yield positive results as long as the basis of the self-serving interpretation of the United Nations philosophy remains the one born of the Second World War. Let us approach the issue at its source by allowing for equitable and inclusive participation in decision-making and by making cross-cutting changes to an outdated conception of our Organization so that it can act in full solidarity to save humankind from the situations of destitution and abuse in which most human beings find themselves.

In order to operate more effectively, the United Nations must be reformed to ensure its own survival as a useful and beneficial entity working for humankind, whose ultimate purpose should be to increase its legitimacy, effectiveness and acceptance through substantial changes that cannot be postponed, such as the reform of the Security Council, currently at an impasse, to make it more representative and redress once and for all the historic injustice of depriving the African continent of all the privileges and the permanent voice that membership in it confers. Let us not forget that African issues make up two thirds of the Security Council's agenda. In short, as we continue our struggle until justice is done, we are not in a position to abandon the Ezulwini Consensus of the African Union, which embraces and justly reflects all of the legitimate aspirations of the African continent.

Reform should not be limited to the Security Council. The ambitious programme to reform the United Nations peacekeeping operations undertaken by the Secretary-General deserves our attention. If implemented, it would make peace operations more effective, as the main goal is to reduce fragmentation so as to provide a better response, making the pillar of peace and security more coherent, agile and efficient by prioritizing conflict prevention and maintaining and sustaining peace, in line with the 2030 Agenda for

Sustainable Development, as the Secretary-General himself points out.

Peacekeeping operations must enjoy the strong support and backing of the various levels and partners of the United Nations. It is important to motivate host countries, troop-contributing countries, troop contingents and funds. The benefits of being familiar with the environments covered by regional and subregional economic communities should be acknowledged and fully exploited, and closer and more trusted partnerships forged. There is no doubt that achieving these goals would have a very positive impact on the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations. Financial contributions to the United Nations are vital for it to perform its important work.

We agreed with the Secretary-General about convening a summit on a subject as important to humankind as climate change at this session of the General Assembly. As we all know, climate change poses a clear threat to the safety and preservation of the human species on Earth. We believe that the Paris Agreement on Climate Change is essentially the efficient solution to the threat of global climate change. Africa, in particular, is deeply concerned about the very negative effects of climate change on the continent, especially when, together with other causes, such as armed conflicts, it leads to the forced displacement of people, who are then concentrated in major camps and subjected to inhumane conditions. It is a human tragedy, which Mr. Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, witnessed during his visit to a refugee camp near Assosa, Ethiopia.

Climate change leads to the destruction of Africa's meagre infrastructure, a decline in agricultural production, high food prices, rising sea levels, declining water resources, reduced livelihoods of people living on the coast and an increase in the number of conflicts. Such effects all have a negative impact on the development of our countries. Current statistics show that there are now millions of internally displaced persons in Africa. The situation, along with the aforementioned problems, should be addressed at the international level, particularly given that the General Assembly has mentioned the need to strengthen multilateral efforts to address the effects of climate change, poverty and sustainable development.

Although the Republic of Equatorial Guinea is a peace-loving nation, we remain the target of threats and

attempts to destabilize the country by overthrowing its legitimate authorities in order to seize natural resources and wealth that belong only to the people of Equatorial Guinea. It is not the first time that we have drawn the attention of the Assembly to the dangers and risks of destabilizing Equatorial Guinea and the dire consequences that it could have on the entire region. Our perpetual detractors and enemies do not welcome the signs of economic recovery and good prospects for my country's future. The unity of the people and the strength of our national institutions and security and defence forces, along with cooperation with friendly countries, provide vital support, despite the turmoil.

Our country has been experiencing an economic crisis because of the drop in oil prices on the international market. The current situation has compelled us to diversify our economy and use the profits in other sectors that are not as vulnerable to fluctuations. We have taken note and learned our lessons so that reforms we undertake will make us stronger and assist us in attempting to take full advantage of the vast opportunities and potential offered by other sectors of the national economy.

Our term as a member of the Security Council has given us an excellent opportunity to show the world that the trust it has placed in our country has enabled us to demonstrate the best we have to offer. We have tried to serve the noble objectives of the Security Council — particularly, that of maintaining international peace and security — and we do so with conviction and honour. We are now more familiar with the complex issues of the world in which we live, which has led us to reaffirm our belief in the sacred principles of international law outlined in the Charter of the United Nations. Given our views, there can be no doubt as to our sense of independence, freedom and justice. Once again, we are very grateful for the trust placed in our country.

In that regard, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2457 (2019), on silencing the guns in Africa, submitted by Equatorial Guinea, on behalf of the African Union, during its presidency of the Council in February. I take this opportunity to extend an invitation to all those present to participate in the conference on the subject, which we will host in Equatorial Guinea in November. It should provide us with a platform to realistically address this serious issue, which is one of the factors that hinders the development of the vast potential of the African continent.

As we have said on other occasions, silencing the guns in Africa must not be a question solely of aspirations or desire. The potential for conflicts in our countries results from the nearly insurmountable obstacle of our own underdevelopment. We believe that it is important to prioritize the peaceful resolution of conflicts, by creating the necessary conditions for development in post-conflict environments. Some of these multisectoral approaches should constitute the path we take together in order to achieve the stability required to ensure the development of our countries.

That is the spirit that guides our relations with the countries with which we share borders. We sign agreements to establish good-neighbourly relations and establish standing joint committees on consular issues and cross-border security. Equatorial Guinea has always upheld the principles of mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in the internal affairs of others, equality, reciprocal benefits and peaceful coexistence in its relations with its neighbours. Similarly, we are members of subregional organizations and structures, which reveal the pan-African spirit that guides our ideals and principles in foreign policy.

I would like to end my address by appealing to the need to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade that weighs on Cuba and by calling for positive developments to be resumed, which has given rise to great optimism in the international community. I hope that the spirit of peace, harmony and solidarity will guide our debates.

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

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind them that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Ivanovic (Serbia): My delegation would like to exercise its right of reply in response to the address made earlier today by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, Mr. Edi Rama (see A/74/PV.9).

As States Members of the United Nations deliberate during this general debate on problems and challenges facing the international community, let me underscore that the consolidation of international peace, security

and stability is a top priority for the Republic of Serbia as well. We are therefore extending maximal efforts aimed at achieving stabilization, reconciliation and regional cooperation. In this regard, our joint approach to and vision of the Balkans working together has been widely acclaimed. Despite our efforts, we have witnessed today another attempt by the Prime Minister of Albania to mislead Member States when he referred to the Serbian Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija as an independent State. For the sake of truth and clarity, I would like to emphasize the following points.

First, Kosovo is neither an independent State nor a Member of the United Nations. Albania was the only delegation at this general debate that called for the recognition of the so-called Republic of Kosovo, contrary to international law and the principles on which this Organization, the Charter of the United Nations and Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) are based.

Secondly, in accordance with resolution Security Council 1244 (1999), which is legally binding, Kosovo and Metohija is an autonomous province within the Republic of Serbia, although it is under the administration of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

Thirdly, all outstanding issues in the process of the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina were discussed in the dialogue facilitated by the European Union and conducted in Brussels. However, owing to the continuing unilateral moves made by Pristina, including the imposition of 100 per cent tariffs on all goods from central Serbia, the dialogue has been stalled since last November. Needless to say, remarks in Prime Minister Rama's address today only diminish efforts to re-establish dialogue or even the prospects for dialogue in future.

The Prime Minister of Albania today mentioned the word "genocide", in connection with Kosovo Albanians in the late 1990s. Abusing this term is tantamount to game-playing with international law and an attempt to misinterpret a conflict that affected all communities in Kosovo and Metohija and does not lead to an environment conducive to dialogue and reconciliation.

Prime Minister Rama spoke of the need to "do justice to history, acknowledge reality and ... [build] ... a better future" (*ibid.*, p. 39). But in his version of reality, he leaves out the 200,000 internally displaced Kosovo Serbs who, 20 years after the conflict, are living without

the basic conditions needed for them to return to their homes in Kosovo and Metohija.

When we speak of the necessity of dialogue and the importance of multilateralism, it is unacceptable to openly support unilateral acts that run contrary to the United Nations Charter and the principles of international law. The Prime Minister of Albania today referred to “more than a decade after declaring [Kosovo’s] independence” (*ibid.*). In using those words, he ignored the fact that Kosovo’s declaration of independence was a unilateral act contrary to resolution 1244 (1999). I take this opportunity to appeal to our friendly neighbour Albania to accept the reality that resolution 1244 (1999) is legally binding and in force.

In conclusion, I would state that the resolution of the issue of Serbia’s southern-most province is my Government’s top priority. We have demonstrated time and again that we are ready to make an active contribution to reaching a sustainable agreed solution that is acceptable to all and takes into consideration the legitimate interests of all communities in Kosovo and Metohija. Let me be clear and stress once again that Serbia will continue to use all diplomatic means to preserve its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): This time yesterday, the regime of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, through its Minister for Foreign Affairs, once again played the wrong card before the General Assembly in an attempt to conceal its regressive nature and repeatedly doomed adventurism (see A/74/PV.8). However, evidence of Saudi Arabia’s ruinous policies cannot be photoshopped out of existence by simply blaming others for its self-inflicted mistakes. The Saudi despots cannot forever conceal their medieval fanaticism that harks back to the dark ages by blaming Iran for their repeated failures.

Perhaps the Saudis need to be reminded that it is Saudi Arabia that has spent billions of dollars to spread hate and extremism around the world for decades. It is Saudi Arabia that has provided billions of dollars of arms and weaponry to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and its affiliated terrorists in Syria, the majority of whom are Saudi citizens. It was from Saudi Arabia that 15 out of the 18 terrorists who committed the terrorist attack of 11 September 2001 originated. It is Saudi Arabia that bribes foreign politicians to promote its form of sectarianism and buy protection for its deeply corrupt system. It is Saudi Arabia that has ruthlessly

engaged in silencing all democratic movements and the calls for democracy in our region. It is Saudi Arabia that has imposed brutal blockades on its neighbour to extort its population. It is Saudi Arabia that has waged a full-fledged criminal war against its poorest neighbour, again, Yemen, while committing war crimes and crimes against humanity on a daily basis. It is Saudi Arabia that continues to behead peaceful political opponents and upgraded its weapon of choice from the sword to the saw. And it Saudi Arabia whose people are forever alienated from human rights, democracy and the ballot box.

Perhaps the memories of Saudi despots must be refreshed: while the Iranians were defending their country from the aggression of Saddam Hussein, it was Saudi Arabia that had assisted that dictator, and as a result, more than 250,000 Iranians lost their lives. While Iranians were combating Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups in Afghanistan, it was Saudi Arabia that was lavishly funding and arming those very groups. While Iranians were assisting the Governments and the peoples of Iraq and Syria to drive terrorists from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham out of their countries, it was Saudi Arabia that was supporting those terrorists ideologically, logistically and financially. Today, while Iranians are calling for regional dialogue to return stability to the Persian Gulf region, it is once again Saudis who are insisting on pursuing their ill-fated adventurism.

The Saudis have so far succeeded in inducing their Western patrons to go along with their folly, be it in Syria or in Yemen, by playing the Iran card. However, and in no uncertain terms, we call on the Saudis to avoid further miscalculations of this kind. The short-sighted tactics of Saudi Arabia are based on the fanciful notion that regional instability and further chaos will help improve the Saudi posture in the region. We therefore call on Saudi Arabia to avoid any such miscalculation.

The corrupt House of Saud has brought nothing but disgrace to the birthplace of Islam. The Saudis have turned Al-Hijaz — the land of peace and tolerance — into a fountainhead of extremism and terrorism.

The global terrorist movements responsible for the attacks on 11 September 2001 and those that took place in London, Paris, Madrid, Karachi, Kabul, Baghdad and Istanbul, have incontestable links to the teachings of Saudi-born Wahhabism. Almost all their known ringleaders have been educated in the Saudi-

sponsored rigid and unforgiving creed. With their mix of corruption, despotism, and medieval ideology, and armed with trillions of dollars' worth of military technology, the Saudis present a catastrophic threat to regional and global peace and security.

As long as the Saudis continue to make wrong choices, as long as Western countries continue to appease the Saudis to support their arms-manufacturing industries, and as long as the voices of the of the holy land of Al-Hijaz remain unheard, more people like Jamal Khashoggi will be butchered, and more Yemeni children, and others like them, will lose their lives, and insecurity will linger in our region and beyond.

In conclusion, in order to avert future catastrophes before it is too late, the Saudis should be stopped from abusing and ridiculing international forums, including the United Nations. The idea of Saudi war criminals as partners in the global fight against terrorism and intolerance is a blatant mockery of humanity, justice and peace.

Mrs. Maitra (India): I take the floor to exercise India's right of reply to the address made by the Prime Minister of Pakistan earlier today (see A/74/PV.9). Every word spoken from the rostrum of the General Assembly, it is believed, carries the weight of history. However, what we heard from Prime Minister Imran Khan of Pakistan was an unfortunately callous portrayal of the world in binary terms: us versus them, rich versus poor, north versus south, developed versus developing, and Muslims versus others. A script that fosters divisiveness at the United Nations, attempts to sharpen differences and stir up hatred is, simply put, hate speech.

Rarely has the General Assembly witnessed such misuse, or rather abuse, of an opportunity to reflect. Words matter in diplomacy. The use of such words and phrases as "pogrom", "bloodbath", "racial superiority", "pick up the gun" and "fight to the end", reflect a medieval mindset, not a twenty-first century vision. Prime Minister Khan's threat of unleashing nuclear devastation qualifies as brinkmanship, not statesmanship. Even coming from the leader of a country that has monopolized the entire value chain of the terrorism industry, Prime Minister Khan's justification for terrorism was brazen and incendiary. For someone who was once a cricketer and believed in the gentleman's game, today's speech bordered on

crudeness of a variety that is reminiscent of the guns of Darra Adam Khel.

Now that Prime Minister Imran Khan has invited United Nations observers to Pakistan to verify that there are no militant organizations in his country, the world will hold him to that promise. In the meantime, I have a few questions for Pakistan to answer prior to his proposed verification. Can Pakistan confirm the fact that, as of today, it is home to 130 United Nations-designated terrorists and 25 terrorist entities listed by the United Nations? Will Pakistan acknowledge that it is the only Government in the world that provides a pension to an individual listed by the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities? Can Pakistan explain why, here in New York, its premier bank — the Habib Bank — had to shut down after it was fined millions of dollars for the financing of terror? Will Pakistan deny that the Financial Action Task Force has put it on notice for its violations of more than 20 of the 27 key parameters? Finally, would Prime Minister Khan deny to the city of New York that he was an open defender of Osama Bin Laden?

Having mainstreamed terrorism and hate speech, Pakistan is trying to play the wild card of being a newly minted champion of human rights. Pakistan is a country whose minority community has shrunk from 23 per cent of the population in 1947 to 3 per cent today. It has subjected Christians, Sikhs, Ahmadis, Hindus, Shias, Pashtuns, Sindhis and Balochis to draconian blasphemy laws, systemic persecution, blatant abuse and forced conversion. Pakistan's new-found fascination with preaching human rights is akin to the trophy hunting for the endangered mountain goat, the markhor.

I would say to Prime Minister Imran Ahmed Khan Niazi that pogroms are not a phenomenon associated with today's vibrant democracies. We would request that he refresh his rather sketchy understanding of history. Do not to forget the gruesome genocide perpetrated by Pakistan against its own people in 1971 and the role played by Lieutenant General Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi — a sordid fact that The Honourable Prime Minister of Bangladesh reminded the Assembly about earlier this afternoon.

Pakistan's virulent reaction to the removal of an outdated and temporary provision that was hindering

the development and integration of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir flows from the fact that those who thrive on conflict never welcome the light of peace. While Pakistan has ventured to upstream terrorism and downstream hate speech there, India is going ahead with the mainstreaming of development in Jammu and Kashmir. That mainstreaming in Jammu and Kashmir, as well as Ladakh, as part of India's thriving and vibrant democracy, which is steeped in a millenniums-old heritage of diversity, pluralism and tolerance, is well and truly under way, and irreversibly so. The citizens of India do not need anyone else to speak on their behalf, least of all those who have built an industry of terrorism from the ideology of hate.

Ms. Prizreni (Albania): I take the floor in response to the statement that the representative of Serbia delivered in response to the statement delivered this morning (see A/74/PV.9) at the general debate by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, His Excellency Mr. Edi Rama. I wish that I was not obliged to take the floor at this late hour, but I have deemed it important to say a few words regarding the status of the Republic of Kosovo and its worldwide recognition.

As we have previously highlighted in this very Hall, there is no room for calling into question the status of Kosovo, which the International Court of Justice has found to be in compliance with international law. The undeniable reality is that Kosovo has been an independent and sovereign State since 2008 and it is recognized by 116 United Nations States Members. Kosovo is also a member and active participant in all the initiatives in its region and part of more than 60 international organizations.

As the Prime Minister of Albania stated this morning, the Republic of Kosovo has proved itself to be a reliable partner in the region and has never wavered from its Euro-Atlantic commitment. Kosovo has managed to build a highly vibrant democracy. The way that the people of Kosovo — regardless of their ethnicity — have embraced European values serves as a model for others. Kosovo is a country that has a clear constitutional and legal framework for protecting its minorities and their cultural heritage. It is fully engaged in the process of reconciliation and economic cooperation and, above all, it is fully engaged in implementing international law and international rules.

Albania believes that Kosovo's membership in all international organizations, including the United

Nations, will not only be rewarding for all those organizations but will also be a chance for Serbia to break once and for all from its past and look forward to regional and European integration. Albania strongly supports the European Union-facilitated Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, which should lead to a definitive solution and an abiding legal agreement on mutual recognition. Kosovo should soon have its rightful seat among us all at the United Nations.

Mr. Al Assiri (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country is exercising its right of reply to the statement made by the representative of Iran. At the outset, we categorically reject the words of the representative of Iran. It seems that the representative of Iran underestimates my country's serious position.

For years, we have been used to hearing lies and allegations from the representative of Iran, who tries to twist the truth. Those are desperate attempts because the international community knows the truth about the terrorist State of Iran and its support for all actions to destabilize the Arab Gulf region in particular, and the Middle East in general. The Iranian regime has always intervened in the affairs of other countries, sponsored terrorism and sowed chaos and destruction in many countries of the region.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia calls on the international community to seriously work to end Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes and to stop the activities of the Iranian regime that threaten security and stability in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and other countries of the region. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia believes that achieving peace and stability in the Middle East requires curbing Iran's expansionist and destructive policies. Iran's aggressive behaviour is in violation of all international conventions and Security Council resolutions. That is why Iran is on the international sanctions list.

Iran is providing military, financial and logistical support to the Houthis while also supplying them with ballistic missiles. The international community can check the debris of more than 250 ballistic missiles that were fired against the citizens of my country. The Organization has acknowledged that the Iranian regime provided its militias with those missiles, an act which is in blatant violation of Security Council resolutions 2216 (2015) and 2231 (2015).

The Iranian regime also attacked commercial ships in the Gulf of Oman in July and the Shaybah oil field in

August. The Iranian regime cowardly told its militias to claim responsibility for those attacks. On 14 September, the Iranian regime also attacked various oil facilities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with 25 missiles and drones. That halved my country's oil production of nearly 5.7 million barrels per day. That is a serious and stark violation of international conventions and customary law. It is an attack on international peace and security and a serious threat to global oil supplies. Iran also seized a British-flagged tanker in the Strait of Hormuz in the international waters of the Arabian Gulf, freeing it today after two months of detention. Iran shot down a United States drone on 20 June. All of those actions constitute acts of terrorism against the freedom and safety of shipping routes and international air space.

The list of actions that Iran and its militias have perpetrated in the region and elsewhere is long. That includes the bombing in Buenos Aires on 18 July 1994, which killed 85 people and injured 300. Iran was also responsible for the October 1983 Beirut bombings, during which two trucks full of explosives targeted United States and French facilities, claiming the lives of 241 United States soldiers, 58 French soldiers and six civilians. Iran was also responsible for the Khobar Residential Towers bombing in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1996, which also caused the deaths of another 19 United States military personnel and injured 372 people. Some of the perpetrators of the Khobar bombing took refuge in Tehran.

We have also not forgotten what happened during the 1987 Hajj pilgrimage in Mecca, the holiest site in the world. Iranian pilgrims were responsible for the violence that occurred then against Saudi Arabian security forces in the course of huge demonstrations during which innocent people were stabbed and killed using machetes and knives. The Iranian pilgrims also set fires to holy sites. That list also includes the assassination of Saudi diplomats in Thailand in 1989 and in Karachi in 2001, as well as the failed assassination attempt against the Saudi Ambassador in Washington, D. C., in October 2011. The United States authorities apprehended two Iranians related to that incident, Gholam Shakuri and Mansour Arbabsiar, who were brought before a federal court in New York on charges of plotting to assassinate the Saudi Ambassador by setting off an explosion in the restaurant he was in, before proceeding to the Saudi Embassy to do the same.

I assure the representative of Iran that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its leaders are a unique example for the world. Never before has crime been as closely linked to a country in the world as it is currently to Iran and its agents in the region. Iran has been responsible for so many terrorist attacks; is there anybody in this Hall who doubts that Iran is a terrorist country? I do not think so. Everybody's mind conjures images of terrorism, death and destruction whenever Iran's name or one of its militias in the region is mentioned.

Mr. Mamdouhi (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation takes the floor for the second time to exercise its right of reply to the baseless accusations and fallacies levelled against my country by the delegation of the Saudi regime. The people of the Arab world will remember the treacherous collusion of the Saudi and Israeli regimes against Iran, as confessed by the ex-Prime Minister of the regime over the occupied Palestinian territories and later confirmed by the Saudi Foreign Minister in his statement. It should not be considered coincidental that both of them focused their statements on attacking Iran.

The Saudi regime is heavily engaged in wars of aggression, regional bullying, destabilizing behaviour and risky provocation, and absurdly blames others for their consequences. Iran is not responsible for any of the many wrong choices that Saudi Arabia has made in recent decades. In fact, none except the Saudi regime itself should be blamed for its mistakes. Neither the suppression of democratic movements in the Persian Gulf region, nor overwhelming support for the terrorists in Syria and other countries in conflict in the Middle East, nor the financial and ideological nurturing of every major terrorist group in the world can be attributed to others. They are the faults of Saudi Arabia and they reflect the very nature of the corrupt and unelected ruling family. It is time for the Saudis to stop signing cheques and accept the outcomes of their wrong choices.

Saudi-born Takfiri ideologies act like invasive species attempting to uproot all other varieties and bring them to the brink of extinction. If the staggering number of Yemeni children killed by Saudi missiles is not enough to reveal the true face of the Saudis; if the thousands of Syrian children murdered by the terrorists funded, dispatched and ideologically nurtured by the Saudis are not enough to expose their hypocrisy with regard to humanitarian aid; if the systematic violation of the human rights of minorities in Saudi Arabia is

not enough to alarm the world; if the ruthless silencing of all dissidents — in particular the butchering in the Saudi Arabian Consulate General of Jamal Khashoggi, who dared to criticize a corrupt and unelected royal family — is not worrying Saudi allies; if the official slavery of hundreds of thousands of women and girl migrant workers and their abject living conditions inside Saudi Arabia do not speak of the horrible nature of the Saudi system, then something is going seriously wrong. Then the world should expect even worse brutality and smokescreening of Saudi regime violations, and even more serious atrocities.

I would like to seize this opportunity to stress that, while there are deliberate attempts at provocation by certain circles inside and outside of the region hindering maritime navigation in the Persian Gulf, all measures taken by the Iranian forces are, and have always been, aimed solely at enforcing the related laws and regulations in support of, inter alia, preserving law and order, protecting the marine environment, maintaining the safety and security of maritime navigation and ensuring the flow of energy. Since the Saudi regime has blamed Iran —

The President: Excuse me. We really must stay within the five minutes, as agreed.

Mr. Al Assiri (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I will be as brief as possible. With God's help, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is leading efforts to establish stability and security in the region in order to counter the destabilizing efforts of the Iranian regime and extremist

forces. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia stresses that leniency with Iran encourages it to wreak more havoc and hostilities, which undermine not only regional but also international peace and security. Targeting Bqaiq and Khurais with Iranian weapons constitutes not just an act of aggression against our country but, in targeting energy supplies for international markets, against the entire world. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia strongly emphasizes that we are able to defend our territories and our people and to forcefully respond to such aggression.

It is very strange that Iran is the only country that has not been targeted by Al-Qaida. Iran clones Hizbullah militia in Yemen through the Houthi militia. Iran causes violence and chaos while claiming that it is a peace-making country. The truth is that the Iranian regime is implicated to the fullest. Undoubtedly, the entire world appreciates the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Millions of dollars have been spent by Iran to support terrorist militias in Yemen, Lebanon, Syria and other countries. Its people are deprived of a decent life. I wonder how the Iranian regime could ignore the executions carried out in Iran on a daily basis, including of Iranian experts.

We emphasize to the representative of terrorist Iran that we in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will undoubtedly cut their hands and forbid them from infiltrating into Yemen and the entire region.

The meeting rose at 11.10 p.m.